

THE BALUTA SYSTEM IN THE 18th CENTURY MAHARASHTRA

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

AMARENDRA KUMAR

**CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY**

NEW DELHI-110067

INDIA

1994




CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES

Date : 21 July 1994

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled
THE BALUTA SYSTEM IN THE 18th CENTURY MAHARASHTRA
submitted by AMARENDRA KUMAR in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the Degree of MASTER OF
PHILOSOPHY, is his bonafide work to the best of our
knowledge and may be placed before the examiners for
evaluation.


Prof. SATISH SABERWAL
(Chairperson)


Prof. DILBAGH SINGH
(Supervisor)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I take this opportunity to thank the following who have been of invaluable assistance in course of my dissertation.

Prof. Dilbagh Singh has been more than a supervisor to me. This dissertation owes a great deal to his patient guidance, not to mention his constant pushing for ever more "accuracy and exploration". Apart from learning a lot, I have enjoyed every moment of my association with him.

The hospitality of Prof. A.M. Deshpande, Dr. Deepak Gaikwad, Dr. Gopal Guru and Dr. S.C. Das (all from University of Poona) and the tireless efforts of Mrs. V.Joshi in translating many manuscripts cannot be repaid but only recalled with deep gratitude.

Credit also goes to Chandrakanta Ghuge, and my colleagues Sanjeev, Someshwar, Alone and Hridayesh for encouraging me and helping me in innumerable ways during the entire course of my research work.'

I am also thankful to the staff of the Jaykar Library (University of Poona), *Bharatiya Itihas Samshodhak Mandal*, Pune, *Peshwa Daftar*, Pune, ICHR Library, New Delhi, National Archives, New Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, New Delhi for allowing me to consult the books and documents of their respective librarians.

And, how can I forget to thank the wing of my Hostel

with whom I shared several madcap moments of fun and morbidity, particularly for keeping away and not disturbing my peace while I was busy writing the dissertation.

But I readily owe everything to my parents, my Mamaji & Mamiiji and all other family members for their blessings and moral support.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my Grandfather. Thogh I was not fortunate enough to have known him in person, his extraordinary intelligence (of which my affectionate and encouraging Grandmother constantly reminds me) has always acted as a source of inspiration and keeps me pressing ever forward in search of excellence.

21st July, 1994


(AMARENDRA KUMAR)

CONTENTS

	Acknowledgements	
	Abbreviation	
	INTRODUCTION	1 - 10
Chapter I		
	THE VILLAGE SOCIETY	11 - 36
Chapter II		
	THE BALUTEDARS: STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONING AND MODE OF PAYMENT	37 - 78
Chapter III		
	THE BALUTEDARS, THE VILLAGE SOCIETY AND ADMINISTRATION	79 - 105
	CONCLUSION	106 - 112
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	113 - 119

ABBREVIATIONS

IESHR	Indian Economic and Social History Review
JESHO	Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient
MIS	Marathyanchnya Itihaschi Sadhane
PIHC	Proceedings of the Indian History Congress
PSAP	Peshwa Kalin Samajik wa Arthik Patra Vyavahar
SCS	Shiva Charitra Sahitya
SPD	Selections from the Peshwa Daftar
SSPRD	Selections from the Satara Raja's and Peshwa's Diaries
TKKP	Tarabai Kalin Kagad Patra

INTRODUCTION

In all the studies pertaining to the pre-colonial rural society, considerable attention has been paid by the scholars to analyse its structure and functioning with main emphasis on the ownership and control of land and the forms of dominance that emerged from relations of production. In these studies the economic injustice resulting from the disparities existing between the different classes have been extensively highlighted. The role of caste in determining the relations between land and labour by way of horizontal division of the rural population into land owing caste peasantry and the low caste landless menials is well known . These studies also refer to the class of village artisans and servants and other professional groups. But despite the recognition of the fact that the services of this group of the village population was crucial for the smooth functioning of the village society, a little effort has been made to analyse their position and role in the village establishment and their relationship with the landed aristocracy and different strata of the cultivators.

The stratification within this section of the village society in terms of caste on the one hand and, as perceived by the agriculturalist community, from the standpoint of their functional utility and service obligation on the other needs to be addressed. The precise character of the relationship that existed between the cultivating and non-cultivating class and the impact of the rural stratification on the pattern of relationship between these two constituents of the village society also requires a closer examination. The other important question which needs a much deeper analysis relates to their position *vis-a-vis* land. Scholars like Irfan Habib have suggested that the lower caste people were precluded from holding land. This question however, should also take into account the nature of economy, such concrete conditions as the favourable land-man ratio and the pattern of labour organization on the holdings of substantial land holders including the revenue grantees.

This study is an attempt in this direction. I have chosen the region of Maharashtra during the 18th century for my research project primarily because sufficient research material are available on this region, particularly on this period. Village and *Pargana* level records in the form of letters, petitions and royal orders

etc. are preserved in the Maharashtra state Archives. In addition to these documents family records of the erstwhile *Watandars* are also preserved in the collection of some private institutions. Moreover, the organization of the village society, the role of caste, in determining the allocation and the privileges associated with land, the concept of *Watan*, *Baluta* etc. in Maharashtra differed from that of North India.

The village artisans and menials who served the entire village and were an integral part of the village community were termed as *balutedars* in medieval Maharashtra. In North-India they were variously called as *Kamins*, *Khidmatgars* or *Balahars*. The nature of their rights & perquisites associated with their duties and the mode of payment (mainly in the form of grain share called *baluta*) were specific to medieval Maharashtra. For example, as they participated in the village *Panchayat* or *Got sabha* and played an important role in the decision making process, the *balutedars* enjoyed a higher position than their counterparts in northern India. The *balutedars* are yet to receive proper attention In the works dealing with village society of Maharashtra during the medieval period. These studies only make passing references to their functional obligations and duties towards the

village community or the State. No serious attempt has been made to locate their exact position in the hierarchy of the village society, the relationship between their caste status and the importance and significance of their role in the social, economic and cultural life of the rural population.

Modern historical research in Maratha history began with Sir James Grant Duff whose book 'History of the Mahrattas' was the first scholarly attempt to write a comprehensive and detailed work on Maratha history. Although he mentions the names of the village *balutedars* and gives a few references of their functions & remunerations received them, the book confines itself mainly to the description of military and administrative policies. Another British administrator Mounstuart Elphinstone seems to have understood the importance of the village society and hence has given a fairly detailed picture of the of the village society and its institutions in his report entitled 'Territories Conquered From the Peshwas'.

Among the modern works on the village society of Maharashtra, A.R.Kulkarni's work "Maharashtra in the Age Shivajee" throws light on the organization the village society. In Addition to the description of the various

aspects of the village society such as its structure, land system, settlements etc., he has discussed at length the position, functions and remunerations received by the *balutadars* in lieu of their services.

The late - Japanese scholar Hiroshi Fukazawa's book "The Medieval Deccan - Peasants, Social Systems and State (16th - 18th centuries)" is also a valuable contribution to the socio - economic history of the village society in medieval Maharashtra. This book which is actually a collection of his previous articles on the different aspects of the village communities in medieval Deccan, deals separately with the village artisans and servants forced labour and also includes a discussion on whether the service relationship between the village servants and the village society, or individual families could be understood in terms of the '*Jajmani*' system.

Another work titled "Social life in Maharashtra under the Peshwas" by Sudha V. Desai is also a detailed study of the structure and functioning of the village communities during the Peshwa period. In two separate chapters - 'the local government' and 'caste' - she argues that the village communities were organized on caste and *baluta* which did not permit much flexibility in the relationship between the different social & economic groups in the

village. She also contends that the village communities during the Peshwa period were more or less self reliant in economic and administrative matters.

These studies, though fruitful in their own respective ways do not analyse the position and role of the *balutedars* with respect to land and land owning classes. Since only brief references to their duties, obligations and perquisites have been made, other aspects such as the extent of their mobility and migration, their relationship with different sections of the village society and their role in social life of the village remain only partially answered.

This dissertation is a humble effort to highlight the importance of the *balutedars* in economic as well as social sphere and show that they were an integral part of the village society by attempting to locate their position in the village-society in terms of *watan* and *inam* land held by them. An attempt has also been made to present a detailed picture of the structure and functioning of the *baluta* system. By an assessment of their role on social & religious occasions, various rights and perquisites enjoyed by them and their importance in the judicial affairs I have tried to determine their position in the

village society. Many of the *balutedars* such as *Mahar*, *Mang*, *Chamars*, *Gurav* etc. belonged to low castes and were even considered untouchables. This raises an important question. Did the caste status of these *balutedars* pose a serious hindrance in discharging their functions or enjoying the privileges granted to them by the village society ? Finally an attempt has been made to determine the nature of the *balutedari* system i.e., whether it was 'demiurgic' or *Jajmani* or a system of social justice.

Though secondary sources like H.H. Wilson's - 'A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms', Gratn Duff's - 'History of the Mahrattas' and T.N. Atre's - 'Gaon Gada' (in Marathi), have been extensively referred to this study is primarily based on contemporary Marathi documents relating to the *Watan* grants (*Watan-patra*) including *baluta Watan*, village accounts, agreement papers (*Mahjars*), the instructions to the village officials or the *Sanads* etc. Many of these papers have been collected and edited by some Marathi scholars and are available to us in the form of books. But since these documents mainly deal with the village accounts, expenditure and letters concerning the rights, perquisites and privileges of the *Watandars*, adequate care is required while extracting

necessary informations relevant for the purpose of this study. The Marathi sources which have been consulted in course of this study are as follows :-

1. Selection from Satara Raja's and Peshwa's Diaries (in IX volumes) prepared by Sir G.C. Vad and edited by D.B. Parsanis, K.N. Sane and K.B. Marathe and B.P. Joshi.
2. Peshwa Kalin Samajik Wa Arthik Patra Vyavahara edited by R.V. Oturkar.
3. Tarabai Kalin Kagad Patra, edited by Dr. A.G. Powar.
4. Marathyanchya Itihasachi Sadhane : edited by V.K. Rajwade (relevant volumes only).
5. Selections from Peshwa Daftar : edited by Sir G.S. Sardesai (relevant volumes only).
6. Shiva Charita Sahitya - published by Bharatiya Itihash Sanshodhak Mandal, Pune (relevant volumes only).

This dissertation comprises three chapters and a concluding remark.

The first chapter deals with the structural features of the village community on the basis of the concept of

Watan i.e. the ownership of land and office. The nexus between caste and status has also been examined while discussing the different categories of *Watandars* i.e., the village or *Pargana* officials, *Mirasdars*, religious persons such as *Gurav*, *Mulana* etc. and the village servants as well. By discussing the different types of land tenures I have also attempted to examine the position of the *balutedars vis-a-vis* the land holding classes and the State.

The second chapter is an explanatory-cum-descriptive study of the structure and working of the *balutedari* system which takes into account the pattern of relationship based upon economic interdependence. The classification of the *balutedars* into *Watan* holding and *non-Watan baluta*, the position, right, perquisites, mode of payment and privileges held by each category of the village artisans and servants have been discussed. In this chapter, the relative positions of the *balutedars* in terms of their functional obligation and remunerations and their place in the village society as against social hierarchy (based on caste) has also been examined and explained.

An attempt has been made in the third chapter to

examine the importance of this class through a discussion of their role at festive occasions and religious ceremonies, marriages, births, deaths, etc, their participation in the judicial assemblies i.e. *Panchayats* or *Got Sabha* as well as their role in the resolution of social conflicts. The question whether the relationship of the *balutedars* with other sections of the village society could be termed as 'demi-urgic' or *Jajmani* has been a subject of close examination in this chapter.

Finally, this dissertation ends with a brief review of the important points of each chapter followed by concluding remarks.

Chapter I

THE VILLAGE SOCIETY

The village has been generally referred to as 'Grama', 'Gaon', 'Deh' or 'Mauza' in the Marathi sources. Villages have been the basic unit of production and administration. The Marathi texts and letters variously use the terms *Gaonkari*,¹ *Dahijan*² or *Desak*³ to denote the inhabitants of the village. The available references also tells us that where as the terms *Gaonkari* and *Dahijan* were were applied to denote all the people residing in the village⁴ (i.e., the ryot), the term *Deshak* included the names of the *Patil* (village headman), *Kulkarni* (the village accountant), *Chaughula* (assistant to the Patil), the *mirasdars* (the cultivators who had permanent and hereditary rights to the land they cultivated) and the *balutedars*⁵ (the village artisans and menials). This list never included the *Uparis* (the strangers) who had migrated from the neighbouring villages and took a (temporary) job of cultivation there. The *uparis* also resided in the village where they cultivated land but they did not belong to the group of original inhabitants of that village. Hence, in a strict sense, the term *Deshak* signified only that section of the village

society who were the permanent inhabitants of the village and had been residing there since generations. These residents were attached to the village through some hereditary and perpetual interest in the local offices or land, and were also required to serve the village for its general welfare and progress such as expansion of cultivation, maintenance of the shrines, cleanliness of the village etc. The specific duties of each individual depended upon the office he held as well as his position in the socio-economic administrative set up of the village.

A major distinguishing feature between these two categories of the villages i.e, the *Deshaks* and *Uparis* was that all the *Deshaks* were attached to the village through the institution of *Watan* (and were hence called *watandars*) where as the *Uparis* were precluded from holding *Watan*.

The word *Watandar* is derived from the Arabic term '*Watan*' which literally means one's country, native country, place of residence, house.⁶ *Watan* was actually an office tenure which was hereditary and it perpetuated in the family of the holder (*Watandar*) so long as he performed the duties assigned to his office. The *Watandars* were offered emoluments by the government in the form of rent free land called *inam* or *Watani-inam*⁷ and other

customary rights & perquisites 'hags' and 'lawjimas' in kind which were usually mentioned in the Watan deeds known as *sanadas* or *mahzars*.⁸ Hence, Watan could be defined more appropriately as a hereditary possession of office, land or privilege recognised by the community on the one hand and the state on the other for enabling the possessor to perform the duties associated with it.⁹ The hereditary nature of the Watan not only formed an important basis of the Watan institution but also created a close link between the *Watandars* and the village society.

An interesting feature of the social structure of the rural society during the medieval period throughout Maharashtra was that right from the highest officers of the *Pargana* like *Deshmukh* and *Deshpande* or the village officers like the *Patil* and *Kulkarni*, down to the *balutedars* i.e., the class of village artisans and menials, all of them claimed to hold their office by virtue of their watan tenure. The amount each *Watandar* was to get and the nature of privileges associated with each watan varied according to one's position in the watan hierarchy. Their mode of payment also differed. While the higher category of officials like *Deskhmukh*, *Deshpande*, the village *Patil* or *Kulkarni* always held, in addition to

a customary share in the produce of the cultivators and services of artisans & menials, rent free land called *Watani Inam*, the village artisans and menials, barring a few instances, always received their payment in kind only. And hence land was not the invariable concomitant of the *Watan* tenure.¹⁰ Elphinstone remarks that *Watan* could be mere right of lifting dead cattles or supplying flowers or vegetables etc.¹¹

The fact that the institution of *Watan* embraced almost every section of the village society, clearly indicates its importance in the rural society. The Maratha people attached much importance to the institution of *Watan* and we have instances of people purchasing *Watan* in the villages.¹² "The real cause of attraction towards the *Watan*", remarks Gune, "was not merely land (as all the *watandars* were not holding land) but the position a *Watandar* enjoyed in the community by receiving his rights and perquisites (from the common people) called *Hags-Rayat-Nisbat*."¹³ Due to this feeling a number of complicated disputes arose relating to *Watan*. Captain James Grant Duff mentions an event in his letter to Elphinstone which shows that the people could go to any extent to defend their *Watan*. He writes, "I have seen two women fight and tear each other in the streets of Satara,

because the one had removed a loose stone from near the house of the other, which was part (said the enraged and aggrieved person) of my *Watan*. This feeling will be found universal, but here it is particularly observable.¹⁴ To A.R. Kulkarnee, the Maratha Kings, *Sardars* and royal officials preferred to retain their *Watan* due to the fact that while they viewed political power as temporary, they looked to the *Watan* as permanent, on which they could fall back upon in case of loss of political power. There are instances that the holders of temporary land-tenures like *Saranjam*, *Jagir*, *Mokasa* were anxious to get them converted either into *Watan* or *inam* which could perpetually remain with their family undisturbed.¹⁵ The Peshwas themselves held *Deshmukhi*, *Patilki* and *Kulkarni* rights with *inam* land mainly in the Southern Konkan.

On the basis of their position in the administrative apparatus, nature of rights in land and hereditary monopoly of occupation etc. we may broadly divide the class of *Watandars* into two categories: Higher and Lower. In the village the local officials like *Patil*, *Kulkarni*, *Chaughula* etc. occupied the higher category of *Watandars*. They were the group of hereditary officers whose duty was to strive for agricultural extension and improvement. They also constituted the revenue collecting machinery and

hence formed a link between the revenue paying villagers on the one hand and the officials of the land-revenue department of the State on the other. Owing to the nature of work performed by them and the superior *Watan* tenure, they enjoyed a superior and privileged position in the rural society. For example *Patil* - the chief hereditary official of the village who was entrusted with the duty of extension of the cultivated land in the village had, under his possession, the '*Gatakul Jamin*' or land of extinct families and '*Pad jamin*' or waste land of the village.¹⁶ He was supposed to invite cultivators from the neighbouring areas to take up agriculture in his (*Patil's*) village.¹⁷ But he could not sell or give away such lands arbitrarily i.e., without the consent of the village society. In consideration of the services performed by him, the *Patil* was granted some land in *inam*. By virtue of his office and *Watan*, the *Patil* not only got his fixed customary share in the cultivators' produce, but also enjoyed certain privileges as far as the matter of social and religious occasions were concerned. A few of these rights and perquisite of the *Patil* are mentioned below.

- i) to receive a fixed service from the *Mahars*¹⁸
- ii) to receive water from the *Kolis*¹⁹
- iii) the *Joshi* was to read the almanac first at

his²⁰ door and then to any other villager
iv) his bullock to precede in the 'Pola' festival
etc.²¹

Thus, by virtue of the privileges associated with his *Watan* a *Patil's* authority was exercised in one way or other over the whole of the village society and he enjoyed an influential position in the rural society and the local affairs. Similarly, the *Kulkarni* also held an influential position (after *Patil*) due to his official status and superior *Watan* tenure.

A large portion of the village population constituted of the people professionally engaged in agricultural activities. Indigenously, those people were called *Kunbi* a caste whose traditional occupation was agriculture.²² The term *Kunbi* has generally been used in our sources to denote the cultivating population of the village without making any differentiation between the resident cultivators (*Mirasdars*) and stranger or migratory cultivator (*Uparis*). Only occasionally the term '*Mirasdar Kunbi*' has been used.²³ The term *Mirasdar Kunbi* signifies the permanent residents of the village who had, in their possession, a piece of cultivable land over which they had hereditary and proprietary rights. (*Mirasdars* have been discussed at length in the next section of this chapter

which deals with the different types of land tenures). On the other hand, the *Uparis* did not have any permanent or hereditary right over the land they cultivated and their land tenure was temporary. Hence, the *Mirasdar Kunbis* also fall into the category of village *Watandars*. But their position in the hierarchy was inferior as compared to the village officials like *Patil*, *Kulkarni*, *Chaughula* etc. though better than the village artisans and landless menials and the other sections viz. the *upari* cultivators who were precluded from holding *Watan* in the village. The *Mirasdar Kunbi* had to part with his surplus agricultural products not only to meet the land revenue demand and various other 'cesses' and 'taxes', but also to remunerate, in kind, the hereditary class of village artisan and menials known as '*balutedars*'. The term *balutedar* has been derived from the word *baluta* which signifies "yearly allowance of grain for services rendered to the village community".²⁴ The *balutedars* were also *Watandars* as the hereditary and perpetual nature of their services were recognised by the village society. But owing to the nature of the services performed by them as well as their caste status, they constituted the lowest rung of the *Watan* hierarchy. The only exception in this rule was the *Joshi* who was of *Brahman* caste. But many a

times the *Kulkarni* held the *baluta watan* of the *Joshi*. The *balutedars* played an important part in the socio-economic life of the village. They were discharging multifarious functions some of which were pottery, blacksmithery, religious services or the most menial services like lifting the dead cattle from the village site and preservation of their hides etc. Irrespective of caste creed or social position each *balutedar* had his own allotted share of grain from every cultivating unit which was paid to him annually, at the time of harvest. Hence, the *Kunbi* or the cultivators played the role of the main supporting pillars of the village economy as they had to "maintain" the other section of *Watandars*.

We, thus, find that the village was stratified in terms of *Watan* holdings. Those who ornated the highest office (*Watan*) of the village such as the *Patil*, *Kulkarni* etc. enjoyed a superior *Watan* tenure and had an influential position in the village affairs. They were also a part of the state's administrative machinery. As a result an unequal relationship ensued between these *Watandars* and the *Mirasdar Kunbi* and the latter were subjected to so many taxes legal or illegal by the former. On the other hand, though enjoying the much carved for title of '*Watandars*' the *Watan* holding artisans

(*balutedars*) occupied an inferior place in this hierarchy. The superior *Watandars* i.e. the village officials exercised their superior rights in the form of receiving personal services as well as articles produced by them on a yearly, monthly or daily basis.²⁵

II

Having talked about the structural features of the village society on the basis of the concept of *Watan* and *Watan holdings* we will now examine different types of land tenures and the pattern of land holdings in the rural society. We will simultaneously examine the impact of caste on the pattern of land holdings. Our records mainly tells us about three types of land tenures in the village. They were

- (i) *Miras*
- (ii) *Upari (Ukti)* and
- (iii) *Inam*.

THE *MIRAS* TENURE

Miras was the most important and major category of land tenures during the medieval period. *Miras* is an Arabic term. According to Wilson's glossary *Mirath* means

"inheritance, inherited property and as such the term is used to signify lands held in absolute hereditary proprietorship in South India".²⁶ In general the villagers who owned land in perpetuity with hereditary proprietary rights and paid land revenue were called the *Mirasdars*. An earlier designation of this class is *Thalkari*.²⁵ The word *Thalkari* is derived from sanskrit 'Sthala' or 'Thal' meaning a place or a specified piece of land; and each 'Thal' often had a name that was perhaps so called after the surname of the original proprietor.²⁸ In the villages the names of the *Thalkari* (i.e. the person holding a 'Thal' or land), the area of land under his possession and the various rights associated with it were contained in the 'Thalzada' records.²⁹ In the contemporary documents they are also referred to as 'Thalwai'.³⁰

Captain Robertson remarks that "*Mirasdar* is considered and acknowledged by the government to have the property of the lands he cultivates and that the 'Thalkari' pays rent according to the extent and quality of his land".³¹ The *Mirasdars* as a class were considered to belong to the group of original settlers of the village community,³² and hence the concept hereditary property in soil was very deeply rooted amongst this class of village

DISS
307.7620954792
K9602 Ba

TH5104

135 [21

TH-5104



landholders. Elphinstone remarks, "a large portion of the ryots are proprietors of their estate subject to the payment of a fixed land tax to the government³³. Theoretically a *Mirasdar* could enjoy his *Miras* tenure as long as he paid land revenue regularly. But in practice he never loses his right to land unless it was sold, transferred or gifted away³⁴. Every possible step was taken by the village officials to see that the *Mirasdar* do not have to leave cultivation or abandon the village. The contemporary records informs us that even if cultivation was affected due to army inroads, famines or any other reason, the village officials were also instructed to encourage cultivation in such cases and advance *taqqavi* loan if necessary³⁵. The *Mirasdari* right was protected in the sense that the government saw to it that he was not unduly harassed by the infunetial *Watandars*. There are references where a 'Mamlat' (a *Paragana* official) and a *Kulkarni* (the village accountant and record keeper) were instructed to keep their subjects (*ryot*) happy & satisfied and refrain from molesting them by levying extra or illegal taxes³⁶. Even if one was compelled to abandon his field due to his inability to satisfy heavy government demands or due to some calamities or illegal exaction,³⁷ he was still considered as a proprietor of his field and

his name was not removed from the *Thalzadas*. He or his descendants were entitled to reclaim them even after a long gap, say after a lapse of 100 years, or three generations, on the payment of his arrears to the government³⁸.

Due to the privileges associated with it, the *Miras* tenure was deeply valued by the Marathas. Elphinstone mentions that even Peshwa Baji Rao always paid for any *Miras* land which he wanted for his own use, and purchased them from the *Mirasdars*, generally at their own price, like any private individual; there are instances of *Mirasdars* having refused him their land on any conditions, and his being obliged to submit.³⁹

Though the hereditary and proprietary right of a *Mirasdar* in land was recognised and respected by the government, he did not have the absolute ownership over the piece of land he held under *Miras* tenure. The state could retain any land in the village in the interest of the village society. But in such cases, the state compensated the affected person adequately.

We have such an example of the year 1779 - 80 A.D. The population of *Kasba Otur*, *Pargana Junner* being over crowded and building (residential) site much in demand, the *Pargana* and village officials were ordered to add 60

bighas of *Miras* land to the east of the village to the existing site. The *Mirasdar* whose land was taken, was given in exchange, a piece of land equal in extent to the land taken up, out of the *Gatakul* land in the village⁴⁰. A *Misardar* was also authorised to participate it in the village council or *Panchayat* and deliberate in the decision making process.

THE UPARI TENURE :

The literal meaning of the term *Upari* is stranger. In the Maharashtrian villages an *Upari* is a person who cultivates land in which he had no separate rights. The *Uparis* generally migrated from the neighbouring villages on a lucrative offer. The British administrators call them "Coolwarree" or *Kaulwari* - a term derived from the word *Kaul* which means permission or a renewable lease for a short period⁴¹. They were also, sometimes, called *Owandkari*⁴². In practice the *Upari* held the land on *Ukti* tenure which is a land lease by verbal agreement for one year⁴³.

Elphinstone, in his report, has mentioned that "Every village has a portion of ground attached to it, which is committed to the management of the inhabitants, which was always let out to the *Uparis*, who had a lease with the

expiration of which their claims and duties expired. The lands belonging to absent proprietors (*Gatakul Jamin*) which have been reverted to the government were also let out to the *Uparis*"⁴⁴. It was the duty of the village officials in charge of extension of cultivation, to invite the cultivators from other parts on lucrative terms. There are a few references to show that the *Uparis* were lightly assessed on land. A letter of 1776-77 A.D. informs us about the instructions issued by the Government (to the *Pargana* and village official) to arrange for the cultivation of the village land, invite the cultivators commencing with a reduced (land revenue) figure and gradually increase it till the maximum was reached⁴⁵.

Elphinstone mentions that the *Mirasdars* had to pay more than the *Uparis*.⁴⁶ This indicates that the *Uparis* were lightly assessed on land. But, despite the concession the *Uparis* were mere "tenant at will as they had no right to the soil; they come and settle in the village and are permitted by the *Patil* to cultivate a certain portion of land".⁴⁷ The extent to which hereditary and proprietary rights in a piece of land mattered for gaining social status, has been well explained by captain Grant who remarks,

"all persons who possess hereditary right to any field come under the head of *Watandars* of

such and such village, though they may have actually resided all their lives at Gwalior (i.e. at any other village or place); whereas all others who do not possess this right, though present in the village, and though their and their ancestors may have resided there for a century, are termed in common with the passing Maratha traveller, who slept at night in the 'Dharmshala' (inn), *Upari* or stranger".⁴⁸

This passage demonstrates that mere presence in a village for long and without any permanency of rights in land could not bring a person any recognizable status in the village society. The *Uparis* did not have a *locus standi* in the village affairs though they could take part in the proceedings of the village council in the capacity of mere spectators⁴⁹. An *Upari* could, however, acquire *Mirasi* right in land and hence claim hereditary proprietary over that piece of land. By doing so, he could thus elevate his social standing and prestige in the village. Elphinstone notices that an *Upari* could become a *Mirasdar* by paying a 'Nazar' or a registration fee.⁵⁰

THE INAM TENURE

Another category of land - holding was through the *inam* tenure. By *inam* tenure we generally understand rent free land granted in perpetuity to the beneficiary. Though various *Watandars* (especially the higher category such as

the *Patil, Kulkarni, Deshmukh* etc.) held rent - free *inam* land called *Watani inam* as a part of their service emolument, there is a slight difference between the *inam* grant which we are talking and the *Watani inam*. While the *Watani inam* was granted essentially on the condition of service performance, no such condition was attached with the *inam* grant. The *inam* grant could be made to a distinguished State servant, men of letters, religious personalities or a shrine for its maintenance⁵¹. It could be made even to a disabled or deceased military commander or soldier. In this case the grant was made to the widow or nearest kins of the deceased⁵². When an *inam* land was granted by the sate, its privileges were mentioned in a *Sanad* and hence the *inam* came to be known as *Sanadi inam* or *Diwan - nisbat inam*⁵³. Sometimes the village community would grant rent free land to some artisans or agricultural labourers if it found the services of such people essential for the community and this grant was known as *Gaon - nisbat inam*. Regarding the grant of *Gaon - nisbat inam* Elphinstone remarks, "if they were so small as to be admitted by the government, no rent was charged on them; but if they were too large to be agreed on to escape observation, the revenue was paid by all other ryots the creditors still enjoying them rent free."⁵⁴

What we understand from the study of the different types of land tenures in the village society may be summed up as follows

A large section of the village population was engaged in agriculture. There was a further segregation in the cultivating class on the basis of the nature of land rights. While those who had a permanent & hereditary right in land were called *Mirasdars* or *Thalwahi*, those who had migrated from other villages and agricultural land on concessional lease (*Ukti* tenure) were known as *Upari*. We are not sure about the caste status of the *Uparis* as the sources use the term *Kunbi* or *ryot* to denote the cultivating class of the village. By virtue of his land tenure, the *Mirasdar* enjoyed a dominant position in the village society in contrast to the *Uparis* who had no *locus standi* in the village affairs. Land was also allotted to other *Watandars* and *balutedars* who held them on *inam* tenure. The *Watandars* with higher official status viz *Patil*, *Kulkarni* etc., held large tracts of rent free land. Regarding their caste status Choksey notes that whereas the *Patils* were of *kunbi* caste, the *Kulkarni* were necessarily of *Brahmin* caste⁵⁵. A significant feature of the *inam* grants made to the *balutedars* was that it was often granted taking into account the functional utility

of the grantee and the grantee may belong to the most menial or untouchable caste whose position could well be at the bottom of the caste hierarchy.⁵⁶

III

Our next venture in this chapter is an attempt to examine the position and importance of the village artisans and menials (*balutedars*) vis-a-vis land and the land owning class. As far as the land possessed by *balutedars* is concerned, our sources indicate towards two points: (i) that all the *balutedars* were not very often granted *inam* land and were mostly paid in grain share called *baluta* and (ii) if at all they were granted any, the extent or the income from it was too meagre to significantly alter their economic status. On the other hand their importance and services to the land owning and cultivating classes was of a much wider dimension. Irfan Habib suggests that the subjection of the menial proletariat to the caste peasantry continued practically unabated through out the medieval times. The occupation set for castes like *Chamars*, *Dhanuks* and *Dhirs* at the end of the Mughal rule was quite firmly that of "working in the fields of *Zamindars* and peasants".⁵⁷ Harbans Mukhia too holds that the menials who belonged to the lowest rung

of the caste hierarchy received paltry share of the produce for rendering assistance to the peasants at sowing and harvest times.⁵⁸ A British administrator captain Briggs in his letter to Elphinstone mentions, "A third class of cultivators (apart from the *Mirasdars* and *Uparis*) are those who have neither interest in the soil nor in the crops; those are labourers who receive in cash".⁵⁹ Keeping in mind the fact that in Maharashtra a *Mirasdar* was accountable to pay land - revenue of the total land under his possession irrespective of the area he actually cultivated, it seems probable that the *balutedars* would have served a helping hand to the cultivators in agricultural purposes. Some of them, especially the landless menials, might also have served the landed *Watandars* like *Patils* and *Kulkarni* at the crucial time of sowing and harvests when a large amount of labour reserve was needed. The *balutadars* were useful to the landed class not only for agricultural purposes but also for non-agricultural purposes. They mostly performed non-agricultural function. (i.e. their hereditary profession) such as making and repairing ploughs, making pots for storing grain, keeping the village clean by lifting the dead cattle from the fields, keeping vigil on the village boundaries etc., which were essential for the

entire community.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Starting with the concept of *Watan* and on the basis on *Watan* holding we find that the rural society of Maharashtra during the 18th century was highly stratified. The *Watandars* were also a stratified lot and this stratification was mainly based on their position in the administrative apparatus, nature of rights in land and hereditary monopoly of occupation. The role of *Watandars* could be progressive as well as retrogressive. This applies especially to the higher category *Watandars* i.e., *Patil*, *Kulkarni* etc. who were entrusted with the duty to promote and extend cultivation. While they formed a link between the state officials and the revenue paying peasantry, they could use their position to exploit the peasantry by levying extra taxes on them. On the other hand the lower category of *Watandars* i.e., the *balutedars* performed useful and indispensable services towards the entire community and hence were maintained by the community.

Another significant feature of the village society was the ownership of land on *Miras* tenure. The uparis strived to become a *Mirasdar* was not only because of the

fact that it implied hereditary proprietorship of the land held but also because it conferred a certain social status upon the holder. An *Upari* could acquire a *Miras Watan* in the village and gain socio-economic benefits by paying a fee or *Nazar*. Though the *balutedars* also possessed certain *inam* lands but the benefits or rights associated with it were not to the extent to significantly alter their position in the village society. Their functional obligation and caste status prohibited them from leaving their hereditary profession and become a landed *Watandar* like the *Mirasdars* or *Patil* and enjoy a social status like them.

References

1. SSRPD, Vol. VI, Poona, 1909, no.749; Vol.VII, Poona, 1911 nos. 532, 546 etc.
2. ibid. Vol. II, Poona 1906 no.20.; PSAP, Pune 1950, no., 71.
3. MIS, Vol. XVI, Poona 1912 nos. 5, 56; SCS Vol.I, Pune 1926 nos. 10,21.
4. SSRPD, Vol. II, no.20., PSAP no.71 uses "Samast Dahijan" to denote the villagers without making any distinction between different classes.
5. MIS, Vol.XVI, no.56 mentions that Patil, Kulkarni etc. as Deshak. See also A.R. Kulkarni, 'The Indian Village', PIHC, 1992; also V.T.Gune : The Judicial System of the Marathas, Poona, 1953, p.52.
6. H.H. Wilson : Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms Delhi, 1968, p.557.
7. V.T. Gune : op.cit. p.52.
8. For example SCS, Vol.2, Pune, 1930, no.220; Vol.3, Pune 1932 no.586. See also MIS, Vol. XVI, nos. 7,9,11 etc.
9. R.V. Oturkar and S.N.Joshi : 'Institution of Watan and its influence on the 18th century Maratha Society', PIHC, 1945, pp.280-285.
10. V.T. Gune, op.cit. p.52.
11. M. Elphinstone, Territories conquered from the Peshwas, Delhi, 1973, p.136.
12. For example see SSRPD, Vol. III, Poona, 1907, nos, 8,41,482, 483 etc; TKKP Vol. II, Kolhapur, 1970 no. 158, 191.
13. V.T. Gune, op.cit. p.52.
14. Extracts of a letter from Capt Grant to M. Elphinstone in M. Elphinstone: op.cit. p.126.

15. A.R. Kulkarni : 'The Indian Village' *PIHC* 1992, p.32.
16. SSRPD, Vol.I, Poona 1906 nos. 28, 289.
17. ibid.
18. PSAP, no.46.
19. SSRPD, Vol.I, Poona, 1906, no.289.
20. ibid. Vol. III, Poona, 1907, no.521.
21. ibid.
22. H.H. Wilson : op.cit. p.302, Iravati Karve: *Hindu Society an interpretation*, 2nd ed. Pune, 1968, p.20.
23. For example, See SSRPD, vol.VII, Poona, 1911 no.433.
24. H.H. Wilson, op.cit. p.56.
25. For example See SSRPD, Vol.III, nos. 4, 521, 522 etc. Vol. VIII, Poona, 1911 no.999 etc.
26. H.H.Wilson, op.cit. p.342.
27. A.R. Kulkarni : 'Village life in the Deccan in the 17th Century', *IESHR*, Vol.IV, 1967, pp.38-57.
28. H. Fukazawa : *The Medieval Deccan*, New Delhi 1991, p.157.
29. A.R. Kulkarni, "Village life in the Deccan....", op.cit. pp.38-57. See also V.T. Gune : op.cit. p.52.
30. PSAP, no.48.
31. Capt. Robertson's letter to M. Elphinstone in M. Elphinstone, op. cit. p. 113
32. Capt. Grant's letter to Elphinstone.....op.cit. p. 129; see also A.R. Kulkarni 'Indian village'.....*PIHC* 1992
33. M. Elphinstone op. cit. pp. 21-23.
34. Capt. Grant's letter..... op. cit. p. 133.

35. See for example SSRPD - Vol. VI nos. 714, 733 also TKKP Vol. II. no. 44.
36. SSRPD, vol. VII nos. 444 and 645.
37. For example see SSRPO, Vol. VI, nos. 716, 723, 751; Vol. VIII, no.645, etc.
38. M. Elphinstone op. cit. p. 76
39. Capt. Grant's letter to M. Elphinstone op. cit. Pp. 135-136.
40. SSRPD, vol. VI. no. 748
41. R.D. Choksey : The Aftermath (1818-1826), op. cit. p. 11; see also M. Elphinstone op. cit. p. 114.
42. T.N. Atre : Gaon Gada, Pune 1989, p. 99.
43. A.R. Kulkarni: 'The Indian Village' PIHC 1992; see also H. Fukazawa, op. cit. chapt - 7, fn. 70
44. M. Elphinstone : op. cit. p. 25 see also H. Fukazawa, op. cit. p. 154
45. SSRPD, vol. VI, no. 714; See also TKKP - vol II, nos. 44, 53, 187 etc.
46. M. Elphinstone : op. cit. pp. 24-25
47. Extracts of a letter from Captain Briggs to M.Elphinstone in M. Elphinstone, op. cit. p. 119
48. Capt. Grant's letter..... op. cit. p. 128
49. A.R. Kulkarni, PIHC 1992.
50. SCS vol. 3, no. 576; see also Capt. Grant's letter op.cit. p. 136
51. For example see G.S. Sardesai (ed) Selection from Peshwar daftar, Bombay 1933, vol. XXX, nos. 7, 19, 23, 31, etc.
52. SSRPD - vol. VII, nos. 663 to 665, 667 to 668.

53. A.R. Kulkarni : 'The Indian Village' *PIHC*, 1992 p. 32
54. M. Elphinstone, op. cit. p. 26
55. R.D. Choksey : op. cit. p. 15
56. For example see SSRPD, Vol.II, no.2 (*Mali holding inam land*); PSAP no.46 (*Mahars holding inam land*).
57. Irfan Habib : 'Peasants in Indian History', *PIHC* 1982, p.25.
58. Harbans Mukhiya, 'Illegal Extortions from peasants, artisan and menials in 18th century Eastern Rajasthan' *IESHR*. vol. XIV no. 2, pp. 231 - 245
59. Extracts of captain Brigg's letter to Elphinstone in M. Elphinstone : op cit. p. 120.

Chapter 2

THE BALUTEDARS : STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONING AND MODE OF PAYMENT

The word *Balutedar* is derived from the Marathi term '*baluten*'. Wilson defines *baluten* as "a portion of crop assigned to the village servants for their maintenance, also their fees, perquisites or other rights. A village officer or servant receiving a share of the crop was thus called *balutedars*."¹ Like other *Watandars* of the village such as *Patil*, *Kulkarni* or a *Mirasdar Kunbi*, in the Maratha country a *balutedar* also performed his hereditary functions in the interest of the village community such as that of carpentary, blacksmithery and pottery etc. The village society on the other hand saw to it that the *balutadar's* rights (to perform his hereditary work) was not infringed upon and took adequate measures to protect his exclusive rights.

Regarding the presence of the group of artisans and menials in the villages, Baden Powell comments,

"A village group established perhaps in the forest at some distance from any other village, to say and nothing of the larger towns, would need some purely local means of providing for the simple wants of daily life. The people perhaps could not go to far distant towns to buy shoes or find a

carpenter. And therefore, the villagers solved the problem by attracting to themselves a body of resident craftsmen and menials—a potter, a blacksmith, a washerman, a cobbler, a carpenter, a sweeper, a barber and so on..... . These servants lived permanently in the village and became hereditary. These people are not paid by the job, but are employed by the village on a fixed remuneration, sometimes a bit of rent free land, sometimes by small payments at harvest, as well as by customary allowances of so many sheaves of corn, millet etc...Each is also given a house site in the village, or in some cases in a group outside it, forming a sort of suburb."²

The Russian scholar Chicherov notices a similar phenomena and writes,

"Indian village represented a unique form of blending of crafts and agriculture," and that "the craftsmen were maintained by the entire community receiving from it remunerations in kind.....a definite amount of grain from each field of the peasant household for the services rendered." He further notices that in Maharashtra some *balutedars* were also entitled to hereditary tenure of a plot of land called *mirasi* or *inam*."³

Max Weber, the economic historian of the early 20th century also deals with the topic of the servants of the Indian village communities in his work 'General Economic History'. He writes

"Here are settled craftsmen, temple priests, barbers, laundrymen, and all kind of labourers belonging to the village 'establishment'. They hold on a 'demiurgic'

basis; that is, they are not paid for their work in detail but stand at the service of the community in return for a share in the land or in the harvest."⁴

Altekar, too, discusses the mode of payment and the claim of *balutedars*. and writes,

"a certain grain share was paid every year by each farmer to all the village artisans at the time of the annual harvest. Payment was not made in cash but in kind; nor this payment in kind made on each occasion the service was rendered, but annually at the harvest time."⁵.

In a addition to certain agricultural or functions, a wide range of non-agricultural services was performed by the class of village artisans and servants. Depending upon the nature and importance of their services to the village society, they have been broadly divided into two categories - *Balutedars* and *Alutedars*. The latter being the collective designation of the persons whom it was customary to retain in villages as servants in addition to the *balutedars*.⁶ Though the number of heads of the *balutedars* and *alutedars* in a village differed according to the local needs, there has been a general concensus among the scholars that there were twelve *balutedars* (*bara -balute*) and twelve *alutedars* (*bara-alute*) assigned to each village.

A document of the year 1799 A.D. lists the names of

the *baluta* servants in the Saswad region as follows :
*Sutar, Chambhar, Mahar, Mang, Kumbhar, Nhavi, Parit, Lohar, Joshi, Gurav, Sonar and Mulana.*⁷ But again this list was not universal for all the region and hence the scholars of Maratha history give different names of the *bara-balute*. For example, whereas A.S. Altekar mentions *Chaughula* and *Taral*⁸ in the list of *balutedars*, Grant duff includes '*bhat*' in the list of the *balutedars* and excludes the *Sonar* from this list .⁹ Another list of *baluta* servants named *Patil, Kulkarni, Chaudhari, Potdar, Deshpande, Joshi, Gurav, Nhavi, Parit, Sutar, Kumbhar and Mahar*¹⁰ as its twelve members.

The twelve *balutedars* were further grouped under three rows called '*kaas*' or '*oal*'. According to the document of 1799 A.D. the *Sutar, Chambhar, Manag* and *Mahar* constituted the major row called '*Thorali Kaas*'. The middle row or '*Kaas Madhil*' was occupied by *Kumbhar, Nhavi, Parit* and *Lohar*, where as the '*Dhakati Kaas*' or the third (minor) row consisted of the religious servants like *Joshi, Gurav, Mulana* and *Sonar*.¹¹ This classification, however was not uniform as the *Mang* was sometimes shifted to the middle row and the blacksmith or *Lohar* was upgraded to the major row.¹² Though there was no fixed criteria for this type of grouping, but this

classification seems to be based on the importance attached to their services to the village community. Had the caste or social status been taken into consideration, the religious persons such as *Joshi* who were *Brahmans*, by caste would certainly have got a place in the '*Thorali Kaas*' or the major row where as the *Mahars* and *Mangs* who belonged to untouchables castes would have taken the lowest seat. In other words this classification "corresponded to the actual contribution an artisan or labourer made to the village economy and did not correspond to the social and material standing of the *balutedar*." ¹³

There was no fixed number of *balutedars* and it varied from village to village depending on the requirements of individual villages. A professional was admitted to the class of *baluta* only after the approval of the village community. On the other hand, whenever a new office was created or if there arose any dispute regarding any *Watan*, the consent and attestation of the *balutedars* was considered necessary. They were also invited to take part in the village council called *Panchayat* or *Got Sabha* and endorse its decision by affixing separate signs allotted to them over the decision papers.

We are now giving a brief description of the duties

functions performed by the members of the *bara - balute* as well as the remunerations they got in the village.

Mahar

The *Mahars* are regarded as the most important and useful servants of the village society. Lengthy references regarding the nature of their work and perquisites granted to them are contained in the documents. Wilson mentions the *Mahars* as the men of low caste, retained on the village establishment for performance of lowest menial offices, as those of a scavenger.¹⁵ The *Mahars* performed multifarious jobs. The most important among them being guarding and acting as a referee on the village boundaries - a position implying that his knowledge of them was the most ancient. Due to their knowledge about the village boundaries they were also entrusted with the job of the village watchman and in this capacity they were also called *Jagleys*.

The late 19th century administrator T.N. Atre makes particular references to them and mentions that "the duties of the *Jagleys* and *Mahars* cannot be defined specifically because the *Jagley Watan* is 'Potbhag' (i.e. a part of the *Mahar Watan*), but one may infer that the *Mahars*, were employed for civilian duties and the *Jagleys*

for police duties".¹⁶ Enumerating the civil duties of the Mahar Atre writes - "their duties were to go and call/bring and such person with him from the village whom the Patil or Kulkarni needed in connection with government works. They had to inform the village officials about the births, deaths and crimes in the village, and about trees or village boundary encroachments. They were also obliged to keep the village clean by lifting the dead cattles from the death spots. Furthermore they had to accompany the Patil or Kulkarni beyond the village boundaries in connection with government works and their duty required them to carry the revenue of the village, official papers and other material either to the police post or to some town or village."¹⁷ Elphinstone also notes that since the Mahars were entrusted with the crucial job of carrying and depositing the collected land revenue to the Pargana officials, they (along with the Potdars) were the only non-official people in the village establishment who were concerned with the land revenue administration of the government.¹⁸ Sometimes the Mahars, in the capacity of watchman themselves committed thefts or other petty crimes or invited criminals from outside the village, informed them about the prevailing situation or even guided them.¹⁹ To keep these tendencies in check, there was a provision

to hold these people responsible for any theft committed in their locality and sometimes they even had to make up for the stolen property. Elphinstone writes,

"when a theft or robbery happens, the watchman commences his enquiries and researches; it is very common for him to track a thief by his footsteps, and if he does this to another village, so as to satisfy the watchman there, or if he otherwise traces the property to an adjoining village, his responsibility ends, and it is the duty of the watchman of the new village to take up the pursuit. The last village to which the thief has been traced becomes answerable for the property stolen, which would otherwise fall on the village where the robbery was committed. The watchman is obliged to make up this loss as far as his means go and the remainder is levied on the whole village."²⁰

Referring to the variety of jobs performed by the *Mahars* Russels mentions that they formerly spun their own yarn and their fabrics were preferred by the cultivators for their durability.²¹ The contemporary - documents show that very often the office of the village *Mahar* was held by more than one family. They were remunerated according to the nature of work performed by them and those performing in different functions were named differently for example the *Mahars* who performed the duties of messenger and errand runners was called '*Lebacha Mahar*'.²²

The letters contained in Peshwa diaries and PSAP enlist the different types of duties performed by the

Mahars as well as their rights and perquisites on certain occasions -

1. The *Mahar* should offer a bundle of fire wood to the *Patil* on each festive day and then asked for food.²³
2. *Mahar* had to bring fire (wood) for *Holi* festival and for that he should be given half a coconut shell, betel leaves and cashew.²⁴
3. He was entitled to the grains left on threshing grounds.²⁵
4. Offering called *Naivedya* on *Holi* festival to be given to the *Koli* (the water carrier) and *Ghads*i (the vocalist or piper) first and then the *Mahar* should be satisfied with what these people give to him. In addition they also received five paise in cash.²⁶
5. When cattle die in the village, *Mahars* should have their skin excepting those of the plough oxen.²⁷ But whenever the cattle of the *Patil*, *Kulkarni* or *Chaughula* died, the *Mahars* should give the skins of the dead cattle to their respective owners.²⁸
6. On the *Dussehera* day, the pot of sweet, hung from the neck of a male buffalos going round the village should be given to the *Mahars* along with that buffalo.
7. Offerings dedicated to the village shrine in order to

avoid Cholera epidemic are given to *Mahars*.²⁹ Yet another duty of the *Mahar* was to open grain pits, the noxious gas from which sometimes produces asphyxia. For this he received the tainted grain.³⁰

For these services, besides the allotted *baluta* share, the *Mahars* were given the hides and flesh of animals dying in the village and plots of rent-free land. *Atre* writes that the *inam* lands of the watchmen (*Jagleys*) were cultivated by the *Kunbis* in contract and for that he had to pay Re 1. per year to the *Kunbi*.³¹ The rate for this contract, however, is difficult to be believed. The *Mahar* used to get one or two 'ser' of seed per plough and the *Jagleys* most probably one or half 'ser' irrespective of whether they had their own land or not.³² "At the time of thrashing of grains, the whole of the '*Mahar Wada*' (the place where the *Mahars* used to reside) would come and claim their share in the grain. In addition to this the *Mahars* were also in the habit of charging one and half times more *balute* from the *Uparis* and the latter had no choice but to yield to their demands.³³ A letter of 1719-20 mentions that one rupee was given to each *Mahar* in the villages through which the Peshwa passed as a reward for greeting the Peshwa by waving lights around him.³⁴

Mang

Wilson defines the *Mang* as a man of very low caste who is the scavenger and sweeper of the village. He is also employed as skinner and an executioner and occasionally as a watchman and guide.³⁵ Rope making was the hereditary occupation of the *Mang* community³⁶ and the leather ropes made by them were used to be tied around the dead bodies.³⁷ In the capacity of village watchmen the *Mangs* are also reported to have been involved in theft and dacoity.³⁸ The *Mang* also participated in various village festivals with his musical instrument called *Gondhal* and *Damdama* (a kettle drum).³⁹ Atre informs us that apart from the regular *baluta* share the *Mangin* (wife of the *Mang*) was entitled to get a 'aanchal' full of grains, *supari* or betel nut, a *saari*, a blouse piece along with some cash from the owner of the field ever before the field was cultivated.⁴⁰ Such a practice can be attributed to superstitions and a part of rituals performed before commencing work of rowing the field. Besides this the *Mangs* also had a share in the grains or vegetables dropped during harvesting.⁴¹

Since the nature of work performed by the *Mang* community was akin to that of the *Mahars*, there arose many disputes whenever the question of the rights and

perquisites enjoyed by each community arose. For example the skin of dead cattle which was owned by a *Mang* was the exclusive property of its owner. And this skin was used for making drums. But in 1766 A.D. When a cattle died at a *Mang's* house a dispute arose as to whether the skin belonged to the *Mahar* or the *Mang*.⁴² In another instance of 1754 A.D. a dispute arose over *Pendhyachi Ghaghar* i.e. the sweet tied around the buffalos neck.⁴³

Chambhar

Wilson defines *Chambhar* as a man of low caste who works in hides and leather and makes the shoes and leather bags for drawing water.⁴⁴ Russels specifies him as a menial labourer and writes that in return for receiving the hides of the cattle of the villages officials such as *Patils, Kulkarnis* etc., the *Chmbhar* had to give them a pair of shoes each free of payment once a year and sometimes also to the village watchman.⁴⁵ Atre, also mentions that the *Chambhar* served the farmers and other *balutedars* by mending their shoes in return for *baluta*, the latter had to purchase new shoes through a cash payment.⁴⁶ To the list of articles made by the *Chambhar*, Russels adds thongs and nose string for bullocks, buckets for irrigation and wells, rude country saddlery etc.⁴⁷ Besides acting as a torch-bearer, a *Chambhar* was also

obliged to accompany the government official on tour as far as the next village to point him the road.⁴⁸ The *Chambhar* on which these duties were imposed usually received a plot of rent - free land from the village society.⁴⁹

Sutar or Sutradhara

The *Sutars* were the carpenters and wheel wright who made and repaired all the wood work and agricultural implements of the villagers.⁵⁰ This craft was very important from the villagers point of view. The wood handicraft industry not only supplied the wants of agriculture and farmers viz. the wooden part of the farming implements, but also the needs of the urban people like the chariots, beds, planquins etc.⁵¹

Lohar (Blacksmiths)

Lohars were engaged in making and repairing all kinds of iron works. Iron work industry was an important industry in rural as well as urban areas. In villages they were engaged mainly in repairing ploughshares, but the references to nails and pieces of iron prepared by blacksmiths for horse saddles etc. suggest that the blacksmiths supplied not only agricultural implements and

tools but also the needs of horsemen and soldiers.⁵² Catering to the needs of the villagers, the *Lohars* also made sickles chains, household utensils, etc. for which they were provided with the necessary raw materials by the villagers for which they did not charge any wage.⁵³ For the various works performed by them the *Lohars* were remunerated through the *baluta* share.

Kumbhar

Kumbhars or the potters were engaged in making earthen pots, lay bricks and tiles etc.⁵⁴ The *Kumbhar* played an important role in the daily life of the people. The pots supplied by him to the villagers were the pitchers, pots for storing grains and other food materials etc.. On occasions such as a death in a family he had also to replace the broken vessels with new ones free of cost. But sometimes he took soiled grass from the stalls of cattle and gave pots to the cultivators in exchange.⁵⁵ On *Akti* day, at the beginning of the agricultural year, the village *Kumbhar* used to present five pots with cover on them to each cultivator and received two and a half lbs of grain in exchange.⁵⁶ At the time of festive occasions and marriages also the *Kumbhars* had an important role.

Nhavi or the Barbers :

Their hereditary profession was to shave (more especially the heads).⁵⁷ Besides the obligation of his immediate profession of shaving the *Nhavi* also practiced a rude kind of surgery and carried special messages connected with betrothals.⁵⁸ Atre mentions that the barber got (in addition to his *baluta* share), 2 to 4 *Payali* of grain for hair cut and a *roti* extra for shave.⁵⁹ As his wife also acted as the general midwife, she also sometimes got a blouse-piece.⁶⁰ In addition, the *Nhavi* also accompanied the *Patils* on tours and performed *Chumpie* or shampening to him after the fatigue of the day. He was also occasionally called upon to carry a torch before a traveller at night. Like other *Wantandars*, a barber's '*baluta watan*' was also secured in the village where he resided, we have such a reference of the year 1749-50 summarised as follows : "Jakhoji *bin* Yamaji *bin* Santaji barber represented that the barber's *Watan* at Chinchodi in *Tarf* Sirale in *Pargana* Newase, belonged to him. When his grandfather left the village during the famine, the *Patil* employed other person for performing the barber's services, and that the said person refused to handover the *Watan* to him. These persons on being called to the *Huzur* admitted the correctness of the above facts, and gave in a writing to that affect, duly attested by the *Patil*,

Kulkarni and *balutas*. The *Watan* was therefore given to *Jakhoji* and others.⁶¹

Parit

The *Parit* or washerman in a village was engaged in his traditional duty of washing clothes on ceremonial and ritual purposes.⁶² T.N. Atre writes that "the *Parits* used to wash clothes only at occasions such as births or deaths, but washed the clothes of the rich people i.e., *Patils* and *Kulkarnis* daily in lieu of which he got 'bhakar' or bread." He further mentions that the washerman got one third of what the *Nhavis* got.⁶³ A *Parit* was also supposed to lay carpets for the brides and grooms to walk during the marriage ceremonies⁶⁴ and for these services he was given a piece of land by the village society which was rent free or *inam*.⁶⁵

Joshi or Jyotshi

Joshi was the *Brahman* in the village who practiced astrology and fortune telling. Basically he was the village astronomer who calculated and prepared almanac and read them out to the villagers. A document of the year 1752-53 tells us that the *Joshi* had to read almanac every day to the *Patils* and other respectable village persons.⁶⁶ In this sense his main duty was, by calculating the

position of stars and planetary objects, to announce lucky & unlucky days and the days appropriated for public festivals. In addition, he prepared horoscopes of the newly borns and assisted in the performance of the death anniversary rituals called *Shradha*.⁶⁷ He also performed the marriage ceremonies, and a document of the year 1777-78 informs us that the *Joshis* who performed the marriage used to collect '*Pathavani*' (a tax on marriage).⁶⁸ Referring to a case of similar nature another letter of 1742 informs that one *Bal Joshi* was granted half a rupee in case of marriage of a *Shudra* and one quarter of a rupee in case of a remarriage.⁶⁹ Thus, the position of a *Joshi* in the village was held in high esteem. His prestige enhanced considerably when he also held the office of the village accountant or *Kulkarni* simultaneously.⁷⁰ The influence of the *Brahman* families over the rural communities stemmed from the fact that "the *Joshi* who looked after the temple, which was the pride of any respectable village, and attended to the ritualistic needs of the *Kunbis* provided some sort of link between the inhabitants of the village and the great tradition of the *Hindus*".⁷¹ There are references in the contemporary documents that *Joshi* also occasionally practiced magic.⁷² A village may have more than one *Joshi*, but in that case

instead of creating new *Watan*, the privilege attached with the *watan* were divided.⁷³

Gurav

The *Guravs* were the temple priests whose main duty was to attend, wash and adorn the idols of the temples. Wilson regards the *Guruavs* being of *Shudra* caste whose special duty was to clean (sweep) the village temple and deck the idols.⁷⁴ Sometimes he attended the touring officials (*Kulkarnis*) and probably carried their baggage.⁷⁵ He also acted as trumpet player and on occasions of feasting prepared '*Patrowlee*' or leaves used as a substitute for plates.⁷⁶

Mulana

Wilson identifies *Mulana* as the *Muslim* priest who conducts the ceremonies of the *Muslims* in the village and acted as school master.⁷⁷ In some places he also acted as a butcher killing animals for villagers and his official insignia affixed on the various village-council's decision papers was a knife. But Grant Duff holds that the *Mulana* were mistaken as butchers as they killed the sheep and goats when offered as a sacrifice at temples, or in the fields to propitiate the deities presiding over the

village lands. For this job he was entitled two pice (small cooper coin) and the heart of every animal he killed.⁷⁸ Some other duties attached to him were mainly to perform the ceremonies at *Mulsim* marriages, and to look after the mosques and burial places of the *Muslim* saints.⁷⁹ For these jobs he got the *baluta* share from the peasants.

Potdar or Sonar

They were hereditarily engaged in making gold and silver ornaments worn by the villagers.⁸⁰ In addition to their traditional and hereditary profession, some of them were also employed by the government for assaying of the coins (deposited by the villagers as land-revenue).⁸¹ The coins if found pure were to be stamped with an iron instrument by the *Potdar*.⁸² The money so attested was then received by the *Patil* who, in turn, sent it to the *Pargana* officer called *Mamlatdar*. The money so brought to the *Mamlatdar* was again examined by a *Shroff*, and if any of it was found damaged or false, the goldsmith or *Potdar* was obliged to change it.⁸³ Sometimes a *Potdar* also acted as a *Shroff* or money changer.⁸⁴ Apart from their payment through *baluta*, they were also, sometimes, remunerated in cash. According to a document of 1742-43, a *Potdar* received one *Damadi* (one fourth of a quarter *anna*) for each rupee he tested and certified.⁸⁵

Another document of the year 1748-49 tells us regarding a *Potdari Watan* of *Prant Junnar* which was conferred on one Gopal Naik Bhide. As remuneration of the *Watan*, the ryots were to be charged at the rate of Re 1 per hundred of revenue.⁸⁶ Like the other *watandars* of the village the *Potdar* also enjoyed a hereditary and perpetual right over his profession. This is evident from the information contained in a contemporary *Sanad* which mentions about a renewal of *Potdari Watan* of *Panhala* to *Abhaji* and *Nagoji Sonar* by *Shambhaji-II*. Due to political troubles the *Watan* was not actually held and that's why it had to be regranted.⁸⁷

The Alutedar

Alutedars were also the artisan and village servants whose services, however, were not as necessary as compared to that of the *balutedars*. We do not find the word *alutedar* as such in the contemporary documents although their names are mentioned in the village records & *Mahjars* (i.e decisions papers). But this term has been mentioned by the British administrator Capt. Grant Duff, H. H. Wilson, T.N. Atre, S.N. Sen, and A.I. Chicherov etc. and all of them are unanimous on the view that just like the *Bara Balute* there was the system of maintaining *Bara -*

Alute as well by the village community. Depending upon the nature of work allotted to each of the twelve *alutedars* and the demand of particular villages for certain specific work the members of *bara-alute* present in each village varied. A member of the *Bara alute* would, however, be taken into service as a *balutedar* in the village if the village community found that it required the services of that particular *alutedar* permanently. It is because of this fact that we find different list of the village artisans & servants in different part of the Maratha country. For example where as Grant Duff puts the 'Bards' in the category of *balutedar* and enlist the *Potdar* in the category of *alutedars*, Wilson does the opposite while classifying the *balutedars* and *alutedars*.⁸⁸ Depending upon the nature and demand of a particular profession in the village society it seems evident that the village society could have dispensed with the jobs of certain *alutedars* by having the services of a common person (*alutedar*) for every two or three villages. For example, Oil pressing was one of the essential cottage industries which thrived both in rural as well as urban areas. In villages, as the demand of oil was comparatively less, the services of one *Teli* would have been enough to keep the needs of the villagers belonging to two or three neighbouring villages

satisfied at a time.

The case of the *Shimpi* or tailor might have been of similar nature. Generally speaking the list of the *alutedars* include - *Jangam, Koli, Bhat, Ramoshi, Mali, Taral, Gosavi, Gondhal, Ghadsi, Shimpi, Tamboli* and *Teli*. Significantly enough, the tenure or *Watan* of the *alutedars* was also secured and protected.

Jangam

Wilson writes, "*Jangam* was the priest of the *lingayat* sect employed to blow the conch-shell in the temple".⁸⁹ Although not a *Brahman*, he officiated their religious rites in the villages where the members of this community were found in a large number. Wilson further mentions that the *Jangam* was recognised as a member of the village society in such villages and he held a piece of rent-free land known as *Jangam Inam*.⁹⁰

Koli

The watermen in the village were called *Koli*. According to Wilson, they belong to a wild and landless tribe. They were of a low caste origin, nevertheless a part of the village organisation who were entitled to *baluta* in lieu of their services as water carrier. "Their main duty was to supply water to the travellers and

touring officers in the village".⁹¹ They had to supply water to the peasants to wash their threshing floor and were also obliged to supply water to the entire village population on public festivals.⁹² In addition a *Koli* was obliged to supply water to the *Patils* and *Kulkarni* daily.⁹³ A *Koli* was also employed by the rich people of the village or the land owners for important ceremonies like wedding etc. when large quantities of water was needed. This employment however seems to have been purely temporary in nature.

Bhat

Bhat was the village bard. Regarding his origin Wilson holds that the *Bhat* was of a mixed origin - born from a *Kshatriya* father and a *Vaisya* mother.⁹⁴ The bard's duty was to compose and recite songs in honour of deities during festivals. He was also employed to ensure that there were no physical impediments in the bride or groom during betrothment.⁹⁵

Mali

Mali was the gardener of the village. His main duty was to grow flowers to decorate the temple. But sometimes the *Patil* required his services especially to prepare bunch of flowers to be presented to the Government

officials or men of rank passing through the village.⁹⁶. Sometimes the *Mali* had also to supply vegetable to the *Patils*.⁹⁷

Ramoshi

Ramoshi was the name given to the individuals of a low and semi- barbarous race, living on the village boundaries and the adjoining forests who were retained in the village usually as the village watchmen.⁹⁸ As the duty of guarding the village boundaries was conventionally performed by the *Mahars*, wherever this duty was performed by the *Ramoshi*, the number of the *Mahars* or *Mangs* must have been meagre - not even large enough to meet the demands of this profession. Grant duff mentions that under a weak government or when anarchy prevailed these people, used to quit their habitations (in the village) and became thieves, and robbers.⁹⁹ Certain contemporary documents also record the cases of theft and robberies committed by them.¹⁰⁰

Taral or Yeskar

A *Taral* or *Yeskar* was *Mahar* by caste but the nature of work and the remunerations made to him in lieu of his function differed from that of a *Mahar*. Wilson notes that "all the *Mahars* take the office of the *Taral* for a year in

rotation for which, besides the fixed allowance of *baluta* and *inam* land, each one received annually a pair of shoes and blankets".¹⁰¹ Though the privileges of the office were enjoyed by a particular *Taral*, he was entitled to these benefits only for as long as he occupied the post, i.e., for a period of one year. Hence, a *Mahar* while discharging the functions of a *Taral*, held this position as an individual and only for a short period. On the other hand a member of the *Mahar* community who held *Mahar baluta* exercised hereditary rights to his *baluta Watan*. Even when a particular *Taral* discharged his function, he discharged it as a member of his *Mahar* community. Therefore, it can be said that it was not an individual *Mahar* but the *Mahar* community of the village as a whole who rendered this service on rotation basis. The nature of duties required the *Taral* to be always present within the village boundaries so that he may always remain within the reach of the *Patil's* call. He was also obliged to attend to the strangers and visitors, supply them with the necessary informations and to procure for them all the necessary supplies as might be required.¹⁰²

Gondhali

The *Gondhalis* are the persons who are least mentioned

in our sources. The *Gondhali's* business was to sing and dance by blowing *sambal* - a musical instrument,¹⁰³ and were probably the bearer of kettle drum.¹⁰⁴ For their services they were also entitled to *baluta* share from each peasant family.

Gosain or Gosavi

They were religious mendicants who used to beat a sort of drum.¹⁰⁵ The *Gosavis* rarely held land and were paid mostly by the annual allowance of grain share called *baluta*.¹⁰⁶

Ghadsi

The *Ghadsi* were the the vocalist or probably pipers¹⁰⁷ and they used to sing during the festive occasions such as *Holi*. Besides the *baluta* payment they were also entitled to certain perquisites. For example they were allowed (along with the *Kolis*) to take first the *Naivedya* (or the offering) at the time of *Holi* festival of the village and give a share to *Mahar* according to their sweet will.¹⁰⁸

Shimpi (Tailors)

Shimpi were engaged in the profession of selling and sewing clothes. They were found mostly in clusters in a market place or *Kasba*. *Shimpi* was not found in every

village as this demand was very limited in the villages.

Teli

Teli or the oil-pressers were engaged in the business of extracting oil. Depending upon the requirement of oil, a single *Teli* could have easily satisfied the needs of two or three villages at a time. He was also the receiver of *baluta* share from the villagers whose needs he satisfied with his profession. In the village to which he actually belonged, he was also given an additional rent free land to set up his *kolhu* or the oil-pressing machine. A contemporary document enlists the name of the *Teli* as the *Watandar* of the village.¹⁰⁹ A *Teli* was also obliged to supply half a mound of oil cake every year from each mill to the *Patils* and *Kulkarnis*.¹¹⁰

Tamboli

The *Tambolis* were engaged in the hereditary profession of selling betel leaf or *Pan*. Though their's was an insignificant work, still they were very much recognised as the part and parcel of the village in which they were found. Like other *balutedars*, a *Tamboli's* rights were also respected and protected. A letter of 1770 mentions that there was an encroachment of the right of

selling betel leaves and hence the aggrieved party had to report to the *Patil* for the redressal of the dispute.¹¹¹ In yet another letter of the year 1769 we find that the *Deshpande* of *Saswad* region asked the *Patil* of *Garade* to prevent the grocer from dealing in betel leaves as the *Tamboli* had the exclusive right to do the same.¹¹²

Besides these two category of the *balutedars* there was another category of *batutedars* who were called the *Uparis*. As is evident from the term *Upari*, these *balutedars* did not originally belong to the village in which they were serving, but were invited by the villagers to perform the duties of a particular *balutedar*. Generally, whenever a *balutedar* ceased to perform his duties and functions due to certain reasons such as famines, poverty or official harrassement, making the village deprived of his crucial services, the villagers would appoint another artisan practising the same proefession from the nearby village. This appointment was conditional and the invited *balutedars* was obliged to leave the village and *baluta* perquisites, whenever the original *balutedar* returned back or claimed his *Watan*. In this way his appointment was strictly temporary. But during his entire tenure, the *Upari balutedar* was entitled to enjoy all the rights and perquisites as enjoyed by the

local or permanent *balutedar*, except for the right in the decision making process of the village *Panchayat*. He was also given a place to reside and construct his hut.¹¹³ Due to this arrangement many complications arose when the original *balutedar* returned to his native place and claimed his *Watan*. A few such cases are recorded in the contemporary documents:

A letter of the year 1749-50 mentions that the '*Nhavi Watan*' of Chinchodi in *Tarf Sirale* in *Pargana Newasi* was claimed by *Jakhoji bin Yamaji bin Santaj* barber. *Jakhoji* claimed that his grandfather left the village during the time of famine due to which the *Patil* employed other barber as a substitute for his duties. Now that he, being the legal hier to the *Nhavi-Watan*, has come back to the village, the said person (who had been invited to perform the duties of the barber) was refusing to handover the *Watan* to him. The matter was reported to the *Huzur* and the *Watan* was transferred to 'the original hier.'¹¹⁴ A similar document of the year 1763 refer to a complicated situation arising out of dispute of *Watan baluta* and *Upari baluta*. According to this document there arose a dispute in *Koradh* village of *Junnar* province between a family of blacksmiths and a group of families holding the *Sutarki Watan*. The contention was actually for the *Loharki Watan*.

The carpenters claimed that both the *Sutarki* as well as *Loharki Watan* belonged to them and argued to the local governor that one of the members of their family had earlier been engaged in the profession of blacksmithery in the village. But he had to leave the village due to the ill-treatment meted out to him by the local officials. The *Loharki Watan* lying vacant, the villagers therefore brought another blacksmith called Satva from another village to continue the work of *Lohar* in the village. But this was objected by the group of carpenters of Koradh, village and so the villagers asked them to continue the blacksmithery themselves and pay Satva the remuneration for the work he had already done. But this was not acceptable to Satva. He now claimed that the *Loharki Watan* belonged to him as it had earlier been held by his family since his grandfather's time. But his father had left the village due to famine and settled down in another village where he was brought up. So when the previous carpenter-blacksmith left Koradh he (Satvaji) was approached by the village officials of Koradh to come back to his native village as the *Loharki watan* 'belonged to him'. The matter on being referred to the village *Panchayat*, it was found that Satva's claim to the *Loharki Watan* did not corroborate to the available evidences

whereas there were evidences to show that the carpenter's ancestors lived in that village for three generations, and also that the blacksmith who left the village Koradh was carpenter by caste. It was therefore decided that since Satavaji simply practiced blacksmithery as an *Upari* for only 32 year (during which he enjoyed all the benefits attached to that watan), he could not lay claims over the *Loharki Watan*.¹¹⁵

Thus, from the discussion of the different kinds of *balutedars* the picture which emerges before us may be summer up as follows :

- a) The *balutedars* hereditary *Watan* and the privileges associated with it were recognized by the village society.
- b) Like a *Mirasdar* cultivator, a *balutedar* could also claim his hereditary *Watan* after long intervals of absence. But for the period of his absence he could not claim any remunerations.
- c) In the time of adversities the *balutedars* could also migrate from one place to another without obstructions.

MODE OF PAYMENT:

Going through the contemporary records we come across different types of payments for the claim of village *balutedars/alutedars*. They were (i) Payment in kind (i.e. *baluta share*)

ii) Payment in cash

iii) Through rent free or *inam* land

iv) Payment through various *haqs Lawjimas* (i.e. rights & *perquisiters*).

The *balutedars* were paid in kind annually in terms of grain share which was determined by custom. The grain share was determined during the time of harvest and "each peasant holding was supposed to collect its own grain-produce and set apart the share of the village officers and artisans....rather than doing it collectively".¹¹⁶ An undated record of the Saswad region mentions about the process of *baluta* payment.¹¹⁷ It mentions that the *baluta* remuneration for the astrologer used to be paid after the headman has inspected fields and crops. In this way it seems that it was the duty of the village headman or *Patil* to see that each cultivator paid a certain fixed amount of his produce to each category of the *balutedars/alutedars*.

A few other documents tells us that arrangements were made sometimes for the artisans and menials to be paid in

cash for their services. The document of 1799 A.D.¹¹⁸ not only gives the details of the classification of the *balutedars*, but also mentions the amount, in cash, to be paid to each category of the *balutedars*. According to this document the *balutedars* of the first category were allowed Rs. 10 each; those grouped in the 2nd category were entitled to get Rs 5 each and for those belonging to the 3rd or inferior category, there was a provision to pay Rs. 2.5 each for their services. But this letter does not indicate as to what was the actual contribution of each peasant family and whether this payment was to be made on an yearly or monthly basis.

Another mode of payment to *balutedars* was through the grant of *inam* lands i.e., the revenue free land to the individual members. An early 19th century British administration mentions that,

"the whole of the village officers, such as the *Patils*, the *Kulkarni* the barber, the washerman, the goldsmith, the carpenter, the potter, the *Joshi*....and the currier had each his field assigned to him; his office and his land are both hereditary....., these lands are free of taxes as a remuneration for the performance of their offices, and to ensure in the village, however small, one of these useful members of the village community,"¹¹⁹

The 18th century records also show that many of the *balutedars* held certain *inam* land.¹²⁰ The *inam* lands were

granted to them by the village community, the expenses of which were to be borne by the community as a whole.¹²¹ Among the *balutedars* the *Mahars* were getting the *inam* lands more frequently. The *inam* lands granted to the *Mahars* were classified under the heads 'Harati land'¹²² (i.e., the land granted in lieu of services to the *Patil*), *Maharik* land¹²³ (the land allotted for miscellaneous jobs to the government) and *Hadki-Hadola* ¹²⁴(land grant for lifting dead cattle from the village habitation).

Another kind of remuneration to the *balutedars* was through the grant of certain *haqs* (i.e, rights) and *lawjima* (perquisites). We occasionally find the references to these perquisites in the contemporary documents particularly when there arose any dispute between the claimants. Some of these rights and perquisites of the *balutedars* are given below:

- i) The *Mahar's* right to the grain left on thrashing floor.¹²⁵
- ii) The *Mahar's* right to offer the village headman a bundle of firewood at every festival and then ask cooked food.¹²⁶
- iii) The barber was to get some grain and bread for extra hair cut and shave. ¹²⁷

- iv) The *Gurav's* right to a share in the offering to the village shrine.¹²⁸
- v) The *Taral's*, right to get a pair of shoes from the *Chambhar*.¹²⁹
- vi) The right of the *Koli's* and *Ghadsis* to receive the offering of *Naivedya* at the time of *Holi* festival.¹³⁰

In this way it can be seen that whereas the *baluta* remuneration was paid in kind or cash by the peasants, the *inam* land was granted by the village community. The perquisites called *haq-lawjimas* etc, on the other hand were granted to the *balutedars* by the village community as a whole, that is, not only by the peasants but also by the village officers and servants in the form of offerings to the village shrine or on various other occasions and under various pretexts.¹³¹

References

1. H.H. Wilson: Glossary of Judicial and Revenue terms, Delhi 1968, p.56.
2. B.H. Baden Powell: Indian Village Community, 1957, pp16-17, see also (by the same author) The Origin and Growth of village communities in India, Jodhpur 1985 pp.9-10.
3. A.I. Chicherov, India: Economic Development, 16th - 18th century, Moscow 1971, pp.22-23.
4. Max Weber, General Economic History (English translation), 1961, p.35.
5. A.S. Altekar, History of Village Communities in Western India, OUP, 1927, p.90.
6. H.H. Wilson, op-cit, p.19.
7. PSAP, Pune, 1950, no. 75.
8. A.S. Altekar, op.cit, pp.95-96.
9. Grant Duff, A History of Mahrattas, vol.I New Delhi, 1990 pp.23-24.
10. Dr. Balakrishna, Shivajee the Great, Kolhapur, 1940 p.141.
11. PSAP, no.75.
12. A.I.Chicherov, op.cit, p.31; see also H.H. Wilson, op.cit, pp.55-56.
13. A.I. Chicherov op.cit, p.31
14. See, for example, SSRPD, Vol. VII, Poona 1911, no. 532; Vol.II, Poona, 1906, no. 16; PSAP no. 37 etc.
15. H.H. Wilson, op.cit. p.55.
16. T.N.Atre, Gaon Gada, Pune, 1989, p.91.
17. ibid, pp.91-92.
18. M. Elphinstore, Territoroes Conquered from the

- Peshwa; A report, Delhi 1973 pp.21-23.
19. T.N. Atre, op.cit, p.91.
 20. M. Elphinstone, op.cit, p.47.
 21. R.V. Russels: Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Delhi 1977, pp.144-145.
 22. PSAP, no.46
 23. SSRPD, Vol. VI, Poona, 1909, no. 816.
 24. ibid.
 25. ibid.
 26. ibid.
 27. ibid,
 28. PSAP, no.46
 29. SSRPD, Vol.VI, no 816.
 30. T.N. Atre, op.cit. P. 100
 31. ibid, p.98
 32. ibid, p.100
 33. ibid, p.99
 34. SSRPD, Vol. II, no.309.
 35. H.H.Wilson, op.cit, pp. 55, 328
 36. T.T. Mahajan, Industry, Trade and commerce in western Maharashtra during the Peshwa Period, (Ph.D Thesis, Univ. of Poona, 1980) p.44.
 37. T.N. Atre, op.cit, p.98
 38. SSRPD, Vol.VII, no 608; Vol. VIII, Poona 1911 no. 895.
 39. R.V. Oturkar & S.N. Joshi: Institution of watan and its influence on the 18th century Maratha Society, PIHC, 1945, pp.280-285.

40. T.N. Atre, op.cit, p.100
41. ibid,
42. PSAP, no 77
43. ibid no. 53, see also no 77
44. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.55.
45. R.V. Russels, op.cit, Vol.II, p.417
46. T.N. Atre, op.cit, pp.111-112.
47. R.V. Russels, op.cit, Vol II, p.418; See also SSRPD Vol.VIII, no.929.
48. R.V. Russels, op.cit, Voil II, p. 419
49. ibid
50. H.H. Wison, op.cit, p.54.
51. T.T. Mahajan, op.cit. p.34; See also A.I. Chicherov, op.cit, p.30.
52. ibid, p.37
53. A.I. Chicherov, op.cit, p.30
54. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.55, 302
55. T.N. Atre, op.cit, pp.111-112
56. R.V. Russels, op.cit, Vol IV, p.6
57. Wilson, op.cit. p.55
58. B.H. Baden-Powell, The Origin and Growthop.cit. p.11, see also (by the same author) Indian Village.... op.cit, p.17.
59. T.N. Atre, op.cit, pp.111-112.
60. ibid
61. SSRPD, Vol II, no.16

62. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.55
63. T.N. Atre, op.cit, p.111-112
64. ibid,
65. SSRPD, Vol II, no.12
66. ibid, Vol.III, Poona, 1907, no.521
67. H.H. Wilson, op.cit. p.55, 245
68. SSRPD, Vol.VI, no.716.
69. TKKP, Vol.II, Kolhapur, 1970, no.181; see also SSRPD Vol.II, no.41.
70. For example see SSRPD, Vol.III no. 521; Vol VII, no.535.
71. Ravinder Kumar, 'Rural life in Western India on the eve of the British conquest', *IESHR*, Vol.II, no.3, 1965
72. SSRPD, Vol. VIII, no.928.
73. SSRPD, Vol II, no.37.
74. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.242, 192
75. ibid, p.242
76. Grant Duff, op.cit, Vol. I, p.23
77. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.55
78. Grant Duff, op.cit, Vol.I, p.24
79. ibid, p.23.
80. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.55
81. SSRPD, Vol.III, no 518
82. Letter from H.D. Robertson to M.Elphinstore (Nov. 1918), printed in R.D. Choksey, *The Aftermath (1818-1826)*, Bombay 1950, p.182.

83. ibid, p.183
84. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.55
85. SSRPD, Vol.III, no.516
86. ibid, no.518; see also SSRPD, Vol VII, no.502
87. TKKP, Vol.III, no.37.; see also SSRPD Vol.II, no.48 for the references of the same nature.
88. Grant Duff, op.cit, vol.I, pp23-24 and H.H. Wilson. op.cit. p.55
89. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.29.
90. ibid, p.231.
91. ibid, p.19
92. ibid, p.293
93. SSRPD, Vol.II, no.65; see also Vol III, no. 521.
94. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, pp.78-79
95. ibid
96. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.19.
97. SSRPD, Vol.III, no.522.
98. H.H. Wilson, ibid, p.437.
99. Grant Duff, op.cit, Vol.I, p.24.
100. For example see SSRPD, Vol. V, Poona, 1908, no.166, 168, 169; Vol.VI no.656 etc.
101. H.H. Wilson op.cit, p.19
102. Grant Duff, op.cit, Vol.I, p.24, see also H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.19
103. R.V. Oturkar and S.N. Joshi, 'Institution of Watan.....' op.cit, PIHC 1945, pp. 280-285
104. H.H. Wilson, op.cit, p.182.

105. ibid, p.183, 19
106. ibid, p.20
107. Grant Duff, op.cit, Vol.I, p.24.
108. PSAP, no.46.
109. MIS, Vol.XVI, Poona 19 no.55
110. SSRPD, Vol.III, nos 4, 522.
111. PSAP, no.63.
112. R.V. Oturkar & S.N. Joshi, 'Institution of Watan.....' op.cit, PIHC, 1945, pp.280-285.
113. See for example SSRPD, Vol.VII, no.532.
114. SSRPD, Vol.II, no.16; See also TKKP, Vol.III, Kolhapur 1972 no.8
115. SSRPD, Vol.VII, no.532.
116. B.H. Boden Powell, Indian Village Community, op.cit, p.213.
117. PSAP, no.90
118. ibid, no.75
119. Captain Brigg's letter to M. Elphinstone, contained in M. Elphinstone, op.cit. p.118-119.
120. For example see SSRPD, Vol.II, no.12, This documents tells us about inam land being granted to a print.
121. M. Elphinstone, op.cit p.26
122. PSAP. no.46
123. ibid
124. T.N. Atre, op.cit. p.89
125. PSAP. no. 46

126. ibid
127. T.N. Atre, op.cit., pp.111-112.
128. Cited in H.Fukazawa, The Medieval Decean, 1991, p.222
129. H.H. Wilson, op.cit. p. 19
130. PSAP, no. 46.
131. H. Fukazawa, op.cit. p.224.

Chapter 3

THE BALUTEDARS, THE VILLAGE SOCIETY AND ADMINISTRATION

I

Among the components of the village society where as the status and position of the village officials like the *Patil*, *Kulkarni* and *Chaughula* etc. corresponded to their position in the administrative hierarchy, i.e. the 'Watan' or office they held and the superior rights in land, that of the cultivators depended on the kind of land tenure they held. On the other hand in the case of the non-cultivating class of *balutedars*, their position in the village society was indicated by the degree of their usefulness to the cultivating classes which also determined their rights and perquisites called '*haq lawjima manpan*'. The *balutedars* not only satisfied the economic or productive needs of the fellow villagers by supplying to them various goods prepared and manufactured by them such as the agricultural implements like plough & sickles; varieties of - pots to store grain or water or other food materials; oil for preparing food or other uses, etc. but also performed certain other services for the village community which satisfied its social and spiritual needs. For example the *Mahars*, *Mangs* and

Ramoshis, besides helping them to keep the village clean by lifting the dead cattle etc. also served as the village watchmen and messengers; similarly the *Joshi* and *Gurav* performed the important rituals and other religious functions which satisfied the spiritual needs of the village society.

The *balutedars* played an important role in the social life of the village. Members of the *baluta* community not only participated in the various social celebrations or festivals or religious ceremonies, but some of them were also assigned specific jobs at such occasions. In addition, their contribution to the village council or *Panchayat* for arbitration of conflict arising out in the village society and their participation in the process of decision making also gives us some idea of the social role played by the *balutedars*.

In the following pages we will discuss the nature of participation of the *balutedars* in social and cultural sphere of the village society i.e. on the occasion of marriages, births, deaths the festivals and rituals and their role in the judicial affairs through the *Panchayats* or the village council.

SOCIAL OCCASIONS

On the occasion of marriage celebrations, births or death, the services of some *balutedars* were required. For example the *Joshi* who was of the *Brahman* caste also the marriages in the village society. He was even required to conduct the marriages among the lower caste people.¹ The potter or *Kumbhar* also played a specific role during the marriage and it was a traditional practice to take the bride to the *Kumbhar's* house as a part of '*Sohag ceremony*' during the marriage for making the marriage propitious. The *Kumbhar* seated the bride on his '*wheel*' and turned it round with her seven times. The *Kumbhar* then presented her with seven new pots, which were taken back to the bride's house and used at the time of wedding.² At this occasion the *Parit* or washerman was also supposed to spread cloth for the brides to walk.³ Another important functionary was the '*Bhat*' or the village bard who was employed at the time of betrothment of children in order to ensure that there are no physical impediments in the bride or groom.⁴ Similarly at the occasion of births of a child the *Joshi*, who was the village astrologer, was required to prepare the horoscope of the newly born child.⁵ The *Parit* or the washerman was also required to wash all the clothes of a house during births or deaths,⁶ whereas the *Kumbhar* was required to change the broken earthen utensils of the

house after the death of a person.⁷ On the occasion of other social gathering or feasting where large quantity of water was needed, the services of a *Koli* was required.⁸ But this particular service of the *Koli* (at specific occasions) was not remunerated through the *baluta* share. This engagement seems to be rather temporary, in lieu of which the *Koli* might have got some cash or cloth etc. by the family which employed him.

RELIGIOUS OCCASIONS

Religious feasting and festivals like *Holi*, *Dussehera* etc. were also the occasions when the villagers gathered together and exchanged pleasantries. The *balutedars* participated in these occasion with interest and were also given certain specific work or favours at each of these occasions. For example, at the time of each religious feasting, the *Gurav's* job was to prepare and supply '*Patrowali*' i.e. plates made of leaves to put the offerings and food.⁹ It was the *Mali* who was to supply flowers to the temples daily and decorate it.¹⁰ At the time of religious sacrifice, the *Mulana* or the *Muslim* '*Pundit*' was to pronounce '*Nyet*' first and then only declared that the meat of the sacrificed animal could be eaten.¹¹ At the time of *Holi* & other festival the *Mahar*

fetched fire wood, presented it to the village headman and in return received cooked food.¹² Moreover the *Kolis* and *Ghadsis* (who used to sing during the festivals) were given precedence while accepting the offerings called 'Naivedya'. Likewise the *Gondhalis* were also given the right to participate in each festival with their musical instrument called *Sambhal*.¹³

Thus, the *balutedars* played an important role in the social and cultural life of the village society. As far as their interaction with the other groups in the village is concerned, it is evident that their caste status posed least hindrance. Whether it be the untouchable caste of the *Mahars* or the *Brahman Joshi*, all of them had to interact at these occasions and perform their services towards the entire community. In fact some of the lower class *balutedars* such as the *Bhat* and the *Guravs* performed important functions.

Though their caste status did not come as a big hinderance in way of discharging their functions towards the village society, yet (particularly) the untouchable members of the *baluta* community were treated differentially. The untouchable *balutedars* belonging to the *Mahar*, *Mang* & *Chambhar* castes were not supposed to live within the site of village habitation and had their

residences outside the village boundaries. In the year 1789-90 at *Taraf Karyat Mawal*, the houses of these people were shifted by an order of the Government from the vicinity of the village to a place farther off merely because its previous location was considered to be 'too near' to the village.¹⁴ This type of incidence even occurred in cities like Poona.¹⁵ We have certain other documentary evidences in which we find references of separate temples for *Shudras*¹⁶ and *Mahars*¹⁷ and also instructions barring certain other lower sections of the society from performing religious rites accompanied by the recital of *Vedic* hymn.¹⁸

THE VILLAGE PANCHAYATS

Panchayat was the people's court in which the disputes arising in the village society were settled. H.G. Franks holds that "the *Panchayat* was solely a jury agreed by both parties in a dispute, and which automatically dissolved when the case was concluded. It was one great and stable institution through which came the only regular court of justice during the centuries of upheavals and wars".¹⁹ The council which was called *Panchayat* at the village level and *Got Sabha* or *Majlis* at the *Pargana* level,²⁰ decided the disputes of various types among its

members. Each time a dispute was to be arbitrated, a fresh *Panchayat* was convened. A *Sanad* of the year 1769-70 infact instructs the *Kamavisdar* of the concerned area to nominate as *Panch* any resident of the place that might be selected by the parties and to get the dispute settled.²¹ That there was no fixed number of the members of the *Panchayat* is evident from the contemporary sources.²² Sometime the number of persons attending the *Got Sabha* rose to 238.²³ Going through the various *Mahjars* (i.e. the decisions papers), which record the method of constituting the *Panchayat* as well as the mode of arbitration of the disputes, it becomes clear that the opinion of the members of the *baluta* community was always taken into consideration in the judicial matters.

As a matter of fact, one or the other member of the *baluta* community was always present in village council. This fact has also been attested by the British administrators.²⁴ We come across a large number of contemporary documents which bear the names of the artisans & menials as the list of witnesses. For example a document of the year 1763-64 relating to the arbitration of a dispute between a carpenter and a blacksmith contains the list of *balutedars* witness as follows *Mahars-5, Kumbhar-1, Chambhar-1, Mang-1, Koli-1, Mali-1 and Parit-1.*

Most of these were above 35 years of age.²⁵ In another letter of 1724 which also relates to a dispute between a carpenter and a blacksmith, the list of witness (which was recorded in a temple) contains among the names of other persons the names of 2 *Malis*, 4 *Mahars*, 2 *Nhavis*, 1 *Chambhar*, 1 *Gurav*, 1 *Parit*, 1 *Kumbhar* and 1 *Potdar*²⁶. In this case also most of them were above the age of 30 except the *Gurav* who was only 20. We have seen in the last chapter the importance of the knowledge of certain *balutedars* like *Mahars* and *Mangs* who were entrusted with the duties of the village watchman. Their evidence counted very much not only when there was any dispute regarding village boundary or the (immovable) properties²⁷ but also whenever a case of theft had been under arbitration²⁸. Sometimes the opinion of the entire *baluta* community was taken into consideration while deciding important disputes. To mention a case of the 1736 Sambhaji II renewed the *Khoti Watan* of village Fur to Vishwanath bhat Agnihotri. It happened that one Dhondo Gopal Khandekar was claiming the above *Watan*, but the *Watandars* and *Balutedars* of the said village upheld the claim of Vishwanath bhat Agnitotri²⁹. In another instance of 1749-50 when a decision regarding a disputed *Nhavi Watan* was executed, the losing party had to give in writing that he has lost

the case and hence will not claim the disputed *Watan* or privileges in future. This paper called '*Vijit Patra*' was then duly attested by the *Patil*, *kulkarni* and the *balutedars* and they also put their signatures over it³⁰. It was not that the village society needed the services of the *Balutedars* only at the time of settling disputes, the documentary evidences clearly demonstrate that the members of the *baluta* community were also present even at the time of the execution of documents regarding the sale, transfer or division of *Watans*. For example, a sale of *Jyotish* and *Kulkarni* rights of a village was effected in 1670. The deed was endorsed by a *Patil*, *Mokadam*, all the family elders (*baap-bhau*), the *balutedars* and hereditary cultivators. Their names and seals were put on the document³¹. This document shows that cases relating to bigger *Watans* of village hereditary officers like *Patils* and *Kulkarni* were settled in the council and this, in turn, reveals that the witness of the '*balutedars*' were given due importance.³² The *balutedars* were also allotted a particular symbol or seal illustrating their occupation which they used to affix below their names³³ whenever they endorsed any decision taken by the village council or whenever a sale or transfer deed was executed.

The *Panchayat* which was a respected institution of

the village for arbitrating disputes, was composed of men of various castes and professions. But irrespective of one's religion caste, occupation, age or financial strength etc. all the *Watandars* enjoyed equal right to take part in the *Panchayat*. The participation of almost the entire village community indicates that the caste status and profession did not play an important role in the deliberations of the village *Panchayat*. Even the *Mahars & Mangs* who were considered as untouchables played a part along with the *Brahman Kulkarni* and *Patils* in the deliberation of the village council. They showed their unanimous approval to the decisions taken by the council endorsing them with their respective signatures and seals. Thus, they enjoyed certain social position which was denied to the *Upari* peasants who were allowed to view the proceedings of the village *Panchayats* but did not have the right in the decision making.

II

THE *BALUTEDARS* AND THE ADMINISTRATION

The services that the *balutedars* were required to perform were not confined to the village society alone, they were also obliged to carry out certain tasks for the

state. The most frequently and widely performed of these tasks was to render their services to the state in the form of forced labour. In most of the contemporary documents of Maharashtra the term *Veth-begar* has been used to denote this custom of forced and compulsory services. The word *Veth*, derived from the Sanskrit word '*Visti*' means 'unpaid labour' and the word '*Begar*', Persian in origin, means 'extracting work without remuneration'. From the above it can be inferred that the use of force or compulsion by a government or a person in power and giving no remuneration were the main characteristics of *Veth-begar*. But the nature of this system in the 17th century differed from that of the 18th century. "In the 17th century", writes A.R. Kulkarni , "when the forts were regarded as the essence of the Maratha Kingdom, services were requisitioned for the construction, renovations and repairs of the forts, whereas in the 18th century, free services of the local people were secured for cutting grass from the state owned meadows, or for constructing stables, as there was not much work on the forts due to the change in the mode of warfare."³⁴ In this way we find that during the medieval period in Maharashtra, the demand of *Veth begar* was not only compulsory but it was legally sanctioned by the State too. In addition, the demand for

forced labour was always made through the village or *Pargana* officials such as *Patils*, *Mamlatdars* etc.

In most of the documents whenever the demand for the supply of free labour was made by the State, it was not specifically laid down which category of people i.e., whether artisans or peasants, skilled or unskilled were required for the services. To cite two examples here, a letter of the year 1775 instructed the concerned officials to make arrangements for 429 persons who could work as *begar* with the cavalry of the Peshwa Government.³⁵ Another letter of the year 1785-86 informs us that 250 forced labourers from Belapur, Neral and Karnala were ordered to carry the baggage of an English Agent from Poona.³⁶

The term *ryot* which includes both the *kunbi* and *balutedars* is used in a number of documents to refer to the group of forced labourers and though a number of instances of cultivators performing the services of *begar* are to be found³⁷, it was mainly the class of artisans and menials who were drafted for forced labour. To cite an instance contained in latter of 1774-75 here, it was usual for the villagers in *Prant Junner* to construct every year shelters, 200 *khans* in extent for the bullocks of artillery sent there for grazing owing to the rainy season. As the sowing season was at hand and as the

employment of the ryots on the said work was undesirable, only 100 *khans* were ordered to be constructed by means of forced labour.³⁸ From this instance it may be inferred that since the nature of the work (construction) required the labourers to carry the construction materials to the site of construction and also the services of particular artisans like *Sutar* (i.e. carpenter) and *Lohar* (blacksmith) etc. for construction (of the cattle shed), it is probable that the services of the class of artisans and menial were more desirable than that of the peasantry. Although a few documents specifically mention the profession of the *balutedars* who were to perform *begar*, such documents are limited in number. For example a *Sanad* issued to the officials of *Prant Rajapuri* directed them to supply Hari Bhikhaji, a servant of the Government, along with other materials-20 labourers and 3 carpenters for 15 days as the latter intended to build a house.³⁹ In another instance of the year 1754 A.D., the Peshwa Government ordered the *Kamavisdar* of *Dabai Prant* to employ carpenters, potters and other *balutedars*, whenever needed as forced labourers, for the administration of forts.⁴⁰

The documentary evidences also suggest that the bigger *Watandars* and *Inamdars* enjoyed the right to extract *Veth-begari* from the *balutedars* in the village society.

For example, a letter of 1741-42 of *Pargana Mahim* which mentions the perquisites of a *Desh Kulkarni Watan* informs us that in addition to other favours such as the customary share in the agricultural or non-agricultural produce, the *Desh Kulkarni* was also given the right to claim services for 8 days from one *Mahar* of each village in the *Pargana*.⁴¹ That the people belonging to the menial and untouchable castes were frequently employed in the Royal Cavalry has been suggested by some other documents of this period. A government order of the year 1750 required about 250 *Mahars* to serve in the Government cavalry in in *Prant Junner*, Pune, Karkan, Bhosa and Gangathadi. In addition, 10 mangs and 10 *Chambhars* were also required to serve at prant Junner.⁴² Another document of 1675 also required the people of these three castes to serve at various places.⁴³ In both these letters the numerical requirement of the *Mahars* far outnumbered that of the other two castes. This phenomenon may be attributed to the fact that the population of the *Mahars* among the untouchable castes was considerably more. Regarding this phenomena Fukazawa comments,

"the fact that various artisans and untouchable castes were regularly pressed into forced services in their respective traditional occupation by the Government or by the privilege holders of 'fiefs' (substantial landholders) or *inams* suggests

that an important role was played by the caste system in the total polity of the Maratha kingdom."⁴⁴

But the services so extracted from the *ryots* of the village for Governmental purposes were not always free of cost. There are a number of references in which the labourer performing forced services was compensated either in cash or with grain, but the principle adopted to determine the rate of this payment appears to have been arbitrary. For example a government letter of 1719-20 mentions the provision of paying 8 *annas* to each labourer enforced for services.⁴⁵ Another letter of 1737 mentions that the forced labourers were to be given clothes when required, and a *seer* of grain every day.⁴⁶ The intensity of demand of forced labour and the mechanism of its extraction, however, varied from place-to-place and was determined by local circumstances. As long as the demand was modest and within the customary limits, the system functioned without major hiccups but the moment it exceeded the customary limits, the labourers migrated or ran away. For example, the 250 labourers who were enforced to carry the baggage of the English Agent proceeding from Bombay to Poona could not carry the burden due to steep mountain passage (*ghats*) and ran away leaving the baggage.⁴⁷ Another letter (a kind of petition from the

side of the village officials) of 1776-77 tells us that owing to the severe magnitude of the forced labour (by the Government), the ryots were forced to leave the village.⁴⁸ When faced with such possibilities, the Government was also quick to take adequate and immediate measures to prevent reoccurrences of the flight of either the entire ryot or artisans and menials. An instance of 1784-85 reveals that some villages of Prant Junner were being held on *Mokasa* tenure by Hari Damodar. The villagers informed the Government that no demand on account of forced labour or *farmash* (presents) were ever made on them and that such demands were being newly made by the grantee. The Government therefore issued prohibitory orders to the *Mokasadar*.⁴⁹ However, it is difficult to say how effective were such injunctions or prohibitory orders. It is evident from a large number of documents that the *begar* extracted from the artisans and menials adversely affected other residents of the village who were dependent upon their services. The *Patils* and *Mamlatdars*, in order to protect the interest of the village society and to prevent the migration of those who fell victim to the *begar*, petitioned to the State to exempt the artisans and menials from forced labour.

That the demand of *begar* could affect the productive

capacity of the village is evident from a document of the year 1773-74. The village of Koregaon in Taraf Pabal was bound to supply labour to the government for cutting 13,500 bundles of grass every year. But the village headman represented to the Government that during the year the village had suffered due to the incursion of the army. He further represented that the obligation to render *begar* is bound to affect agricultural production in the coming harvest. Hence he requested for the exemption from forced labour in that year.⁵⁰ In another instance of the following year the officials of *Prant Gangathadi* represented that the arrangement of supply of forced labour, free of cost, for cutting grass was becoming a source of annoyance not only to the victims but to the entire ryot. In response to the petition alternative arrangement was made for cutting the grass. The *Mamlatdar* was to pay Rs 2. for each thousand bundles of grass to be cut in lieu of labour.⁵¹

It is evident from the above discussion that the *balutedars* were exploited by the State by rendering *begar* for unproductive purposes. In normal circumstances they could not escape from forced labour. In extreme circumstances they resorted to migration to escape from

the tyranny of the State officials who often extracted *begar* in contravention of the accepted norms. To migrate was not an easy option as it amounted to the loss of *baluta Watan* on part of the fleeing *balutedars*.

In a number of cases the *Patils* and other *Watandars* who, in addition to being the local officials, were also substantial land holders, pleaded on behalf of the *balutedars* of their area for exemption from these obligatory services. These land holders even sent cash as compensation for their inability to supply the required number of hands. Such an act by the *Patils*, *Mamlatdars* etc. can't be interpreted as being a pure gesture of benevolence; there must have been certain disguised selfish motives behind this attitude towards the class who were made to perform forced services by the State. The most probable explanation lies in the fact that since these officers were also substantial land holders, a significant part of their agricultural activities, especially at the time of sowing or harvest, were carried out by these people who mostly belonged to the non-agricultural class of the village. Any indifference on the part of these officials to the sufferings of the *balutedars* beyond limits might have proved detrimental to the interest of the land owners as it could have forced

the labourers to migrate or run away leaving them (the substantial land holders) without a hand to perform labour service at the time of sowing and harvesting.

It can be assumed that the land owners could not afford to disregard the interest of the *balutedars* without risking their own interest. Their eagerness to prevent them from being harrassed by the State for excessive *begar* and petitions sent by the landed *Watandars* to the State to this effect becomes intelligible if viewed from the perspective that how dependent they were on these people who hailed from the lower rungs of the social and economic ladder and yet played a key role in the economic set up of their villages.

III

NATURE OF THE BALUTA SYSTEM

The scholars such as Altekar, S.N. Sen, Chicherov, Max Weber etc. are in agreement with the view that the *balutedars* were collectively maintained by the entire village community. The *balutedars* satisfied the local

needs of the cultivators as well as the non-cultivating classes through their specific services like providing and mending the plough share, supplying leather bags and buckets for irrigation, making pots for storing grain and other food materials etc. They might also have acted as labour reserves in the village society which could be utilised for agricultural as well as non-agricultural purposes. Regarding the nature of their employment Weber comments,

"they hold on a 'demiurgic' basis; that is, they are not paid for work in detail but stand at the service of the community in return for a share in the land or in harvest", and that, "they are essentially village serfs receiving a share in the products or money payment".⁵²

This concept of 'demiurgic labour' does not hold good for the *balutedars* in 18th century Maharashtra. Even if we study the incidence of forced labour or *Vetebegari* which the *balutedars* had to perform frequently on Government demands, we find that the obligation to perform the *Veth begar* was not always an absolute binding on them. As long as the *veth* was within the customary limits they did not object to it, but whenever the demand tended to exceed these limits, the servants migrated or ran away.⁵³ Sometimes, when the local officials harassed them by way

of illegal exactions, they appealed to the authorities and were successful in getting a favourable decision. For example, in the Saswad region the carpenters were being harassed by way of forced labour. On petition, the Government ordered the officials to desist from this practice and further instructed that if they need the services of the carpenters, they must give it in writing.⁵⁴ Hence we see that a village aristan or servant, who performed forced labour was also protected from illegal harassment a favour which a 'serf' could not have enjoyed. Another document of the year 1750-51 refers to the instance of a barber who was assisted by the village officials at a marriage ceremony in his house. In this case the *Kamavisdar* of *Taraf Pal Haveli* was instructed by the Government to erect a shed for the marriage ceremony of the barber's nephew and to supply him with fuel and other necessities including the services of 5 labourers.⁵⁵ In any case a 'serf' was not supposed to have invited so much attention of the officials for personal works. Further more we have seen that the *balutedars* were sometimes granted *inam* or rent free lands as well as certain *haq lawjimas*. Besides these, it may also be remembered that the *balutedars* were the members of the village *Panchayat* and they also participated in the

decision making process. All these evidences go against Max Weber's claim that the *balutedar* or the village artisan & servants were essentially the village 'serfs' and show that the *balutedars* unlike the 'serfs' enjoyed a respectable social status.

Another framework in which the nature of the *balutedari* system could be examined has been offered by William H. Wiser.⁵⁶ He propagated the concept of 'Jajmani' or the 'master-servant relationship' for the services of village artisans & servants. But the evidences contained in our sources regarding the *baluta* system in Maharashtra do not strictly indicate towards this type of employment in the service sphere. Even if we take the case of 'Lebacha Mahar' i.e. the Mahars who were errand runners and were also to serve the *Deshparde*, *Patil* and *Kulkarni* personally for certain specified number of days,⁵⁷ we can't compare it with the *Jajmani* framework because in the *Jajmani* system, the relationship was based essentially on a master-servant relationship i.e., the servant performing certain specific services for his master or 'Jajman', and the master, in turn, remunerating them in kind or cash. In contrast to the *Jajmani* system, the case of 'Lebacha Mahar', was different in the sense that in lieu of his services to

these officials, the *Lebacha Mahar* was not getting his *baluta* remuneration from them. So far as the other *balutedars* are concerned, we have already seen that their service were not meant for any particular section of the village community or any particular family or families. They served the entire village and it was the village community as a whole which was allotting them the grain share or *inam* land or the *haq lawjimas*.

References

1. TKKP, Vol.II, Kolhapur, 1970, No. 181.
2. R.V. Russels, Tribes and castes of the central Provinces of India, Delhi 1976, Vol. IV, pp. 6-7.
3. TKKP, Vol.I, Kolhapur, 1969, No. 230.
4. H.H. Wilson, Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms Delhi, 1968, p. 19
5. SSRPD, Vol. III, Pune, 1907, 190 No. 521 see also H.H. Wilson, op.cit. p. 55, 242.
6. T.N. Atre, Gaon Gada, Pune 1989, pp. 111-112.
7. R.V. Russels, op.cit. Vol. IV, p. 7.
8. H.H. Wilson, op.cit. p. 19, 293
9. Grant Duff, History of the Mahrattas, New Delhi 1990, Vol. I, p. 23.
10. H.H. Wilson, op.cit. p. 19.
11. Grant Duff, op.cit. Vol. I, p. 24.
12. SSRPD, Vol. III, No. 521; PSAP, No. 46.
13. H.H. Wilson, op.cit. p. 182, See also R.V. Oturkar & S.N. Joshi, 'Institution of Watan and its Influence on the 18th century Maharashtra', *PIHC* 1945, pp. 280-85. This article mentions about a dispute between the *Gosavi* and *Gondhali* over this right to play *sambhal*.
14. SSRPD, Vol. VIII, Pune 1911, No. 1142.
15. The documentary evidence suggests that the members of the untouchable eartes were not allowed to enter the gates of Poona between 3 p.m to 9 a.m. lest their shadows defile th persons of the high caste in streets. (Cited in S.V. Desai, Social life of Maharastra under the Peshwas, Bombay 1980, p.37)
16. SSRPD, Vol.. VIII, No. 1144.

17. ibid. No. 1129.
18. ibid. No. 1144.
19. H.G. Franks, *Penchayats under the Peshwa*, Pune, p. 3.
20. see V.T. Gune, *The Judicial system of the Marathas*, Pune, 1953, p. 23, etc.
21. SSRPD, Vol. VII, Pune 1911, No. 561.
22. For example see TKKP, Vol.. II, No. 159; Vol. III, Kolhapur 1972 No. 94.
23. See V.J. Gune, op. cit. pp. 196-198.
24. H.G. Franks, op.cit. p. 14.
25. SSRPD, Vol.. VII, No. 532.
26. PSAP, No. 37.
27. See chapter II.
28. see TKKP, Vol.. II, No. 110, see also chap. II.
29. TKKP, Vol.. II, No. 160.
30. SSRPD, Vol.. II, Poona, 1906 No. 16.
31. Cited in Dr. Balakrishna, *Shivajee The Great*, Kolhapur 1940, p. 159; for documents of similar nature, see also, TKKP, Vol. II, No. 159.
32. viz. TKKP, Vol. II, No. 44 and Vol.. III, No. 146.
33. V.T. Gune, op.cit. p. 142 and 228-229. Gune lists the symbols allotted to some balutedars. Such as

Kumbhar (Potter)	-----	'chak' (Potter's wheel)
Shimpi (Tailor)	-----	'Katari' (Scissor)
Parit (Washerman)	-----	'Mogari' (mallet)
Nhavi (Barber)	-----	'Aarsa' (mirror)
Mulana (Muslim Priest)	---	'Churi' (Knife)
Mali (Gardener)	-----	'Khurpi' (a small spade)
		etc.
34. A.R. Kulkarni, 'The Indian Village' *PIHC* 1992, p. 42

35. SSRPD, Vol. III, nos. 265 and 11.
36. ibid. Vol. VIII, no. 1092
37. See for example, ibid Vol. VII no. 741, Vol. II no. 306
etc.
38. Ibid. Vol. VIII, no. 1088, see also no. 1089
39. Ibid. Vol. II, no. 286
40. Ibid. Vol. III, no. 315.
41. Ibid. Vol. III, no. 4; see also SPD Vol. XXXI, no. 78.
42. Ibid. Vol. III, no. 265; see also Vol. V, no. 283
43. Ibid. Vol. VI, Pune, 1909, no. 273
44. H. Fukazawa, The Medieval Deccan. Delhi, 1991, p. 137
45. SSRPD, Vol. II, no. 282
46. SPD, Vol XXXIV, Bombay, 1933, no. 94; see also SSRPD,
Vol. II, no. 306
47. SSRPD, Vol. VIII, no. 1092
48. Ibid. Vol. II, no. 716, 723 & 751
49. Ibid. Vol. II, no. 284
50. Ibid. Vol. VIII, no. 1087; see also Vol. II, no. 285
51. Ibid. Vol. VIII, no. 1089; see also Vol. II, no. 306
and Vol. VII no. 741 etc.
52. Max Weber, General Economic History (English
translation) New York 1961, p. 35 and 97.
53. SSRPD, Vol. VIII, No. 1092, Vol. VI, No. 716, 723 &
751.
54. PSAP, No. 81.

55. SSRPD, Vol. II, No. 287.
56. William H. Wiser, The Hindu Jajmani System, Lucknow 1958. pp. vii- xxi.
57. SSRPD, Vol. III, No. 4, See also SPD Vol. XXXI, Bombay 1933. No. 78.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study has been to highlight the structure, position and functioning of the class of village artisans and menials called the *balutedars* in the rural society of Maharashtra during the 18th century. We initiated this study with an attempt to reconstruct the social structure of the village community on the basis of the concept of *Watan* and land holdings. The concept of *Watan* was peculiar to medieval Maharashtra and it actually signified an office tenure which was hereditary and perpetual. Interestingly enough the different sections of the village population whether it be the village hereditary officials like *Patil* and *Kulkarani*, or the cultivators or the class of *balutedars*, all of them laid their claim to the office by virtue of their *Watan* tenure. But all those who practiced agriculture were not *Watandars* and a cultivator's claim to a *Watan* depended upon the kind of land tenure he held.

The village land was held by the cultivators on two different types of land tenure namely *Mirasi* or *Thalwika* and *Upari* or *Ukti*. Whereas the former signified ownership of the land one cultivated which was hereditary and saleable, the later tenure signified only the right to cultivate land which were not one's own but were held on

a temporary lease (*Ukti*) the terms of which varied. On the basis of the kind of land tenure one held, the cultivating class was also divided into two classes- the *Mirasdars* and the *Uparis* or *Owandkari*. The *Mirasdars* were landed proprietors and by virtue of their *Miras* tenure, they occupied a high place in the village. It could be noticed particularly from the working of the judicial administration of the village as they not only participated in the meetings of the village *Panchayat* but also deliberated in the decision-making process. On the other hand the *Upari* was debarred from doing so.

Land was also held on *inam* or rent-free tenure. The *inam* land was granted taking into consideration the services performed by the beneficiary called *inamdar* towards the village community. As a matter of fact both the village officials like *Patil* and *Kulkarni* who constituted the higher category of the *Watandars*, as well as the village artisans and menials held *inam* lands. But owing to their superior position in the administrative hierarchy as well as the important functions performed in connection with the land revenue administration, the village officers like *Patil* and *Kulkarni* held large tracts of *inam* land and had to get it cultivated with the help of tenants and sharecroppers. On the other hand, the

balutedars also held *inam* land but the extent or income derived from it was hardly enough to have changed their social or economic status in the village society.

The main source of income of a *balutedar* was his *baluta* i.e, the allotted share of agricultural produce from each peasant household which was payable to him annually at the time of harvest. To meet the local demands of the villagers, the *balutedars* performed multifarious jobs. For example the *Lohars* and *Sutars* made ploughs and other agricultural implements, the *Kumbhar* made pots, and the *Mahars* or *Mangs* kept a vigil on the village boundaries etc. In lieu of these services, they not only got their *baluta* share or *inam* land but were also granted certain rights and perquisites (*haq-lawjimas*) and precedences at certain social or religious occasions (*manapan*). Moreover, they were also called *Watandars* and as such their hereditary and perpetual right to perform specific functions was recognised by the village community. Hence, the *balutedars*, some of whom belonged to very low or even untouchable castes were governed by a feeling of pride and security that they were *Watandars* and holders of certain rights and privileges. Like the *Mirasi Watan* the *Baluta Watan* was also hereditary and perpetual and a *balutedar* had full right to claim his *Baluta Watan*

after a considerable gap of time.

The *balutedars* were also a stratified lot and were graded into three categories or rows corresponding to their actual contribution in the village economy as well as the degree of utility and indispensability of their services in the productive system of the village. The caste status of the *balutedar* did not have any impact on this classification as the lower caste or untouchable *balutedars* like *Mahar*, *Chambhar* etc. were placed in the 1st row whereas the *Brahman Joshi* was placed in the 3rd or minor row.

Traditionally the number of *balutedars* was fixed to be twelve but it always varied from time-to-time and place-to-place depending upon the requirements and size of the population of the village. Along with the *balutedars*, the village was also served by a few more people belonging to the class of artisans and menials. These were commonly designated as *alutedars*. Their number in each village was also supposed to be twelve and they were also remunerated through annual grain share. They were employed by the village community if their services were considered necessary by the community. Interestingly, neither the list of the *balutedars* nor that of the *alutedars* were uniform and there were certain cases of

overlapping also in these groups.

Sometimes, a village was also inhibited by some *balutedars* who were not the permanent residents of the village. Like the *Upari* peasants they were also invited to perform the duties of a particular *Baluta Watan*, and hence they were also called *Upari balutedars*. Like the *Upari* peasants, they too could not claim permanency of the *Baluta Watan* and had to leave after the expiry of the contract or whenever the original *balutedars* returned to the village to claim his *Watan*. But, for the time they were engaged as *Upari balutedars*, they got the full remuneration and benefits of that *Watan*.

Though many *balutedars* like the *Mahars*, *Mangs* and *Chambhar* etc. belonged to the untouchable castes, their services were considered indispensable. Their lower caste status did not act as a hinderence in the performance of various services in the socio-economic and cultural life of the village. They were an integral part of the village *Panchayat* and *Got Sabha* as they played an important role, along with the superior *Watan-dars* in the deliberations of these institutions, in the decision making process and in the settlement of local disputes. This coupled with the indispensable role they played on important occasions like birth, marriages, deaths and festivals and the way they

were rewarded by other members of the village community at these occasions show that they were an invaluable functional unit in the social and cultural life of a Maharashtrian village during the 18th Century.

Regarding the nature of the system, we have argued that the *balutedars* could not be considered as 'serfs' as they enjoyed specific rights and privileges in the society. They indeed served the entire village community, but were not treated as 'serfs', they were enjoying permanent and hereditary *Watani* right over their profession and *baluta*. The village community also saw to it that their rights and perquisites were not encroached upon. The *balutedars* were even an integral part of the judicial system. A 'serf' however could not enjoy these favours in a social system. Their service relationship was also different from the *Jajmani* system which was essentially based upon a master-servant relationship. The *balutedars* infact served the entire village community and hence the whole community was responsible for their maintenance.

Each *balutedars* received some share from every agricultural producer irrespective of their caste or the nature of services performed, but this does not necessarily mean that there was some principle of 'social

justice' working behind this system. The contemporary sources inform us that the *balutedars* were classified into three groups and the remuneration of each group varied. This differentiation in remuneration was strictly according to one's contribution to the productive system of the village. And hence the *balutedars* whose services were considered more important and indispensable received a better share as compared to their fellow *balutedars* whose contribution to the village economy was comparatively of lesser importance. Thus, there was no 'social-justice' behind the functioning of the *baluta* system.

In conclusion, it may be said that the *balutedars* performed certain important and indispensable services for the entire village society in lieu of which each of them got a share depending upon their contributions to the actual production of the village.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES (Published)

Marathi

Marathyanchoy Itihasachi Sadhane, (22 vols.) (ed)

Kashinath Vishwanath Rajwade, Pune. (1908-1915).

(relevent volumes only)

Vol. VIII, 1910;

Vol. XV, 1912;

Vol. XVI, 1912;

Vol. XVIII, 1914;

Vol. XX, 1915.

Peshwakalin Samajik Ka Arthik Pata Vyavahara, (ed) R.V.

Oturkar, Pune, 1950.

Selection from Satara Raja's and Peshwa's draries, (IX

vols.) prepared by Rao Bahadur Ganesh Chimanji Vad &

edited by different authors, Poona, (1906-1911)

Vol. II (ed.) D.B. Parsanis, 1906;

Vol. III (ed.) D.B. Parsanis, 1907;

Vol. IV (ed.) K.B. Marathe, 1908;

Vol. V (ed.) B.P. Joshi, 1908;

Vol. VI (ed.) K.B. Marathe, 1909;

Vol. VII (ed.) B.P. Joshi, 1911;

Vol. VIII (ed.) K.B. Marathe, 1911;

Vol. IX (ed.) K.N. Sane, 1911.

Selection from the Peshwas Daftar, (45 vols.) (ed) Sir

G.S. Sardesai, Bombay, (1930-1934), (relevent volumes

only)

Vol. XXI, 1932

Vol. XXX & XXXI, 1933

Vol. XLIII & XLV, 1934.

Shiva Charitra Sahitya, published by Bharatiya Itihash
Samshodhak Mandal, (13 vols.) Pune, (1926-65)
(Selected Volumes only).

Vol. 1, 1926;
Vol. 2, 1930;
Vol. 3, 1932;
Vol. 5, 1942;
Vol. 8, 1942.

Tarabai Kalin Kagad Patra (III Vols.) (ed.) Dr. A.G.
Powar: Shivajee Vidyapeeth Aitehashik Granthmala,
Kolhapur.

Vol. I, 1969,
Vol. II, 1970
Vol. III, 1972.

English

Forrest, G.W. : Selections from The Minutes and Other
Official Writings of Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone
London, 1884.

Elphinstone, Mountstuart : Territories Conquered from the
Paishwa : A reprot: (First Reprint) 1973, Delhi.

Choksey R.D. : The Aftermath (1818-1826) [with select
documents from the Deccan Commissioner's Files,
Peshwa Daftar, on the Administrative and Judicial
Organization of Maharashtra by the British] Bombay
1950.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Marathi

Atre, T.N. : Gaon Gada, 2nd edition, Pune 1989.

English

Altekar, A.S. : History Of The Village Communities in Western India, OUP, Bombay, 1927.

Baden Powell, B.H. : The Indian Village Community, London 1896, Reprint, New Haven, 1957.

----- : The Origin And Growth Of Village Communities In India, London 1899, Reprint, 1985 Jodhpur (India).

Chandra Satish : Medieval India : Society, The Jagirdari Crisis And The Village, New Delhi, 1982.

-----: The 18th Century in India : Its Economy And The Role Of The Marathas, The Jats, The Sikhs And The Afghans, Calcutta, 1991.

Chicherov A.I : India : Economic Development In The 16th-18th Centuries, Outline History of Crafts and Trade, Moscow, 1971.

Desai, S.V. : Social Life in Maharashtra under the Peshwas, Bombay, 1980.

- Dr. Balakrishna : Shivajee The Great, Kolhapur, 1940.
- Duff, James Grant : History Of The Mahrattas, Delhi Reprint, 1990.
- Franks, H.G. : Penchayat Under The Peshwa, Pune.
- Fukazawa, Hiroshi : The Medieval Deccan : Peasants, Social System And States (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries), Delhi, 1991.
- Ghurye, G.S. : Caste and Race in India, Bombay 1977.
- Gune, V.T. : The Judicial System Of The Marathas, Pune, 1953.
- Habib Irfan : Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707), Bombay, 1963.
- Karve, Irawati: Hindu Society : An Interpretation, 2nd edn., Pune 1968.
- Kulkarni, A.R. : Maharashtra In The Age Of Shivajee, Pune, 1969.
- Lele, Jayant : Elite Pluralism and Caste Rule : Political Development in Maharashtra, Bombay, 1982.
- Mahajan, T.T. : Industry, Trade and Commerce in Western Maharashtra During the Peshwa period (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Poona, 1980).
- Mann, H.H. & Kantikar N.V. : Land and Labour in a Deccan Village, OUP, 1921.

- Marx, Karl : A Critique of Political Economy, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, (revised edition) Chicago, 1935.
- Ranade, M.G. : Introduction to the Peshwa diaries in Sushil Gupta, Shivajee And The Rise Of Marathas, Calcutta, 1953.
- Ray Choudhary, T. & Habib, I. (ed) : The Cambridge Economic History Of India, vol.I, Orient Longman, 1985.
- Russels, R.V. : The Tribes And Castes Of The Central Provinces Of India, (4 vols.), London 1916, Reprint, Delhi 1976.
- Sen, S.N. : Administrative System Of The Marathas, 3rd edn. Calcutta, 1975.
- Sharma, R.S. : Urban Decay In India (C-300-1000 AD) Delhi, 1987.
- Srinivas, M.N. : India's Villages, Bombay, 1969.
- Weber, Max : General Economic History (Translated from Original German into English by Frank H. Knight), First Collier Book Edition, New York, 1961.
- Wilson, H.H : Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 2nd ed., Delhi, 1968.
- Wiser, William H. : The Hindu Jajmani System, 2nd print, Lucknow, 1958.

Articles

- Grewal, J.S. : 'James Grant Duff and the Marathas' PIHC, 1967.
- Habib, Irfan : 'Peasant in Indian History', PIHC, 1982.
- Hasan, Sayyid Nurul : 'Aspects of the Zamindari system in the Deccan' PIHC, 1967.
- Kulkarni, A.R. : 'Source materials for the study of the village communities in Maharashtra', IESHR, vol. XIII, no.4., 1976
- : 'Origin of Deshmukh and Deshpande', PIHC, 1969.
- : 'Village Life in the Deccan in the 17th Century', IESHR, vol.IV, 1967 (March).
- : 'The Indian Village: with special refernce to Medieval Decan (Maratha country)', General Presidential Address - PIHC, 1992.
- : 'The village Hakdars', PIHC, 1982
- : 'Social and Economic Position of Brahamans in Maharashtra in the Age of Shivajee', PIHC, 1964.
- : 'Social relations in Maratha Country in the medieval period', PIHC, 1970.

- Kumar, Ravinder : 'Rural life in Western India on the Eve of the British conquest', IESHR, vol.II, no.3, 1965.
- Kadam, V.S. : 'Forced Labour in Maharashtra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: A Study of its Nature and Change', JESHO, vol.XXXIV, 1991.
- Mahajan, T.T. : 'Social Groups and Relations in Towns in Maratha country with Special Reference to Poona', PIHC, 1985.
- Mukhiya, Harbans : 'Illegal extortion from Peasants Artisans and Menials in 18th century Eastern Rajasthan', IESHR, vol.XIV, no.2. 1977
- Oturkar, R.V. & Joshi, S.N. : 'Instituion of Watan and its Influence in 18th Century Maratha Society', PIHC, 1945.