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**WESTERN INDIA IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY**

**A Study in the Social History
of the Maharashtra**

RAVINDER KUMAR

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WESTERN INDIA
IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

*A Study in the Social History
of Maharashtra*

by
Ravinder Kumar

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RAVINDER KUMAR

Canberra, February 1967

to ASHA

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A Select Glossary of Indian Terms

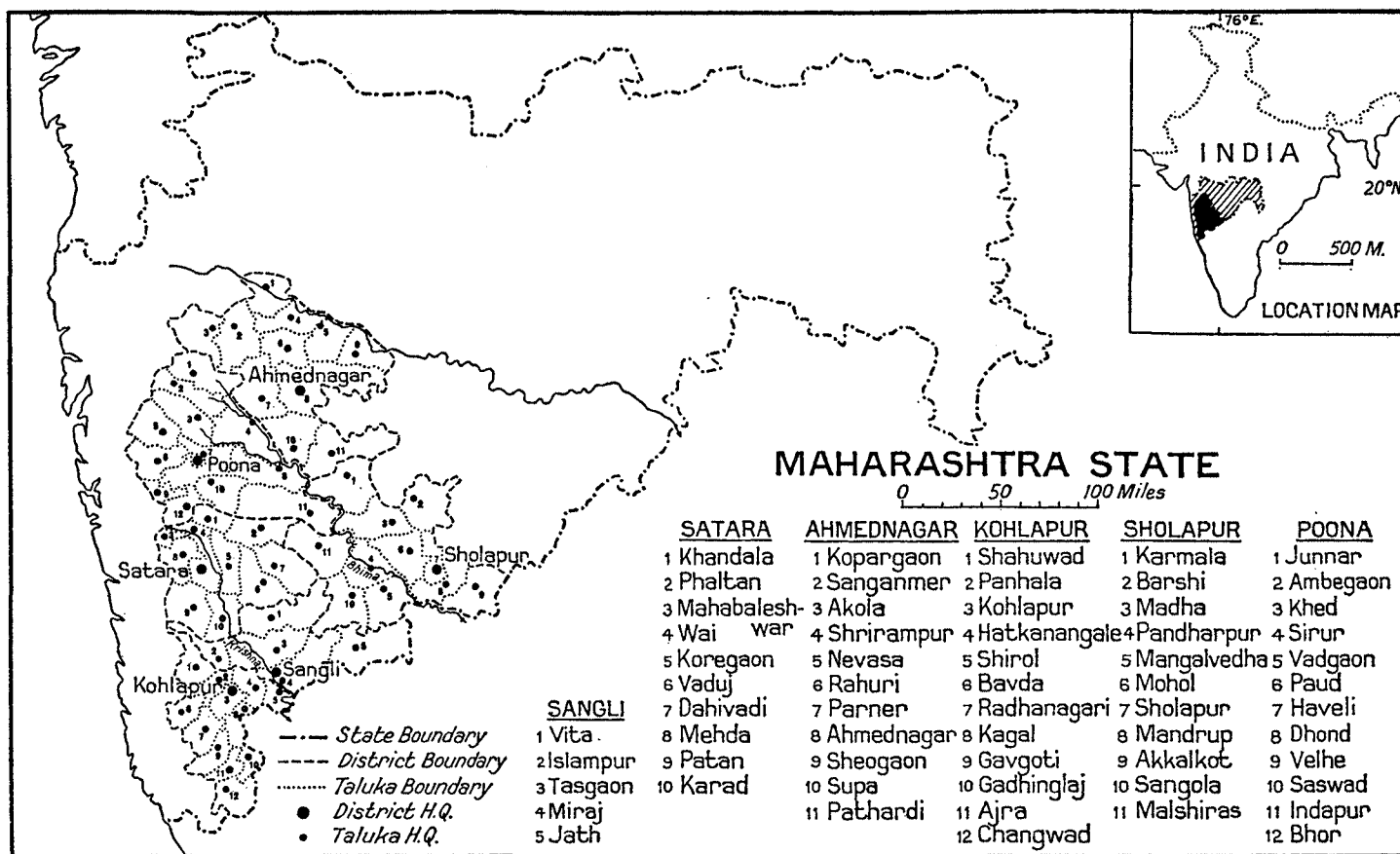
<i>Abhangas</i>	The songs composed by the folk saints of Maharashtra.
<i>Adawlut</i>	A court of justice.
<i>Advaita</i>	A monistic school of philosophy founded by the Indian philosopher Sankaracharya.
<i>Beegah</i>	A unit of area, approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ acre.
<i>Bhayachara</i>	A term which indicates a relationship of brotherhood.
<i>Bhowbund</i>	A brotherhood.
<i>Bullotedars</i>	The Marathi term for village artisans.
<i>Camvisdar</i>	A subordinate native revenue officer.
<i>Carcoon</i>	A servant.
<i>Chamar</i>	The caste of leather-workers.
<i>Chowar</i>	A unit of area, approximately 120 acres.
<i>Chowrie</i>	The municipal hall in a village.
<i>Cowl</i>	A contract or engagement.
<i>Cusbah</i>	A substantial village or township.
<i>Daftar</i>	An office or Secretariat.
<i>Daftardar</i>	The ranking native officer in a District Office.
<i>Dakshina</i>	(<i>Lit.</i> a gift) The prize awarded annually to brahmans by the Peshwas.
<i>Deshmukh</i>	A Marathi term for a landed aristocrat.
<i>Dharamsala</i>	A rest house for travellers.
<i>Enam</i>	(<i>Lit.</i> a gift) A term designating a grant to a feudal dependent.
<i>Ghutcool</i>	(<i>Lit.</i> Past families) A Marathi term which refers to land belonging to extinct families.
<i>Huzoor Cutcherry</i>	(<i>Lit.</i> Principal Office) A term which refers to the office of a District or Settlement Officer.

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<i>Jathas</i>	A group of families.
<i>Julaha</i>	A weaver.
<i>Jyotish</i>	The art of astrology.
<i>Kamal</i>	The revenue survey conducted in Maharashtra under Madhav Rao Peshwa.
<i>Khatik</i>	The caste of butchers.
<i>Kulkarni</i>	The village accountant.
<i>Kunbis</i>	The caste of cultivators in Maharashtra.
<i>Mahar</i>	A caste of untouchables which provides watchmen in the villages.
<i>Mamlatdar</i>	A revenue officer who was in charge of a <i>taluka</i> under the Marathas. The term also refers to a native officer responsible for the collection of tax in a <i>taluka</i> under the British Government.
<i>Mauzewan</i>	A term which refers to a village or a revenue estate.
<i>Meeras</i>	A form of tenure which confers 'proprietary' rights upon a cultivator.
<i>Meerasdar</i>	A cultivator who holds land on the <i>meeras</i> tenure.
<i>Mohturfa</i>	A tax on urban incomes.
<i>Nazarana</i>	The presents given by a feudal dependent to his lord.
<i>Nyaya</i>	A school of Hindu philosophy.
<i>Panchayat</i>	A council of five persons.
<i>Pathshala</i>	A school.
<i>Patil</i>	The headman of a village.
<i>Puntoji</i>	A brahman, usually a teacher.
<i>Puttah</i>	A title deed.
<i>Rivaj</i>	(<i>Lit.</i> custom) A term which refers to the traditional rates of assessment.
<i>Ryot</i>	A peasant.
<i>Ryotwari</i>	A form of settlement in which the peasants pay their land-tax directly to the State.
<i>Sadar Adawlat</i>	The Principal Court.
<i>Shastras</i>	The sacred books of Hinduism.
<i>Shastri</i>	A brahman versed in the <i>Shastras</i> .
<i>Sillahdar</i>	A soldier of cavalry.
<i>Sowcar</i>	A financier who resides in a city.

A SELECT GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS

<i>Sthul</i>	An estate.
<i>Taluka</i>	A territorial unit smaller than a district.
<i>Tankha</i>	A settlement introduced by Malik Amber in Maharashtra.
<i>Thulwaheeks</i>	Cultivators descended from the founding families of a village.
<i>Tukseem</i>	(<i>Lit.</i> a fraction) A branch of a family.
<i>Uprees</i>	Cultivators who do not possess any prescriptive rights in the land.
<i>Vani</i>	A village moneylender.
<i>Vedanta</i>	A system of philosophy which seeks to interpret the Vedas. The term normally refers to Sankara's <i>advaitavada</i> .
<i>Vyakaran</i>	Grammar.
<i>Vydic</i>	A term which refers to the medical profession.
<i>Watan</i>	A grant in land or a right in office.
<i>Watandar</i>	One who holds a <i>watan</i> .



I

The Poona Districts in 1818

MAHARASHTRA, literally the great country, lies in central and western India. It is inhabited by a people who speak the Marathi language, and who possess a distinct historical and cultural tradition, which sets them apart from the rest of the sub-continent of India. Maharashtra covers an area which is bounded by the Arabian Sea on the west, the rivers Narbada and Tapti on the north, and the Malaprabha on the south, while its eastern boundary is defined by geographical characteristics which demarcate the western limits of the Telugu region. Apart from the narrow Concan coast, which lies between the Arabian Sea and the Ghats, Maharashtra comprises a plateau which slopes gradually to the east, but descends precipitously to the west towards the coastal plain and the Arabian Sea. From the Ghats, which stretch roughly north to south, long tongues of higher ground run east and divide the plateau into compartments like the plains of Berar and Nagpur, the basin of the upper Godavri, and of the Bhima between Poona and Sholapur.

The location of Maharashtra has conferred certain advantages upon her people which are reflected in their history and in their political and cultural traditions. The Narbada and Tapti, which define the northern boundary of Maharashtra, act as formidable barriers in the path of any invader who proceeds towards the Deccan from the north. Besides such obstacles, the terrain of Maharashtra offers ideal conditions for sustained

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resistance against an alien authority. Both the Ghats, which run parallel to the coast, and the tongues of higher ground, which branch off eastwards from the Ghats, are flanked by rich valleys and plains in which are located many towns and villages. The uplands of Maharashtra therefore constitute an ideal base for armed resistance against an invader, since they possess abundant sources of supply, and numerous sites for military strongholds, where power can be organised both for aggression and for defence. The region is considered to be one of the most inaccessible parts of India by military strategists.

Because of the location of Maharashtra and the identity of her people, the region possesses a political and an historical tradition which distinguishes it from other parts of the subcontinent of India. In referring to these unique qualities of Maharashtra Spate, for instance, has summed up the land and the people with remarkable acumen and perception. 'The entire region,' he points out, 'bears the imprint of the Marathas: a tough, hard-working, and cheerful peasantry, ably served by an adroit Brahmin élite which maintained close touch with the people.'¹ The unique qualities of Maharashtra were equally apparent to Sir Richard Temple, the Governor of Bombay in the 1870s. Speaking of the extent to which the high culture of Hinduism had influenced the religious traditions of the region, Sir Richard Temple observed: 'But despite (the values which they share with the rest of India) the Mahrattas have always formed a separate people or nation, and still regard themselves as such.'² The qualities which struck Spate and Temple could hardly have failed to make an impression on indigenous scholars, who have consequently devoted considerable time and attention to scholarly studies of the history and culture of the region.³

¹ O. H. K. Spate, *India and Pakistan* (London, 1954), p. 654.

² R. Temple, 'The Maratha Nationality' in *Shivaji and the Rise of the Marathas* (Calcutta, 1953), p. 1.

³ The history of Maharashtra has been investigated in detail by Maharashtrian scholars who have published their findings both in English and in Marathi, though mainly in the latter. The pioneer in this field was M. G. Ranade, who wrote a series of essays attempting to unravel the reason behind the rise of Maharashtra in the 17th and 18th centuries. The scholar who has exercised the greatest influence on the historians of Maharashtra, however, is V. K. Rajwade. He collected and published twenty-two volumes of original documents dealing with the history of the region, and he touched upon all the important problems of the history of the region in

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I

Behind the unique qualities of the people of Maharashtra lies an historical tradition which stretches into the beginnings of the Christian era. During the three centuries which followed the birth of Christ, the region was ruled by the Satvahana kings from Paithan on the Godavri. Besides being the capital of a powerful kingdom, Paithan under the Satvahanas was a well-known centre of culture and commerce, and its architectural remains speak of a thriving and prosperous city. The decline of the Satvahanas was followed by a time of troubles in Maharashtra. But the Chalukyas, who established their sway over the region in the 6th century, and ruled over it for the next century and a half, were powerful enough to inflict a defeat on Harsha of Kanauj, who controlled the whole of India north of the Narbada. The Chalukyas were displaced in A.D. 780 by the Rashtrakutas, who dominated Maharashtra till the end of the 10th century, and were the most powerful rulers of the region before the Peshwas, of whom more later. The Rashtrakutas were in turn overthrown by a cadet branch of the Chalukyas, but political control over the region passed into the hands of a Yadava clan, which was overwhelmed by Alauddin Khilji in the closing years of the 13th century.¹

Though the Yadavas were vanquished by Alauddin Khilji, the intrusion of Islam in the Deccan weakened rather than destroyed the power of the landed chiefs of Maharashtra, whom we shall presently discuss in greater detail. The inaccessibility of their mountain strongholds bestowed considerable independence on these landed chiefs even when Muslim kingdoms were established south of the Narbada. But while they enjoyed a substantial measure of local autonomy, the landed chiefs of Maharashtra never presented any serious threat to the political dominance of Islam, partly because they were unable to

the introductions he wrote to these volumes. Rajwade's example influenced and inspired V. S. Khare, D. B. Parasnis and G. S. Sardesai, all of whom have made significant contributions to historical scholarship. The tradition set by these scholars is being maintained in our own times by Professor P. M. Joshi of Poona, and Professor N. R. Pathak of Bombay. The work of these historians reflects a sensitive awareness of the regional identity of Maharashtra.

¹ C. A. Kincaid and D. B. Parasnis, *A History of the Maratha People* (Oxford, 1918), Vol. 1, Chaps. I to VI.

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unite in opposition to the Muslim rulers, and partly also because their interests were in no way seriously threatened by them.

Shivaji, the national hero of Maharashtra, who organised a movement against the Muslim rulers of the Deccan, belonged to an upstart family whose fortunes had been founded by his father. Shivaji saw his great opportunity when the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb vanquished the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan; and he exploited the political vacuum created by Aurangzeb to set up an independent State, which was inspired and sustained by the principles of resurgent Hinduism and Maratha dominance. Shivaji and his soldiers were Marathas of lowly caste, but his ministers and administrators were recruited almost exclusively from high-caste brahmans. Shivaji had many achievements to his credit. He inculcated self-confidence in his people; he organised them into a formidable military power; and he laid the foundations of an enduring political society. The State established by Shivaji was visited by various vicissitudes after his death. But despite the enormous resources which he controlled, Aurangzeb was unable to vanquish that spirit of independence which was Shivaji's greatest boon to his people, and he weakened the foundations of the Mughal Empire in an attempt to annihilate a State which rested on the support of the common people of Maharashtra.¹

After the successors of Shivaji had consolidated their position in the Deccan, the Mughal Emperors were obliged to acquiesce in their independence, and to grant them formal recognition. The instrument of recognition was negotiated on behalf of Shivaji's grandson by his brahman minister, whose official designation was the Peshwa. The office of the Peshwa grew in importance as the Marathas gained in strength, and eventually be-

¹ A considerable amount of biographical literature is available about Shivaji. Sir Jadunath Sarker's *Shivaji and His Times* (4th edn, Calcutta, 1961) is still the best general survey of the life and times of the Maratha statesman. J. Grant-Duff devotes a considerable portion of the first volume of his *History of the Marathas* (4th edn, Bombay, 1876) to Shivaji's career. Most Maharashtrian scholars, however, find Grant-Duff's account of Shivaji lacking in sympathy, and they feel that he pays inadequate attention to the religious changes which were sweeping across Maharashtra contemporaneously, and which created a favourable climate for the political unification of the region. See, for instance, M. G. Ranade's essays on the *Rise of the Maratha Power* (Bombay, 1961), and Chapter III of G. S. Sardesai's *The Main Currents of Maratha History* (Bombay, 1949).

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came hereditary, while the descendants of Shivaji sank into a position of insignificance. By the middle of the 18th century the political system founded by Shivaji became dominant throughout Maharashtra, with the Peshwas controlling authority from their seat at Poona, while the titular kings clung to the shadow of power at Satara.

While the Peshwas established their authority over Maharashtra, some of the Maratha chiefs busied themselves in carving out independent principalities from the outlying provinces of the Mughal Empire. Prominent among these chiefs were the Bhonsles who established themselves in Nagpur; the Scindhias who gained control of Gwalior; the Gaekwads who set themselves up in Baroda; and the Holkars who seized hold of Indore. Between the Peshwas and the Maratha chiefs there subsisted a relationship which it is most difficult to define. The chiefs were to all intents and purposes independent, yet they recognised the Peshwa as the head of the Maratha polity. But while they accepted the Peshwa as their suzerain, they reserved to themselves considerable freedom of action. The political system of Maharashtra therefore resembled a Confederacy. The Peshwa, who was the head of this Confederacy, ruled the Marathi speaking territories from his seat at Poona, while the subordinate Maratha chiefs controlled extensive provinces in central and western India. Despite its loosely knit structure, the Maratha Confederacy became the dominant power in India under the leadership of Balaji Baji Rao, who occupied the office of Peshwa from 1740 to 1761.

The growth of Maratha power was first checked at the battle of Panipat, which was fought in 1761. The débâcle of Panipat shook the political edifice headed by the Peshwas to its very foundations, and seriously weakened Maratha power. But while the Marathas were able to recover from the defeat of Panipat, and applied themselves with renewed vigour to a policy of expansion, they met their Nemesis in the British East India Company. The first Anglo-Maratha War, which was fought in the 1780s, proved inconclusive. But within a decade dissensions in the Confederacy created a serious rift between the Peshwa and the Maratha chiefs, and forced the former to seek British protection. Whereupon the East India Company, acting on behalf of the Peshwa, inflicted in 1803 a series of military reverses on

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the Maratha chiefs, and obliged them to cede large chunks of territory and to accept British political supremacy.

Though the events of 1803 destroyed the Maratha Confederacy by placing the Peshwa under British tutelage, he refused to accept the verdict of the Second Anglo-Maratha War as final. The initiative for the third and final round of hostilities came from the Peshwa, despite the fact that in 1802 he had placed himself voluntarily under British protection. Spurred by memories of past glory, the Peshwa placed himself at the head of a combination which sought to rid the country of British control. However, his desperate attempt to reassert his independence ended in military disaster at Kirki near Poona in 1818. Under the terms of a peace settlement, the Peshwa retired as a state prisoner to Bithur near Kanpur, while the territories under his control were taken over by the British Government.¹

II

The geographical factors which enabled the political leaders of Maharashtra to offer effective opposition to Islam, and which also enabled them to dominate the subcontinent of India, have received considerable attention at the hands of the historians of the region. It would be foolish to deny that the inaccessibility of Maharashtra played a significant part in moulding the resistance which her leaders offered to Islam. But it would be equally foolish to maintain that factors of geography alone explain the resistance which the people of Maharashtra offered to the spread of Islam in the Deccan. To explain this resistance, and to explain the striking political vitality of the region, we have to look in other directions.

The key to the vigour of Maharashtra lay in the secular and spiritual values which inspired the people of the region. These values stemmed from a religious upsurge which coincided with the advent of Islam in the Deccan, and which affiliated the

¹ The events leading to the dissolution of the Maratha Empire can be gleaned from a number of works, of which the most important are: (i) J. Grant-Duff, *History of the Marathas* (4th edn, Bombay, 1876), Vol. II; (ii) Sir Jadunath Sarker, *Fall of the Mughal Empire* (2nd edn, Calcutta, 1950), Vol. II; and (iii) G. S. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas* (Bombay, 1957), Vols. I and II. The career of the last Peshwa is sketched out in detail by P. C. Gupta in his *Baji Rao II and the East India Company* (Oxford, 1939). Also see *Poona Residency Records*, ed. by G. S. Sardesai, Vol. XII (Bombay, 1950), and Vol. XIII (Bombay, 1953).

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élite castes, like the brahmans, and the lower and middle castes, like the *kunbis* and *mahars*, to a common corpus of religious ideas. By resolving the tension between the élite and the plebeian castes, Maharashtra was able to bridge a gulf which bedevilled Hindu society elsewhere, and prevented it from offering effective resistance to Islam. The resolution of caste tensions released a flood of creative energy which expressed itself in the political genius of Shivaji and the imperial vision of Baji Rao I.

The seminal intellectual influence upon the brahman castes of Maharashtra was the *advaita* philosophy of Sankara, who lived in the 8th century.¹ Like other exponents of orthodox Hinduism, Sankara sought to initiate the individual into a state called *moksha*, which represents complete spiritual realisation, and which liberates the individual from the trials and tribulations of the secular world. Also like other exponents of orthodox Hinduism, Sankara looked upon his system as the only valid interpretation of the sacred texts of Hinduism, namely, the Upanishads, the Bhagavada Gita and the Vedanta Sutras. The basic postulates of *advaita* were set out in a few simple propositions; that the ultimate reality was a principle called *Brahman*; that the individual soul was a part and parcel of *Brahman*; and finally, that the phenomenal world or *maya* was a reflection of *Brahman* upon the centres of human consciousness. But Sankara expounded these propositions with a skill and subtlety which made him the most distinguished figure in Hindu philosophy.

The vitality of Sankara's ideas lay partly in their intellectual sophistication and logical rigorousness, and partly in the monastic order which he organised to provide a firm institutional basis for his philosophy. However, the concepts advanced by Sankara were directed exclusively to the brahmans, with the result that the values of Hindu orthodoxy did not in the first instance influence the middle and lower castes. Indeed, the activities of Sankara actually divided the Hindu community into a small brahman élite, whose values were firmly anchored to *advaita*, and a host of lesser castes, which were only marginally influenced by the high culture of Hinduism. The integration of the lower castes with the brahmans was a task to which a

¹ F. Warden, 'On the Customs of the Gosavees' in A. Steele, *Summary of the Laws and Customs of Hindu Castes Within the Dekhun Provinces Subject to the Bombay Provinces* (Bombay, 1827). Hereinafter referred to as Steele's *Summary of Hindu Laws*.

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remarkable coterie of religious leaders, the so-called Saints of Maharashtra, addressed themselves in the centuries following the spread of Sankara's ideas among the brahmans. The earliest figures in this movement were Mukundraj and Jnaneshwar, who lived in the 12th and 13th centuries.¹ Mukundraj was a brahman by caste, a devotee of Shiva, and he wrote a number of philosophical works in which he expressed in simple Marathi poetry the *advaita* philosophy of Sankara. In choosing Marathi, the language of the common folk, instead of Sanskrit, the language of the brahmans, for his philosophical writings Mukundraj initiated a movement which aimed at influencing the lower and middle castes of Hindu society. The significance of this transition is eloquently brought out in an account of the reaction of the plebeian castes of Paithan when Eknath, a brahman saint in the populist tradition, acquiesced in the desire of his son, Hari Pandit, to perform the *kirtan* in Sanskrit instead of Marathi:

The news spread in the city that Eknath had abandoned the reading of the *Prakrit* books, and the Hari *kirtans*. . . . The pious took this very seriously to heart. 'Our good fortune is broken and lost,' they said, 'and therefore Eknath has given up reading the *Prakrit* books, and he himself listens to the *Puranas* in Sanskrit.' The women, sudras and those of other castes (than the Brahmins) could not understand the Sanskrit, and so while the *Purana* was being read they would get up and leave, abandoning the habit of regularly listening. When Sri Nath (Eknath) used to read the *Purana* the *wada* (house) was more than filled. Five or ten had to remain outside regularly. The place simply swarmed with men. Eknath understood the inner feelings of all, and said to himself, 'There has been a great falling off in bhakti. . . .'²

¹ A wealth of documentary and analytical material is available for the *bhakti* movement in Maharashtra. Attention was first focused on this movement by M. G. Ranade in his essay entitled 'The Saints and Prophets of Maharashtra'. Ranade compares the *bhakti* upsurge to the Reformation in Europe, and attributes to it the creativity of Maharashtra. His interpretation is completely repudiated by a marxist scholar like D. D. Kosambi (see his *Myth and Reality* (Bombay, 1962), pp. 31-36), and partly repudiated by R. V. Otkar (see his introduction to *Rise of the Maratha Power* (Bombay, 1961), p. vi), yet his views find wide if somewhat uncritical acceptance with most of the historians of Maharashtra. I believe that the most sophisticated account of the Saints of Maharashtra is to be found in a series of lectures given by Professor N. R. Pathak before the Bombay *Prarthana Samaj* in 1935. These lectures were subsequently reproduced in the weekly *Subodh Patrika* between 29 September 1935 and 10 November 1935.

² J. E. Abbott, *The Poet-Saints of Maharashtra*, Vol. 2, p. 216. This series, twelve in number, consists of translations by J. E. Abbott of the account by the Marathi poet,

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The most significant figure among the Saints of Maharashtra was Jnaneshwar, who was a brahman like Mukundraj, and who wrote a commentary on the Bhagavada Gita in Marathi called the Jnaneshwari. In expounding the Gita for the common man Jnaneshwar took as his principal theme *bhakti*, or devotion to God, and he is therefore regarded as the founder of the *bhakti* school of Marathi poetry. He was the coryphaeus of the devotional movement, which honoured without distinction Shiva and Vishnu, the two principal Gods of the Hindu pantheon, and which was inspired by the philosophy of Sankara. Since Jnaneshwar was initially a devotee of Shiva, and since he was also an *advaitin*, his conversion to the Vaishnava belief in *bhakti* as an instrument of salvation was probably due to the influence of Ramanuja, a Vaishnava philosopher of the 11th century. It is likely that Jnaneshwar belonged to the Bhagawata cult, which attaches equal importance to Shiva and Vishnu, and that the *bhakti* movement was heavily influenced by the beliefs of the Bhagawatas.¹

Though it was initiated by brahmans of high caste, the *bhakti* movement soon passed into the hands of plebeians like Namadeva the *shimpi*, or Tukarama the *vani*, who expressed religious and philosophical ideas through poetry which appealed to the emotions rather than the intellect, and which exercised great influence over the common people of Maharashtra. The poetry reflecting the movement glorified *bhakti*, and it laid emphasis on the facility with which it provided access to God. Besides preaching the superiority of devotional as opposed to intellectual realisation, of God the *bhakti* saints tried to undermine the obstacles which stood between high and low castes, and prevented the latter from gaining access to spiritual salvation. But although they advocated the novel doctrine of the spiritual equality of different castes, the *bhakti* saints desisted from attacking secular distinctions of caste, partly in the interests of social harmony, and partly out of indifference to the material world. Eknath the brahman saint, for instance, assured Ranya the *mahar* that

Mahipati, of the life and teachings of the Saints of Maharashtra. Besides providing the reader with an insight into the religious values which sustained the people of Maharashtra, Abbott's work presents a fascinating picture of the social and economic conditions which prevailed in that period.

¹ Vide S. M. Edward's introduction to J. Grant-Duff, *History of the Marathas* (Oxford, 1921), p. lxi.

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an outcaste could become 'very acceptable to God' through *bhakti*; he even accepted an invitation to dine at Ranya's home, much to the disgust of his caste-fellows. But it was Vithala who assumed Eknath's form, so runs the myth, and dined in his stead at Ranya's home, thus preventing Eknath from being ostracised by the brahmans of Paithan.¹

The attitude of the Saints of Maharashtra towards God, and towards the institution of caste, was vividly reflected in the poetry of Namadeva and Tukarama, the two most popular figures in the movement, who wrote with such compassion and feeling that they inspired a whole group of minor poets from the plebeian castes. The most important of these minor poets were Samvatya the *mali*, Chokamela the *mahar*, Goa the potter and Narharid the goldsmith. In their attempt to establish a spiritual democracy, the Saints of Maharashtra rejected the values of orthodox Hinduism, and they advocated the idea of salvation for every individual, whatever be his station in the scale of caste, and howsoever humble be his status in life:

One and all have a right to benefit from my teachings [wrote one of the *bhakti* poets]. . . . There is no restriction here. All the varnas can benefit from it. Brahmins, Shudras, Vaishyas, Kshatriyas and even Chandalas have an equal right here. Vaishnavas feel that all distinction and discrimination is a delusion, i.e., inauspicious. One who describes the caste of the Vaishnavas will fall in the worst of hails. . . . He is no Brahmin to whom God's name is not dear. . . . One who straight away on uttering the name of Rama-Krishna has before him his image, though born an untouchable, is a Brahmin indeed. . . .²

By proclaiming the spiritual equality of high and low castes, the Saints of Maharashtra were able to spread the values of Hinduism among the plebeian castes, and as a result of their proselytisation different castes and classes were drawn close together in the pursuit of common spiritual and secular objectives.

The first phase of the *bhakti* movement ended with Namadeva and his associates. During the period which followed no outstanding religious literature was produced, and the creative

¹ J. E. Abbott, *The Poet-Saints of Maharashtra*, Vol. 2, pp. 139-40.

² Quotation from Professor D. K. Garde's unpublished doctoral dissertation entitled: 'Social and Political Thought of the Saints of Maharashtra', Allahabad University, 1956.

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legacy of the time is negligible. The reason for this decline in creativity is foreshadowed in the *abhangas* of Namadeva, which speak of a foreign invasion, and of a *Padshah* or a Muslim ruler. The Muslim invasion of the Deccan disturbed the smooth flow of life in Maharashtra, and created social chaos and political disorder. The sentiment of solidarity generated by the Saints of Maharashtra helped the community in meeting the challenge of Islam. But since Namadeva and his associates were concerned with the spiritual rather than with the secular world, they did not stimulate any active response to Islam. Because of the passivity of the *bhakti* movement in its first phase, the Hindu community acquiesced tamely in the political supremacy of Islam, and its energies were entirely absorbed in maintaining its religious and cultural identity.

But even during the centuries of Muslim predominance, the political apathy of the Hindu community as a whole was not shared by some of its leaders, whose ancestors had bequeathed to them traditions of daring and initiative. Such leaders recognised the weak foundations of Muslim power over Maharashtra. They also recognised that the sentiment of religious solidarity between high and low castes could form the basis of a vigorous political society resting upon resurgent Hinduism. The bigotry of the Muslim rulers assisted such leaders by creating a climate which bestowed upon the *bhakti* movement a militancy, and a concern for the secular world, that was conspicuous by its absence in the teachings of Jnaneshwar, Namadeva and Tukarama. The outstanding exponent of militant *bhakti* was Ramdas, who spent the most creative period of his life in the villages around Poona and Satara, preaching the ethic of involvement to the common people, and establishing *maths* and temples for the dissemination of his ideas.

Ramdas substituted the sword for the cymbals as the symbol of the *bhakti* movement. In doing so he created suitable conditions for the emergence of a political leader seeking to unite Maharashtra on the basis of resurgent Hinduism. Such a leader was Shivaji, who laid the foundations of Maratha power.¹

¹ Vide S. S. Apte, *Samarth Ramdas: Life and Mission* (Bombay, 1965). Also see J. E. Abbott, *The Poet-Saints of Maharashtra*, Vol. 5, Chaps. XVI to XVII, and R. D. Ranade, *Pathway to God in Marathi Literature* (Bombay, 1961), pp. 284-333.

My interpretation of the *bhakti* movement is based partly on the available literature on the subject, and partly on discussions with Irawati Karve, Professor of

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III

The political system established by Shivaji on the foundations prepared by the Saints of Maharashtra was characterised by several interesting features. The task confronting the Saints of Maharashtra consisted in bridging the gulf in values between the élite castes and the plebeian castes. They bridged this gulf through disseminating the high culture of Hinduism by means of a religious literature which was specially created for the unsophisticated sections of the community. But even though the *bhakti* movement generated values which brought the *kunbi* and the brahman close together, it still required political leadership of a high quality to knit the conflicting elements of Maharashtra into an integrated society.

There flourished under the Hindu rulers of Maharashtra a class of landed chiefs, or *deshmukhs*, who exercised extensive powers over the territories under their control. Such were the Naik Nimbalkars of Phaltan, who belonged to one of the most ancient families in Maharashtra. Such also were the Jadvavs of Jindkheir; the Shirkes of Mahabaleshwar; the Savants of Waree; the Ghatgays of Maun; and last but not the least, the Ghorpades of Kapsi and Mudhol.¹ The *deshmukhs* were either petty rajas who had accepted the suzerainty of the rulers of the region, or they were administrators who had usurped hereditary status over the period of time. But whatever be their origin, when the Muslims conquered the Deccan they found the *deshmukhs* firmly entrenched in their estates and their authority was accepted without question both by the Hindu rulers whom the Muslims displaced, and by the village communities of Maharashtra. Indeed, the *deshmukhs* possessed so firm a hold over rural society that when the Muslim rulers appointed collectors of revenue to administer the land-tax on their behalf, the peasants

Sociology, Deccan College, Poona; D. K. Garde, Professor of Political Science, Poona University; S. V. Dandekar, Professor of Sanskrit, Poona University; and N. R. Pathak, formerly Professor of Marathi in Bombay University. Responsibility for the shortcomings of this interpretation, needless to say, rest exclusively on me. The extent to which the tradition of *bhakti* has bridged the gulf between the masses and the intellectuals in Maharashtra was vividly illustrated by Professor Karve's remark that 'because of the Saints of Maharashtra one could get a better exposition of *advaita* from an illiterate peasant woman, than one could from the Professor of Philosophy at Poona!'

¹ J. Grant-Duff, *History of the Marathas* (Bombay, 1878), Vol. I, pp. 71-4.

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refused to accept the authority of these collectors, and rallied around their traditional leaders, namely, the *deshmukhs*. The Muslim rulers were consequently obliged to purchase the co-operation of the *deshmukhs* by granting them a proportion of the land-tax. As a result of such a compromise, the *deshmukhs* remained a powerful social group in Maharashtra, both under the Bahmani rulers, and under the successor states of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda.¹

The conflict between the *deshmukhs* who represented local autonomy, and the Muslim rulers who sought to centralise authority in their hands, became the principal feature of politics in Maharashtra after the Muslim conquest. This conflict resulted in the eclipse of some of the old landed families; but it also created new ones, like the Mores of Jaoli, who owed their rise to the rulers of Bijapur. So long as power was vested in a competent ruler, the *deshmukhs* acquiesced in his authority. But the moment the control of the ruler weakened, the *deshmukhs* tried to set themselves up as independent chiefs. Their interests conflicted with the interests of a powerful ruler, and led them to oppose any attempt at the creation of a centralised State, whether the attempt was made by a Muslim king under the inspiration of Islam, or by a co-religionist under the aegis of resurgent Hinduism.

The *deshmukhs* of Maharashtra, therefore, opposed the attempt of Shivaji to create a centralised State.² Baronial families like the Ghorpades of Mudhol and the Mores of Jaoli lent their services readily to the kings of Bijapur in order to crush Shivaji, whom they regarded as an upstart who threatened their position in a way it was not threatened by the Muslim rulers. Shivaji, on his part, recognised the reasons which inspired the hostility of the old *deshmukh* families, and he realised how important it was for him to be surrounded by men who owed their position to his generosity and were therefore bound to him by ties of interest and sentiment. As the area under his control widened, he installed in the administration, as a counterpoise to the

¹ See Memoranda by J. Briggs and H. Pottinger enclosed in Report by W. Chaplin, Commissioner of Deccan, dated 20 August 1822: *Papers from the Records of the East India House Relating to the Administration of Revenue, Police and Civil and Criminal Justice* (London, 1826), Vol. IV. Hereinafter referred to as *East India Papers*.

² G. S. Sardesai, *The Main Currents of Maratha History* (Bombay, 1949), pp. 74-7. Also see Grant-Duff, *op.cit.*, pp. 196-7.

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deshmukhs, *deshasth* brahmans trained in the art of government by his astute minister, Dada Kondev. The role of a subservient administration was equally apparent to the Peshwas. Consequently, when Balaji Vishwananth assumed control of the Poona Government he displaced the *deshasth* brahmans in the administration by *chitpavan* brahmans, who were his caste-fellows and therefore served his interests with unflinching loyalty.¹

To strengthen their authority the rulers of Maharashtra not only recruited administrators from castes on whose loyalty they could depend in all circumstances but they also created new landed groups which had a vested interest in their régimes. As a result, by the time the British conquered Maharashtra in 1818, two groups of landlords had been superimposed upon the old *deshmukh* families whom Shivaji had subjugated in the first instance: namely, those who held grants from the Rajas of Satara, issued when the Marathas were engaged in a war of survival against the Muslim rulers, and those whom the Peshwas had ennobled in order to consolidate their position. To the first group belonged chiefs like the Naik of Sunda; while the second group was represented by landlords like the Patwardhans, who had risen under the Peshwas from comparative obscurity to the ownership of the most substantial landed estates in Maharashtra.²

The system of administration created by the Peshwas, to control the *deshmukhs*, and to collect the tax on land, rested on simple principles. The provinces of Maharashtra were divided into revenue divisions, each one of which was placed under an officer called the *mamlatdar*, who supervised the collection of the land-tax, and attended to police and judicial duties. The *mamlatdar* was appointed by the central government, but he was permitted to select for himself the subordinate officers who assisted him in discharging his responsibilities. In the districts surrounding Poona the *mamlatdar* received his orders direct from the central government. But in the peripheral districts an officer called the *Sirsubedhar* was interposed between Poona and the *mamlatdars*. The functions of the *Sirsubedhar* were ill-defined, and

¹ R. E. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay* (Bombay, 1920). Vol. I, p. 242.

² For a detailed account of the Patwardhans see letter from M. Elphinstone to the Government of India dated 26 October 1911: *Poona Residency Correspondence*, Vol. XII, pp. 81-4. Also see Sardesai, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

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his prerogatives and responsibilities varied from place to place. In the Carnatic he possessed extensive powers, appointing his own *mamlatdars*, and bearing personal responsibility for the collection of the land-tax. In Kandesh the *mamlatdars* conducted their business under the direct control of Poona, and the *Sirsu-bedhar* merely performed a supervisory function.¹

The *mamlatdar* was the most important member of the administration, and he was consequently chosen from families of proven loyalty, whose antecedents were known to the Peshwa or to a distinguished member of his court. When a new *mamlatdar* was appointed to a district, he first acquainted himself with the *deshmukhs* and the landed chiefs of the region, whose knowledge of the condition of the peasants, and the tax which they could pay, supplemented the information with which he equipped himself from the revenue records in the *daftar*. In apportioning the land-tax on the villages under his charge the *mamlatdar's* negotiations with the *patils*, or headmen of villages, were always conducted through the *deshmukhs*, whose local knowledge was most useful in ensuring a fair distribution of the burden of tax. Since he represented the interests of the government the *mamlatdar* tried to procure the maximum return to the State by way of the land-tax; the *patils*, of course, represented the peasants, and tried to defend their interests to the best of their ability. In the conflict between the *patils* and the *mamlatdars* the latter could easily have imposed a ruinous tax on the peasants because they were not restrained by any legal or rational principles, and also because they were backed by the superior authority of the State. But the interposition of the *deshmukhs*, who were looked upon as their patrons and protectors by the peasants, ensured an equitable settlement of the land-tax. If, however, a *mamlatdar* persisted in demanding an excessive tax, then the *patils* appealed to the central government through the *deshmukh*. The existence of an alternative channel of communication between the central government and the villages restrained the *mamlatdars*, and prevented them from oppressing the peasants.²

¹ Report on the Maratha States by M. Elphinstone dated 25 October 1819; *East India Papers*, Vol. IV.

² Report on the Revenue Administration of the Peshwa's Territories during the Administration of Nana Farnavis by J. McLeod dated nil: *East India Papers*, Vol. IV.

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While the delicate balance of authority and responsibility between the *deshmukhs* and the *mamlatdars* ensured the efficiency of the administration under a competent ruler, the tensions latent within the system flared into the open the moment a weakening of the controlling hand at Poona undermined the power of the *mamlatdars*. Whenever this happened, it was at the peripheries rather than in the districts surrounding Poona that the worst symptoms of disorder manifested themselves. In Thana on the Concan coast, for instance, a British official discovered that the peasants were being made to pay substantial sums of money over and above the standard land-revenue by way of illicit taxes.¹ Most of these illicit taxes originated in the time of troubles which followed the defeat of Panipat, and the death of Balaji Baji Rao. The Peshwa was succeeded by Madhav Rao, who was a minor, and whose ministers thought it expedient to farm out villages to individuals who took upon themselves the responsibility of collecting the land-tax. These farmers of revenue behaved with complete irresponsibility, and made quick profits for themselves by taxing the peasants in excess of the customary rates. The practice of farming villages was revived by Baji Rao II, and it inflicted great misery and suffering upon the *kunbis* during the twilight of the Peshwas.

IV

The elements of instability in the administration would suggest that the villages of Maharashtra were subject to frequent fluctuations in fortune as a result of political changes in Poona. But despite this instability the rural communities were not seriously affected by changes in the capital of Maharashtra because of the restricted role played by the administration in the day-to-day life of the peasants, and also because of the existence in the villages of institutions of self-government which bestowed self-sufficiency on rural society.

The very appearance of a village in Maharashtra set it apart as a miniature world, self-sufficient in itself, and geared to a style of life calling for a minimum of contact with the world

¹ *NAI* (National Archives of India): Report by J. M. Davies on Illicit Taxes in Thana dated 8 October 1836: Home Department, Revenue Branch, Consultation No. 14 dated 27 February 1837.

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outside.¹ It would be located on a smoothly rolling mound, in close proximity to a stream, and it would be surrounded by the fields cultivated by the *kunbis*. From a distance it had the appearance of a mass of crumbling grey walls, with a few stunted trees growing out among them, and with a few structures more conspicuous than the rest. All this was enclosed by a mud wall of irregular shape, and pierced by rude gates of wood at two or more points. On entering such a village appearances were no more prepossessing than from the outside. There was a complete lack of design in the layout of dwellings and streets. The crumbling walls would turn out to be the homes of the cultivators, which were made of calcareous earth, with terraced tops of the same material. These dwellings were devoid of any aesthetic pretensions. They had narrow and crooked lanes winding among them, and dividing them into groups of two or three. While conforming to a basic design, the homes of the substantial cultivators were slightly larger in size, and a little different in outward appearance, from the homes of the poor cultivators. But the most conspicuous structures in the village were the *chowrie*, or the municipal hall, where the public affairs of the village were debated; and the temple, built either by a rich and repentant *patil*, or by a philanthropic *deshmukh*, in the hope of commuting their earthly signs. Conspicuous, too, were the dwellings of untouchables like the *mahars* and the *mangs*, whose status in the scale of caste prevented them from coming into physical contact with the *kunbis*, and who consequently resided in little hamlets outside the walls of the village.

The vast majority of the villagers were cultivators of the *kunbi* caste, and they were subdivided into *thulwaheeks*, or hereditary cultivators, and *uprees*, or cultivators without any prescriptive rights in the soil. The *thulwaheeks* were descended from the first settlers of the village, who had in periods of remote antiquity migrated in *jathas*, or family groups, to new sites and had apportioned the available arable land between themselves. A *bakhar* setting out the circumstances which led to the establishment of the village of Muruda illustrates the ties which linked the *thulwaheeks* of a rural community to each other, and

¹ T. Coats, 'Account of the Present State of the Township of Lony' in *Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay* (London, 1823), III, pp. 183-250. Hereinafter referred to as Coats' *Account of Lony*.

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determined their property rights in the soil.¹ The site of Muruda was originally a jungle, and it served as the *rudrabhumi*, or burial ground, of the neighbouring hamlet of Asuda. To Asuda in the 16th century came an enterprising brahman called Gangadharbhatta, with two disciples in tow, and he decided to establish a new settlement in the neighbourhood of the village. With this end in view, Gangadharbhatta first asked the permission of the cultivators of Asuda to clear the jungle which served as their *rudrabhumi*. He next approached the raja of the region, a prince of the Sekara dynasty called Jalandhra, for a grant of the land surrounding the proposed village. The land gifted away by Jalandhra was then distributed by Gangadharbhatta among the thirteen *jathas* whom he had persuaded to migrate to the new settlement. The property of each *jatha* was marked off by stones called *Gadudus*, and *Kshetrapalas*, or tutelary deities, were appointed as divine witnesses to the allocation of fields. Besides providing them with holdings in land, the shrewd brahman Gangadharbhatta also defined the obligations and the prerogatives of the founding families of Muruda.

The *jathas* of a village like Muruda originally held their estates in joint ownership, and they were collectively responsible for the payment of the land-tax on the village. If the owner of one of the shares in a joint estate let his land fall waste, the family assumed responsibility for his share of the tax, and took over his fields for cultivation. Similarly, if the member of a *jatha* died without an heir, then his field was divided among the surviving members of the family. He was also free to dispose of his *baproti*, or patronymic, but his share was not permitted to pass out of the *jatha* if a co-sharer was willing to buy it. Only if no member of the *jatha* wanted to purchase the field was it sold to an outsider, who then entered the *jatha* on the same terms as the original incumbent, but was still designated *birader bhaus*, or legal-brother, instead of *ghar bhaus*, or brother-of-the-same-house. The institution of *jathas* was of great help in the collection of tax. In each village a representative of the eldest branch in a *jatha* accepted responsibility for the entire family, and collected the dues from its various members. Finally, the patriarch of the seniormost *jatha* served as the *patil* or the headman of the village,

¹ See 'Account of the Founding of the village of Muruda in the South Concan' in *Writings and Speeches of Vishwanath Narayan Mandlik* (Bombay, 1916).

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and was required to collect the land-tax of the whole village by the *mamlatdar*.¹

By the time Baji Rao Peshwa surrendered the Poona territories to the Government of Bombay in 1818, the *jathas* had lost some of their cohesion, partly through inbuilt tensions, but partly also through the attempt of the Poona Government to undermine their autonomy in the distribution and collection of the land-tax in the village. Prior to the 1760s, once the tax to be paid by a village had been settled through negotiations between the *patil* and the *mamlatdar*, the internal distribution of this tax was left to the *jathas* of the village, and was accomplished on the basis of the *rivaj* or customary rates of the community. After the disastrous defeat of Panipat, however, since the revenues of Maharashtra stood in desperate need of augmentation, Madhav Rao Peshwa introduced the *kamal* survey, which anticipated the *ryotwari* survey of Sir Thomas Munro, and attempted to undermine the autonomy of the *jathas* by replacing the *rivaj* rates with a new scale of assessment, and by obliging the *kunbis* to pay their dues directly to the State, instead of paying them through the agency of the *jathas*. But the *jathas* were so powerful in the villages of Maharashtra that the *kamal* survey was unable to undermine their authority, and even after its execution the *kunbis* continued to pay their taxes on the basis of the *rivaj* instead of the *kamal* rates.²

Despite the great influence which they had exercised over the villages of Maharashtra, and despite the success with which they had frustrated the objectives of the *kamal* survey, the *jathas* no longer flourished in full vigour at the time of the British conquest. The *kunbis* remembered the institution only to the extent

¹ BA (Bombay State Archives): H. R. D. Robertson to W. Chaplin dated 17 October 1820: R.D. (Revenue Department), Vol. 26/5 of 1822.

² BA: R. K. Pringle to H. R. D. Robertson dated 20 November 1823: R.D., Vol. 10/94 of 1823. The substitution of the *rivaj* for the *kamal* rates is open to the interpretation that the *kamal* survey only aimed at gaining for the State an accurate idea of the productive capacity of individual holdings. But this hypothesis is difficult to maintain since the *kamal* survey showed that the traditional rates were full of the most glaring inconsistencies. All this can be illustrated by comparing the *kamal* and *rivaj* rates for a village. In the hamlet of Oswaree Khuro in the Collectorate of Poona, for instance, the fields Pandru and Wursola contained a chowar of land each, and were therefore taxed an equal amount by the *rivaj* system. Yet these fields were found to possess different productive capacities by the *kamal* survey. A comparison of the fields Dhuljote and Amberket in the same village confirms the arbitrary nature of the *rivaj* rates.

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of entrusting the oldest family in the community with the responsibility of collecting the land-tax from the entire village. But joint responsibility for the payment of the land-tax was no longer rigidly enforced. The members of the oldest family in the village, who represented it in its dealings with *mamlatdars* and other outsiders were called *patils*, and the seniormost among them was called the *mukaddam patil*. Long after the founding of a village, cultivators descended from the family of *patils* considered themselves to be superior in status to other cultivators, even though their pretensions to superiority were not buttressed by any social privileges, or by any accumulations of wealth. The crucial difference within the cultivators of a village lay between the *thulwaheeks* and the *uprees*. The former could not be dispossessed of their holdings so long as they paid their taxes; they could also sell or mortgage their property with the consent of other members of the *jatha*. In contrast, the *uprees*' connection with the village was tenuous. They leased the deserted holdings or the arable waste of the village on an annual basis, or on a lease which ran concurrently for a number of years.

While the differences between the *thulwaheeks* and the *uprees* were quite significant, they found expression in social rather than in economic distinctions, and they were related to contrasting styles of life rather than to sharp differences in incomes. In a typical village like Ambola, for instance, the holdings of *uprees* like Suntojee Scindiah and Kundojee Scindiah were comparable in area and productivity to the holdings of the majority of the *thulwaheeks* of the community.¹ Besides, *thulwaheeks* like Beerjee Scindiah and Ambajee Scindiah, whose fields possessed the same productivity as the holdings of Suntojee and Kundojee, paid a heavier tax as their share of the village rental. They did so because the *uprees* could only be attracted to the villages through low rents. In contrast to the *uprees*, who wandered from one village to another in search of better leases, the *thulwaheeks* were deeply attached to their holdings, and they never migrated to a new village so long as they could make a bare living on their ancestral lands. Their attachment to their holdings did not flow exclusively from acquisitiveness. It was equally a result of the

¹ BA: 'Tabular View of the Distribution of Village Lands In the Village of Ambola, Poona Collectorate': Appendix to Major Sykes' Report on Poona District dated nil: R.D. Vol. 154B of 1826. Hereinafter referred to as Sykes' *Account of Ambola*.

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social privileges which the possession of a *watan*, or a prescriptive right in land, bestowed on its owner in a society whose values were predominantly rural. The *thulwaheek* was a member of the council which debated the political affairs of the village; he had the right to pasture his cattle in the village common; he did not pay any house-tax so long as he had only one dwelling in the village; he was exempted from a tax paid by others on the occasion of marriage; and last but not the least, he was entitled to preference over the *uprees* on all social ceremonies in the village.

The absence of sharp differences in incomes in the villages of Maharashtra created a social climate which was devoid of serious conflict and strife, and which exercised a decisive influence on the behaviour of the *kunbis*. The *kunbis* possessed a mild and unobtrusive disposition, and they abhorred a want of gentleness in others. Yet for all their mildness, they had a latent warmth of temper, and if oppressed beyond a point, they could turn fiercely on their tormentors, as indeed they did during the disturbances of 1875 in the Deccan. A perceptive traveller in the villages around Poona would have found the peasants surprisingly well informed about agriculture, and the concerns of their village would immediately hold their interest. 'On the whole they are far better informed than the lower classes of our own population,' a British official observed, 'and they certainly far surpass them in propriety and orderliness of demeanour.'¹ That such a portrayal is not overdrawn is clear from the account we have of the distribution of holdings in the village of Ambola. Of the cultivators of Ambola, more than half possessed fields which ranged between 15 and 30 *beeghas* in area. Holdings of this size yielded a reasonable income by the standards of the time, although they did not provide any insurance against involvement in debt. The three substantial cultivators in Ambola were the *patil*, Babu Ram Scindiah, and the *kunbis*, Marojee Scindiah and Bapujee Scindiah, each one of whom had a holding that was 60 *beeghas* in extent, and thrice as large as the average holding in the village. In contrast to the three substantial cultivators of Ambola stood *kunbis* like Amruta Scindiah and Hykunt Scindiah, who found it impossible to keep body and soul together on

¹ BA: Vide Major Sykes' Report on Poona District dated nil: R.D., Vol. 153B of 1826.

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the profits which they derived from their holdings. But such glaring contrasts were rare. For the rural scene was dominated by a mass of *kunbis* who lived at the level of subsistence, and who held the balance between the few substantial cultivators, on the one hand, and the fringe of hopelessly impoverished peasants, on the other.

The size of a *kunbi*'s holdings, however, did not provide a reliable index to his income because of the depressed conditions which characterised agriculture. Indeed, the investigations conducted into the profits of agriculture in 1825 in the villages around Poona by Colonel Sykes, an officer of the Revenue Department, indicated that irrespective of their size and fertility few holdings yielded any substantial profits to their owners. For instance, Bheema *mali*, who cultivated sweet potatoes on 4 *pands* of garden land in the village of Mahlunga sustained a loss of Rs. 9 as. 8 (Table A, Example 1). Similarly, a peasant who cultivated *bajra* on 60 acres of land of medium quality in Serur incurred a loss of Rs. 270; while a *kunbi* who grew *jowar* on a field of comparable size and quality lost Rs. 188 in his agricultural operations (Table A, Examples 2 and 3). This is not to imply that all those who were engaged in agriculture sustained losses instead of making profits. Thus a *kunbi* who cultivated sugar-cane on 1 *beegah* of land of the first quality at Chakun realised a profit of Rs. 46 as. 12; while the *mali* who cultivated vegetables on four *pands* of garden land at Mahlunga secured a return of Rs. 4 as. 9 (Table A, Examples 4 and 5). Indeed, it is highly likely that even those *kunbis* who told Colonel Sykes that they sustained losses in their operations were guilty of giving incorrect returns for produce, or inflated figures for

TABLE A: EXAMPLE 1

Showing Account for the Cultivation of Sweet Potatoes by Bheema *mali* on 4 *pands* of Garden Land in the Village of Mahlunga in Poona District

<i>Investment:</i>	Rs.	as.	p.
Total cost of cultivating sweet potatoes on 4 <i>pands</i> of garden land	15	8	$\frac{2}{3}$
<i>Return:</i>			
Cash value of a crop of 85 $\frac{1}{2}$ seers of sweet potatoes at 4 pies per seer	4	8	0
Half price of cuttings of vines of sweet potatoes provided by owner of the field	1	8	0
Loss sustained by Bheema <i>mali</i>	9	8	$\frac{2}{3}$