

A STUDY OF THE CHANGES IN THE BALUTA-PAYMENTS OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES IN AN IRRIGATED VILLAGE IN THE NASIK DISTRICT

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VILLAGE artisans form the bulk of the non-agricultural population in the village economy. These artisans are traditionally associated with such functions which serve the needs of the agricultural population and for which the return is a payment in kind at the time of the annual harvest. This system is known as 'balutedari' in which certain castes are associated with the practice of a particular occupation. The impact of industrialization has introduced a state of fluidity into this traditional system and has reduced the scope of employment in many of these rural professions. Some artisans have been altogether eliminated from the village economy, while in the case of others, the share in the harvest has dwindled or has become uncertain. It is proposed to study in this paper the system of baluta payment in detail and the changes which have taken place in this respect in the case of some important categories of balutedars over the period of the last twenty years in a village for which two-point data are available. Such a study would bring out the important trends in this sector of the village economy and would also throw light on the future of this age-old system.

The agro-economic section in the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics has completed a resurvey of a group of villages in the Nasik District during 1960-61 for the purpose of assessing economic change. Two villages from this group happened to be among those which were selected for the study of "Economic Effects of Irrigation" which the Institute had undertaken during 1939-40. For the purposes of this study a representative sample of 40 farmers was selected from these villages on the basis of bullock holdings for conducting a farm business survey. Out of these 40, 25 farmers were from Kasbe Sukene, the village resurveyed during 1960-61. An attempt is made in the present paper to pursue these 25 farmers or their descendants to study the changes in the pattern of baluta payments over the twenty year period under consideration. It may be mentioned here that though a sample of 25 farmers from Kasbe Sukene was covered during 1939-40 survey, data in respect of two farmers could not be traced and were, therefore, omitted from the present study. The total number of farmers including the descendants of the original farmers came to 28. It may be mentioned here that among the 28 farmers interviewed during 1960-61 survey, one farmer did not possess any bullocks nor did he report any payment of dues. This farmer has been neglected altogether in this study.