

VASVAYA CASTES AND VILLAGE SERVANTSI: Definition of Terms

I should begin this chapter with a clarification that its title is vague, primarily because the terms 'village servant' and 'vasvaya caste' are vague. The terms will become clear as we proceed with the description of functions and remunerations of vasvaya castes and village servants.

It is also noteworthy that certain village officials who seem to be village servants were not so in fact. We have already seen how the British introduced the office of the village accountant in the villages in Kaira District. The village accountant was a servant of the Government, receiving his remuneration in cash. Although his main work was in the village, he resided in a town and also worked in the pargana office. He was double-faced, but he was loyal more to the Government than to the village. He was not a 'village servant'.

For the same reason, the village accountant's peons were also not 'village servants', although they held chakariya land in the village. The nature of chakariya tenure will be discussed at a later stage, but it may be mentioned at the outset that it applied mostly to land granted for the services of a servant (chakar) of the Government and/or the village community.

The village headman and the Matadars were also double-faced like the village accountant, but their loyalty, unlike that of the latter, was primarily to the village and not to the Government. Even then they could not be called 'village servants', because although they performed administrative services in the village, they commanded the services of a number of people in the village. From the angle of the village, they were not village servants but aristocrats as Elphinstone believed.

II: Non-vasvaya Village Servants

I deal first with those village servants who did not belong to vasvaya castes. The two most important village servants of this category were the Kotwal and the Pagi.

The village records do not state anything about the functions of the Kotwal, but the Bombay Gazetteer informs, "Sums of money are often escorted by them from the village to the Collector's treasury at the head station.... Though very poor, the trustworthiness of these men in charge of treasures is remarkable. Not only are they perfectly honest themselves, but will resist to death any attempt to rob them of their charge." (1) The records of Radhvanaj show that its Kotwal changed almost every year between 1823 and 1827, that he did not belong to Radhvanaj, and that he was always a Talapada Koli but not always a Kotwal by surname. He was not paid any cash or grains, but a large field of about seven acres was allotted to him. Being an outsider he did not himself cultivate his field, but it was cultivated by a tenant and the rent of Rs.16 was paid to him. It seems the

new village accountants had stopped employing the village Kolis as Kotwals and took with them any Kotwal according to their choice.

The functions of the Pagi are described in the village records as follows: "When the Pagi of another village traces the footprints of a thief to this village, it is the duty of the Pagi to trace them to another village. As soon as the footprints are traced to this village, the Pagi sets out accompanied by the headman, the peon, the Talapada Kolis and the Senwas. If the Pagi is not present, the headman should ask another capable Talapada Koli to trace the footprints. If no capable tracker of the other village who has traced the footprints to this village. If the footprints are found ending in this village and not going further to another village, (which proves that the thief belongs to this village or has been sheltered in this village), the amount of money involved in the theft should be paid by the village by collecting contributions from the members of the village, and the Pagi alone should not be made to pay the whole amount. No contributions should be collected from the following castes: Brahman, Bania, Charan Bard, Barber, Potter, Blacksmith, Rama Priest, Shiva Priest, Muslim Mendicant, Tailor and Senwa. The contributions should be collected only from Rajputs (Hindu and Muslim), Patidars, and Kolis (both Talapada and Pardeshi). If the Pagi is called to perform the watchman's duties at the council house at night, he has to come. Nine bighas of revenue-free chakariya land is granted to the Pagi. He may be invited to wedding and other feasts in the village." I wonder

what the modern experts in crime detection would say about the institution of Pagi. I imagine the tracing of footprints must have involved a lot of argumentation, if not disputation, within and between villages. The rules about contributions show the structural distinction between the patron and the dependent castes.

The office of the Pagi of Radhvanaj was the hereditary privilege of a Talapada Koli family of the village, which was granted about six acres of chakariya land as remuneration for its services. In addition, it received an annual gift of Rs.3 from the revenue collection of the village. It should be noted that the chakariya land held by it was not the only land it owned and cultivated.

The Kotwal and the Pagi belonged to the Talapada Koli caste, but their functions were not determined merely by their being members of their caste. Only two out of many Talapada families occupied these offices; the occupation of a Kotwal or a Pagi was not the traditional occupation of the entire Koli caste. This is the main difference between the non-vasvaya village servants and the vasvaya village servants whose position and functions were determined by their being members of their respective castes.

III: Vasvaya Castes in Radhvanaj

In this section I bring together almost all the available information about the occupational functions and remunerations of the seventeen vasvaya castes in the village. I will deal first with those castes about which the records provide

more detailed information.

Carpenters: It has already been noted that there was only one Carpenter household in the village. There was only one adult working male in the household. His main work was to repair ploughs, carts and other agricultural implements, for which he was paid annually in grains at harvest time. The annual payment was called varasud, derived probably from the Sanskrit varshant, meaning 'end of the year'. There were different rates for cultivators of different categories. A cultivator keeping a plough as well as a cart and cultivating irrigated land, i.e. using agricultural implements for two seasons in a year, paid from one and a quarter to one and a half maunds of grains, mostly the staple grain millet (bajri). A cultivator keeping a plough as well as a cart but cultivating only non-irrigated land, i.e. using agricultural implements only for one season in a year, paid from one maund to one and a quarter maunds of grains. A cultivator keeping only a plough and no cart, paid from three fourth to one maund of grains; generally such a cultivator did not cultivate irrigated land. Besides these regular payments, if the Carpenter went to a cultivator's threshing floor while the grains were being threshed in the fields, the cultivator gave him a customary gift of five seers of grains. All these annual payments in grains, it may be noted, were made only for keeping the implements in order and not for making new ones.

We shall see that in some vasvaya castes, such as the

Barbers, some or all of the households cultivated some land besides pursuing their specialized traditional occupation. The Carpenter did not get any payment for his above-mentioned services to these servant-cum-cultivator households, because they did not get any payment for their services to the Carpenter.

For the Carpenter's work in the construction of a house or any other building, he was paid a daily wage. The usual wage was either one third of a rupee or two seers of rice and a quarter seer of ghee. In addition, he was given at noon time half a seer of sukhadi, a snack made of wheat flour, ghee and jaggery. The rates could also vary according to the nature of the job and the prices of commodities.

The Carpenter also performed certain ceremonial functions. He supplied a ritual stool (bajath) for the wedding ceremony of a girl in the village, and received a customary payment of one half to one rupee from the groom's party as a part of marriage prestations from the groom's kingroup to the bride's kingroup. If he did not supply the stool he did not get the payment, which indicates that some castes did not need such a stool in their wedding ceremonies. Furthermore, at wedding and other feasts either the carpenter was invited to the feast, or the food was given to him to carry to his home. In the former case he would be served as much food as he could eat, whereas in the latter case he was given food in a defined quantity.

The three Matadars in the village were an exception to

the general rules. Each of them gave annually only one half to one maund of grains for the Carpenter's services as a répairer of agricultural implements. For his work in house construction, a Matadar deducted two to four rupees from the total amount of wages due to the Carpenter but gave him a turban as a gift. He had also not to demand any payment for making such small articles as low stools (patalas) and lamp-stands (divis) for a Matadar.

When the Government officials and other dignitaries from outside came to the village, the Carpenter chipped fire-wood for cooking their food, repaired their carts and carriages, and made wooden pegs for tying their horses. He was not paid anything for these services. However, if the Government wanted to construct a new council house, the Carpenter would be paid according to the village customs.

The Carpenter held four fields on what was called pasayata tenure. I shall soon discuss the nature of this tenure, but let us note at the outset that usually it applied to land granted for the services provided by an artisan or servant or for the maintenance of a religious person or institution. Two of the four pasayata fields held by the Carpenter were granted for his services to the village community and two were granted specially by the Rathod Rajput lineage for his services to the lineage. Generally the pasayata land was revenue-free but some was charged a nominal amount of revenue. Out of the Carpenter's four fields, three were revenue-free and one was charged revenue. The Carpenter himself cultivated his land, by keeping a

bullock, a plough and a cart.

Blacksmiths: We have noted that there was only one Blacksmith in the village. His main work was to repair ploughshares, sickles, and iron parts of other agricultural implements. He was paid annually in grains for this work. A cultivator cultivating irrigated land and keeping a cart paid from one to one and a quarter maunds of grains. A cultivator cultivating non-irrigated land and keeping a cart paid from three fourth to one maund of grains, and a cultivator with only a plough and no cart also paid the same amount. In addition, the Blacksmith received five seers of grains if he went to the threshing floors in fields at harvest time. He did not receive any payment for his services to other village servants, if he received any service from them.

The Blacksmith sold hardware required in building construction in exchange for money. If the customer supplied iron the Blacksmith charged money for making iron objects according to each piece of work.

The Blacksmith supplied a ritual iron lamp (laman-divo) for the wedding ceremony of a girl in the village, and received a customary payment of half a rupee from the groom's party as a part of prestations. At the wedding and other feasts, either he was invited to the feast or the food was given to him to carry to his home.

The Matadars were an exception to the general rules. They paid only one half maund of grains for the Blacksmith's

work as a repairer of agricultural implements, and paid nothing for making iron objects required in house construction, if they supplied raw iron. Similarly, the Blacksmith would get nothing if the Government wanted to get some smithy work done by him in the construction of a new council house.

The Blacksmith did not hold any land on any tenure whatsoever, nor did he cultivate any land on tenancy.

Potters: The Potters had two types of customers. Firstly, there were permanent customers (bandhela gharak = fixed customers), to whom the Potter supplied pots for daily household requirements in exchange for an annual payment in grains. The quantity of grains varied from a quarter maund to one and a half maunds according to the need of the customer's household. Secondly, there were customers who purchased pots by paying per piece in either cash or grains. The Potter was not paid for the pots he supplied to other artisan and servicing castes from whom he received goods or services. The Potter sold roof-tiles in exchange for cash.

As usual the Matadars were an exception to the rules. They paid only one half to three fourth maund of grains for pots. When they built a new house they purchased tiles, but did not pay anything for a few tiles they needed to replace the broken ones every year. He not only supplied pots free to guests at the village council house but also brought water from a well to fill the pots.

The Potter supplied pots for the wedding booth (chori)

prepared for the performance of rituals at the wedding of a girl in the village and was paid one to two rupees by the groom's party as a part of prestations. If he did not supply the large number of pots needed for the booth but only a few pots for the ritual of mahya, he received one half rupee. He was also invited to wedding feasts or was given food to be taken to his home.

We have noted that there were three households of Potters in the village, two of two brothers and the third belonging to a separate line of descent. There is no information as to how the three households distributed the customers in the village, but it seems they were divided into two lots for the two lines of descent, and the lot of one line was divided between the two brothers. Although the individual customers in the village were divided in this way, the services to the pargana and village officials and to the guests of the community were the joint responsibility of all the three Potters. It seems on the basis of present day information that they performed their duties to the community by rotation, determined by the lines of descent.

Two fields with a total area of about two acres were held jointly by the three Potter households on revenue-free chakariya tenure. The two fields were each held jointly by two representatives of the two lines of descent, having two equal shares, one of the two being divided between the two brothers. The Potters got the two fields cultivated by two tenants. It seems on the basis of a later record that the

Potters were granted one pasayata field by the Rathod Rajput lineage for their services to the lineage.

Barbers: If a Barber performed the services of shaving and hair-cutting for a family of five to seven members he received an annual payment of one to one and a half maunds of grains. If the family consisted of two to four members he was paid one half to three fourth maund of grains. At wedding ceremonies he performed several services besides that of shaving, for which he received cooked food plus one half to four rupees at a girl's wedding and one to three rupees at a boy's wedding. A girl's wedding involved more work than a boy's wedding.

The Matadars were not an exception to these rules, but the Barber had to do a lot of other work for them. He accompanied them as a personal servant when they went to other villages and performed several other services for them in the village. He shaved the officials and other respectable persons coming from outside the village, served water and hooka to them, and accompanied the officers with a pot of water when they went to inspect the fields of the village for revenue assessment.

It has been mentioned that there were three households of Barbers in the village, two of two brothers (Line A) and the third belonging to a separate line of descent (Line B). Each line was granted chakariya land separately from the other; Line A was granted three fields of about five acres, and Line B, about four acres. Line A, in addition, held one field of about one acre on pasayata tenure. The members of

this line continue to hold a prominent position among the Barbers in the village even today. Not only did the two brothers of this line hold the landed property jointly, they also cultivated it jointly. We shall see that the Barbers also cultivated some land on other tenures which had nothing to do with their services as Barbers.

There is no reference in the records to a number of ceremonial and ritual services performed by the Barber men as well as women at pregnancy, birth, wedding, death and other ceremonies, at festivals, and on other occasions among various castes in the village. In Gujarat the ritual role of the Barber was next only to that of the Brahman, a subject demanding a separate inquiry.

Leather-workers: The Leather-workers dragged carcasses of cattle to their ward and skinned them. In return they gave leather for a pair of shoes to the owner of the animal. They also supplied ropes, straps and other small articles of leather needed in fastening agricultural implements, for which they were given five seers to one half maund of grains annually. They charged money for leather bags used in drawing water from wells, and for large leather ropes needed in carts. The Matadars paid only a quarter to a half maund of grains for all the things they got from the Leather-workers, and the Government officials did not pay anything for the leather supplied to them for their shoes. There was always some surplus leather left with the Leather-workers, which they sold in towns. The Leather-workers in the village were charged a collective cess, called 'artisan cess', of Rs.14 by the

Government, most presumably on account of this extra income from the sale of leather.

The Leather-workers in Radhvanaj were not granted any land for their services, nor did they own any land on any other tenure. However, two of their seven households had each taken a field on tenancy, one of 2 acres and 11 gunthas from a Rajput of Radhvanaj, and the other of only 34 gunthas from a Brahman of Kaira. The Census Register shows that neither of these two households kept any bullock for ploughing. It is possible that this was an error in the Census Register, or that the two Chamars, considering it wasteful to keep a bullock and a plough to cultivate just one field, cultivated it by borrowing bullocks and ploughs from some other villager or from relatives living in other villages, or that they did not use any plough at all. Besides cultivating some land on tenancy, the two households kept milch cattle, one kept two buffaloes and the other one buffalo. It is also very likely that they supplemented their income by agricultural labour, as most Leather-workers and their women do at present in Radhvanaj as well as in other villages. The occupation of leather-work was not a full time occupation, and the work in Radhvanaj was divided among seven households. The five households with neither land nor cattle must have worked as agricultural labourers to a much greater extent than did the above two households.

Senwas: The records do not contain any information about the functions of the Senwas. However, it can be stated on the basis of the Bombay Gazetteer and my field investigation,

that the usual source of livelihood for the Senwas was agricultural labour, which was not a caste function as such. Their low position in caste hierarchy was reflected in a number of ritual practices and in the menial duties they performed for the pargana and village officials. They carried messages, letters, records and luggage of the pargana and village officials from Radhvanaj to other villages, conducted strangers on to the neighbouring village, and informed the villagers of the officials' orders, decisions, news, etc. by shouting them out in the village streets. It also seems on the basis of field investigation that the four Senwa households performed these services by rotation. There were two chakariya fields held by the Senwas, one in the name of the father of one Senwa and the other in the name of the grandfather of another Senwa, and probably each represented a line of descent composed of two households. Two Senwas had taken some land on tenancy, but they did not keep bullocks to cultivate it. They must have depended on agricultural labour to a lesser extent than the other two households.

Tailor: The Tailor, as we have noted, was an 'outsider'. No land was granted to him for his services, all of which were paid for in cash. It is noteworthy that he did not derive the raw material for his occupation directly from agriculture and was therefore not tied intimately to the cultivators. Furthermore, only a few people in the village used tailored clothes, and even these were not worn as a normal routine of life. Women used to make their skirts and blouses themselves, and went to the Tailor only for a few clothes required on ceremonial occasions. The records of Radhvanaj mention that an

item of women's clothing required at weddings, namely mandana-nu kapadu, was made by the tailor at a price of seven jais or paises.

Shoemakers: The records do not contain any specific information about the Shoemakers, but I may state on the basis of my inquiries at the present time, that the Shoemakers were like the Tailors a town-based caste and not a part of the agricultural, ceremonial or ritual complex of the village. They derived the raw material for their craft from the Leatherworkers and not directly from the cultivators and were therefore not tied to the cultivators. The Shoemaker in Radhvanaj, like most other Shoemakers, did not own or cultivate any land or keep any cattle.

Dheds: This caste did not have a single traditional occupation. Some of them were weavers of coarse cotton cloth and some were scavengers and menial servants. It seems the Dheds in Radhvanaj were weavers, but there is no information about the organisation of their occupation. I do not know whether the weaver purchased spun cotton and then sold the cloth, or was paid for the labour of weaving a piece of cloth out of spun cotton supplied by the customer. The Dheds did not own or cultivate any land, nor kept any cattle.

Rabari and Bharwad Shepherds: I have not found so far any reliable ethnographic account of the Rabari and Bharwad Shepherds, although a great deal of folklore has developed around them. The available accounts do not make any distinction between the occupation of Rabaris and Bharwads. Both of them are described as transhumant, and the two words are used synonymously to mean 'shepherd'. This description, however,

applies only to the Rabaris and Bharwads of Saurashtra. They leave their villages with their herds at the end of monsoon, pass through Central Gujarat, and go towards the highland region, from where they return before the onset of monsoon. The Rabaris and Bharwads found in Central Gujarat were not transhumant but permanent residents of villages. The one Rabari household and the two Bharwad households in Radhvanaj were its permanent residents. The Rabari kept twelve cows and female calves. He must have sold milk and milk products in the village, and also traded in bullocks and cows. The Survey Book of Radhvanaj states: "If the Rabari's manure is sold and if the revenues of the village are collected directly by the Government, the sale proceeds are taken by the Government. If the revenues are collected by the Matadars, they take the manure". The full significance of this statement will be shown in a later chapter. Here we may note only that the large quantity of manure the Rabari collected during the year was a source of income for him. I doubt if the Rabari provided to the villagers any service in particular. He did not own or cultivate any land in the village.

Out of the two Bharwad households in the village, only one kept cattle, but a very small number, only two bullocks and four buffaloes and no cows. This shows that this Bharwad was not a Shepherd in the same sense as the Rabari was. The other Bharwad did not keep any cattle whatsoever. These facts support my inference from field investigation that the Bharwads in the village did not keep much cattle on their own but grazed the cattle of other villagers during the non-rainy

Season.

Jogi: There is no information about the traditional occupation of the Jogis. I have already mentioned that their caste-name suggests and supports the information given by the present-day villagers that there were a number of oracles among the -- Jogis. The present-day villagers also inform that the Jogis have been practising the occupation of drumming and rope-making for a long time. I have also mentioned that one of the three Jogi households in Radhvanaj kept a large number of goats and sheep. This household also cultivated some land taken on tenancy. The second owned some land and took some land on tenancy. The third neither owned nor took any land on tenancy. Further more, the three households paid an 'artisan cess' of Rs.2, Rs.1½ and Re.½ respectively to the Government, probably on account of their occupation of rope-making.

Bhoi: It seems the Bhoi household in the village was a new-comer. The Bhois living on river banks were fishers and boat-keepers; in other areas they were water-carriers and palanquin-bearers. The Bhoi household in Radhvanaj seems to have practised both these occupations. But neither of these were full-time occupations. It is very likely the Bhoi household also worked as agricultural labourers.

Charans: The Charan lineage in Radhvanaj seems to have been attached to the Rathod Rajputs as their bards for a very long time, and I have described this occupation in my and Shroff's paper on the Bards. Both the households in Radhvanaj held considerable land on pasayata and other tenures. One cultivated its land by keeping bullocks and the other got its land

cultivated by tenants.

Veragi: The celibate Rama Priest in Radhvanaj not only worked as the priest of the Rama temple but also cultivated a considerable area of chakariya and other land by keeping bullocks. He also fed dogs with bajri loaves, for which he was paid an Rs.2¼ from the revenue collection of the village. To feed dogs was an act bringing punya (religious merit) to a Hindu, and it is significant that this act was performed by the Veragi on behalf of the whole community. It is reasonable to assume that the Veragi must also have received direct gifts in cash and kind from villagers and also indirectly all gifts offered to the deity. He was, however, supposed to give something back to the devotees in the form of prasada (god's gift to men).

Gosai: The celibate Shiva Priest performed only routine pujas in the Shiva temple, mostly those pujas which did not involve the use of Sanskrit texts. The other pujas were performed on Shiva festivals by a Brahman of the village. The temple was endowed a small chakariya field, which the village leaders got cultivated by a tenant and gave the income to the priest. He must have also gone round the village every day, as he does today, to beg alms in kind from the villagers. A small amount was given from the revenue collection of the village for the performance of special pujas on Shiva festivals.

Dhadi: The Muslim Mendicant must have lived in the village on account of the existence of Molesalams and Sepoys in the village, but he must have begged alms from both Muslims and Hindus as he does today. He seems to have got his small

pasayata field cultivated by agricultural labourers.

IV: Vasvaya Castes in Other Villages

Radhvanaj was served by a few vasvaya castes of other villages. One Olgana or Bhangi of Antroli worked as a scavenger and menial servant. The Olganas were the lowest among the Untouchable castes in Gujarat, lower than even the Senwas. Their ritual status can be gauged from the fact that while the Leather-workers removed carcasses of only high status animals such as cows, bullocks and buffaloes, the Olganas removed carcasses of low status animals such as cats and dogs. The Olganas cleaned the streets of Radhvanaj on ceremonial occasions such as weddings, festivals and officials' visits. They also carried errands and luggage of officials.

A Bajania of a neighbouring village Sokhda served Radhvanaj as drummers. The Bajanias were drummers of a higher status than the Jogis. They kept instruments of a different kind from those of the Jogis.

It is also noteworthy several temples and religious personages living in other villages and towns had social relations with Radhvanaj, as for example, a Shiva temple of Sandhana, a few temples of Nadiad and Kaira, a temple of Bhabharam sect in Run, a village about six miles from Radhvanaj, a Vaidya or ayurvedic doctor of Kaira, and a few Bhat Bards of Undhela and Nadiad.

It is quite certain that some of the vasvaya castes of Radhvanaj must have served neighbouring villages, because every one of them did not possess all the vasvaya castes

necessary for its social and economic life. Some villages, like Antroli, included only a couple of vasvaya castes. Furthermore, towns included many more vasvaya castes than those in villages, and a fairly large number of urban vasvaya castes also served villages. This subject demands a special inquiry and is outside the scope of this monograph.

V: Relation between Caste and Occupation among the Vasvaya Casts:

It can be seen from the description of occupations of vasvaya castes that every one of them was associated, by tradition, with one or more non-agricultural occupations. However, this was not the criterion of distinction between them and the non-vasvaya castes, because there were among the latter some castes, such as Brahmans, Banias and Sepoys and also in a way the Rajputs, who were associated with non-agricultural occupations. In order to understand the nature of relation between caste and occupation among vasvaya castes, as also among non-vasvaya castes, each occupation should be studied as a complex composed of functions and activities of a certain class.

Agriculture is one such complex. In the above description of vasvaya castes in Radhvanaj I have mentioned the nature of association of the households of each caste with land, and in Table 13 in Chapter X on "Pattern of Landownership, Tenancy, and Agricultural Labour," I have summarised the land data concerning all the minor castes. No household in eight vasvaya castes, namely, Blacksmith, Bharwad Shepherd, Bhoi, Shoemaker, Tailor, Dhed, and Leather-worker, owned any

land whatsoever, but two of the seven households of Leather-workers cultivated some land on tenancy, and all the seven households of Leather-workers and the one Bhoi household worked as agricultural labourers. In the remaining nine vasvaya castes, namely, Carpenter, Potter, Barber, Charan Bard, Jogi, Senwa, Rama Priest, Shiva Priest and Muslim Mendicant, some or all the households owned some land and a few households cultivated some land on tenancy. In the case of Potters and Senwas, the little land they owned—about two acres in both the cases—was owned by all the households jointly, and the Potters did not even cultivate the land they owned. The Senwas cultivated not only the land they owned, but two of their four households had taken some land on tenancy. Out of the total number of twelve households of the remaining seven castes, two of the three households of Jogis did not own any land but one of the two cultivated about six acres on tenancy. Among the remaining ten households, five each owned less than five acres and one owned only a little more than five acres, and two of these six households had also taken some land on tenancy. Finally, the two Charan Bards, the Carpenter and the Rama Priest, each owning from about ten to about fifteen acres, were above-average landowners.

As we shall see in Chapter X, there were a large number of landless households among Patidars, Talapada Kolis, Pardeshi Kolis, and Sepoys, and a few among Hindu and Molesalam Rajputs. Some of them depended almost entirely on agricultural labour, and some on the cultivation of land taken on tenancy, and some on both. Similarly there

were a large number of households in these castes who were below-average or average landowners. But, the majority of Rajputs and Brahmans were wealthy landlords in the village itself. There were a few wealthy and powerful Patidars in Radhvanaj itself and the caste was dominant in a large number of other villages and towns. Although there was no wealthy Talapada or Pardeshi Koli in Radhvanaj, a large number of other villages were dominated by Kolis. In the same way, in a considerable number of villages the Sepoys were wealthy and powerful landlords, and the Banias were dominant in towns due to commercial wealth. The Sepoys and Banias were minor but not vasvaya castes in Radhvanaj. In comparison with these non-vasvaya castes, no vasvaya caste had a large and powerful population in any village.

The crucial determinants of the distinction between vasvaya and non-vasvaya castes were two, wealth and population. In villages the principal source of wealth was land, and in towns it was commerce and political office. In almost every village in Central Gujarat, a member of a vasvaya caste was considered by caste a dependent (= a person who depended on another for support, position etc., a retainer, subordinate, servant). An individual member or a group of a few members of a non-vasvaya or patron caste could be dependents in actuality in any one village, but they did not have the status of dependents by the fact of their being members of their castes, because each of the non-vasvaya castes had always had a large population occupying a dominant position in a fairly large number of villages and/or

towns in the area. None of the eighteen vasvaya castes could boast of their caste-fellows enjoying a dominant position in any village in Central Gujarat. It should be emphasised that the distinction between vasvaya and non-vasvaya castes was made in any one village not on the basis of wealth and power of a caste group in that village, but it was a general distinction applied to entire castes. It is also noteworthy that landownership was not by itself a criterion of distinction between vasvaya and non-vasvaya castes. In some villages, as in Radhvanaj, some households in vasvaya castes owned and cultivated more land than the land owned and cultivated by a large number of households in non-vasvaya castes. Moreover, along with the area of land, we have to consider the tenures under which the land was held, but I shall deal with this question after I have dealt with a few other questions.

Like agriculture, another important occupational complex was that of activities concerned with cattle-keeping. Cattle-keeping was not in itself an exclusive occupation of any one caste. We shall see in the following chapter that cows, buffaloes and bullocks were kept by members of many diverse castes, but there were certain castes who specialised in cattle-keeping. Different aspects of cattle-keeping could also be specialised occupations of different castes or of different sections of the same caste. There were Bharwads and Rabaris who were transhumant and also Bharwads and Rabaris who were permanent residents of villages. There were also Bharwads and Rabaris, such as the Bharwads of Radhvanaj, who did not keep much cattle with them but grazed other people's cattle, and sometimes a member of a non-shepherd

caste also grazed other people's cattle. A further complication was that neither the Rabaris nor the Bharwads in Radhvanaj kept goats and sheep, which were kept in a large number by a Jogi. This does not mean that the Bharwads and Rabaris in other villages did not keep goats and sheep. There did exist Bharwads and Rabaris in other places who kept goats and sheep in large numbers. Finally, cattle-keeping activities of transhumant shepherds, of permanently settled shepherds of various kinds, and of non-shepherds, were related with one another by trade in cattle which occurred in villages and in fairs.

Trading, cloth-making, carpentry, blacksmithy, leatherwork, drumming, domestic services, menial services, etc. were also occupational complexes, in each of which on the one hand more than one specialised castes of Hindus and Muslims and of villages and towns participated, and on the other hand there was specialisation between families in the same caste. In the discussions of relation between caste and occupation the usual practice of associating each caste with a single traditional occupation, mostly on the basis of its caste-name, has led to oversimplification of reality. The records of Radhvanaj provide data only about the occupations of castes in the village, but I have also indicated the occupational characteristics of most castes as entire groups on the basis of other data. To know the traditional occupation of a caste as a caste we should consider the entire population of the caste distributed in an area and the details of its occupational functions, and not be misled by its caste-name. A caste could have several traditional occupations, let alone the

deviations from tradition. It should not be assumed that a caste was always a homogeneous group with a single occupational tradition. There could be several traditions, often conflicting with one another and subject to change from time to time. It seems to me that occupational diversification within a caste was always a feature of the caste system, and it was a result of the responsiveness of caste system to changes in economic system.

VI:Relation between Village Structure and Functions of the Vasvaya Castes:

The description of functions of the vasvaya castes in Radhvanaj shows how a distinction was made between (a) services performed by a vasvaya for the village community as a corporate body, (b) services performed for individual villagers, (c) services performed specially for the Rathod Rajput lineage as a corporate body, and (d) services performed for the headman and Matadars as their special privileges. Some vasvaya castes, Tailor, Shoemaker, Blacksmith, Dhed, Rabari Shepherd, Bharwad Shepherd, Bhoi, Jogi, Leather-worker and Charan Bard, did not perform any service for the village corporation. The castes which performed services for the village corporation as well as for individual villagers were Carpenter, Potter, Barber, Rama Priest, Shiva Priest and Senwa. Compared with these vasvayas, the village Kotwal and the village Pagi did not perform any service for individual villagers. They were simply 'village servants' and not vasvayas, whereas the Shiva Priest, Rama Priest, Carpenter, Olgana, Senwas, Potters and Barbers were both village servants and vasvayas. The other vasvayas were not village

servants but only *vasvayas*.

As regards services performed for individual villagers the records do not provide any data as to which caste served which other castes, but we can make certain inferences. *Senwas*, *Leather-workers*, *Potters*, *Carpenter*, *Dheds*, *Shoe-maker*, *Tailor* and *Blacksmith* must have provided their goods and services to anybody wanting to have their goods and services, irrespective of ritual and social status. *Charan Bards* served only *Rajputs*, *Molesalams* and *Patidars*. *Barbers* must have served only the 'purer' castes. It is noteworthy that they served the *Talpada Kolis* but not the *Pardeshi Kolis* among the major castes. The *Rabaris* did not perform any service either for the village community or for individual members of the village. The *Bharwads* must have served mostly the wealthy higher castes who wanted to get their cattle grazed by the *Bharwads*. Certain castes did not really need the services of certain castes, although they were not prohibited from being served by the latter.

VII: Chakariya and Pasayata Land:

Let us first note that all chakariya land was revenue-free in *Radhvanaj* in 1822-27, and most of the pasayata land was also revenue-free but some was charged revenue. Literally, chakariya land meant land granted to a chakar (= servant), and pasayata land meant land granted as a gift (derived from Sanskrit prasada; Prakrit pasaya, meaning gift). These literal meanings raise certain questions: Whose servant? What kind of servant? What kind of services? Who gave the gift? When was it given? Why was it given? and so on. In order

to find answers to these questions, let us first see the details about the holders of land under the two denominations. The -- records of Radhvanaj provide a complete list of the holders of chakariya land in the village as follows: two Desais of Nadiad, two Ravanas or peons of the village accountant, the Kotwal or watchman of Radhvanaj, the Pagi or tracker of Radhvanaj, the three Barbers, the three Potters, the four Senwas, the Rama Priest, the Shiva Priest, and the Olgana of Antroli. We have already noted that the peons of the village accountant began to be appointed only from 1816. The land granted to them was a part of their remuneration, and was held by them only as long as they were in the employment of the Government. The other part of their remuneration was an annual cash payment. The Desais had been holding chakariya land in every village under their charge even before the coming of the British, possibly since the Mughal period, but by the time the British came, their chakariya land had become their hereditary possession. Even a non-working Desai could hold chakaria land as a part of his patrimony. It is also not unlikely that the Desais had increased their chakariya land when they became powerful in the latter-half of the eighteenth century. The Kotwal held chakariya land for the specific services he performed for the Government, though not as its full-time servant. The Pagi held chakariya land for the specific services he performed for the village corporation and the Government. The Barbers, Potters, Senwas and Olgana were granted chakariya land for the specific services they performed for the Government and the village corporation. All the holders of chakariya land we have considered so far performed services either only for the

Government or for both the Government and the village community. It is difficult to explain why the land held by the Shiva Priest was considered as held under chakariya tenure, because he was performing services only for the village community and not for the Government. I do not know if the Mughal administration levied revenue on land endowed to Hindu temples, but it is quite certain that there was a revival of state patronage to Hinduism during the Maratha regime, and the revenue-free land might have been granted, or re-granted, to the Shiva temple in Radhvanaj during the Maratha regime. It is not unlikely that the Shiva Priest was considered as providing services to the Government through his services to the Shiva temple, and the British did not alter the tenure under which the land was held.

The records do not provide a ready list of the holders of revenue-free pasayata land, but I have reconstructed an almost complete list on the basis of bits of information scattered over different records. The holders of revenue-free pasayata land included the village headman, one Kotwal (different from the one who held land on chakariya tenure), one Brahman, the Barbers, the Carpenter, one Charan Bard, the Muslim Mendicant, one Bhat Bard of Nadiad, one Shiva Priest of the neighbouring village Sandhana, the Bajania Drummer of Sokhda, and the Bhabharam temple of Run, a village about six miles from Radhvanaj. The records provide information about only a few of the holders of the revenue-paying pasayata land; they included the Carpenter, one Brahman, one Kotwal, and one Vaidya or Ayurvedic doctor of Kaira town.

The Barbers held land on chakariya as well as pasayata tenure, which indicates that the former was granted for the specific services performed for the village corporation and the Government, and was held only during the tenure of office, while the latter was a hereditary gift given not for any specific services but for the general role as a vasvaya of the village. The other vasvayas of the village, namely, one Charan Bard and the Muslim Mendicant, must also have been granted pasayata land as a gift for their ritual position in the society. The Bhat Bard of Nadiad must have received gift land in recognition of his ritual position. The Shiva Priest of Sandhana must have received gift land on account of the devotion of the people of Radhvanaj to the Shiva temple in Sandhana. The Bhabharam temple in Run belonged to a popular local sect of chorotar, and must have been endowed gift land on account of its influence in Radhvanaj. The Bajania Drummer of Sokhda must have been granted gift land for his services as a drummer to the people of Radhvanaj. The Ayurvedic doctor must have received gift land for his medical services to the people of Radhvanaj. The holders of pasayata land we have considered so far did not perform any specific services for the Government though they did perform services for the village. I do not know whether the category of revenue-paying pasayata land existed during the pre-British period or was introduced by the British. It is also noteworthy that although the Brahmans held a lot of revenue-free land, it was not held under chakariya or pasayata tenure. It is possible that the distinction between the two tenures was not applied consistently in all cases, and that the pasayata land could become land

under other tenures in course of time.

I may refer here to hadia tenure which was very similar to pasayata tenure but bore a special name because hadia lands were held only by Bhat Bards. A hadia field was granted to the descendants of a Bhat who had sacrificed or injured his body for the sake of the village or for any worthy cause. Out of ten bighas of hadia land in Radhvanaj, six bighas were held by a Bhat of Nadiad, and four bighas by a Bhat of the adjoining village Undhela. A Bhat stood as security in agreements of various kinds and threatened to commit suicide or injure his body whenever an agreement was not fulfilled. Their threat was effective because they were considered sacred persons. It seems a Bhat held land on the hadiya tenure only when his ancestor had committed suicide or injured his body, otherwise he held land on pasayata tenure as mentioned earlier. The hadia land may be considered a special kind of pasayata or 'gift' land. In any case we shall see that chakariya, pasayata and hadia tenures formed a single class of tenures compared to other tenures.

We should inquire why certain vasvaya castes, namely, Blacksmith, Leather-worker, Tailor, Shoemaker, Dhed, Rabari Shepherd, Bharwad Shepherd, Bhoi and Jogi, were not granted any chakariya or pasayata land in Radhvanaj. The Bhoi was a new comer, the Tailor and the Shoe-maker were outsiders; the Rabari and Bharwad Shepherds and the Jogis did not perform any services for the village community, and the services the Bharwads performed for individual villagers affected only a few rich villagers; but it is difficult to explain why the

Blacksmith and the Leather-workers, who performed crucial services, were not granted any chakariya or pasayata land. It is however noteworthy that if the members of a pasayata caste were granted land in one village it did not mean that its members in other villages were also granted pasayata land. It seems to me that the granting of chakariya or pasayata land in a village depended a great deal on the particular history of that village, because after all some one had to grant land to some one else, and the grant had then to be recognized in subsequent generations by the ruling powers in the village, the pargana, and the kingdom.

It has been mentioned that some pasayata land was granted to some vasvaya castes by the Rathod Rajput lineage. This pasayata land, as we shall see in Chapter IX, was a part of the Wanta tenure and not an independent tenure.

While chakariya and pasayata tenures were not meant only for vasvaya castes, most of the land held by vasvaya castes in Radhvanaj--about 64 acres out of a total of about 76 acres--was held on these two tenures (see Table 13), and most of the remaining 12 acres of land was not, as I shall show, the private property of the vasvayas but was taken on 'permanent or temporary tenancy' from the Government. This shows how dependent were the vasvaya castes on the non-vasvaya castes in the village and the region. A considerable area of pasayata land had of course become the hereditary possession of its holders, and the non-vasvaya castes were perhaps not in a position to take away the land from its holders, but the social recognition of the dependent position

of vasvaya castes through the symbol of these tenures was far more important than the actual day-to-day dependence.

VIII: Modes of Payment: The grant of chakariya or pasayata land to a vasvaya was of course a mode of payment for his services, but the above discussion of the two tenures shows (a) that the land was granted mostly for the services to the corporate body of the village community, the services which could not be reckoned easily in terms of current measurements, and (b) that the land was granted as a symbolic recognition of the structural position of the vasvaya castes as dependents of the non-vasvaya castes, though this was not the only symbol for the recognition of this position, nor did the symbol have only this meaning. Another symbol of the dependant position of some if not all the vasvaya castes in Radhvanaj was the cash gifts given on the New Year Day from the funds of the village community.

As regards the payment for services provided to individual villagers, it is noteworthy that even in the beginning of the nineteenth century cash payments were very prominent in the village, which shows the high degree of monetisation in the rural economy of Central Gujarat. A single vasvaya was paid in different ways for different kinds of services. Besides annual grain payments, there were various rates in cash and kind for various pieces of work, and gifts in cash and kind. And finally, there was the invitation at ceremonial feasts, recognized all over Gujarat as a symbol of a social and not merely economic bond between a vasvaya and his patron.