Fields, Capitals and changing meanings of ‘Maratha’: Transition from colonial to the Post colonial

In this chapter I examine the period from early 19th century to the 1970s to assess how the colonial contexts led to the organisation and consolidation of the social imaginary called ‘Maratha’. The colonial state through their policies of governmentality inaugurated a new knowledge system. This system sought to comprehend societal processes through the lens of binary codes. Indigenous actors were to be henceforth recognised through these binaries by the state. The colonial state in its attempt to comprehend societal organisation of the indigenous actors resorted to oversimplified categories called castes and tribes. The field of knowledge production determined how individual indigenous actors now identified with the state and how the state identified with the indigenous actors. Additionally as the complete economic, political and administrative unification of the territory now called ‘British India’ was effected, the British inaugurated ‘modern’ fields such as bureaucracy, law, legislature, police, military and lower level public offices as a corollary to its governance practices and policies. With the absence of opportunities of political and social mobility (for instance through demonstration of military prowess or Kingship that was a common practice in the pre-colonial times) these fields became coveted and contested spaces for economic, political and social mobility. These spaces were used by individuals and indigenous social groups to claim and counter claim their social positions. And therefore it is not surprising that many old and new strategies were operationalised by the actors to get access to these spaces. Even though the colonial binary model did much to reorganise identities of indigenous actors, this did not mean that the actors ceased to use earlier identities in their everyday interactions. Instead now they used various sets of identities to gain access to coveted colonial fields and another set for social recognition. It is in this context that I ask what impact of these new practices on the identities of social groups in the Deccan and especially in the Bombay Provinces.
How was the colonial classificatory category of caste interpreted and employed by social actors in the Bomby Provinces to access the fields? How did the colonial understanding of imagined groups as caste shape the habitus? How did and under what circumstances did the social imaginary called ‘Maratha’ emerge? How did the meaning associated with ‘Marathas’ change overtime? What did this mean in the context of social mobility? Who were the actors involved in this construction? How and through what practices and institutions did the discourses on ‘Maratha’ operationalise? I address these questions in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into five sections. In section one I assess how through colonial policies new fields were inaugurated in the Bombay Provinces in the early part of the 19th century. Capitalism and monetisation of the economy together with the newly introduced ryotwari system set into motion a process whereby erstwhile jajmani networks weakened and new rational-bureaucratic ones instead emerged. The colonial state together with institutions such as law and bureaucracy replaced the jajmani system. It was now through the state that the indigenous actors were recognised and legitimated- as individual cultivators and also simultaneously was identified through a communitarian identity. The colonial policies of classifying the indigenous actors into castes meant that the indigenous actors had to operate through these categories to be identified by the state. The land tenurial practices introduced by the colonial state led to transformation of the political economy of the villages- a market economy that was now connected to the world market made the village economy vulnerable to global level fluctuations. The unchecked growth of moneylenders and usury in the Bombay Provinces led to situations of indebtedness, drought and famine. The Deccan riots of 1875 was a manifestation of this phenomenon.

In the second section I trace the organisation of the social imaginary called ‘Maratha’ from the early 19th century onwards and map out the major discourses regarding this imagining by the indigenous groups and actors. With changes in the political economy the indigenous actors organised new strategies to manoeuvre in the new fields. These strategies ranged from the social imaginings of a kshatriya
group to that based on kinship networks. I examine these discourses in the newspapers, pamphlets, matrimonial columns, biographies and autobiographies. I use Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and embodied cultural capital to explain how the social imagining really takes place through symbols, signs and reinvention of 'common' value systems. This was also a phase in which the Satyashodhak movement of Phule was inaugurated which created new meaning of the term 'Bahujan' Samaj or the non-Brahmins. How did this movement enable the organisation of the 'Maratha' imagining? Who were the actors involved? What were the interests of these actors? How did this movement transform into the non-Brahmin movement by the early 20th century and how did this change affect the meaning of 'Maratha'? These are some of the questions that I address in this section.

In section three I explore how these strategies were misrecognised by the colonial state as caste. The legitimation of identity based on the classificatory policies and practices (census and other colonial registers) led to the reorganisation of strategies. This was also a period when the colonial state was supportive of organisation of civic associations by the indigenous actors. How did these civic associations enable the indigenous actors to internalise certain skills or capitals necessary to enter the fields? What was the educational forum of the 'Marathas'? What were its objectives? The colonial state in the late 19th century introduced the concept of martial races. The 'Marathas' were deemed by the state to be a martial race in the Deccan. How did this classification enable certain groups and sections within the peasantry to become part of this social imaginary - 'Marathas' as kshatriya? What were the strategies employed and invented by these actors and groups to claim a martial heritage. One section that laid claim to being a part of the 'Maratha' imagining was that of the Kunbis. Kunbis in that period meant any individual or group that tilled land and sometimes even extended to those groups who were involved in agricultural activities. What strategies did these peasant groups employ to demonstrate their martial past? How did this affect the 'Maratha' imagining?
In section four I assess and map the changing political economy and its impact on the social imaginary- 'Marathas'. I examine the period from the 1930s onwards to the post independence period of 1970s when the 'Marathas' became the ruling group in the State of Maharashtra. What new institutions did the 'Marathas' inaugurate to consolidate their rule? What was the relationship of these new institutions with the field of power/politics? What are the strategies that the 'Marathas' employ to access state resources? How did the 'Maratha' leadership manage to retain a peasant imagining in its development agenda? Why are the 'Marathas' considered to be the rulers?

Political Economy of Deccan (1820s to 1900): Organisation of new 'fields'

With the advent of colonialism in Deccan in 1818, political and economic changes ensued- Deccan (also called Dekhan, during the colonial rule) was integrated into the territories of the East India Company it was called the Bombay Presidency. This integration entailed territorial, administrative, economic and judicial/legal unification. This meant that the 'modern' practices of governance together with capitalism now replaced the earlier 'feudal' system. The Deccan was divided just as parts of conquered British India i.e. divided principally in two ways- one was the retention of the 'feudal' element wherein the erstwhile rulers were given territories that were autonomous (yet under the colonial rule) princely states and the second was the merging of all other territory into the British India.

By the 1830s with absolute military domination of the Deccan, the East India Company (with instructions from the British Parliament in England) now began inaugurating ways through which ideological control could take place. The famous 'Maculay minutes' of 1835 made it clear that the colonialists wanted to establish a system that would be 'self managerial' i.e. they wanted to create a small section of indigenous actors who would be 'British like' in taste, opinions,
morals but Indian in colour. It was hoped that this section of indigenous actors would then operate as the intermediary zone between the colonial state and the indigenous actors, they would be the interpreters- who would carry the voice and visions of the colonial state to the masses and also act as a ‘safety valve’ by reporting the aspirations of the indigenous actors to the colonial masters. This entailed the envisioning of a new education system together with new forms of civic associations that could ‘create’ this class of indigenous actors who would then become the interpreters and trusted ‘citizens’ of the colonial state. (Stokes, 1978)

With this objective the colonial state from the mid nineteenth century onwards began to expand its economic and political activities in the Deccan. It began to organise new fields such as education, judiciary, police, military (recruitment of indigenous actors), civil services, lower level bureaucracy, lower level revenue departments and also promoted organisation of civic organisations that would operate as ‘civil societies’ at the behest of colonial interests. For entry and manoeuvring in these fields the colonial state made it mandatory that the indigenous actors had to possess certain kinds of cultural, social and symbolic capital such as educational degrees, rudimentary level of literacy in English, ‘noble’ family/social background and recommendations from recognised indigenous actors among other such criterion. Thus the colonial practices entailed that the indigenous actors were henceforth to be recognized through their community membership rather than through in their individual capacity.

It is no wonder that from 1861 onwards the colonial state began to undertake census operations and through it social categories such as caste, religion and even race became ‘the’ way of recognising individuals. (Patel, 2007) In its endeavour to visualise Indian society in terms of European society, the colonial state with the aid of native ‘scholarship’ (predominantly the scribal group popularly termed as Brahmin caste in social science literature) constructed a knowledge system in which one form of caste system was recognised and later through ethnographic work legitimated i.e. Varna model in which all castes and sub castes were ranked
into a fourfold classification. Also with the inauguration of colonial rule, the opportunities and the potential for individuals and social groups to transcend it social position in the ranked classification decreased. As Dirks (1989) and R. Thapar (1984) argue that in the pre-colonial era, individuals and groups could capture power through military prowess and through control of the state ensure economic and social mobility. With the advent of the colonial rule, with the political field now dictated by the colonial state, the only channel of social and economic mobility was streamlined through the access to the colonial fields- and this was only possible when indigenous actors operated through the identities given by the binary model of the colonial state. It is in this context that Dirks (2001) argues that groups were construed as communities and castes. In due course of time caste (the colonial model) was frozen in time and came to be connoted as the colonial state imagined it to be. However in everyday practices indigenous actors and groups continued to employ a combination of past and tested practices and identities and for certain contexts operated through specific ‘colonial’ codes. Dirks (2001:76) argues, that caste (as was comprehended by the British and informed by the Brahminical episteme) was made into a peculiarly rigid social phenomenon detached from political processes, and a specifically Indian form of civil society. This was done through the colonial registers and practices such as the census wherein heterogenous groups were straight jacketed into finite set of identities. Cohn (1978) observes,

‘...in some sense it might be argued that the British created the Indian village, and that they rigidified some groups and institutions, which formerly had been contingent and flexible, such as castes...’ (1987:195-6).

Similarly, Bayly (1988) argues that hierarchy, based on royal rank or caste purity, became an increasingly pervasive principle throughout society, and the Brahmin interpretation of Hindu society which was theoretical rather than actual over much of India as late as the mid-Eighteenth century was firmly entrenched a century later. He further argues that ‘traditional’ Indian society was not created out of nothing by colonial rule, but it was consolidated by it. And it was through the
combined effect of colonial institutions and discourse that caste became an immanent, static, social and political entity- though the census and other such ethnographic projects did open up spaces for contestations i.e. caste associations demanding revision of positions within the Varna stratification but in doing so it reaffirmed the idea of an omnipresent Brahmanical model as the way in which Indian society was ordered. (Bayly, 1988: 157)

With the colonial state now recognising individuals through their communitarian identity i.e. caste, religion, race and region this practice was soon resonated in all the colonial policies. For instance, with regards to land related policies, the colonial state decided to reorganise the existing land tenurial practices such that it did not completely rupture the ‘traditional’ structure but instead introduced a system that recognised caste and Varna system. In order to maximise profits the East India Company introduced a new practice, called the ryotwari system in the Bombay Provinces in 1830s in which the actual cultivators of the land were by and large recognised. In this process the colonial state classified the population on the basis of peasant castes/classes, artisan caste/classes and other interrelated castes/classes in rural areas. It was through this classificatory practice that the Kunbi’s for instance came to be recognised as a peasant caste in the Deccan, the Kumbhars (potters), Lohars (iron smith), Sonar (goldsmith) as artisan castes and the Brahmin, Vani (local moneylender), Parit (washermen) and Nhavi (barber) as the service providing caste. What was the result of this classification practice? It meant that the space that was open to an individual to change occupations now became constricted. That is in pre-colonial and in some instances as late as the early 20th century individuals practicing a particular occupation could pursue some other occupation and gain social acceptance for the same. Any individual who tilled land could be called a Kunbi- it did not mean that it was specific to any caste. For instance as the British administrator, Enthoven (1921) argues that

“...Kanbis (Kunbi’s) are said to be not infrequently recruited from the Malhari Kolis who take to cultivation and in time establish their claim to be classed as Kunbi’s.” (Enthoven, 1921: Vol II; 285)
The colonial policy of cataloguing the indigenous actors into on the basis of occupation with the assumption that occupational practice determined ones caste and that these castes were closed endogamous social groups meant that ‘caste’ as a category was now frozen in time and space- indigenous actors were now straight jacketed into oversimplified and well defined units. But this was not an easy task as there were innumerable jatis that were to be placed within this classificatory scheme. It is no wonder that the colonial state gave up this practice of cataloguing individuals into castes after the 1931 census. However the effects of this classificatory practice were that ‘caste’ was essentialised and became a normative, over-generalised and uniformised category. What is more is that this category (caste) continued to be employed as a measurable and quantifiable concept in the methodology of social science even in the post colonial period. (Dirks, 2001)

What was the effect of the colonial practice of reorganisation and legitmation of individuals according to communitarian identity? The ryotwari system now created a class of peasantry who now imagined themselves as belonging to a particular social group i.e. the Kunbi’s and Malis (gardeners) with other allied social groups such as Dhangars (shepards), Kosti (weavers), Parits (washermen) among others. Similarly the ‘Marathas’ as a social category got redefined i.e. the transformation from a broad, historical category to a narrow, specific social group, misrecognised as caste in social science literature. ‘Maratha’ in pre-colonial and early colonial contexts meant Marathi-speaking and territorially located population. But ‘Mahratta’ also had a distinct meaning in the Deccan during pre-colonial times. As James Grant Duff argued

“...the name Mahratta is applicable in some degree to all (the inhabitants of the Deccan), when spoken of in contradistinction to men of other countries, but amongst themselves a Mahratta Brahmin will carefully distinguish himself from a Mahratta. That term, though extended to the Koonbees, or cultivators, is, in strictness, confined to the military families of the country, many of whom claim a doubtful, but not improbable descent from the Rajpoots.” (Duff, 1826;8)
This suggests that there was more than one meaning ascribed to ‘Maratha’. As Deshpande (2004) argues that to be a ‘Maratha’ in the pre-colonial period, was not to be part of an enumerable and bounded jati but rather depending on the context, the category could signify certain military values, or the elite of a broad military-cultural group. By the early 20th century ‘Maratha’ came to include Kunbis also and came to connote a social category that constituted the peasantry and also that claimed to have a martial cultural past. (Deshpande, 2004; 11-13, 2007)

In mentioned earlier in this chapter I am arguing that the colonial governance practices introduced certain historically impinging conditions that transformed the meaning of ‘Maratha’ overtime i.e. from a connotation that referred to a territory in the early decades of 19th century to that of a community claiming martial heritage and also to connote a peasant political group by the early 20th century. The inauguration of new ‘fields’ entailed that the indigenous actors drew up strategies that allowed them the flexibility to collate as political groups such that they could enter colonial fields. To comprehend what the term ‘Maratha’ earlier connoted and how the meaning of this category shifted over time one needs to examine the juncture when the colonial rule began and the Peshwa rule ended in the Deccan which was in the year 1818.

The Peshwa state (‘Maratha’ kingdom ruled by the Peshwa) was an exemplification wherein the social collapsed with the political i.e. Brahminical knowledge system ensured that the Varna ideology was strictly followed and that the Peshwas ruled the state based on this principle. With the end of the Peshwa rule in the Deccan in 1818 and its integration into the colonial fold, two important consequences ensued. The first was that the Peshwa’s authority at policing jati discipline came to an end and the existing jati ordering was once again thrown open into the realm of the political i.e. during the Peshwa rule religion was made an integral part of the state and through the authority of the state a Brahmanic order was legitimated. The Peshwas patronized many of their caste Brahmins who reinterpreted religious texts to marginalize the rest of the jatis. In this scheme a
well to do section of the Kunbi peasantry that had claimed a kshatriya status ("Maratha") during Shivaji's times in the 16th century, came to be connoted as shudras (the servant caste). This meant that it was Brahmins at the top of the Varna stratification and the rest were placed in the category of vaishya and shudra. According to the Peshwa ideology there were to be no kshtriyas in the Deccan. (O'Hanlon, 1983)

With the advent of colonial rule all this changed as now the 'modern' practices and system entailed that indigenous actors had an opportunity to question the earlier Brahmin doctored knowledge system in the public/political arena. The colonial policy of relative non-interference in cultural matters of the indigenous actors at least in the initial decades enabled the inauguration and expansion of new spaces for alternate discourses. Another development was the introduction of capitalism and the growth of newer structures of contestations or in Bourdieun terms 'fields' that required individuals to strategise and operationalises various species of capital. Contestations between various indigenous social groups and actors ensued to access the fields- especially so between the scribal groups who were the political elite during the Peshwa regime and other indigenous peasant and allied groups. With the end of the Peshwa rule and the British policy of permitting Kingship (nomial) in certain territories, a new notion of 'Maratha' emerged that challenged the earlier Brahminical episteme. This happened for the first time in a place called Satara in the Deccan.

With the installation of Pratapsinh the descendant of Shivaji in 1818 as the nominal ruler at Satara the authority and the hegemonic rule of the Peshwas and the scribal group (Brahmins) in western India was to an extent circumscribed at least in this region. This development was to have profound consequences on the composition and understanding of the category 'Maratha'. This did not mean that the Brahmin intellectuals lost all the ground as these ideas of purity and pollution were very much ingrained in the minds of the masses and the Brahmins were still regarded as the interpreters of religion. However the change in guard allowed the new entrant to question the entrenched social order. It brought back memories of
the time when the ‘Marathi’ speaking local Brahmins refused to accept Shivaji as a kshtriya and he had to legitimate his claim through the services of Gaga Bhatt from Varanasi.\textsuperscript{xiii} (O’Hanlon, 1983)

In this contestation in 1830 Pratapsinh was supported by ‘Maratha’ chiefs (watandars and erstwhile feudatories) who too wanted to claim the same status. This was the first effort of this kind and it led to polarization of two groups, one representing the Brahmins and the other the kin group of Pratapsinh and his allies’ i.e. elite ‘Maratha’ sardars. This face off resulted in a public debate taking place to determine if the ‘Marathas’ could claim a kshtriya status. This debate was informed by religious ideologies and therefore was seen as an important attack on the Brahmin forte. The public debate finally secured Kshatriya status for Pratapsinh and his kindred and also the erstwhile feudatories or sardars who were self proclaimed ‘Marathas’. However the criteria on which this debate was won enabled not just influential landed chiefs but also many modest Kunbi families to put forward Kshatriya claims, despite Pratapsinh’s attempts to limit them to a small, elite circle. The term ‘Maratha’ necessarily came to mean ‘of kshtriya origin’ and now a large section of the peasantry i.e. Kunbis began to appropriate it as it had inherent cultural and symbolic value. By claiming to belong to a noble family background an individual stood better chance of getting employed in the colonial ‘fields’ than without. This of course led to a contestation between the aristocratic and erstwhile military sardar families and the common Kunbi peasant families over the use of this term. As O’Hanlon (1983) argues

“...All this seems confirmed when we turn back to Pratapsinh’s diaries where he frequently recorded his anxiety and irritation at the efforts of humble Kunbi families to connect themselves with assal families. He made it clear that the 1820s and 1830s had seen a very worrying increase in such threats to their purity”... O’Hanlon (1983; 38)

Further she points out that Pratapsinh and his elite allies tried to halt this processes through sanctions- ostracisation of members of assal ‘Maratha’s for contracting marriages outside the elite circle. She quotes Pratapsinh,
“These days, when the Kunbis and others grow wealthy they try to pollute our caste. If this goes on, dharma itself will not remain...but in spite of this these men are trying to spread money around in our caste...the Gayakvad of Baroda as a mere Kunbi, had offered some people of the ‘Maratha’ caste the inducement of money and led them into betrayal and pollution. So the whole community gathered together and it was found that Chimappa Sirke Kutekar was responsible, so I said to him you are no longer in our caste. Today you must leave Satara. Thus he was thrown out of the caste. The son of Appajirao Mohite had also gone over so I told him he also was out of the caste”. (O’Hanlon 1983; 38-39)

It was not only the peasant Kunbis who were ascribing to claim the kshtriya status but also other social groups such as the Sonars (goldsmith) and Prabhus (scribes) who were attempting to do the same. The outcome of this debate in Satara was that a wider range of peasant castes began to claim a ‘Maratha’ kshtriya status that invoked the attributes of rulership and martial heroism which could be shared by very large groups especially amongst the Kunbi peasantry. In time large number of Kunbi families began to adopt practices such that they could be recognised as ‘Marathas’. Especially those Kunbis who were rich and landed attempted to raise their social status in this manner. (O’Hanlon 1983; 40)

It is pertinent to point out that the colonial field’s required noble lineage as one criterion to enter it. Also with the reorganisation of the British Indian Army after the 1857 revolt, the military field opened up potential opportunities for the peasantry, but with the right kind of credentials. The appendage of a title such as a ‘Maratha’ would have definitely facilitated entry rather than just a peasant Kunbi.

This contestation was also facilitated by transformations taking place in the agrarian structure in the Deccan and especially in the Bombay Provinces. Monetisation of the economy coupled with commercialisation and commodification of agriculture meant that the peasantry was now being stratified in terms of economic classes. The well to do Kunbi peasants were now appropriating the kshtriya label of ‘Maratha’ in order to strengthen their social and political position.
The inauguration of ryotwari from 1830s onwards transformed the existing Jajmani system (Balutedari) whereby a large proportion of indigenous actors in the Deccan i.e. Bombay Provinces (presently, Western Maharashtra and Gujarat including small areas of North Karnataka) were now deemed to belong to the peasantry or allied groups. With the shrinking of the military market, the opportunities of employment also reduced drastically. This meant intense strategising on the part of the indigenous actors to enter the newly inaugurated fields in which an individual’s cultural, social and symbolic capital played an important role. (Omvedt, 1976, Rodrigues, 1998)

Ryotwari was preferred in Bombay Provinces as this region was found to be suitable by the colonial state as the land holding pattern (i.e. average agricultural land per rural person) in this region was not as grossly skewed as in the others. In other parts of the Deccan the revenue settlements became operational by 1860 (except for Konkan). In most of Marathwada and in the Berar districts of Central Provinces (Vidarbha), locally adapted forms of ryotwari called the khalse prevailed. While in the other regions of Central Provinces a variation on the zamindari system, called malguzari, was introduced. (Charlesworth, 1972, Wink 1983)

What was so novel in the ryotwari system that allowed for high levels of economic mobility of the peasantry? Under the ryotwari system every peasant was registered and the holder of land was recognised as its proprietor who paid taxes directly to the colonial authorities. The ryot was therefore free to sublet his property, or to transfer it by gift, sale, or even mortgage it. He could not be ejected by the authorities as long as he paid the annual fixed assessment rate. In unfavourable seasons remissions of assessment were usually granted for entire or partial loss of produce. The assessment was fixed in terms of cash/money and therefore it meant that the erstwhile Balutedari system in which goods and services were exchanged in kind that was carried out through more of a barter system now was replaced by a monetised economy. Moreover the ryotwari system entailed the creation of a class of propertied small peasants with the logic that these peasants would pay a certain
amount of revenue to the colonial authorities directly rather than through intermediaries such as Zamindars or the Jagirdars. This was in tune with the colonial form of capitalism which intended to maximise profits and which entailed reorganisation of indigenous actors on the line of classes as in Europe. To oversee the collection of taxes that the ryots had to pay, the colonial state vested this authority in the village headman i.e. the Patil who now gained more importance in this system. With capitalism now percolating to the peasantry and with the Company following predatory policies of exacting large profits the taxation rates increased overtime which brought in drastic changes at this level. In the context of rapid commercialization of agriculture together with high rents meant that many of the small peasants lost their land to those with greater economic and political resources, ones who could survive. (Charlesworth, 1972, Kumar, 1964)

This was also at a time when the pressure on land was ever increasing due to the dismantling of the ‘Maratha’ armies (the term ‘Maratha’ here denotes a territorial identity) leading to unemployment resulting in ex-soldiers, civil servants and other miscellaneous military and related state functionaries to revert to agriculture and related land based activities. Moreover with the growth of urbanisation and inauguration of modern industrial technology the artisans faced a major problem. As the new technology based on mass production began to take roots in the Deccan most of the artisans were faced with the prospect of reverting to agriculture, mainly as casual landless labourers. (Rodrigues, 1998)

In the pre-colonial feudal system in the Deccan under the Peshwas, tax which was also called chauth and was collected through intermediaries who constituted a hierarchy spanning the region to the village level. Certain individuals or families and lineages who were influential officers in the military or the civil administration were conferred hereditary rights called watans, over certain lands (that could extend to control over several villages) whose control lay with the individual families. These families were titled as Deshmukhs and Deshpandes (other titles that were invested in these lineages were Jagirdars, Inamdars, Sarunjamdar and the like) and through the system were invested with authority not only related to
revenue matters but also of judicial and executive functions. The Deshmukhs and Deshpandes operated at a regional level. Their function was to ensure stability at the regional level and also to repatriate part of the revenue collected by them from the region under their rule. At the behest of the Deshmukhs certain lineages which were close to or related to the Deshmukh family were appointed as village head called the Patil (usually both the Deshmukh and the Patil were considered to belong to the “Maratha” social group which was akin to the peasant group called Kunbi’s. The ‘‘Maratha’s’ were deemed to be well off Kunbi’s who were large land holders and usually did not till their own land and instead employed agricultural labourers).

The function of the Patil was to ensure revenue collection from all the peasants in the village and repatriate the same to the Deshmukh and in this respect he had a supporting officer called the Kulkami (who usually was a Brahmin as they were the only literate social group) to aid in record keeping of revenue and land related matters. (Kaiwar, 1994, Rodrigues 1998)

Social historians such as Fukazawa (1972) and Kumar (1965) argue that in the pre-colonial period villages were considered as relatively autonomous political units that epitomised community (jati) interdependence called the Balutedari or jajmani system in the Deccan. The village structure was stratified on the basis of the patron client relationship. In this system an arrangement of social hierarchy was devised whereby each community was assigned a corresponding social status with respect to its position in this organisation. In this system, the hereditary office bearing jatis became the local elite- the title holding self proclaimed ‘Maratha’ lineages. The jati boundaries were not completely discrete and bounded but were rather a continuum. The practice of hypergamy, wherein the ritually lower influential and economically well off lower peasant communities such as Kunbis, Malis, Dhangars among others were selectively incorporated into the ritually higher ‘Maratha’ community through marriage. But in the pre-colonial period a common practice was ascendance through military exploits- the best illustration would be of families that rose to power through their military prowess such as the Holkars of Indore, Scindias of Gwalior and Gaikwads of Baroda. 
However with the colonial rule setting in the territories were now merged into the British Empire and uniform bureaucratic practices entailed new ways through which social and political ascendancy could be realised. With the integration of hitherto disparate cultural zones within one state which had a common set of practices led to the organisation of new social imaginings amongst the indigenous actors. New ways of identification and mobilisation also followed. For instance with rapid commercialization of agriculture, accompanied by the process of rent stabilization, a complex set of social relations of agricultural production developed in the different parts of the Deccan. Depending on their initial level of wealth the Deshmukhs, Deshpandes, Patils and Kulkarnis were able to retain their clout through involvement in the commercial and financial activities of the emergent village-town nexus and their contacts with the bureaucracy outside the village. In pursuing such a policy of direct taxation through the ryot, the colonial authorities hoped to alter the earlier feudal authority structure in the Deccan to a more market oriented economy. Some of the traditional administrative officers now were incorporated into the colonial bureaucratic structure and henceforth were added to the payroll of the colonial state. (Hardiman, 1996, Rodrigues, 1998)

Thus between 1830 and 1890 many changes occurred in the political economy of the Deccan. The railways connected the major cotton tracts to the ports by 1870. More importantly, it led to a rapid spread of the area under cotton and later by the early 20th century other commercial crops such as sugarcane. With the growing demand for raw cotton the hinterland of Bombay city witnessed a steady decline in the acreage under grain cultivation. Thus on the one hand population in urban areas was burgeoning that required more manpower and on the other food was getting scarce. This anomaly was realised and soon the core districts of the Bombay Presidency such as Poona, Ahmednagar, Sholapur and Satara began specialising in production of grain crops. The artificial insufficiency of food grains created a famine situation. Mass migrations occurred in this period. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Bombay government also began
constructing large-scale irrigation canals along some of the major river valleys in this region. The Deccan Canals were intended to serve as famine-protection works, providing an assured water supply for the basic food crops. However, when the first canals came into operation in the 1880s, enterprising cultivators discovered that the new irrigation water could be most profitably employed for growing sugarcane especially in the western region of the Bombay Provinces. (Baviskar, 1980, Kaiwar, 1994, Rodrigues, 1998)

Also the emergence of many district and taluka (tehsil) towns as small trade centres contributed to the commoditization of food grains. The larger villages and talukas and district towns became the centres of accumulation and distribution for the intra-and interregional trade in food grain. Most of the big traders and moneylenders resided in these centres and acted as intermediaries between the major local wholesale markets and the peasantry. This led to intensification and modernisation of agriculture on ryot lands. (Banaji, 1978: 359, Kaiwar, 1994)

Additionally, with associated demands of inputs and marketing, the need for credit and working capital also led to a rapid expansion in the activities of traders and moneylenders. The increase in area under cash crops such as cotton meant an increase in demand for and the prices of land. Substantial increase in land transfers occurred as a result, from small peasants to larger landholders and moneylenders some indigenous to the land and some exogenous such as the Marwaris and Banias from the north and western India. (Banaji, 1978, Charlesworth, 1972, Kaiwar, 1994)

In the period from 1850s onwards due to the commercialisation of agriculture and predatory capitalism there occurred a great deal of differentiation within the peasantry in the Deccan region. The rich landholders became richer and the poor lost their land. Charlesworth (1972) argues that the incidence of indebtedness was massive and this led to the pauperisation of the lower (small land holder) ‘Maratha’ (those Kunbis who considered themselves as having a past martial credential) and Kunbi peasant. Banaji’s (1978) research points out that in the
Bombay Presidency, among those who lost their lands many belonged to the Kunbi peasantry but there were also cases of some Patils, whose wealth and power had steadily decreased. (Banaji, 1978: 397, Kaiwar, 1994)

As Omvedt (1976) points out

“Richer peasants were also threatened by bad years and by continual pressures from moneylenders and courts; and they retained family and caste ties with many of the poorer peasants.”(Omvedt, 1976: 91)

Thus to sum up with the advent of colonialism in Deccan in 1818, political and economic changes ensued. The integration in the Company’s territories entailed administrative, economic and judicial/legal integration. In other words, the traditional authority structure (feudal) in the Deccan was made partially redundant and newer structures of authority were introduced. Some of the traditional administrative officers now were incorporated into the colonial bureaucratic structure and henceforth were included in the payroll of the colonial government. The village ceased to be the relatively autonomous political unit and the patron-client system weakened. A large section of the peasantry and artisan castes were rendered unemployed. Now towns became power and administrative centres. In this set up which required lower level bureaucrats, the educated Brahmins (the interpreters of Indian society) were now incorporated in large numbers. The rural areas remained as feeder or ancillary units to urban-industrial centres, Bombay being notable. (Kumar, 1965, Rodrigues, 1998)

Thus the Ryotwari system of land revenue introduced in the early 1820s had two effects- a) it weakened the Balutedari system and with it the cohesiveness and interdependence of disparate social groups within a village b) it strengthened and promoted the values of individual entrepreneurship and presented opportunities for enhancing individual merit- led to commercialisation of agriculture in certain regions and also promoted the class consciousness to develop i.e., peasant class with common problems and interests, though its manifestation in the Deccan Riots of 1875. (Kaiwar, 1994)
The Deccan Riots of 1875 highlight the political transformations brought about in rural areas of Bombay peasantry during the first five decades of British rule. The riots were essentially an outcome of extreme pauperisation of the peasantry and the domination of the urban based outsider ‘sowcars’ or urban based moneylenders. The ryotwari system weakened the cohesion of the village by abolishing the collective responsibility which the Patil had formerly borne for the village and the Deshmukh for the regional rental which meant that the sowcar no longer had any dealings with the Patil as the head of the village community. Instead, he dealt with each peasant directly. Also with the institutionalisation of legal system through inauguration of courts of law the traditional judicial function and authority of the Patil was made defunct. The courts based on the principles of legal documentation and contractual responsibility favoured the sowcar rather than the Kunbi peasant. Also, the colonial judicial system could only be afforded by the urban rich as it entailed huge expenses and was genuinely out of reach for the peasantry. Thus in short, the Deccan riots was the first peasant revolt which brought together peasant and allied artisan social groups together as a political front that retaliated the dominance of the sowcar by targeting them. (Kumar, 1965, Fukuzawa, 1976)

As the Deccan riot commission report suggests,

"The Marwari and Gujar sowkars were almost exclusively the victims of the riots, and in villages where sowkars of the Brahmin and other castes shared the money lending business with Marwaris it was usual to find the latter only were molested." (Report of the Deccan Riots Commission, 1876, II, Appendix C, 66-69, Bombay)

The effect of the riot was that the colonial authorities hastily instituted a commission to look into the causes of the riots and decided to henceforth regulate the private money lending business. It also floated the idea of starting credit cooperative institutions which could function as banks for the benefit of the peasantry. (Kaiwar, 1994, Rodrigues, 1998)
Two important events took place in the later decades of the 19th century in the Deccan which some scholars such as Omvedt, (1976), O’Hanlon (1985) deem as important developments that facilitated political assertion of the peasantry. These events spurred the emergence of discourses on the meaning of ‘Maratha’ and the process of Kunbis asserting themselves as ‘Marathas’ and in turn ‘Maratha’ came to be connoted as not only kshatriya but also having an element of peasant culture. What were these two events? The first was the inauguration of the Satyashodhak movement (or Truth Seeking Society), Phule in 1973 which later translated into the non-Brahmin movement. The second was the ascendance of Shahu as the Maharaja of Kolhapur princely state in 1894. The primary reason for the inauguration of the Satyashodhak movement was the alarming Brahmin domination in the new fields organised by the colonial state. As the Brahmins were the scribal community and hence educated, they were the first to recognise the advantages of English education and also of allying with the colonial authorities. The scribal community (Brahmins) soon became the interpreters of Indian society which enabled them to reintroduce the Varna model of the caste system as ‘the’ way to understand societal phenomenon and processes. This of course proved very useful for the scribal group to enter the new fields and also form civic associations that would benefit their community (such as the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha in 1870s, Maharashtra Education Society in 1870s, Deccan Education Society in 1880s among others). The Satyashodhak movement and later Shahu’s involvement in the Non Brahmin movement stemmed from this anomaly.

Native Discourses on ‘Marathas’: Strategies of Inclusion and Exclusion

In this section I explore how various discourses emerged in the late 19th century that defined and reimagined the term ‘Maratha’ and in doing so questioned the Brahmanical episteme. These definitional discourses continued till the 1931 census ‘froze’ in time the category called ‘Maratha’. In this period many sections of indigenous actors ascribed to this category ‘Maratha’ as a strategy that
facilitated their social, economic and political mobility. These discourses are anchored in the Satyashodhak movement of Phule and Shahu’s interventions.

From the mid-nineteenth century, colonial observers highlighted the fact that membership of the ‘Maratha’ kshatriya category was emerging and this was related to the improved economic status due to urbanization and also those benefiting from the recent commercialisation of agriculture. This was also a period when the political economy was in transition. Famines and droughts were forcing villagers to migrate. The Deccan riots of 1875 in Ahmednagar and Poona were perhaps one of most violent protests against this rising trend that also critiqued the colonial government policies. It was in the midst of this transition that the non-Brahmin movement emerged. (Omvedt, 1976, O’Hanlon, 1983)

Phule, belonging to the Mali (gardener) community, emerged with his radical critique of Brahminism and economic exploitation by the ‘outsiders’ i.e. Gujar and Marwaris. He founded the Satyashodhak Samaj (the organisation of truth-seekers) in 1873 to educate and enlighten the illiterate and ignorant masses, and to liberate them from religious persecution. He rejected Brahmanism based on rituals and instead propagated a Sarvajanik Satyadharma (universal religion of truth) based on rationality and equality. (O’Hanlon, 1983; 24-37)

His attacks on Brahmin ideological hegemony were simple and forthright. In his own intuitive ways he attempted to bring the non-Brahmin community together and to do so he interpreted the Shivaji period of ‘Maratha’ history. He used the term ‘Bahujan Samaj’ for the non-Brahmin community. He urged the Bahujan Samaj members to follow the ideals professed by the revered king Shivaji. He presented his interpretations of Shivaji in the form of a powada (Ballad) which was published in 1869. He presented Shivaji as the leader of Maharashtra’s shudras, and ascribed his achievements to the strength and skill of his shudra and ati-shudra armies (which Phule argues belonged to the pre-Aryan race), rather than to his Brahmin ministers. The lower castes of Maharashtra, the peasantry were glorified. Phule strongly denied any Brahmin role in the creation of the
'Maratha' state (Kingdom). He posited conflict between Brahmins and the ritually lower communities as a central feature of 'Maharashtrian' culture. He argued that Brahmins had added, to their traditional religious power, a formidable new sphere of secular influence within the administrative and political structures of the British raj. He thus laid out an ideology of the Bahujan Samaj (masses other than the Brahmins) to counter the entrenched Brahmin cultural hegemony. (O’Hanlon, 1985)

Phule and his associates also tried to organize peasants against the moneylenders and landlords. He was equally opposed to the hegemonic claims of self proclaiming ‘Maratha’ estate holders and also to the moral and social superiority claims of the Brahmins. Though a critique of Brahmin- ‘Maratha’ domination was implicit in his anti-Brahmin stance, he rarely criticized the political impact of the self proclaiming ‘Maratha’ landlordism and failed to investigate their role in the economic oppression of the peasantry, the artisan communities and the untouchables as well as other landless labourers. Regarding Phule’s view on the village system, Omvedt (1976) opines

"Phule wanted sweeping changes within village society itself. His primary goal was not simply to replace a Brahmin-dominated bureaucracy with a non-Brahmin bureaucracy and it was not simple to transfer power to the villages. Rather he wanted to revolutionise village system. Not only should the position of Kulkarni be abolished; also the Patil’s and other watan posts should be opened up to all on the basis of merit through special training schools. Thus the entire balutedari system with its relation to traditional caste privileges and functions was to be destroyed along with the hereditary linking of caste and occupation.” (Omvedt 1976:120)

It is no wonder that it did not appeal to the ‘Maratha’ nobility (those who assumed the nomenclature of kshtriya origin). Other than the aristocratic ‘Marathas’ the Lingayats, Jains and Kayasthas also did not participate in Phule’s Satyashodhak movement. Phule had consciously avoided the category ‘Maratha’ in his imagination of a rural, non-Brahman solidarity and preferred using the combination of the term ‘Shudra’ with ‘Kshatriya’ (derived from kshetra or land,
to denote aboriginal inhabitants of the land) to evoke this solidarity as well as a
generalised sense of pride and bravery.

It is therefore not surprising that the Non Brahmin movement lost its initial
objective and gave way for the ‘Maratha’ vision to unify the Kunbis into the
‘Maratha’ fold. The Indian National Congress was inaugurated in 1885 and one of
their major demands was the incorporation of indigenous actors in the functioning
of the government and a long term agenda was self-rule. This is also the time
when the Viceroy Rippon and his council were deliberating of introducing local
self rule and the understanding was that sooner or later this political space was
going to expand- which was materialised as the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909.
The idea of kingship was intricately associated with that of rulership. By claiming
to possess certain inherent characteristics i.e. of kshtriyaness sections of the
‘Maratha’ leadership were implying that they have the right to rule. What is
interesting in this discourse is that it relied on religion while doing so and also
evoked a sense of a social imaginary i.e. a restricted form of imagined nationalism
(invoking a cultural past of heroism and martial qualities). (Omvedt, 1976)

O’Hanlon (1986) points out how this project enabled new social imaginings. In a
speech entitled ‘kshtradharma’ in one of the Satyashodhak meetings in the late
19th century, one member argued that the term kshatriya was derived from the
word kshatra meaning power or authority and drew his conclusions as to the
proper role of kshtriyas in society,

“The meaning of the word kshatra is power or authority. Those who go
forward to oppose a hostile army see this proper role as exercising
authority in the land. It is we who have to protect it with our lives. The
strength of those who strive on the field of battle with their comrades is
the strength of the country itself.” (O’Hanlon 1986, 298)

Further arguing that,

“It was not true that only rajas could call themselves kshatriya: the term
should be given to all those whose families had striven in the past to
protect the country and this included the humblest of soldiers. Moreover
the fact that many kshtriyas had now ceased from practicing their professions as warriors did not meant that they were no longer kshtriyas” (O’Hanlon 1986, 298)

This was a very tacit way of ensuring that the notion of kshtriya could be expanded to include the peasantry. Thereby suggesting that the Kunbis, Malis, Dhangars and other allied peasant social groups could be termed as ‘Marathas’ and these nomenclatures are interchangeable and permeable. The claim towards being a kshtriya meant that the ‘Maratha’s were now imagining themselves through the prism of kingship with the tacit anticipation of ‘Maratha’ rulership.

Another speaker added

“Even though kshtriyas have taken up trade, agriculture and animal husbandry this does not polluted their kshtriya lineage, or their kshatriya dharma. Even though they have acquired the arts of learning, they should not forget the use of their weapons. But they should take to earning their living through education if they can.” (O’Hanlon 1986, 298)

Similarly a letter to the Din Bahndu on 15 April 1888 praised the work of the society and the efforts of the secretary Bhanaji Bapurao Angane in publishing the report of its proceedings and commented on the importance of such activities for facilitating the claim of kshtriya.

“He (Bhanaji Bapurao Angane ) has show his caste brothers, their proper kshatriya descent, their duties and position...because of this, the book has found acceptance amongst all the Maratha’s, from the most illiterate to the very learned and everyone is able fully to recognize his kshatriya lineage.” (O’Hanlon 1986, 299)

This aspiration of the ‘Marathas’ received due attention in the colonial discourse and was accepted with the inclusion of the ‘Marathas’ as the martial race in 1882. There were other communities which were labelled as martial races by the colonial state and employed in their British Indian army- such as Rajputs, Sikhs Muhammadans, Pathans, Gurkahas and Dogras. To this list were added the ‘Marathas’ and the Deccani Musalmans.
By the late 19th century from within the Satyashodhak movement arose the Non-Brahmin movement that in particular stimulated economic and social change in the rural areas through promotion of institutional building, especially in the realm of education. Though Phule initiated the Non-Brahmin movement, after his death the self-proclaiming elite ‘Marathas’ took over its leadership and redefined and reinterpreted the non-Brahmin movement as ‘Sarvajanik Satya Dharma’ (universal fraternity) and thus incorporated ideologies that suited its interests. In time it came to represent the political ambitions of the ‘Maratha’ elite. Henceforth a section of the ‘Maratha’ elite took over the mantle as the leaders of the ‘Bahujan Samaj’. To this end Phule’s ideology was appropriated and reinterpreted by his ‘Maratha’ successors. However by 1880s Phule’s interpretation of ‘Kshatriya’ was reinvented and appropriated by the ‘Marathas’ to mean exclusively kshatriya. (Omvedt, 1976)

As Lele (1990) argues

“It is important to remember that the Non-Brahmin movement gathered momentum in Maharashtra under the conditions of ascendance and reassertion of dominance by the Maratha elite and not as a consciousness among oppressed groups... that goal (of Sarvajanik dharma) now shrank to that of reasserting ‘Maratha’ hegemony and fulfilment of elite Maratha interests... they began to speak of a generalised peasant interest at a time when peasantry was becoming more and more differentiated along class lines.” (Lele 1990; 153)

The non-Brahmin movement was now taken over by a section of the peasantry that claimed to be ‘Marathas’ and who wanted to give a new connotation so as to restrict its ‘misuse’ and make it an exclusive category. (Phadke 1989:254 and O’Hanlon, 1985)

In 1886 Narayan Meghaji Lokhande a close associate of Phule and the editor of the Satyashodhak Samaj mouth piece, Din Mitra reinterpreted the term ‘Maratha’,

“Maratha means those of the Kshatriya varna. In this Kshatriya varna, there are ninety six families, and many sub-families within these. The people who were born into these families are the true Maratha’s
(Kshatriyas). Those who hold surnames from among these families can become Maratha’s; other people can never do so....’. (O’Hanlon, 1985; 51)

This statement coming at a juncture when the colonial state was preparing to devolve some authority and power to the indigenous actors at a lower level meant it was significant in political terms. There was a tacit acknowledgement of the elite nature of the ‘Maratha’ category with its ninety-six families, but allowed for its extension to include families of other castes who have the same surnames and who could, thereby, ‘become’ ‘Marathas’. The fact that many such surnames were common across rural caste groups made this a significant extension. Social actors such Lokhande possibly realized the importance of such a notion with a view to building a broad based political group through a combination of the Kunbis and other peasantry that could to be used at a politically opportune period, but it is important to note that he did not clearly specify that all of rural society could belong to his ‘Maratha’ community. (O’Hanlon, 1983)

Thus Phule’s attack on inequality and on all forms of Brahminism, his battle against untouchability, his active promotion of women’s equality and his opposition to the oppressive social practices of child marriage, neglect or oppression of widows and orphans, was all by the late 19th century narrowed down to further claims of a small section of self proclaiming ‘Marathas’.

Organizations like the Deccan Maratha Education Association (DMEA), which was founded in 1883 by Mhaske (a landed ‘Maratha’), had taken steps to promote higher education amongst ‘Marathas’ and Kunbis. Mhaske thereby effectively ignored the needs of most ritually lower placed communities such as Malis (not to mention Mahars and Mangs), who, unlike ‘Marathas’ needed basic literacy, not higher education. In 1884 D. N. Shelke likewise organized a fund for the spread of education among ‘Marathas’. This funding was directed at ‘Marathas’ and included Kunbis but excluded Malis and other lower castes. It became a strategy to for the Kunbis and some well doing individual families amongst other peasant communities to take up the ‘Maratha’ nomenclature for furthering their interests. Phule’s powadas were reinterpreted in which now comparisons were drawn
between the martial qualities of the ‘Marathas’ of the 16th and 17th century to the British claims of ‘Marathas’ being a martial race. (Omvedt, 1976, O’Hanlon, 1983)

As O’Hanlon (1983) suggests that there is a very large Marathi literature, dating from the 1880s, claiming a kshatriya status for ‘Marathas’. There is also evidence of a lot of activity amongst these non-Brahman groups aimed at supporting these claims- the proceedings of the Kshatradharma Pratipadak Sabha (Society of the Maratha Caste for the Promotion of Kshatriya Dharma), a ‘Maratha’ society in 1882 in Bombay was inaugurated, which set out to restore to all ‘Marathas’ what it saw as their rightful position as the leaders and protectors of the land and people of Maharashtra. Its president was Tukaramji Haraji Patil Salunkhe, and its secretary Bhanaji Bapuraoji Angane. By 1886 the society could show a total of 997 contributors to its funds, which stood at over Rs. 1600. One of the main purposes, reflected in the society’s title was to define the qualities of the social group which might call itself ‘Maratha’ kshatriya, and to publicize its legitimate position in society. (O’Hanlon 1986, 288-300)

By late 19th and early 20th century the reigns of the non-Brahmin movement leadership passed onto Shahu, the Maharaja of Karveer (princely State of Kolhapur, now a district in the southern part of the State of Maharashtra). The contestations between the Maharaja and the Kolhapur Brahmin leaders came into the open in 1900, although the elements of conflict were present as early as 1894 when the Maharaja first launched his policy to help non-Brahmins. The pretext for the break was the refusal of the court priesthood and Brahmins generally to recognize the Chhatrapati family’s claim to Kshatriya status and to perform certain religious rites, known as the vedokta ceremony, connected with this claim. The vedokta controversy brought the ill-feeling between the Darbar and the Brahmins to a head, but it was only one of a chain of incidents that helped to embitter relations between the two parties. Among them were the ordinance of July 1902, which reserved at least half the posts in the state service for non-
Brahmins, the Maharaja’s attempts after 1904 to create a non-Brahmin priesthood (Latthe, 1924:23-6)

In the words of the Kolhapur weekly, Samartak, a Brahmin mouth piece,

“A whole community, we mean the Brahman, is put under ban. . . . All possible offices are given to Maratha’s under the guise of encouraging the backward classes. When enough men of this class are not available, all possible and impossible offices are concentrated in the hands of one Maratha... ...” (Samarth, 8 August 1906)

It is interesting to understand why Shahu opted for policies favouring the non-Brahmins. It is obvious that he was hurt by the vedokta incident of 1899 which did not recognise him as a Kshatriya. Moreover, the intervention of Tilak in both the vedokta and the abolition of the Kulkarni and Joshi watans (hereditary offices) in support of the Brahmins kept the issue burning. Was it then just this personal war or was it a message and a design to reassemble the Kunbis into the ‘Maratha’ category to claim political power?

This becomes clear especially in the early 20th century. In 1917 the Montague-Chelmsford declaration to grant a caste-based representation encouraged the ‘Maratha’s to establish the ‘Maratha’ League on December 16, 1917. Shahu lauded the provision of caste-based representation at Khamgaon. In a letter written in September 1918 to Lord Sydenham, the Governor of the Bombay presidency, Shahu justified the communal electorates for the ‘Maratha’s as he believed that the Brahmins had monopolised services in the British administration and hence, the grievances of non-Brahmins did not reach the colonial government (Kavalekar 1979:227).

Shahu and his associates gave a new direction to the movement and its mandate changed- it now became a vehicle for organising a ‘Maratha’ based political formation. He and his colleagues urged the peasantry to join the various fields inaugurated by the colonial state. He opined that it was the only way through which the Bahujan Samaj could challenge Brahmin domination. To this end he
started many educational and professional institutions within his princely state and also patronised other such efforts by the Bahujan Samaj members outside Kolhapur. In this pursuit to challenge Brahmin domination in the sphere of religion and administration he also began to train members of the Bahujan Samaj in priesthood and as lower level administrators (Talathis). Though he is popularly known for his benevolence in supporting the Bahujan Samaj, it is pertinent to note that he was also furthering the interests of the ‘Maratha’ community. For instance he readily patronised and supported many of the ‘Maratha’ newspapers such as Rashtraveer, Shivachhatrapati, Chhatrapati, Tarun Maratha, Garibancha Kaivari, Bhagava Zenda, Shrishvasmarak, Vijayi Maratha, Deen Mitra, Jagruti, Hunter, Kaivari, Pragati, Jinvijaya and Navyug. He also overtly supported efforts by ‘Marathas’ in the field of education, sports and specifically urged ‘Maratha’ youth to enrol in the military and police services, subscribing to the view that the ‘Marathas’ had a martial (kshtriya) cultural past. (Copland, 1973)

Some of these ‘Maratha’ sponsored and operated newsprint became a means through which these ideas were consumed and ingrained in the ‘popular’ domain and also contested other parallel meanings of the term ‘Maratha’. For instance in Vijayi Maratha the issue that became well known was regarding the ritual status of the Maharaja of Baroda, the Gaekwads. The Gaekwads were deemed to be Kunbi and therefore of shudra Varna.

“The Gaekwads of Baroda and even the Holkars of Indore are Marathas. As the occupation of their forefathers was that of kshtriya how can they be called shudra and Dhangar. By their deeds they are both Marathas.” (Vijayi Maratha, 1922, July 24th ; 4)

Similarly the ‘Marathas’ were also urged to look back into history to realise the false division of ‘Marathas’ and Kunbis.

“For centuries marriages have taken place between the Kunbis and Marathas. How can they be different? In every Maratha family one is bound to find ‘Kunbi’ filiation. We are one jati.” (Rashtraveer, 1919; May 4th ;9)
Some ‘Maratha’ writers, most notably Shahu’s minister and lawyer Bhaskarrao Jadhav (1867-1950), reflected ideological attempts (commonly associated with Shahu) to find common ground between the increasingly divergent beliefs of the earlier Satya Shodhak Samaj’s inclusive view of kshatriya identity and the growing exclusivity of elite ‘Maratha’ kshatriya lineages. Jadhav emphasized that, although ‘Marathas’ were descendants of Aryan invaders who had become mixed with indigenous Dravidian races, they remained fundamentally Aryan kshatriyas. In addition, he sought to remove status distinctions among ‘Marathas’ urged for the inclusion of all Kunbi peasants within the ‘Maratha’ framework and kshatriya ideology. From the early 20th century onwards, ‘Marathas’ came to connote both-individuals possessing a social and military status based on Aryan descendancy that was equal and even superior to Aryan Brahmins and also a peasant identity. Thus subscribing to this view it rendered ‘Marathas’ alone as worthy of association in kshatriya naukari i.e. Military and the Police services. (Omvedt, 1976, 132-33)

Thus by the early 1890s, a clear social trend had emerged delimiting kshatriya identity to ‘Marathas’ and the ‘Maratha’ “shahannava kuli” (ninety-six lineages) who were also now deemed to be assal (pure) ‘Marathas’. A section amongst the assal ‘Marathas’ sought to uphold their elitist perception of kshatriya heritage by distancing themselves from the peasant Kunbis. But there was also a counter current in which other sections of assal ‘Marathas’ and other ‘Marathas’ permitted hypergamy resulting in Kunbi peasants to become part of the ‘Maratha’ community. Thus this phenomenon suggests that after the classificatory policy of the colonial state straight jacketed indigenous actors into ‘castes’ which the British supposed were strictly endogamous social units meant that social mobility could only occur through social processes such as marriage. It is therefore no wonder that kinship became one of the prominent strategies that the indigenous actors employed to further their social position. Another complimentary strategy employed was that of ‘sanskritisation’- through which well to do peasant families from disparate communities imitated and internalised cultural practices of
reference communities. In particular in the late 1890s and early 1900s, the demands of the Maharaja of Kolhapur, Shahu Chatrapati (1874-1922) for Vedic religious rites (befitting a kshatriya) rather than Puranic rights (of a shudra) spurred many prominent Kunbi families to follow suit in asserting a more exclusive kshatriya heritage i.e. appropriating ‘Maratha’ as a symbolic title. (Copland 1973, O’Hanlon, 1983)

The Colonial Register and the meaning of ‘Maratha’ in the 20th century

The inclusion of ‘Marathas’ in the category of a Martial race further strengthened their claim of belonging to the Kshatriya Varna. As Major Bentham, the recruiting officer in 1908 for the Deccan ‘Marathas’ and Musalman reiterates this belief,

“As a class the Maratha’s possess great military qualities. They are quiet, orderly, amenable, clean, intelligent, determined and well-behaved. They are both good infantry soldiers and the Dekhani unsurpassable as Cavalry soldiers. These qualities have not yet been recognised at their true worth...What other class in India have as the Maratha’s have, except perhaps the Sikhs...?” (Bentham, 1908; 76, Handbook for the Indian Army; Maratha’s and Dekhani Musalmans Superintendent of Government Printing, India, Calcutta)

Also commenting on the best places to find such ‘Marathas’, he points out that Satara and Kolhapur are the best recruiting areas for the assal ‘Marathas’. In his words

“The very best class of Maratha’s are obtained here...supplies a large number of men. The people are thoroughly conversant with military matters and know all about conditions of service...” (Bentham, 1908; 156 and 161)

This is suggesting that the ‘Marathas’ have an inherent cultural knowledge of the military and therefore the capability of good administration, behaviour, manners and therefore are professionals. This in Bourdieun (1984) terms would mean embodied cultural and symbolic capital. This process of crystallisation of the term
'Maratha' was reflected in the colonial ethnographic work and by the 1920s it came to refer to a section of the peasantry i.e. the Kunbis were supposedly 'Marathas'. For instance as Enthoven (1921) a British ethnographer observes

"Kunbi is commonly derived from Kulambi or Kutumbika and is a Marathi term meaning a husbandman, Kanbi being its Gujarati equivalent. The Bombay Kunbi's are represented in the United Provinces by Kurmis, who are also known as Kunbi's. There seems little doubt that, strictly speaking, the term Kunbi, like Rajput, denotes a status and not a caste, and may be compared in this respect with the latter term, which has no necessary ethnic significance. The fact that Maratha Kunbi's are to a great extent homogeneous is clearly due primarily to their being 'Maratha's and not to their being Kunbi's. It is of special interest in this connection to observe that in the Savantvadi State, to the present day, the local cultivator, who would be known as a Kunbi in the Deccan, is known as a Maratha, the term Kunbi being little used." (Enthoven, 1921, Vol II: 284)

The discourses of the indigenous actors were thus gradually being reflected by the colonial state and simultaneously the indigenous actors interpreted these colonial registers as forms of legitimation to their claims. Thus through this dialectic process the boundaries of the category 'Marathas' had been drawn- though these boundaries were never strictly bounded. As Enthoven observes,

"Kunbi's, as a class, are landholders and husbandmen. Some of the higher families are land proprietors, Deshmukhs and Patils in the Deccan. Some of the Maratha Kunbi's are employed in Native States, and a few in Government service. Many enter the army. The Deshmukhs and those in service are well off, but the husbandmen as a class are poor." (Enthoven, 1921, Vol II: 285)

This discourse was now reflected now officially through the ethnographic details of the census and also in the writings of historians. Historians such as Altekar (1927) who have researched on the political economy of the Deccan in medieval ages and has elaborately documented the Brahmin- 'Maratha' rulership alliance since the medieval period. According to Altekar (1927), in order to preserve political authority, the Deccani Muslim rulers employed the local Brahmin (Deshastha) for civil and diplomatic services together with the Kunbi caste
members for military recruitment. It was during the Bahamani rule that the offices of Deshpandes, Sardeshpandes, Kulkarnis, Patil, Deshmukhs and Sardeshmukhs were instituted so as to preserve political authority and impart administrative (especially collection of taxes) and judicial functions.

Sardesai (1926; 78-79) argues that some of the Kunbis employed in military services and the Deshastha Brahmins in the administrative services were granted in lieu of their services a cluster of villages called watans. These beneficiaries thus took up titles such as Watandars, Zamindars, Jagirdars and Inamdars. Also those Kunbis who rose up the military hierarchy but were not allotted watans also claimed to have a higher status than the peasant Kunbi.

This process of economic and political differentiation was in essence the precursor to the emergence of the 'Marathas'. As Enthoven (1921: 8) suggests that there emerged two classes from the Kunbi peasant group - 'Maratha' proper and the 'Maratha'- Kunbi or cultivator caste also called Kulvadi. He argues

"The common belief in Maharashtra regarding the origin of Maratha's is that there is little or no difference, so far as caste is concerned, between Maratha's and Kunbis...Hence it would appear that Kunbis and Maratha's are differentiated rather by wealth and social status than by any hard and fast caste distinction." (Enthoven, 1921, Vol.3: 9)

However with selective inter-group marriages and endogamy these classes emerged as separate yet interconnected social groups. Eventually the exhaustive stratification established by the feudal system became a source of economic and political supremacy of a few families and their kin within the 'Marathas' itself. The 'Marathas' developed a stratification in terms of three jatis- Assal or Kulin (Pure 'Maratha' or 96 kulis or lineages), Lenkavale, Shinde or Kharchi (illegitimate) and mixed 'Marathas'.

Henceforth few lineages emerged as the upper or assal 'Maratha's, during this period such as the Bhonsales, Jadhavs, Nimbalkars, Mores, Manes, Ghatges, Dafleys, Sawants, Shirkes, Mahadiks, Mohites including others of the 96 pure
*kuls* or lineages. These lineages became more prominent with the rise of Shivaji (1627-1680) the founder the ‘Maratha’ Empire. (Enthoven, 1921, Vol.3: 19)

In this kingship system as argued earlier the village land was allotted to the Brahmin and ‘Maratha’ landlords. At the village level the Patil usually a ‘Maratha’ performed the function of a village head and the Kulkarni a Brahmin kept land records. Similarly at the regional level their counterparts i.e. Deshmukh a ‘Maratha’ claiming an *assal* or pure ‘Maratha’ lineage functioned as the regional head and the Deshpande a Brahmin kept revenue records. (Omvedt, 1976)

The elite class or *assal* ‘Marathas’ together with the upper class Brahmin ruled in alliance at the regional and village level. The feudal system in the Deccan was called the Balutedari or the Jajmani system. The jajman (yajman) or the patron the ‘Maratha’ Deshmukh and Patil was at the center of this system with the Deshpande and the kulkarni very close to the patron. The actual cultivators of lands were tenants and peasants belonging to the Kunbi and other artisan communities. The cultivators paid the land revenue to the inamdars and jagirdars who were the appropriators of the whole or part of the land revenue. (Altekar, 1927)

Historians such as Sardesai (1926) and Altekar (1927) argue that such was the symbolic domination of the *assal* ‘Marathas’ that they became the reference group. Their surnames (last names which are in themselves social and cultural markers) were taken up by other (than Kunbi) allied artisan and peasant communities also. As Enthoven (1921) affirms,

“In this connection it may be observed that the protégés often take the surnames of the patrons. Thus there are Chavans, Cholkes, Mores, Pavars, Shelars and Yadavs among Kolis, Dhangars, Mahars, Malis, Ramoshis, Mangs and several wandering tribes which seem to be but slightly connected. In a Lamani settlement the servants used to take the surnames of the head of the settlement. There are two or three historical instances where even Brahmins have assumed the surnames of their Maratha
patrons, e.g., the Ghorpades of Ichalkaranji, the Dhamdheres of Poona...the Bivalkars are known as Angres in Bombay.” (Enthoven, 1921; Vol.3: 27)

The Balutedari system continued to determine the mode and relations of production in Deccan region as late as the 20th century. In this system an arrangement of social hierarchy was devised whereby each caste (Jati) was assigned a corresponding social status with respect to its position in this organisation. (Kumar, 1965, Fukazawa, 1972, Karve, 1951)

According to Altekar (1927), in return for the patronage of the aristocratic ‘Marathas’ (assal) the Brahmins provided legitimacy to their claims of kshatriya origins. Shivaji was then solemnly invested with the sacred thread as a Kshatriya, and documents were procured from Udaipur connecting the Bhosles with the Sisode Rajputs. The value of this evidence has since been disputed. As Enthoven (1921) surmises

“As proofs in support of this claim they state that they belong to the four ancient Kshatriya royal vanshas or branches, viz., Suryavansha, Somavansha, Brahmavansha and Sheshavansha, that they have the ninety-six mythological Kshatriya families, or kuls, that many of their kul or family names are common clan names of Rajputs (who are supposed to be the modern representatives of the ancient Kshatriya race), that there is historical evidence to show that marriage connections were formed between royal Rajput houses...” (Enthoven, 1921, Vol.3: 8)

In return for this legitimacy the aristocratic ‘Marathas’ gave large donations and protection to the scribal community (Brahmins of all classes) and also accepted the Varna classification which placed the Brahmins at the top of the pyramid. There existed tensions between and within the alliance partners but it never reached a degree to threaten the existence of the alliance.

The patrons also advocated the rituals of purity and pollution so inherent to the Brahminic interpretation of Hinduism. In order to distance themselves from the other common ‘Marathas’ and Kunbis the aristocratic ‘Marathas’ sanskritised themselves by adopting value system of the Brahmins. As Enthoven states
“...the ruling Maratha families, that like the Rajputs they observe purdah, wear the sacred thread and prohibit widow re-marriage, that they have bards or Bhaps like Rajputs, and that, as among Rajputs, the Nhavi or barber performs the function of serving water at their feasts, although he is considered comparatively unclean by the surrounding population in the Deccan...Socially the Maratha is the superior of the Kunbi, and this is evinced by the facts that while Kunbi widows remarry, Maratha widows do not, that while Maratha ladies of recognised rank observe purdah, Kunbi women do not observe it, and that while Maratha ladies insist on gold in preference.” (Enthoven, 1921, Vol.3: 9-10)

However he also adds that the line of demarcation is rather flexible when it comes to marital alliances. Highlighting the role of kinship practices that enable well to do Kunbi-families to become part of the ‘Maratha’ community he opines,

“The line of demarcation between the two communities is not a hard and fast one as inter-marriages between well-to-do Kunbi families and the lower sections of Maratha’s are not infrequent. Such intermarriages usually take the form of a Maratha boy being married to a Kunbi or Kulvadi girl. Such marriages are common in remote parts of the Presidency. On the other hand, Maratha girls would not be given in marriage to Kunbi boys. Thus the Maratha’s proper assert their social supremacy, and though akin to Kunbis, they must be considered distinct. (Enthoven, 1921, Vol.3: 9)

But why did the Kunbi peasantry yearn to be known as ‘Marathas’? In attempting to answer this question, Enthoven (1921) suggests,

“Kunbis prefer the designation Maratha to that of Kunbi, as more honourable. The Kunbis however do not lay any pretensions to Kshatriya origin. They are as a rule connected with field work, while the Maratha’s, though they may be mere cultivators, more often follow other avocations and regard cultivation as a secondary profession on which they may fall back if they are unsuccessful in other lines.” (Enthoven, 1921, Vol.3: 9)
Expansion of fields: Transition from colonial to 1970s

By the early 20th century the ‘Marathas’ progressively began to enter the colonial fields such as the legislatures, military, police, railways, lower levels of judiciary and bureaucracy. For instance the when the Government of India Act of 1909 (Morely-Minto reforms) was instituted which permitted election of indigenous actors into the provincial and central legislature a section of the ‘Marathas’ (landed elite) formed a civic association called the Deccan Maratha Education Association (DMEA) to further their political interests. Similarly when the Government of India Act was promulgated in 1919 (popularly called as ‘dyarchy’) the landed and elite section of ‘Marathas’ were successful in getting elected to the Bombay Legislative Council in November 1920. In ‘dyarchy’ certain areas of governance (such as education) were placed in the hands of ministers responsible to the provincial legislature, while others (such as public order and finance) was retained in the hands of officials responsible to the British-appointed provincial Governor. To capitalise upon this success the Deccan Non-Brahmin League was formed by this section of ‘Marathas’ on December 12, 1920. And in 1921 thirteen more ‘Maratha’ leaders got elected to the Bombay Legislative Council. (Omvedt 1976:190)

This section of ‘Marathas’ soon emerged as the organic intellectuals which recognised the need to organise the peasant communities as a political front. They urged the peasantry to unite and form a rival political bloc to that of the Brahmins. These ‘Marathas’ were either the proprietors or editors of the non-Brahmin newspapers and editorials in the Bombay Province and other regions of the Deccan. For instance as this new report substantiates their ideology,

“In unity lies strength...we must defeat the Brahmins like we did in this election else they will rule over us again. We must also start taking up employment in the civil and military establishments. This is what Maratha’s are supposed to do...to rule that is our true dharma (religion)” (Vijayi Maratha, 1922, January 27th: 2)
After the death of Shahu in 1922, the non-Brahmin movement was led by Keshavrao Jedhe and Dinkarrao Jawalkar together with other ‘Maratha’ associates who were part of the organic intellectual of the ‘Marathas’. Bhaskarrao Jadhav who was a close associate of Shahu was nominated as a member of the Bombay Legislative Council in 1922. In 1923 he formed the non-Brahmin party with the help of thirteen ‘Maratha’ legislators. Soon by mid 1920s, the non-Brahmins (in reality ‘Marathas’) gained control of the local boards in Satara, Solapur and Nasik districts. After gaining control over the local boards the non-Brahmins started education institutions and student hostels (Omvedt 1976:199).

One can discern two distinct yet enmeshed discourses of the ‘Maratha’ organic intellectuals. The two ideologies were interchangeably employed in disparate contexts so as to mobilise a large section of the peasantry for political ends and also to ensure that only very few communities became part of the ‘Maratha’ group. Thus on the one hand these intellectuals urged all peasant communities to join the fight against Brahmins and on the other hand coaxed only Kunbis to enumerate themselves as ‘Marathas’ in the 1931 census operations. Of course as mentioned earlier members of some communities (those communities that were culturally inimical to the Kunbi peasant culture) could own and till land and be accepted as Kunbi. For instance the discourse in a non-Brahmin periodical called Rashtraveer from Kolhapur urged ‘Marathas’ to accept the claim of Kunbis as ‘Marathas’,

“…Kunbis are Marathas. In earlier times also during the era of Chattrapati Shivajiraje the Maratha’s were cultivators during periods of peace and warriors during war. It is the Brahmins who have created this false category...rise of sons of great Maratha’s and defeat the designs of the Brahmins” (Rashtraveer, 1919, April 4th;2)

What this meant was that there was a graded channel through which individuals could ‘belong’ to the ‘Maratha’ community. Thus the ‘Maratha’ intellectuals organised new strategies such as kinship and kshetriyazation through which sections of the peasantry could form a political front. To support these strategies
and in recognition of the fact that colonial fields required other forms of cultural capital the intellectuals began to organise education and sports (talims or gymnasiums) - a form of civil society.

It is quite obvious that this discourse by this intellectual section of the ‘Marathas’ was meant to attain a specific objective- that of accessing political power. For instance in the newspaper called Jagruti an article urged ‘Marathas’ to vote for ‘Marathas’ for the elections of the Bombay Legislative Council elections

“... the Maratha’s should bond together and not fight amongst ourselves. This was the mistake we made when we handed over power to the Brahmins. All Kunbis are Maratha’s and we must stick together. The Bahujan Samaj look upwards towards us for emancipation. We are the rightful claimants to rule... (Jagruti, 1920, 15th February; 5)

It is no wonder that with much political mobilisation, the ‘Maratha’ intellectuals were able to impress upon the Kunbi peasantry and also on the colonial authorities such that the 1931 census recorded all Kunbis in Bombay Provinces as ‘Marathas’. But what did this mean in terms of accessing political power?

In the ensuing elections to the local bodies and the legislature in 1924-1926 the ‘Maratha’ representation increased. The 1931 Census noted that the strength of the Brahmin legislators declined from twenty nine to seventeen in the third council and that of the ‘Maratha’s rose from six to nine. This success was not only witnessed in the Bombay Provinces but also in other parts of the Deccan. Panjabrao Deshmukh, a wealthy Deshmukh ‘Maratha’, with a doctorate from Oxford University, joined the non-Brahmin politics and became president of the Amravati Municipal Committee in 1928. In 1930, he got elected to the legislative council from Amravati. Similarly other landed ‘Marathas’ such as Uttamrao Itkikar, Shyamrao Gund, Anandrao Meghe and Nanasaheb Amrutkar, Sampatrao Deshmukh and Pandharinath Patil of Berar of Central Provinces were other militant non-Brahmin activists who were elected to various local level bodies and legislature. (Diwan 1980:237)
By late thirties a small section of the 'Marathas' joined the Indian National Congress but a majority of them remained outside it. And also simultaneously, by early forties in some provinces within the Presidency (especially Satara) a large section of the 'Marathas' participated in the nationalist struggle by forming peasant committees (formed the Toofan Sena in Satara district). The organisations such as the various peasant committees such as Toofan Sena were the precursors to the Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) established in 1948. This party grew out of another party called the Brahmanetar party (a non-Brahmin party) founded in 1920 with the objective to organise the non-Brahmin castes (Bahujan Samaj) vis-à-vis the Brahmins. It had the background of the non-Brahmin movement and the ideas of Phule. The Brahmanetar party organised the non-Brahmin castes to confront the Brahmin leadership who by now had come to dominate the Nationalist movement. This recognition was one of the reasons that a section of the 'Maratha' leadership quit the Congress to form the PWP in 1948.

The Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) consisted of medium and small peasants. The leadership of the PWP consisted of ex-Congressmen who were not comfortable with the urban based Congress party dominated by Non-Marathi speaking and Brahmin elements. They perceived that since the Congress party leadership was urban based, the interests of the peasantry could never be promoted. The PWP remained a party of small and medium peasants and was heavily influenced by left and Marxist ideology. No wonder the rural based leadership of the PWP highlighted the problems of the small and medium peasants and yet at its core it remained a political party that in fact represented the interests of the 'Marathas'.

The PWP was at the epicenter of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement that was inaugurated in 1956- that demanded that a separate State of Maharashtra be carved out of the existing bilingual State of Bombay Provinces. The 'sons of the soil' ideology became the platform from which emerged the slogan 'Shetji and Bhatji'. The political interests of the 'Marathas' were overtly palpable.
With the State of Maharashtra being inaugurated in 1960, the ‘Marathas’ captured power. Once in power the ‘Marathas’ organised new institutions such as cooperatives and the panchayati institutions. The ‘Marathas’ not only came to dominate the State level Congress party and the State legislature but also the lower bureaucracy and police services. The term ‘Marathas’ now began to connote a specific group of the peasantry. The strategies of kinship and kinship continued to operate to enter the field of power and to accrue resources.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the historical contingencies which influenced the organisation of the social imaginary called ‘Marathas’. I have argued that changes in the political economy entailed newer strategies to be drawn up by the indigenous actors which I contend were misrecognised by the colonial state as caste. The specific colonial policy such as introduction of the concept of martial race influenced this imagining. Civic associations organised by the indigenous actors led to the broadening of the meaning associated with the imagining called ‘Marathas’. I also argue that the role of the leadership of the Satyashodhak and non-Brahmin movement was crucial in the organisation of this social imaginary. It was not only the ideology of the movements but the aims and interests of the leadership that finally shaped this imagining in particular ways. Patrons such as Shahu, Gaikwads and Scindia have also played an important role in this imaginings. But most importantly it was the colonial state that legitimated certain native claims that led this imaginary to become inclusive by the early 20th century.

In the post independence period the ‘Marathas’ now organised through the PWP and also the Congress party. With the formation of the State of Maharashtra the ‘Marathas’ captured political power in the State and inaugurated a new ideology of agrarian development. This ensured that the interests of the ‘Maratha’ peasantry were safeguarded. The ‘Marathas’ also inaugurated new institutions such as the cooperatives and the panchayati raj. Strategies of kingship and kinship
were employed to get into these institutions. Additionally as these institutions were integrally connected to the field of power/politics entry into the State level Congress party and the state came to be channelised. With the 'Marathas' entering all the fields of the state from lower bureaucracy to the legislature, from the military to the police services, it led to the naturalisation of the idea that the 'Maratha' rule ensued. Thus this chapter is really an introduction to what is to follow in chapters four, five, six and seven.

In this chapter using Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) theorization I argue that kinship and kingship can be construed as strategies rather than rules. These strategies enable individuals and social groups to accumulate various species of capital that are then fungible into economic and political capital. The actors are seen as extremely adept players, who know the fields well and are aware of how to accrue capitals and resources by employing various strategies. However the actors usually mask their actions in the garb of official rules so as to give an impression that they are following the prescriptions of the community/society. The actors are also in a doxic condition where they have naturalized certain ideas as rules. But in reality when one explores how social interaction takes place it becomes evident that actors are strategizing to accrue and accumulate more of the various species of capital. The four case studies highlight the doxic nature of the actor’s habitus and also the strategies that they employ. However it is pertinent to note that these strategies should not be seen as rational choice explanations. These are long term strategies which at times may seem illogical but in fact have a sound reason.