CHAPTER THREE

AGRARIAN RELATIONS IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

The Sultanate period provides a historical background to understand the larger area where the present study has been conducted. The Sultanate rule was confined to Northern India with Delhi being its capital. The dynamics of agrarian relations and social structure bases itself on the relationship between power structure at macro level and traditional structure at micro level. The significance of agrarian relations at the village level and its dialectics could be seen in the relationship with outside forces. Rural aristocracy of villages perhaps represents the linkages of peasants with state. Sultanate rule when challenged by Rais and Ranas took help of Chaudhary, the traditional village headman by making him a revenue collecting official. Interaction of forces at the level of State with local during the Sultanate period finds expression in the first part of the chapter. Some questions relating to the issues of 'feudalism' and 'serfdom' during Sultanate period also form the part of discussion here.
In the second part of the chapter agrarian relations during the Mughal rule are discussed. The Mughal rule were discussed. The Mughal rule was more widespread in area and thus more strong than the Sultanate Rule. Peasantry witnessed a more stronger state before them. However, the challenges to the Mughal Rule, particularly in Deccan by Shivaji could be seen as a challenge to the agrarian policies persuaded by Mughals, which included primordial challenges also. Shivaji's death again led to decentralization of the challenging forces and their reduction into guerrilla war-groups only.

A division of agrarian structures into oppressive class of intermediaries and peasants, provides a background which helps in understanding the agrarian structure of period following it.

This chapter consists of two parts. In the first part agrarian conditions during the rule of Sultanate at Delhi are examined, this includes a discussion on agrarian inequalities, class-relations and the overall nature of the political economy of that period. In the second part of the present chapter agrarian relations during the Mughal period of Indian history are examined. An attempt has also been made to Sketch a general picture of agrarian relations over
Agrarian Relations During the Sultanate Period

In order to make a precise understanding of the agrarian relations as they exist in India today it is essential to understand how and when they evolved as the Indian history unfolded itself. Not simply for the reason that several terms like Muqquaddam and Zamindar etc. representing the basic important units of agrarian social structure during the Sultanate rule or later during the Mughal rule are found to be in use in certain parts of the country even today, but also to understand the historical role that they have played in a meaningful way. The traces of various units or elements of today's agrarian class-structure go or date back at least upto the Sultan's rule at Delhi and the Mughal rule later. Apart from it to a limited extent some traces of the elements of the Western style feudalism could also be located during these periods.

1. Most of the data presented in this chapter have been taken from The Cambridge Economic History of India, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, (1982), 1984. However I have tried to present my own inferences and interpretations.
Political economy of the Sultanate period was closely associated with the power-structure. The power structure of those days was never a static one and this is to be seen as well as established with the help of historical facts. This power-structure was also closely associated with the agrarian hierarchy of that period. An effort is also made at later stage of this chapter to understand the nature of the agrarian economy or for that matter a part this economy i.e. a single unit as it could be related with certain terminologies originated in the west like 'feudal', 'serf' etc. of course with certain modifications. The mode of revenue collection by the state has also gone through a considerable change from time to time. This was so because we come across some examples, where peasants literally ran away from one place to another in order to save their life and several local taxes imposed upon them either by Sultan or by the representative of Sultan. Extra-economic coercion has also been present throughout this period. A detailed discussion on all these is to follow later in this chapter. An effort is made now first to sketch the agrarian hierarchy and second to explain its relationship with the power-structure and also to see whether, any suitable explanation could be offered or not as we move across from one system to another.
For the construction of agrarian hierarchy, secondary sources of data have been used and historical material is utilised with all the precautions necessary for that purpose. While utilizing the historical material which in itself based upon certain original documents, the attempt has been made to bring out the sociological meaning that they might convey instead of questioning their scientific validity. Of course, as said above every possible effort has been made to keep an eye over their historical reliability. Agrarian hierarchy of the Sultanate period broadly speaking consisted of two categories namely khots (or headmen) and batahars (or village menials). There were however some other categories also and their reference has to be made after due care because the historical material has been doubtful in certain cases. There is another point that needs be clarified here. As the historical material is available - it reflects both economic nature i.e. agrarian hierarchy as well as political nature i.e. power structure of the historical period under consideration.

The major thesis that is advanced in this chapter is that while analysing the agrarian social structure of the Sultanate period it should be seen in relation to the political economy of this period. This means that instead of asking a question about sharp distinctions between economic and political hierarchy of the period, it would be more
appropriate to see them as operating together, one affecting the other. Thus, an effort has been made to analyse how polity actually affected economy of the period and also its vice-versa. This attempt obviously does not reach the boundaries of the argument that how polity effects economy and its vice-versa at a generalised level. It would thus be relevant to begin with the power structure with the Sultan at the top and later the structure that follows him downwards.

The power-structure of the Sultanate period, apart from its being related to the agrarian structure, must be seen vis-a-vis traditional social structure also. From numerous examples, it appears that the power structure underwent a continuous change throughout the historical period. At a given point of time the power-structure in fact may not correspond to the traditional social structure. But it has been noticed that whenever there was some crisis at the level of power-structure, the policy inclined itself towards the traditional social structure. That is why there appears to be a need to see these two structures vis-a-vis one another. This point shall be made clear at the later stages of this chapter.

The power-structure of the Sultanate period consisted of Sultan or the ruler at Delhi occupying the
position at the top of it. Below sultan there was a governor, known as Sultan's governor. Below Sultan's governor there existed a rural aristocracy consisting of two categories within it, locally known as Rais and Ranas. This rural aristocracy was followed by another strata consisting of two categories, locally known as Khots and Muqquaddams. The position of Khots and Muqquaddams has witnessed a lot and perhaps most of the changes in their structural situation. Khots and Muqquaddams when agriculture flourished rose nearly up to the structural situation of rural aristocracy and when either due to crop-failure or heavy taxation their position was reduced just nearly equal to peasants. The changing position of Khots and Muqquaddams could be traced throughout the Sultanate period. This has remained such a marginal strata which had undergone and witnessed most of the changes. Khots and Muqquaddams and their structural situation which varied a lot could be equated to peasants also. In fact "Khots and Muqquaddam as peasants" - when and under what conditions? This could become an interesting problem for further research and investigation. Below them there existed small peasants and those who worked on land for others. The literature on Indian history does not reflect much on these categories. However, their conditions could be attempted for the purpose of understanding with the help of the discussion on whether
or not or to what extent feudalism did exist in India. Methodologically this would reflect the approach suggested by Durkheim known as indirect experimentation.

As it was argued above that there is a need to see this power-structure vis-a-vis traditional social structure, to provide a dynamic nature to the problem as a whole. It has been stated above also that both power structure as well as agrarian-structure are seen as related to dynamic forces or process and not to the static ones. The traditional social structure of the Sultanate period was like as follows.

The traditional social-structure of the Sultanate period was not much different from the earlier one i.e. the power structure, however there were certain categories that existed in villages and played important role, specially when there was a crisis at the level of power structure. Besides other categories, it was Chaudhary who played an important role in the traditional social structure. If we delineate traditional social structure, it had at its top the Sultan followed by Sultan's governor, village headman who happened to be Chaudhary and then Khots and Muqqaddams and village menials. It needs to be emphasised here that the position of Chaudhary was so central-so pivotal that almost every social activity was surrounded around it. Chaudhary
was a title and must not be confused with a surname. The status and role of the Chaudhary had enjoyed the maximum support derived from traditional authority in Max Weber's sense. The status of Chaudhary and the role associated with it was more social than its political counterpart. Chaudhary's major concern was about those activities that were basically non-economic in nature. It has to be pointed out that economic concerns were only added roles bestowed upon him by Sultan's governor.

The dynamics of agrarian relations could be seen between the interactions of power-structure and traditional social-structure. Within the power structure itself contradictions could be easily located. The Sultan's rule from Delhi was not accepted as such, but numerous examples are there to witness the revolt from Rais and Ranas who constituted the rural aristocracy. At the instances of revolt from Rais and Ranas, the Sultan was forced several times in the history to send his governor to assess and take account of the situation arising out of these revolts. The revolts by Rais and Ranas were also not without any base. They had their own armies and many a times did not tolerate the rule from above i.e. the rule of the Sultanate at Delhi. But the strength of the Sultanate rule could be identified with the then existing fact that even 1,00,000 foot soliders
and archers could not dare to stand before 6,000 or 7,000 cavalry of Delhi. At the time of revolt therefore the Sultanate started eliminating the influence and the personnel of Rais and Ranas. For the purpose of revenue collection, Sultan's governor sought the help of Chaudhary. He agreed to collect the revenue to avoid a further possible loss of people's lives and crops.

It is therefore argued here that the traditional social-structure acquired an important place in the dynamics of agrarian relations. It may lie or seem to lie dormant but has its important role. At the time of the crisis in the power-structure its existence and role becomes important. Out of these situations and facts there emerges a set of some important sociological insights and they could be put in the following way.

(1) When the Sultan defeated Rais and Ranas and established Chaudhary in its place, it meant only that the one intermediary category was replaced by another intermediary category and as a result of it Sultan's rule at Delhi got strengthened.

(2) There are chances of the sub-infeudation to be reduced because the elimination of Rais and Ranas meant one step less in the agrarian hierarchy. In fact earlier peasantry had two rulers - the Sultan at Delhi and Rais
and Ranas at the village level.

(3) The structural importance of traditional social-structure becomes evident at the time of crises in power structure.

(4) The newly added revenue collection role to Chaudhary might have led him to become another aristocrat.

The political economy of the Sultanate period was marked by revolts from Rais and Ranas. Apart from this there were certain other elements that need attention. The important ones were: (i) the revenue collection-system, (ii) methods of irrigation and crop-pattern, (iii) the existence of feudalism/serfdom and (iv) a particular type of land tax Jizia. These and some other related points are to be discussed now.

As discussed earlier, whosoever came to constitute the category of rural aristocrats—be they Rais or Ranas or Chaudhary himself—they had their links in two directions. Upward, the rural aristocrats were related to Sultan for whom they collected taxes and provided armed support, downward they were related to peasants and village menials. Agrarian hierarchy, sub-infeudation and a peculiar type of land tax Jizia were the characteristic features of this period.
The Sultan at Delhi had appointed a governor to look after the revenue collection. Sultan's governor depended on rural aristocracy i.e. previously on Rais and Ranas and later when they revolted, the Chaudhary was assigned this additional responsibility. What becomes obvious from all this is that direct collection from the villagers was avoided. Only in a few cases when Chaudhary also became defaulter, direct revenue collection from villagers was sought. Under this system of revenue collection the villages were organized into a group of 84 (Chaurasis). According to another classification the villages were organized into a group of 100 (Sadi). Yet another classification suggests that in some cases villages were organized into a group of 1000 (Hazar). It appears that for the purpose of revenue collection villages were not organized on a unilateral pattern. But on the other hand historical evidences lack on the conception of either Chaurasi (84) or Sadi (100) or Hazar (100). It simply suggests that for the Sultan rural aristocracy itself had its own hierarchy and it could be found out with a little bit of exercise into historical records. Each city is said to have been divided into several Sadis and each Sadi had a Chaudhary who was the official to collect land revenue.
For the purpose of land revenue the organization of village into Chaurasi (84) or Sadi (100) or Hazar (1000) even though lack the historical support necessary for its academic approval, it does not look valid even on logical grounds. Before adopting any sort of a classification for the organization of villages for the purpose of revenue collection there is a need to look into the local social as well as geographical conditions. Geographical conditions at that time included a lot of forests too. The rain was uncertain and the irrigation was being developed. It is not logically possible to divide the whole territory into the same number of villages comprising one unit. Therefore the debate between Chaurasi (84) and Sadi (100) and Hazar (1000) simply suggests that even the organization of villages for the purpose of revenue collection had a sort of unequal distribution and the very nature of the rural aristocracy was hierarchical. For the purpose of deriving something reasonable out of it, it could be assumed that the figures reflected only the rough or almost vague idea of the number of villages organized together. Another reasonable unit known as pargana comes to light. According to this the entire territory was divided into various parganas which itself had several villages. But the important point was that the exact number of villages was not specified. But
this does not mean that we can use the term sadi and the like with pargana as identical. To conceive of sadi as identical to pargana might be misleading and this usage is highly problematical. Irfan Habib prefers to define a village as composed of 200 to 300 people living there. But he does not give any evidence to support this. This conception of village ignores the possibility of much smaller and generally much bigger villages than the specified number of people living there. This notion of a village could be dropped merely as a historical conjecture.

(2) Methods of Irrigation and Crop-pattern:

The cultivation was said to be based mainly upon individual peasant farming, although the possibility of other forms could not be ruled out. The size of land varied from Khot to Balhar. There was less use of iron in agricultural implements and unequal distribution of land had its own impact on the methods of irrigation and the crop-pattern. That is why we hear of brickless or kutcha wells - they were more in number and the numbers of brick well or pakka wells were less. Wells were used for artificial irrigation and advancing the loans to the peasants for it was the important matter. It was advanced for the purpose of digging wells and to extend cultivation. Dams are reported to have been built by local people as well as by the state.
The use of canal became known in the fourteenth century. The historians have attributed the notion of canal to have come from central-Asia itself. The names of Ghiyasuddin Tughlug (1220-25) and later that of Firoz Tughluq (1351-86) have been associated with the development of canal and its tributeries. During this period it is heard of tributeries of canal known as Rajab-Wah and Ulugh-Khani. The use of the term Rajab-wah is still found in the rural areas of the western Uttar Pradesh. During the same period the route of the river Yamuna was diverted towards Hissar a place now located in Haryana state. Some smaller canals were also built in the Multan area which now forms a part of Pakistan.

During this period the extensive use of canals and its tributeries, in addition to the wells became evident. As a result of this in the areas mentioned above, there came a point when peasants could have shifted from one crop to two crop pattern. In addition to Rabi (Rain) crop Kharif crop also came into being - wheat being the main part of that crop. Landlords and local people built small canals and the big canals were built by the state. This was the biggest network of canals till the nineteenth century. In the Sixteenth century the use of the Persian wheel became evident. The rise in irrigation led to the decline in Barley and Juar production, cotton and gram remained stable. Barley and Juar were virtually driven off the fertile land. Irfan Habib does
not mention here the price of sugar-cane and uses the prices of wheat as a criteria to determine the prices of other crops, therefore a meaningful analysis is not possible here. In his presentation, the price of sugar-cane is not reported and the price of wheat have been made stagnant, although crops with artificial irrigation like wheat and sugarcane were valued much higher than other crops. On the other hand the Kharif crops which were based upon irrigation were valued lower. The Rabi crops valued higher because they were based upon artificial irrigation and the means for this type of irrigation were limited.

(3) **The Existence of Feudalism/Serfdom:**

The Western style feudalism which was seen in Europe since fifteenth to late eighteenth century, based upon a clearcut class-systems has not been witnessed in India. Even the historians like R.S. Sharma prefer to call it the lack of the Indian variant of feudalism and similarly Amit Bhaduri and others have preferred to use the word semi-feudal for the Indian society. Karl Marx had also negated the existence of feudalism in India and said that instead of having a class-structure of its own, there was yet another variant of exploitation. Marx termed the pre-British Indian society as represented by what he called oriental despotism which meant submission of all to the
state or king. Clearly Marx's opinion negates the existence of feudalism in India. The main point to be observed was that the Indian society did not represent classes nor class conflict was thus visible, yet represented by a lot of repression and exploitation. Historians like Irfan Habib prefers peasants of that time to be equated with yet another term he had coined that is 'semi serfs'. In order to justify the term Irfan Habib says that peasants at that time could own only seeds, cattles and implements, they paid land revenue in cash after selling their produce. Another point highlighted by Irfan Habib is the processes that led to the differentiation of peasantry from within or the internal differentiation of the peasantry.

The medieval Indian history speaks of enormous extra-economic oppressions. Just to mention one case Ghazi Malik asked one Rais of Dipolpur to marry his daughter to his brother. He first denied it but later on had to surrender. Those were the days of Sultan when nobody could dare to speak of against incidents like this one. The peasants who were restricted to cultivation and cattle were still in worse conditions. The point that is theoretically relevant here is that the medieval Indian society was represented by the exploitation of all by the Sultan and partly by rural aristocracy, it was not marked by the
Western style of class-structure operating under feudalism. Andre Beteille had cautioned against using any blanket term like feudalism for Indian society without a proper care. There is in fact a need to handle the historical material very carefully. At several place in the article Irfan Habib has mentioned that sufficient evidence lack in order to prove the thing that he has written.

Therefore for the analysis of agrarian relations during the Medieval period of India, we have to take care of a few requirements. Firstly the data has to be used carefully so that the possibility of historical conjectures could be avoided. Secondly, it is not necessary to attempt any equivalent of the western style feudalism in India. In other words every such attempt which anyhow stretches the Indian society into its western counter part is to be avoided. In such type of an attempt every danger of social reality being riefied is involved. Thirdly, Marx’s conceptualization of Indian society as being represented by asiatic mode of production needs re-examination. In fact apart from the king several elements like Rais and Ranas who constituted rural aristocracy were also exploiting the peasantry. Fourthly any attempt to construct the existence of feudalism in India must not take several disconnected characteristics but feudalism must be analysed in its totality forming a system as a whole. Fifthly, it must be
seen where this particular type of feudalism does come under the bigger category of social formation. In other words the dominant mode of production must be located first than other modes constituting it. From this discussion it seems safe to characterise the medieval Indian society as semi feudal and peasants as semi-serfs.

(4) **A Peculiar Type of Land Tax Jizia:**

The existence of this type of land tax was based upon a peculiar notion. The Hindus of this country or non-Muslims of this country had to pay one additional tax to the Muslim rulers. India in her history since eleventh century had witnessed several invasions of the barbaric tribes belonging to the Muslim religion. The rise of Islam was restricted upto the tenth century by the efforts of Palas of Bengal, Pratihars of the north and west and Rashtrakutas of western Deccan. This peculiar type of land tax on the non-Muslims was one extra burden upon them. This sort of an exploitation was not the characteristic of the western world. The Jizia then continued upto the Mughal rule, barring a few exceptions (like during the rule of Akbar) it continued to exist in the Indian history.

In short it could be said that the agrarian relations during the sultanate period in India could be
understood with the help of the general political economy of that period. Inequalities in agrarian India were widespread and the historical analysis brings out certain facts that are important for sociological insights. The invasion by central Asian barbaric Muslim tribes, the existence and the role of rural aristocracy within the agrarian social structure are also important. Another important change in agrarian conditions was the introduction and management of central system. Theoretically it seems worthwhile to call this period as represented by semi-feudalism within which peasants could be equated with the notion of semi-serfs. In the next part of this chapter agrarian relations during the Mughal rule are discussed.

II

Agrarian Relations During the Mughal Rule

In the second part of this chapter agrarian relations during the Mughal rule in India are discussed. The first difference between the Sultanate and the Mughal rule in India was that the former had its limited impact and was concentrated in the Northern part of India with Delhi as its capital and the latter witnessed the expansion of the Mughal rule which started spreading towards the Southern part of India. As far as the religious impact is concerned a sort of continuity could be seen. Jizia tax imposed on the non-
Muslims was carried over with the exception of the days of Akbar who introduced a new religion known as Din-e-ilahi. During this period of the Indian history despite several counter-attacks, the Mughals continued to increase and consolidate their power. The empire of Akbar in 1605 A.D. included the areas like Kabul and Kandahar in the north-west, Lahore and Panipat in Delhi, Agra and Oudh in the north, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa in the north-east, Ajmer and Malwa region in the central part, Ahmedabad in west and in south it was spread up to Khandesh and Berar. At that time Gondwana region in central north, Bidar, Golkunda, Bijapur, Goa, Calicut, Cochin and Nellore in the south were free of the Mughal rule, but at the time of Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D. except a few areas like Calicut, Cochin, Tranquebar, Negapatnam and the extreme south where Polygars ruled, all fell to it and could not resist the Mughal invasion. The Mughals ruled India from 1526 to 1857 with the only exception of the years between 1540-55 when Sur dynasty was in power.

The agrarian policy of the Mughals was based upon taking the share of the produce from peasants and for this several mechanisms were devised - but Zamindari and Jagirdari were the principal ones. The state's share of the produce varied between one third to one half of the total
produce. Irfan Habib terms it as extraction with all repressive characters of the system of revenue collection. In the new revenue collection system a new device was introduced. Almost all the areas were put into various revenue yielding territories and the jagirs were given to the nobles who had no local ties with that area and then they were transferred too quite frequently. These rights were hereditary in character and nobles used all means to extract revenue from the peasantry. Jagirdars in fact had no interest left in the improvement of that area because these areas were under their control for a temporary period. Another institution ijara came into being referring to the system of revenue farming in which money could be invested in this, the then highly profitable work. In this way jagirdars and ijaradars flourished during this period, they provided armed men also to the Mughal's forces. These jagirdars and ijaradars represented the oppressive class which used severe means of repression that were discovered recently by the historians.

The rights in land were unequally distributed and differential rates of revenue were introduced for highly priced crops and the other low income generating crops. Mansabdars who were above Zamindars collected land revenue. Zamindars passed this burden upon their raiyats or peasants. In fact every surplus was extracted from the raiyats.
Raiyats or peasants then started leaving their territories and entering those ones where Zamindars were very strong being known as Zortalab Zamindars. These Zortalab Zamindars along with raiyat became a strong force against a weak mansabdar. As a consequence of this, mansabdars were compelled to leave some surplus for the Zortalab Zamindars and the raiyats or peasants. In order to protect the raiyat several measures were taken by the Mughal rulers. Aurangzeb is said to have issued orders to protect the raiyat from Zamindars when the latter was forbidden to cultivate peasants' land in his own name but which was actually being cultivated by hired labourers. Irfan Habib notes that even Aurangzeb was not able to protect the raiyat or peasants from nobles and other intermediaries. Irfan Habib speculates the possible development of the intermediaries at the expense of the peasantry. Historical conjectures go further on upto raising the argument of the possible development of the superior rights, and the intermediaries with the introduction of possibly double and multicrop pattern. The possible development of money lenders has also attributed to it. The development of cash crop is also said to be associated with it.

The agrarian hierarchy of the Mughal period continued at the lower level consisting of two categories
namely Khols and Balhars. These two categories were witnessed during the Sultanate rule also. Apart from it Irfan Habib emphasises the need to make an inquiry into the nature and working of the rural elite and on the other hand accepts that the historical evidences lack so far on that. Irfan Habib prefers to concentrate on elite contradiction or the contradictions within the rural aristocracy to understand agrarian conditions of that period. Irfan Habib prefers to examine these elite contradictions just before and after the fall of the Mughal rule in India. As far as the nature of inequality among the elite is concerned, a reference has been made of Bengal where just six big Zamindars contributed about half of the total revenue of the state as a whole. Sometimes mansabdars impoverished and zortalab zamindars flourished. Peasantry remained over exploited.

In the Deccan the major agrarian policies were framed out by Malik Amber, who was the prime minister of the Nizamshahi Kingdom (1604-26). The significant changes introduced in the agrarian policy were the abolition of all sorts of taxes on land and the framing out of certain other criteria to collect land revenue. This was a major shift in land revenue collection, besides abolishment of all taxes, the new policy was based upon nazar pahni meaning glance survey. This could be seen as an improvement over the land
revenue collection system in the north India. This new system of land-revenue system was useful to such an extent that later even during Shivaji's rule in the Deccan it was carried over. As evident by the use of the term itself, in this new policy first a glance survey was made of all the cultivable land. Broadly the land was then divided into two categories baghat meaning irrigated land and ziraat meaning dry land. Dry land was again divided into four types on the basis of the quality of land. The more important point in this policy was that the entire irrigated and dry land was clubbed together and was then divided into two categories namely Khalisa meaning fully assessed land and inam meaning land exempted from revenue. The village headman was made responsible to collect revenue directly from peasants. In this policy some hereditary officers like Deshmukhs and deshpandes were deprived of their right of revenue collection as intermediaries. They were on the other hand given inam lands and also inam villages. With the appointment of headman, as revenue collecting official and the removal of the intermediaries were the aim of giving a limited ownership of land to the peasants. The revenue of land on Khalisa i.e. fully assessed land varied between one fourth to two third but some historians have assessed it to be even more than that.
These salient features of the Malik Amber's policy had its impact on other Kingdoms also. It was tried and practiced in the Qutbshahi Kingdom but did not yield the desired results, most of them amounting due to the inefficient bureaucracy. Some highly placed bureaucrats leased their land assigned to them, out to lessees, who in their turn did the same. In this way a chain of leasing out started and the process of sub-infeudation was built in this. But the overall conditions of agriculture in the south was prosperous, it has been claimed by Irfan Habib. This needs some vigorous treatment of the data but not much of it are available at the moment according to the historians. Probably the historians might have advanced their argument on the basis of the fact that the intermediaries were removed, hereditary revenue collectors were given inam land and inam villages. And moreover the revenue was directly related to the quality of land.

The rise of the Maratha power in the Deccan mainly during Shivaji rule could be seen as a direct challenge to the erstwhile Mughal agrarian policy. After its establishment as a kingdom Shivaji followed the agrarian policy of Malik Amber. The revenue on land varied between one third to one half of the produce. There were certain other cesses too, in all peasants were estimated to have paid about half of their produce to the rulers. Shivaji's
death led to the decentralization of the then hitherto existing centralised administration. After the murder of Sambhaji, the son of Shivaji, the rising militant power of the Marathas was reduced to guerrilla warfare against the Mughals. Sahu of Satara who declared himself the king, also recognized Maratha Chieftains as hereditary jagirdar. Bureaucracy within this territory flourished with hereditary rights in their jagirs or saranjams. The Mughal rule then started to weaken and several parts of the southern and central India and some independent kingdoms got themselves established. The main kingdoms were that of the Holkars in Indore, Scindia in Gwalior and the Peshwas in some parts of central and northern India. In the south India several large tanks were made for the purpose of irrigation. No interest loans known as taquavi were also issued to the peasants in the south.

The agrarian relations during the Mughal rule in India bring out the following facts to our knowledge. In comparison to the earlier days of the Sultanate rule in Delhi, Mughal rule had vast territories of its own kind spread over upto Bengal in the east and upto almost all but the remaining small part of extreme south. Besides all, Jizia continued almost at all places barring a few years of Akbar's rule, it was imposed on all non-Muslims and Parsis. Earlier days of the Mughal rule saw the creation of several
jagirs and jagirdars who collected land revenue and also maintained their own army ready to support the Mughal rulers. Money investors in agriculture were known as ijaradars and the institution to invest in as ijara. These Jagirdars and ijaradars represent that strong intermediary oppressive class that invented every new method of coercion to suppress the peasants. In some areas where there were zamindars, they passed on every burden to peasants. Even the strongest ruler of the Mughals like Aurangzeb could not do away despite several efforts. This intermediary oppressive class in rural India had already established its links with the bureaucracy and thus the peasants could not be protected. The jagirdars leased out their land to others and the same process was carried over at several steps further. A process of sub-infeudation was thus unavoidable. Some evidence of the introduction and improvement in the system of irrigation and double or multi-crop pattern is also found. The existence of moneylenders also came into being. On several scores like the exact amount or extent of revenue collection or the percentage of the produce taken away from peasants. At several stages the required number of army personnel were kept by the jagirdar or some intermediary and thus the total number of the armed men under the control of the Mughal rulers could have not been specified by the historians. They lack data on these counts and at several
places tried to make some historical conjectures. That sort of a discussion is avoided and all possible care has been taken so that this chapter does not remain a sketchy one.

A change in the agrarian policy in south deserves the mention of a prime minister, Malik Amber of the rule of Nizamshahi kingdom (1604-26) who introduced a policy based upon the assessment of land in irrigated and dryland areas for the purpose of revenue collection. During this time peasants flourished to a limited extent and the same policy was followed by Shivaji's son, there came several independent states like ones in Malwa, Gwalior, Peshwa ruled areas and the like came into existence. The Mughal rule continued to weaken became ultimately decentralised and several strong zamindars along with the peasants revolted. Mansabdars, Zamindars, Jagirdars continued to exist as the intermediary oppressive classes and the peasants suffered a heavy coercion. Historians like Irfan Habib reckon that the Mughal rule was basically based upon the coercion, which it used for its existence and continuation.

With the Mughal ruler at the top the agrarian hierarchy of the Mughal period of the Indian history consisted of the following two categories.

1) Intermediary - oppressive classes and,
2) Peasants.