CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

As we all know, life is dynamic among different groups of people. It is very interesting and astonishing, that, man had been wondering with little but meagre reasoning facility at the beginning of historic period, and further, if we went back to the pre-historic period of man, it was not even possible to differentiate between man and animal. He was living on the hills and in the caves, and was filling his belly with roots and fruits which were available in the nature. But the same thing did not continue throughout the centuries. As time passed on, man acquired and developed the faculty of reasoning, and thinking, by learning many things from nature. This process of learning was natural and simple. For him, his changing experiences in day today life itself was a school. Thereby, the primitive man, whose main task was to wander and hunt in order to satisfy his natural thrusts has undergone many changes.

People are not considered civilized unless they know writing. The different forms of writings prevalent in India today are all derived from the ancient scripts. This is also true of the languages that we speak today. The languages we use have roots in ancient times, and have developed through the ages.
India also proved to be a cradle of numerous ethnic groups. The Pre-Aryans, the Greeks, the Indo-Aryans, the Scythians, the Huns, the Truks, etc., made India their home. Each ethnic group contributed to the making of the Indian composite culture. All these people mixed up so intextricably that at present none of them can be identified in their original form.

J.H. Hutton has classified the Indian races in six categories:

1. Negrito
2. Proto-Australoid
3. Medieterranean
4. Alpine
5. Mangoloid
6. Indo-Aryan

Negritos have migrated from a Pacific Island. Yellow in complexion, they have curly black hair. They have mostly settled down in Assam, Andaman, Nicobar, Malabar and Burma.

Proto-Australoid live in Palaestine. They are Dravidian aboriginals. Their colour varies between chocolate and black. They are the dwellers of Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean regions who have given birth to Mohenjodoro and Indus Civilization. Alpines are said to be the admixture of Mangols and Dravidians. They spread their civilization around 3000 B.C. They came to India through the Pamir Plateau.
Mangloid belong to Mangol tribe who migrated to Bengal and Assam and settled down there. The Indo-Aryans made North India their home. They settled in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and gradually mingling with other cultures, spread to South and East India (Shashi, 1978:21).

India, since ancient times, has been the land of several religions. It witnessed the birth of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. But, all these cultures and religions intermingled and acted and reacted upon one another in such a manner that, though people speak different languages, practice different religions, and observe different social customs, yet they follow certain common styles of life throughout the country. Our country shows a deep underlying unity in spite of great diversity (Sharma, 1977:1).

Indian history deserves our attention because of a peculiar type of social system which developed in the country. In post-vedic times, the Indian society was clearly divided into four varnas: Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. Each varna was assigned a well-defined function. Although it was emphasized that varna was based on birth, the two higher varnas were given some privileges. The Brahmanas, at the top of the social ladder, were given the functions of teachers and priests in the varna hierarchy. The Kshatriyas ranked second who fought and governed, and lived
on the taxes collected from the peasants. The Vaisyas engaged in agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade. The Sudras were meant for serving the higher three varnas.

The institution of 'Gotra' appeared in later Vedic times. Literally, this means the cow-pen or the place where cattle belonging to the whole clan are kept. But in course of time it signified 'descent' from a common ancestor. People began to practise Gotra exogamy. No marriage could take place between persons belonging to the same Gotra as having the same ancestor.

Numerous religious sects arose in the central Gangetic basin in the sixth century B.C. We hear of as many as 62 religious sects in this period. Many of these sects were based on regional customs and rituals practised by different people living in North-East India.

The castes proliferated into numerous sub-castes as a result of two factors. On one hand a large number of foreigners had been assimilated into the Indian society, and each group of foreigners was considered a land of Hindu caste. Since the foreigners mainly came as conquerors they were given the status of the Kshatriya—in the society. The other reason was the absorption of many tribal people into the Brahmanical society by way of land grants. To the ruling chiefs of the tribes, was ascribed a respectable origin.
most of the rest of the tribal people were given a low origin, and every tribe now became a kind of caste in Hindu society (Sharma 1977: 42-60).

From seventh century onwards numerous castes were created. The number of castes increased on account of the nature of economy in which people could not move from one place to another, although people living in different areas followed the same occupation. They became divided into sub-castes according to the territory to which they belonged. Around sixth-seventh centuries, there started the formation of sub-national units such as Andhra, Assam, Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, etc. The identity of these sub-national groups are recognised by both foreign and Indian sources. The Chinese traveller Hsuan Tsang mentions several nationalities (Sharma, 1977: 170-171).

In this way as we know "Since the life is dynamic" it has undergone a number of changes and development. But this process of change and development was not uniformly one and the same in respect of all pre-historic and historic people. According to their habitation and different geographical locations there were different experiences which were leading them to different tasks and trails where the primitive and historic man was trying to overcome all the different
experiences by finding out the solution in order to get his life smooth and easy. In order to attain this goal, in course of time, he felt the necessity of company, and this desire of primitive man lead him to the group life. Hence he started living in groups. We may consider this as a remarkable change as well as development in primitive life. Thereby, primitive people in this way, in course of time entered into the so-called civilized life.

When we think of primitive man's stages of developments, automatically we come to know that there were a number of different groups with different leaders, and degree of their development was also varying from one group to another (as already stated) on the basis of their different experiences and geographical locations. In course of time these groups attained different names on the basis of their nature of work, physical built up, geographical location etc.

There are a large number of groups of people in the world who led a wandering life due to various ecological, economic and other considerations. There are numerous nomadic groups in Eurasia, West Asia and Africa like the Lapps, Tungus, Yakut, Somoyeds, Koryak etc., and Eskimo-herderers of reindeer, cattle raising groups like Masai, Herero, Hottentot, several camel rearing groups such as Bedouin Arabs, Kurds of Turkish-Armenian plateau etc. It is
interesting to note that in England and Wales there are some 15,000 nomads. These nomads own trucks to tow their wagons and some even own cars also. They mainly deal in scrap metals, horses, do seasonal agricultural work and engage in other occupations such as hawking, labour work, tinkering and forecasting.

In India there are a large number of nomadic and semi-nomadic groups which follow varieties of professions like trade in the villages, forecasting, basket making, displaying bears, bulls and monkeys, acrobating, selling herbal medicines, smithery, entertaining, etc. Despite existence of number of nomadic groups in the country which we have insufficient information on them.

There were people who had adopted the profession of performing leather puppet shows for different purposes, like, for sake of entertainment and to educate the people, which was widely in practice during the olden days. If we deeply think about this play we come to know that, this performance was not only to entertain the mass, but also had aimed at preserving and carrying the historical events by and through the media of this play from one generation to another. Misra et al (1971) in their detailed study on nomadic people in Mysore city refer to the various itinerant groups moving in the Indian countryside as playing a variety of roles handed
down to them through generations. He quotes Singer (1955) and Raghavan (1959) who emphasize the role of these itinerant groups. Singer considers the itinerant groups as travelling specialists in the villages. Raghavan treats them as one of the media of popular religious instruction.

Viewed in this manner, the Killekyathas, as we have seen, are the travelling cultural specialists. They, by means of epical narration through their leather puppet plays, are the agents and carriers of the cultural content of great tradition. Nevertheless, they have also incorporated several ideas of the local tradition which is reflected in their epical narration and other story telling. A few decades back, this itinerant group moved from one village to the other, mainly showing their art of leather puppet plays, and thus, their role as travelling cultural specialists was so great, that in the villages where they moved, they were able to spread the cultural content of the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

The leather puppet play, performed by these people, derived various names in different states, viz., in Karnataka as Togalubombeyata; in Andhra Pradesh as Tolu-bommalam; in Tamil Nadu as Tolu-Pavakottu; in Kerala as Tolu-Payakali; in Orissa as Ravanchaya (CSR, 1980:159). In Maharashtra it is known as Chyanatuch (Joshi, 1964:502).
Origin and Development of Puppetry:

Static objects brought on a stage and animated is called puppet. Because of this simple definition - there is scope to bring the almost any object on the puppet stage. One can bring the Sun and it can talk to audience about its energy similarly a tree can talk about forest. The puppet theatre thus represents a very dynamic dramatic form and has several advantages over the human theatre (Sunil Kumar, 1989:7).

Some people do not differentiate between a puppet and a doll. Although they appear similar but differences exists in their proportions.

The origin of puppetry is a very debatable question. How the puppets came into existence is a question which has been answered in different ways. It however does make sense of hypothesise that any Art form was created in order to communicate a message. What were the historical origins of puppetry? What sort of messages were created to convey? It is believed that in the earliest times puppetry was related to magic. Those were the days of superstition and fear. The forces of nature were little understood and magic was the key to social domination. People did not know how puppets were manipulated and puppeteer was regard as a person who had some secret powers.
The puppets with strings, the oldest form of man's creation, have been mentioned in a Tamil book written before the birth of Christ. Malayalam literature and other books of South Indian languages refer to the existence of these puppets in olden days. Joshi (1964:204) opines that the most ancient evidence of record of this play was found in period of Mahabhartha (1500-500 B.C.). Joshi (1976:458) says that, of 64 Art performances, this play also recorded as one of them. Professor Helisten of California University presumes the existence of leather puppet play during the 'Bhagvadgeetha' period (Kanavalli, 1993:65). Puppets are referred to by many ancient Greek writers and we find references in many Egyptian Tombs also. In the ruins of Etruria, puppet relics have been found. According to Dr. Fishel, a German Scholar, puppetry originated in India and spread from here to all other countries. To substantiate his claims he has pointed out the similarity of the traditional joker character used in puppetry in many countries to the 'Vidushak' character in the Indian traditional puppet theatre (Sunil Kumar, 1989:8).

In fact, there is nothing mysterious about the art of puppetry. As an Art form puppetry a evolved from drawing painting and sculpture. The earliest of Indian puppetry is supposed to be Chitrakatha (where drawings are used to provide visual support to a story). The art of sculpture (wood and clay) provided a technological impetus to the
development of puppetry, since it transformed a two dimensional representation into a three dimensional perspective and gave life (animation) to the sculptured images. As puppetry has developed over the centuries it became a synthesis of seven fine arts viz., Drawing, Painting, Drama, Literature, Dance, Music and Sculpture. Probably puppetry was the first Audio-Visual aid invented by man.

By and large the art of puppetry has been used as an instrument to support the domination and oppression of the ruling class. It was first used by priests to impress upon their followers their special power over objects they could manipulate. The ancient Egyptians and Greeks used puppets (moving statues) to popularise religion. Later on, when it was developed more fully as a dramatic medium puppeteers patronised chieftains and Kings in order that they may glorify the achievements of the rulers. In the 18th century in England many nobleman had their own private puppet theatres.

It is believed that shadow puppets originated in China. According to one legend a king was heart broken on hearing the news of the death of his fiance. In order to console their king the juster drew the profile of the departed girl and created a shadow puppet which he displayed before the king from behind the screen. The king was pleased and
consoled after taking the shadowy spirit of his fiance (Chennabassappa, 1986:116).

The Chinese also use string puppets and a well known string puppet character is a huge dragon which is made out of bamboo sticks and translucent papers.

In Japan, the improvements in the traditional rod puppet theatre (Bunraku) were brought about by a doctor interested in puppetry. He applied his knowledge of anatomy and physiology to constructing a puppet made of bamboo and plaster of Paris in which he gave the puppet all possible human movements. For example changing facial expressions, movement of eyelids, closing and opening of fists etc. Japan has special puppet theatre where Bunraku puppets are shown throughout the night.

Indonesia is famous for its shadow puppet theatre called "WAYANG". The themes are based on Indian mythological stories derived from epics. The stage performances follow a peculiar social tradition. In front of the stage males are seated and women are made to sit behind the stage from where they can observe only the manipulation of the puppeteers and the cut outs. The shadow puppets are made out of leather which has perforated designs on it.
In Vietnam, the country which has many rivers and so interestingly enough the puppet performances are shown with puppets dancing on the water surface. The puppeteer sits on one bank of the river behind a bush and he has a long and hollow bamboo pole with strings. He operates the puppets at the other end of the pole. The puppets are made of wood and float on the water surface. The audience sits on the opposite bank and enjoy the performance.

In Europe and other countries educational puppetry has assumed a specific form. The Television and other social and educational organizations have adopted this potential medium in fulfilling their mission. In Czechoslovakia and in some other places puppetry is used in the psychological treatment of mentally deficient child as an effective teaching aid.

In France the development of puppetry started in Paris in a little cafe called the "Chat Norre" where artists, musicians and poets used to meet. Messels Henery Reviere and Anatole France with others combined and developed "Le Petit theatre". They used shadow puppets in this theatre with the best of music and language.

In India puppetry is a very old Tradition as evident from the references of puppets found in its old scriptures like "MAHABHARAT", "KATHASARITSAGAR", and "GYANESWARI", etc. During those days the main objective behind any puppet
performance was to keep alive the achievement of ancestors and distinguished personalities, who had contributed to the growth and letterment of the human society, in the memories of the people (Sunil Kumar, 1989:12).

There exists four main traditions in puppetry in India and accordingly they consists on four variety of puppets:

1. String puppets
2. Rod puppets
3. Glow puppets
4. Shadow puppets

The leather puppet play which is performed by Killekyathas is comes under shadow puppet plays. There are again three different styles practiced in the shadow puppet plays. According to Paramasivaiah (1972: 42-44):

1. Badagal Paya (in North Karnataka area); (Northern style)
2. Tenkana Paya (in Old Mysore area); and (Southern style)
3. Mudala Paya (in Karnataka - Andhra Pradesh borders); (Eastern style)

Gowda (1975: 339) states that the leather puppet show, introduced from Maharashtra to Tanjavur, is sometimes held in Tamilnadu. These puppets, many of them being as tall as human beings, are made of thin animal skin, carefully cured.
to make them translucent. It is not possible to deal with the method of construction of traditional Translucent shadow puppets.

ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF KILLEKYATHAS

George Barnard Shaw (Young, 1966:148) stated that "the past is not behind the group, it is within the group". Following his statement, Young pointed out that "the past, if it can be located, contains the key to the present. Though today is different from yesterday will probably influence tomorrow". Realizing the importance of the past, this reviews the historical background of the Killekyathas.

There are various opinions regarding the origin and meaning of the term Killekyatha. Nanjudnayya and Iyer (1930:516) state, Killekyatha means a mischievous imp, 'Kille' meaning mischievous, and 'Kyata' imp, or a crooked fellow.

Sunkapur (1978:69) states that in the beginning of 'Kaliyuga' God himself employed these people to perform the puppet play. Therefore 'Kali' Kyatha in time became Killekyatha. Sunkapur writes further (as quoted in Nanjundaayya and Iyer, 1930:517) that, one of their women had seven sons from Kattare Kalachari of Maharashtra. He taught them to make leather puppets, and earn their living by exhibiting marionettes.
It is said that, at the last phase of Rama's life, his followers questioned him 'you would leave us, how we should live without you'? Then Rama advised his followers that to carry on all the phases of various stories of Ramayana by and through puppet plays.

Whenever they give performance, after the offering of prayers to Ganapati and Saraswathi, they exhibit a puppet of fantastic appearance, jet black in colour, protruding lips, pot-belly and crooked hands and legs. This leather puppet is known as 'Killekyatha', and is accompanied by its wife Bangarakka, equally hideous in appearance. The two figures represent the buffoons of the show, and keep the people amused with indecent jokes. The whole show has come to be known as the play of 'Killekkyatha', and the name has hence passed to the caste itself (Nanjundayya and Iyer, 1930:516). The Belgaum Gazetteer (as quoted by Nanjundayya and Iyer, 1930:517) states that "Killelyatas are the immigrants in the State from the Mahratta country to which they are believed to have come from the North, either from Kolhapur or Satara". The Bijapur Gazetteer (1884: 196-97) recorded them as, "they appear to have long belonged to the district, as they have no tradition of having moved from any other country. The oldest paper that has been found in their possession, is a deed or 'Sannad' dated in the month of Kartik (October-November) of
FIGURE 1. LEATHER PUPPETS OF BANGARAKKA AND KILLEKHYATHA

Source: (Gowda, 1991: 8, 14)
930 Fasli, that is, 1520 A.D. at the time of the reign of the second king of Bijipur. They claim descent from a Kshatriya, who is said to have followed the Pandavas in their wanderings after the loss of their kingdom.

Sherring (1974:331) spells as Khilikyantar and Khatbu as its synonym, where as Enthoven (1922:231) and Joshi (1964:18) excluding Khilikyantar, mentioned two more names, viz., Kilikut and Chhatri, and their profession as fishing and exhibiting marionettes. The Mysore Gazetteer (as quoted by Sherring, 1974:161) has listed the community by the name 'Sillekyata' as a religious medicant sect. Joshi (1964:206) and Laxmanshatri (1976:458) state that, in Malabar, the puppet play performer known by name 'Kootukar' Joshi (1964:502) states that Savantawadi area puppet performers known as Takars. Thurston (1909:198) recorded Arya Kuttadi is Tamil synonym for Maratha Are.

Bombay Gazetteer (1893:125) states, in the article Chhatri, as Chhatris live in all the four districts of the Province, claim their descent from Kshatriya. The customs, manners and habits are similar to those of Rajputs or Maratha Kunbis. They worship Venkataraman and Hanumatha, and engage Brahmans for ceremonial purposes. They live on farming, village guard, and day labour work. Dharwar district Chhatris live in grass huts, and are looked upon low in the
social scale. Some of them do fishing, some perform the 'Killekyatha' play for their livelihood. Viewed from this angle and as explained by Iyer earlier, the community derived its name from the people by the Killekyatha play.

In the Imperial Gazetteer (1908) we don't find the word Killekyatha. This is covered in the Census under the name Chhattri. Thurston (1909:23) states that Chhattri is recorded in the Madras Census Report (1901) as an equivalent of Kshatriya. Thurston (1909:297) writes further, under the name Killekyatha, the Marathi speaking people, who amuse villagers with their marionette shows wherever they can secure sufficient patronage. Nanjundayya and Iyer (1930:516) and the Karnataka State Gazetteer (1982:480) have stated that, under the name, Killekyatha, is also known as Sillekyatha and vice-versa. CSR (1980:162) has written, these people as, Gomberamas and Chitra-Marathas. In the course of the survey, the researcher also found that there were synonymous local names, viz., Chhattri, Sillekyatha, Chitra-Maratha, Gujre-Maratha, Kshatriya, Kathanayaka, Kalasutri, Takar, Gopal, etc. About Kalasutris. Sherring (1974:342) observes that, "this tribe wanders over a wide tract of country, extending from Northern India to the Dekhan. In the rainy season their favourite resort is Walwa in Sattar, and the Patwardhan territory. They support themselves by exhibiting puppet shows and assuming various disguises...."
The explanations referred by various writers are not satisfying in some respects. There are different Maratha allied communities who are performing the puppet play in one or the other way. All these are migratory communities instead of settled, and in many respects differ from each other (they are treated in a separate article). It is however not known whether all these communities lived together once upon a time and then separated, or they were separately formed.

Like in other castes, there are various sub-castes among Marathas. Other castes like Brahmins and Lingayats cannot give more prominence to inter sub-caste marriages, a Vaishnav Brahmin boy should marry only a Vaishnav girl. Where as among Marathas, some of the inter sub-caste marriages are also seen. In the course of the Survey such inter sub-caste marriages like, Takars with Bagdis, Bagdis with Maratha Kunbis, Takars with Gondhalis, Chitrakathis with Ares, etc., have been seen. In such cases, different explanations were collected by them for eg., in case of Takar male with Bagdi female, different explanations about their respective caste-customs, habits and manners were collected. Here, besides some little changes, in general, their customs, habits and manners resemble each other. Russell and Lal (1975:440) state that Chitrakathis have a caste rule that every one must
have in his home a complete set of sacred puppets. This usually includes — 40 representations of Rama's life, 35 of that of the sons of Arjun, 40 of the Pandavas, 40 of Sita and Rawan, and 40 of Harichandra. But such a caste rule was not seen among Killekyathas during the field work in Karnataka.

The most significant difference between the Killekyathas and other communities referred to is, the exogamous septs or sections are recognised by them as clans, whereas in other Maratha allied castes, as surnames (manathanas). Persons bearing the same clan 'manathana' or surname cannot intermarray. Sameness of 'devak' or marriage guardian is no bar to inter-marriage. Here several exogamous sections or septs appear to be named after certain offices held or functions performed by their members at the caste feasts. Thus, Atak or Ganachari section are the caste headmen. There are other exogamous sections that go by the name, viz., Avet, Salve, More, Chhatre, Nekanar etc. These again go by different synonymous name in different castes. Such things might have been happened in the time of previous writers. Therefore, they have treated some of the caste-names as synonymous local names of Killekyathas. Joshi (1964:347) treated them in a separate article, as the puppet play performing Maratha caste in Kannada and Telugu speaking areas.
The word Maratha covers three classes that were probably one in origin but are now distinct.

These are:

1. Marathas Proper, the chiefs, Landowners and fighting Marathas of the Deccan and Konkan, claiming Kshatriya rank, eschewing widow re-marriage and socially superior to the cultivating classes, from whom, however, they will take girls in marriage.

2. Maratha Kunbis or cultivators, also known as Kulvadis.

3. Maratha occupational castes are as following:
   a) Bhandari (Treasurer)
   b) Gavandi (Bricklayer)
   c) Chitrakathi (picture shower)
   d) Kumbar (potter)
   e) Lohar (Blacksmiths)
   f) Mali (Gardner)
   g) Nhavi (barber)
   h) Parit
   i) Sutar (Carpenters)
   j) Takar (Shadow puppet performer)
   k) Taru
   l) Teli (Oilmen)

In this way Takars who are known as Killekyathas are part of the Maratha castes. These would be classed as Marathas when found in other parts of India and have certain features of special significance in common with the first two groups (Enthoven, 1922:8).
Three theories are explained in the field regarding the derivation of the term Maratha. These are briefly:

(1) The one derived from Maharashtra, the name originally applied by Sanskrit writers in Northern India to the great Deccan plain;

(2) That is compound of Maha is great and Rashtrika is either a Sanskrit form of Ratha or a term applied generally to petty chiefs ruling in the Deccan;

(3) That is a compound of Maha great. and Ratha a chariot rider or warrior, corresponding to the ancient Persion caste of Rathaishtar or chariot riders.

The first of these three derivations is favoured by Dr. J.F.Fleet and Dr. Bhagvanlal Indraji (Enthoven: 1922). In 1798 Colonel Tone, who commended a regiment of the Peswas army, wrote of the Marathas; the three great tribes which compose the Maratha caste are the Kunbi or farmer. the Dhanagar or shepherd, and the Goala or cowherd: to this original cause may perhaps be ascribed that great simplicity of manner which distinguishes the Maratha people (Russel. 1916:201).

The earliest known mention of Maratha's is found in an inscription of about 100 B.C. over a statue in the rest chamber at the top of the Nanapass, leading from the 'Konkan'
in to the North of Poona district. The term used here is 'Maharathagranikoviro' which probably means the hero or leader of the Maharathas. In the Bedsa caves in the same locality there is a reference to a queen described as the Maharathini, dated in the first century A.D. Other similar references are found in the Bhaja and Karle caves. It is not easy to decide whether the terms Maharatha and Maharathini indicate residents of Maharashtra or designate the individuals by their racial names, the early form of maratha. The first theory is most probable, for, a few centuries later we read in a Cingalese chronicle, the Mahavanso (480 A.D.) of the country of Maharattha, and in 634 A.D. the Chinese pilgrim Hiwen Thsang (629-645 A.D.) refers to the Kingdom of Mo-ho-lo-cha, presumably Maharattha, and its warlike inhabitants. Hiwen Thsang describes the people apparently the Warlike Maratha tribe, as tall, boastful and proud. "Whoever does them a service" he says, "may count on their gratitude, but no one who offends them will escape their vengeance. If any one insults them, they will risk their lives to wipe out the affront. If any one in trouble applies to them, forgetful of themselves they will hasten to help him. When they have an injury to avenge, they never fail to warn their enemy; after the warning each puts on his 'cuirass' and grasps his appear. In battle, they pursue fugitives but do not 'stay' those who give themselves up. When a general has lost a battle,
instead of punishing him corporally they make him wear women's clothes, and so force him to sacrifice his life. The State maintains several hundred dauntless champions, who every time they prepare for combat, make themselves drunk with wine, and then one of them, spear in hand, will defy ten thousand enemies. If they kill a man whom they meet on the road, the law does not punish them. Whenever the army goes on a campaign, these braves march in front to the sound of the drum. They also intoxicate many hundreds of naturally fierce elephants. At the time of coming to blows they drink strong liquor. They run in a body, trampling everything under their feet. No enemy can stand before them, and the king, proud of possessing these men and elephants, despises and slightsthe neighbouring kingdom (Enthoven, 1922:4-5).

In the middle of the seventh century an inscription at Aihole near Badami in Bijapur district, the dominions of the Rattas and Chalukyas, relates how a king of the later dynasty, Pulikeshi II, gained the sovereignty of the three Maharashtras with their 99,000 villages. It will be seen that these references are all consistent with either the Marathas deriving their name from Maharashtra, or the name of the Marathas having been styled Maharashtra as a Sanskrit form of "the country of the Maharatha". On the other hand, it is to be observed that, previous to any of the references
described above, there is an inscription of 245 B.C. at Girnar, stating that the Emperor Ashoka sent Ministers of religion (i.e., Buddhist priests) to the Rashtikas, Petenikars and Aparantas. It is known that Petenikar refers to Paithan on the Godavari river, while Aparanta is the old name of the northern Konkan. Rashtikas, therefore, indicates some people resident in the Deccan, possibly the Rattas. We know that a Bhoja dynasty became in time the Maha-Bhojas. It is natural to suggest, as Sir R.G. Bhandarkar (Enthoven: 1922) does, that the Rattas similarly became the Maha-Rattas, i.e., Maharathas. In alternative, the reference may be to Rashtrakutas, i.e., local chiefs, who bore this name in the Deccan as rulers over rashtras or territorial divisions. Mr. D.R. Bhandarkar (Enthoven: 1922) favours this theory. Between this and the first theory it is not easy to select. Both are probable. Neither is entirely convincing. A third theory, which is plausible, though equally lacking in confirmation from contemporary evidence, is mentioned by Campbell (Enthoven: 1922) in the account of Marathas given in the Ratnagiri volume of the Bombay Gazetteer. It is suggested that the Marathas took their name from the 'rath' or war chariot in which they once fought. 'Rathas' being the riders in chariots (rath). In this connection it is interesting to note that the ancient Persians has a warrior caste known as Rathaishta or riders in chariots. The plains
of the Deccan would be suitable country for fighting in chariots, and the Marathas have always been a warlike people. It is quite possible that the earliest known lords of the Deccan went to battle in chariots and hence derived their name.

At about 1020 A.D. the Arab geographer Al Biruni mentions Marhat Des as a country to the South of the Narmada. In 1320 the French friar Jordanus refers to “the kingdom of Maratha” as very great. In 1340 the African traveller Ibn Batuta notices that the people of Daulatabad or Devgiri were Marathas, whose nobles were Brahmans. From the beginning to the end of his Deccan history (1290-1600) the historian Ferishta often mentions the Marathas. In his account of the Musalman Turk conquest under Ala-ud-din Khilji and his generals, Farishta refers to the Marathas as the people of the province of Mharat or Mherat, dependent on Daulatabad and apparently considered to centre in Paithan or, as it is written, Mheropatan. In 1318 A.D. Harpal, the son-in-law of the Devgiri chief, rebelled and forced the Musalmans to give up several districts of Maratha. In 1370 A.D. Jadhav Maratha, the chief of the Naiks, revolted in Daulatabad. Persuaded its Musalman governor to join him, raised the Rathod chief of Baglan and other local leaders, and collected a great army in Paithan. Till the end of the Bahmani supremacy (1490) A.D. Some Maratha chiefs among them Rajas of
Galna and Baglan in Nasik, were practically independent, paying no tribute for years at a time. After the close of the Bahmani supremacy (1490 A.D.), under the Ahmednagar, and to a less extent under the Bijapur kings, one or two Maratha chiefs remained nearly independent. Others were continued in their estates on condition of supplying troops, and others took service with their Musalman rulers and were granted estates and the Hindu titles of Deshmukh, Sardeshmukh, Naik, Rao, and Raja. Of the lower ranks of Marathas many were employed as mercenary troops, most of them as cavalry, but some also as infantry. On one occasion (1507 A.D) the bulk of the people between Paithan and Chakan in Poona are spoken of as rebellious Marathas (Enthoven 1922:5-6).

This seems to be true, because, the witness signatures of above such Hindu title holders have been seen in the copper plate inscription dated 1520 A.D. found in possession of a Killekyatha at Kelur near Hungund in Bijapur district during the field work. In that, a person has granted some powers to control his division and referred to as Kottawal for a commandar of Chhatri troop. All of his people were warned to obey his rules and do work as per his direction. Further it seems that the word Chhatri has been used since 1520 A.D. or before. According to Dathe (1933:794) the Kottawal is known as Defence officer or Police Superintendent.
in the Maratha kingdom. From these clues, certainly one may feel the existence of Maratha chieftainships and further it shows that the Killekyathas formerly known as 'Chhatris' were in the military organisations in those days.

Besides their correct name, the Marathas are often called Bargis, a word of uncertain origin. Shakespeare (Enthoven: 1922) seems to derive it from the Sanskrit Vargya as it originally meant a man of a class (verg) or faction. Grant Duff (Enthoven: 1922) describes it as a word of unknown origin, apparently a slang term of contempt used of the local levies by the regular foreign cavalry. In another passage Grant Duff (Enthoven: 1922) states that all the troops officered by Marathas were formerly called Bargis and that when he wrote (1826) in many parts of India the Marathas still known by the name.

The following are the leading instances of the use of the term Bargi by the Musalman historians:

In the fifteenth century, according to the author of the Mirat-i-Ahmadi (1760) the Maratha chiefs of Baglan in North Nasik had for generations borne the title of the Baharji or Bargi chiefs. The word Bargi is applied to the Maratha cavalry under Bijapur in 1549 A.D. and again in 1560 A.D. It is frequently applied to Telugu troops and estate holders under the Kanarese kingdom of Vijayanagar (1336-1565), and to
the Bijapur troops, after Bijapur (1570) had extended its power over much of the territory formerly held by Vijayanagar. In 1613 the Emperor Jahangir in his autobiography calls the Maratha 'skirmishers of Ahmednagar Bargiyan'. In 1616 A.D. the Bargis of Ahmednagar are described as a very hardy race, and Jadhav Rai apparently Shivaji's maternal grandfather, is called Bargi.

These evidences show that the Musalmam historians applied the term Bargi both to Telgu and to Maratha cavalry. This double use of Bargi has been taken as evidence that the origin of the word in the 'Tamil Vaduga', that is, Northern, a term which is the Tamil country is commonly used of the people of Telingana. It is also used to Kanarase immigrants to the Nilgiri hills, and might, with equal correctness, be use of the people of Maharashtra. Bombay Gazetteer (1888:81-85) states that, bargi is, however, either a corruption of the Persian word 'Bargir' meaning a mounted soldier for whom horses and equipment are provided free in contrast to the 'Silledar' who provides his own or else the Marathi word 'barge', which is given in Molesworth (Enthoven:1922) as the equivalent of lawless or licentious, i.e., a unsuitable description of Maratha horsemen, who were notorious plunderers. The Marathas came into prominence with the rise of Shivaji Bhosle (1627-1680) whose successful rebellion
against the Bijapur kingdom founded the Maratha Empire, and led to his coronation at Raigad as ruler of a great part of the Deccan and Konkan in 1668. He was then solemnly invested with the sacred thread as a Kshatriya, and documents were procured from Udaipur connecting the Bhosles with the Sisode Rajputs (Enthoven, 1922:6). Rawlinson (1929:172) states that "the first of his family, was the bastard son of a chief, of whom his mother was the daughter of a carpenter. When this bastard had grown up, he claimed the succession upon the death of his father, although he had a brother, who was legitimate. As the officers refused their allegiance, he was forced to flee and apply to the king of Bijapur". The value of this evidence has since been disputed. Marathas however, continue to claim a twice born status, and to follow many of the Kshatriya practices to this day. Killekyathas wear sacred thread and so they are of twice born status.

It is clear that the fighting classes and large landowners gained considerably in social precedence owing to the rise of the Maratha confederacy with its five centres at Poona, Nagpur, Indore, Gwalior and Baroda. For want of a more distinctive title these must be styled Maratha Proper (Enthoven, 1922:6-8).

It is not possible in these pages to deal finally with the controversy that exists regarding the origin of Maratha
divisions such as Killekyathas in the Presidency. But in the
course of the Survey some important evidence has been
collected dealing with the social structure of Marathas of
all the three classes, and indicating reasons for assuming
that they had a common origin (Enthoven, 1922:10).

In the light of information available, as well as
information sought from some informants, it is clear that,
Marathas eventually revolted openly under the famous Shivaji
and established their independence. During this period, many
of the army troops were employed for intelligence works. Of
these troops, some of the Chhatri troops also seems to have
engaged in such activities. Public officers in the 17th
century whether Asiatic or European were not overscrupulous.
But good kings as a rule exercised a strict control over
them. Shivaji in particular was served by a very efficient
intelligence department. We learn from Koutillya’s
Arthashastra that it is an old practice in India to employ
spies to watch over the conduct of Government servants. Sen
(1925:87,94) says that Shivaji knew quite well that an army
however efficient, could not be expected to operate with
success in an enemy country, unless served by an efficient
intelligence department. He organised a body of excellent
spies. The Maratha spies were found in the army, navy,
civil departments, and camps. They were scattered over the
whole country and in the territories of other rulers. These
FIGURE 2. AT THE COURT OF SHIVAJI

Source: (Sunnakki, 1980: 7)
spies supplied minute information on the question entrusted to them. Shivaji had complete information about the houses of the rich merchants of Surat, Hubli, Dharangaon, Chhapra and other cities plundered by him. He even knew where the treasures were concealed in the houses. Therefore he could pillage large cities in two or three days and depart with his booty to other places (Bal Krishna, 1940:73).

V. Smith, one of the distinguished English historians who spent his whole active career in India says that the Maratha independent rule was the rule of professed robbers. In short, the Marathas were robbers by profession (Bal Krishna, 1940:15), a cunning fox, a master of craft, a perfidious thief, a wily and subtle politician are the titles given to Shiva. He is said to have unscrupulously used all sorts of treachery, duplicity, intrigue, giles and frauds to confound and kill his enemies (Bal Krishna, 1940:30).

In that age all sorts of these tactics were the useful weapons for assassinating one's enemies. We should not judge the men of that age by our standard of morality.

Till today we can see many of the Killekysthas like religious mendicants, petty traders, exponents etc. Aiyappan (1960:33) states that, some of the tribes of Southern India, now lying low and decile, were once spirited fighters for freedom from oppression.
In many of the characteristics thus noted, we may detect, in the remote ancestry of the community, the qualities which distinguished the career of that community and which enabled to withstand the forces of the great Moghal.

Sometimes Shivaji too disguised himself for his escape. When he was under Aurangzeb’s custody (1666), his half-brother Miraji lay down on his cot, with a quilt covering all his body except the outstretched right arm adorned with Shiva’s gold wristlet, while Shiva and his son crouched down in two baskets which were safely sent out through the line of unsuspecting guards. The baskets were deposited at a lonely spot outside the city, and then they issued forth and made their way to a village six miles from Agra, where their followers were waiting for them with horses. After a hurried consultation in a jungle the party divided, smeared themselves with ashes like Hindu ascetics, and hastened towards Mathura, while the others took their own way homewards. The fugitives pursued their way, constantly changing their disguise, sometimes passing for religious mendicants, sometimes as petty traders (Sarkar, 1920:170).

In course of time, in 1686 Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor of Delhi, marched South to conquer Bijapur and Golconda, and to crush the growing power of the Marathas. He took Bijapur
that year and Golconda in the next, and the territories which had been won by these two kingdoms from the Hindus thus became a portion of the Mughal empire. But with Marathas, he was less successful. He seized Shivaji’s son, Sambhaji, and put him to death in 1689 A.D. (Gazetteer of South India, 1988:18).

During this period, many political changes were undertaken in the Maratha kingdom. Peshwas, the ministers of Shivaji, came into prominence. Moore (Sen 1925:392) wrote in the last decade of 18th century, and we do not know whether his remarks hold good of Shivaji’s army. It is however certain that many of his military regulations were suffered to disappear during the Peshwa period, and the Peshwas not only tried to imitate the pomp and splendour of the Moghol court, but also organised their army on the Moghal model. The organization of the Peshwa army therefore was equally unsound, and is clear that, the people, from all the above clues, who were engaged with intelligence work found the later Chieftains not to support them properly, and during this period they were noticed and caught by their enemies. In order to escape, these people managed to eluded into the thick forests and went to far away places. They were driven to play as they wish and sank in the social scale. Consequently they had to depend upon their living on whatever
small work they could do. It is during this period, especially those who had eluded into the forests started huntings for their livelihood and gradually they might have made use of leather and out of it they figured many leather puppets and started to amuse villagers with their marionette shows. CSR (1980:158) states that they were engaged in spy activities, and finally to protect themselves, took to hunting and began the art of making leather puppets. This became their life, a nomadic in nature. In the mean time, they learnt the art of singing, showing dramas, acting and all such cultural activities. Those who settled near the river took to fishing, some choose to farming and others, petty works. Leather puppet play gained much scope in those days. People had the practice of enjoying this art by employing the performers in their villages, to which they were extensively attracted, which was natural on their part in the lack of media for amusements then.

Now this play is losing its existance, perhaps the skill and art of leather puppet play could not compete with the so called more convenient, comfortable and latest medias of amusement and communication. Due to this reason, it is very hard for performers to earn their livelihood, hence most of them are shifting over to the new professions and skills such as farming, fishing, government service etc.