

Role of Twelve Balutedars in Barter

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Abstract:

The balutedar system was supported by the village agriculture. Occupational communities under this system provided services to the farmers and the economic system of the village. The base of this system was caste. The communities were responsible for tasks specific to their castes. Under the baluta system, the balutedars had certain rights and privileges at ceremonies. Their services were remunerated by the cultivators in the form of an annual payment in sheaves of corn and a few seers of other grain grown in the field, such as wheat, hulga, gram, tur, groundnut, and others. For special services rendered on ceremonial occasions, payments were made in cash, grain or clothes. Sometimes food was given.

Balutedar was a traditional system of barter and exchange in rural India. Under this system, the balutedar, or village servants, were entitled to a share of the agricultural produce from the landowners in exchange for their services. These services included tasks such as plowing, sowing, and harvesting. The balutedars were an integral part of the agrarian economy in certain regions of India, particularly in Maharashtra, and their role was recognized and regulated by the government. However, with changes in agricultural practices and social structures, the balutedar system has undergone significant transformation over time.

Keywords: Balutedar, Barter, Work, etc.

Introduction:

In the context of barter systems, the twelve balutedars played a crucial role in facilitating trade and commerce in ancient India. The term “balutedar” refers to a group of twelve hereditary village functionaries who held specific responsibilities within the economic and social structure of the village community. Each balutedar had a distinct role to play in the barter system, contributing to the smooth functioning of trade transactions and ensuring the welfare of the community as a whole.

1. **Kulkarni:** The Kulkarni was responsible for maintaining land records, collecting taxes, and overseeing legal matters related to land ownership. In the barter system, they played a key role in documenting transactions and ensuring that exchanges were conducted fairly.
2. **Mahajan:** The Mahajan acted as a moneylender and financial intermediary in the village economy. They provided credit to farmers and traders, facilitating trade by enabling individuals to acquire goods even when they did not have immediate resources for exchange.

3. **Gurav:** The Gurav was in charge of maintaining temples and religious ceremonies in the village. Their role in the barter system involved overseeing religious offerings made during trade transactions, ensuring that customs and rituals were followed.
4. **Sonar:** The Sonar was a goldsmith who specialized in crafting jewelry and ornaments. In barter exchanges, they played a crucial role in assessing the value of precious metals and gemstones used as currency or traded commodities.
5. **Sutar:** The Sutar was a carpenter who crafted wooden goods essential for daily life and agricultural activities. They contributed to the barter system by providing tools, furniture, and other wooden items needed for trade and household use.
6. **Kumbhar:** The Kumbhar was a potter skilled in making pottery and earthenware. Their products were essential commodities for storage, cooking, and various domestic purposes, supporting the barter economy with necessary goods.
7. **Shimpi:** The Shimpi was a tailor responsible for sewing clothes for the villagers. In barter transactions, they provided clothing items that were valuable commodities for trade and personal use.
8. **Dhor, Chambhar, Nhawi:** These three balutedars were associated with leatherwork – Dhor (tanning hides), Chambhar (making leather goods), and Nhawi (shoemaking). They supplied leather products such as footwear, bags, and other items required for daily life and trade.
9. **Parit:** The Parit was responsible for washing clothes and cleaning tasks in the village. Their services were essential for maintaining hygiene standards and ensuring that garments were clean and presentable for trade purposes.
10. **Koli:** The Koli was traditionally involved in fishing activities or as boatmen along rivers or coastal areas. They provided fish as a source of food and traded seafood products within the village economy.
11. **Barik:** The Barik was a barber who offered grooming services such as haircuts, shaving, and personal care. Their role extended to providing grooming services for special occasions or ceremonies associated with trade events.
12. **Chougula:** The Chougula served as a messenger or courier between villages, facilitating communication and information exchange related to trade activities. They played a vital role in connecting different communities and enabling trade networks to function efficiently.

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