INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth century is an immensely debated theme in Indian history wherein arguments revolve around multifarious dimensions pertaining to two major developments: the Mughal decline and its aftermath which culminated eventually in the establishment of the British colonial rule. In 1700, after a period of about 174 years since its establishment in 1526, the Mughal Empire at its climax under Aurangzeb extended across the entire northern portion of the Indian subcontinent from Kabul to Assam and in the South; its concerns had expanded right to the Krishna River, with the entire area constituted into the six Deccan provinces. Thus, except for certain remote pockets, the Imperial authority had been established across major portions of the subcontinent.

However, by 1750 the fortunes of this colossal territorial power dwindled to almost nothingness. The phase following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 was followed by a rapid change of Emperors until the accession of Muhammad Shah 1719-1748, whose reign despite relative chronological stability, failed to countervail the domination of rival factions at the Imperial court, the implications of which proved to be catastrophic for the Empire. Further, the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah in 1739 and the experiences in the battles of Plassey in 1757 and Panipat in 1761 exposed the military irrelevance of the Empire.

Simultaneous to this collapse is discernible a pattern marking the emergence of a new political configuration comprising of successor states: Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad, ascendant rebellious polities: Marathas, Sikhs and the Jats, which ironically maintained frail links with Delhi despite the Plassey episode, possibly aiming thereby to

extend legitimacy to their nascent ascendancy. Besides these were polities in Mysore, Kerala and Rajputana, which though surfaced as independent powers were themselves threatened by newer and more ambitious players in the emerging power relations: the Marathas, Haider Ali and Tipu, besides the British and the French.

Mushrooming and interspersed alongside these prominent categories was a conglomeration of polities of varying statures seeking a space within the emerging political order in different parts of India. The last category broadly comprised of either erstwhile semi-autonomous chiefs, classed as *zamindars* by the Mughals, whose ancestry in some cases dated to the pre-Mughal era, or elements belonging to different levels of the Mughal bureaucracy: *nazims*, *faujdars*, *naibs, mutasaddis* and *desais* who found an opportune moment to alleviate their position in the structural crisis that the Empire came to experience. Among the successor states, while the Marathas did show some promise of replacing Mughal hegemony, the immense setback at Panipat arrested this possibility. In the period following this episode, Maratha history is characterized by infighting, divisions and stagnation, a striking contrast to their earlier successes.

The Battle of Plassey on the other hand also marked the ascendancy of the English East India Company from a commercial to a political entity in definite terms. By the turn of the century, the political scene was dominated by the coercively pervasive presence of the British who strategically sought to engulf the entire conglomeration of big and small polities located in different parts of India. These were transformed into an elaborate hierarchy of native states under the aegis of British colonial rule. Interestingly while the territorial extents of these polities were uneven, the smallest often spanned just a few acres. Eventually, during

the course of the next century, about fifty years later, British paramountcy was firmly established over the whole of south Asia and colonial hegemony with its blatant manifestations became a glaring reality with far reaching consequences.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND:

These developments and its related dynamics have been viewed with variance by scholars examining the era. In fact, opinions pertaining to the Mughal decline and its aftermath in the eighteenth century display a pattern of evolving historiographical standpoints and perspectives. A peep into this variegated historiography shows significant shifts in the general treatment of the period, with the foci moving from the purely Imperial or Empire-centric perspective and its ramifications to an increasingly broader canvas, which takes cognizance of developments at the regional and sub-regional level, besides examining events beyond individual personalities in a more comprehensive or rather holistic manner. The thrust significantly has shifted towards a broadening multidimensional perspective aiming at examining the overall structural dynamics associated to these developments. It may not be out of place here to give a brief overview of the arguments advanced in recent years on the decline of the Mughal Empire.

It was William Irvine and Jadunath Sarkar who wrote the earliest detailed histories of this period. They both viewed the entire issue of Mughal decline and what followed thereafter in terms of the character and personality of the Emperors and their nobles. According to W. Irwine,[1] the decline was an outcome of the degeneration in the character

[1] William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, ed. Jadunath *Sarkar*, 2 vols. Calcutta, 1922.

of the Emperor and the nobles. Jadunath Sarkar,[2] places the entire onus for the decline on the 'prejudiced' religious policies of Aurangzeb which provoked antagonism and thus a reaction. In his view Aurangzeb was the arch-culprit and his religious bigotry induced him to discriminate against certain important components in the nobility which provoked reaction. He also suggests that his successors lacked the ability to remedy the implications of this legacy of Aurangzeb which eventually resulted in the decline of the Empire. The thesis of the 'Hindu reaction' being the primary cause of decline is however incorrect since similar reactionary tendencies are noticeable from the Muslim nobles and officials too.[3] It is important to bear in mind that these scholars were writing in an ambience when individual personalities and communal interpretations had an overriding influence on history writing.

The 60's witnessed a significant shift wherein the foci moved towards understanding the operational mechanisms and complexities pertaining to the overall structure of the Mughal regime. In 1959 Satish Chandra[4] highlighted the structural shortcomings in the Mughal setup wherein operational stability of the structure depended on the effective working of two core institutions: the *mansab* and *jagir* which in turn depended on the adequate availability of revenue assignments besides the ability to appropriate revenue from the same. According to him, Mughal decline is to be viewed in terms of the Mughal failure, towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign to effectively maintain the system which

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[2] Jadunath *Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1938; 3rd ed. Calcutta, 1964 and *History of Aurangzeb*, vol. I-V, Calcutta, 1912, 1916, 1919, and 1924.

[3] In his study on Awadh, Muzaffar Alam has highlighted the role of the Muslim madad-i-maash holders in creating similar problems for the Empire. Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of the Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and Punjab 1707-1748*, Delhi, 1986.

[4] Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707- 1740*, Aligarh, 1959, 4th ed, Delhi 2002

went into disarray. While the Empire reached its climax under Aurangzeb, the system failed to be sustained and this eventually made collapse inevitable.

In Athar Ali's [5] major study on the nobility and their politics in the late seventeenth century, Satish Chandra's thesis came to be quantified. He illustrates the problem of decline in light of the annexation of the Deccan states, the absorption of the Marathas and the Deccanis into the Mughal nobility, and the subsequent shortage of *jagirs* or *bejagiri* with nobles competing for better *jagirs* which were increasingly becoming scarce due to the recent influx of nobles from the south.

This thesis relating to *bejagiri* has been reviewed by J.F Richards[6] in his study on the Deccan wherein he questions the issue of the absence of adequate *jagirs* arguing that the Mughal annexation of the Deccan also amounted to the augmentation of the Empire's revenue resources. He explains the decline as an outcome of Aurangzeb's deliberate decision to keep the most lucrative *jagirs* in *khalisa* in order to sustain the campaigns in the Deccan and against the Marathas. In response, Satish Chandra[7] gave a clarification of his position by making a distinction between *bejagiri* and the crisis in the *jagirdari* system. In his opinion, the crisis of the *jagir* system did not occur because of the growth in the size of the ruling class and the corresponding decline in the available revenue resources. Rather, the *jagir* crisis was a marker of the non- functionality of the *jagir* system which was conditioned by the structure of the medieval Indian society. Satish Chandra hints at the possibility of a tripolar relationship between the *jagirdar/mansabdar, zamindar* and the *khudkashtas* or resident peasants. An effective

[5] M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Aligarh, 1966, revised ed., Delhi, 1997.
[6] J.F.Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, Oxford, 1975
[7] Satish Chandra, 'Review of the Crisis of the Jagirdari System', in *Medieval India: Society, the Jagirdari Crisis and the Village*, Delhi. 1982, pp. 61-75.

balance between these three categories was the key to the smooth working of the *jagir* system. The ability of the *jagirdar* to collect land revenue from the *zamindars* and keep the peasant involved in agricultural production was essential to keep the system working. The *jagirdars* position was dependent on his ability to maintain his military might besides continued patronage at the Imperial level. This necessitated effective revenue collection to maintain requisite contingent of troops. Once the military power of the *jagirdar* became weak, this tripolar arrangement which sustained the Empire became ineffective resulting in collapse.

S.Nurul Hasan looks at the problem in terms of the broad pattern of agrarian relations within the Empire.[8] According to him, under the Mughal regime, agrarian relations developed into an authority structure somewhat akin to a pyramid wherein rights of various kinds came to be superimposed upon each other. Resultantly, bulk of the state revenue demand was transferred on to the cultivators. Equilibrium was the key factor in this sort of an authority structure. After the death of Aurangzeb and the weakening of the Imperial authority, this equilibrium got irreparably disturbed. With increasing pressure on the *jagir*s the agricultural economy began to face a crisis. Conflict between the *zamindars* and the state and among themselves could not be checked. Often this became a law and order problem weakening the authority of the state. The *zamindars* in this situation could be contained only by a group which would be independent of the support of the *zamindars*. Such a class had not emerged by this time. The collapse of the system thus became inevitable.

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[8] S. Nurual Hasan, 'Zamindars under the Mughals', *Land Control and the Social Structure in Indian History*, ed. R. E. Frykenberg, Madison, 1969, reprint, New Delhi, 1979.

Irfan Habib's[9] classical work on the Mughal agrarian system views the decline in relation to the inherent flaws within the Mughal land revenue structure which offered little scope for enhancement of agrarian production and provoked peasant unrest. According to him, the mechanism of collection of revenue that the Mughals had evolved was inherently flawed. The Imperial policy was to set the revenue at its optimum possibly to secure the greatest military strength for the Empire. The nobles on the other hand, tended to extract the maximum from their *jagir*s showing little concern for the implications of this on the peasantry and the revenue paying capacity of the area. The policy of frequent transfer of *jagir*s negated the relevance of following a far sighted policy of agricultural development. As the pressure of excessive exploitation on the peasantry increased, they were left with little option but to protest. These peasant protests weakened the political and social fabric of the Empire.

In a recent symposium on the decline of the Mughal Empire[10], J. F. Richards, M. N. Pearson and P. Hardy also view the Mughal collapse in relation to extension of Mughal concerns in the south and their involvement in the Maratha affairs. Besides this dimension they too seem to notice certain inherent problems in the Mughal system. According to Pearson, the Mughal rule was basically 'very indirect' and for the general populace it was the local ties and norms that mattered and not the distant Imperial control manifested through the bureaucrats or nobles. It was only for the nobles that the concept of the Mughal Empire was central as their very survival depended on the Imperial patronage which in turn depended on the constant military success of

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[9] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, New Delhi, 1963, 2nd revised ed. New Delhi 2000.

[10] *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXV, No. 2, February, 1976, pp. 221-63

the Emperor. M. N. Pearson views the Mughal decline in relation to the absence of an impersonalised bureaucracy. Once Mughal military expansion reached its climax, patronage slackened and the shortage of *jagirs* engendered restlessness within the bureaucracy and this eventually paved the way for the decline of the Empire.

By the late 70s and in the 80s, the problem came to be examined in light of concerns other than agriculture and polity wherein cognizance was extended to the role of categories conventionally regarded as non political. Karen Leonard has argued that 'indigenous banking firms were indispensable allies of the Mughal state', and that the great nobles and Imperial officers 'were more than likely to be directly dependent upon these firms'. When in the period 1650-1750 these banking firms began 'the redirection of their economic and political support' towards the emerging regional polities including the English East India Company in Bengal, this led to bankruptcy, the ensuing series of political crises and the downfall of the Empire.[11] The arguments of Leonard however do enjoy adequate acceptance in the existing studies on the Mughal polity and economy yet this contention cannot be fully ruled out.

Philip Calkins in his study on the political formation in eighteenth century Bengal takes a serious note of the participation of the merchants and bankers in political affairs. However, Calkins restricts his argument to the period and region he examines, that is, Bengal. It is noteworthy that M. N. Pearson[12] in his study of Gujarat furnishes some evidence of merchants' participation in politics. However, he refrains from

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[11] Karen Leonard, 'The Great Firm Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1979, pp. 161-7

[12] M. N. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat*, California, 1976; see also his article, 'Political Participation in Mughal India', *IESHR*, Vol. IX, No. 2, June 1972, pp.113-31.

suggesting that the Mughal finance system was dependent on merchants' credit.

Further, Athar Ali[13] explains the decline as a cultural failure in intellectual and technological terms in comparison to the west.

While the tone of despondency concerning the decline is distinctly marked, the regional experiences display specific variations which significantly range from the notion of the Dark Ages characterized by crisis and utter breakdown, to economic prosperity which facilitated regional ascendancy and multifaceted realignments which are manifest in the emerging regional and sub regional polities.

Obviously, these historiographical shifts became possible with the broadening of the nature and spectrum of source material examined which came to include different categories of regional sources in local languages besides oral history and folklore, which possibly constitute one of the most important sources of information relating to the unwritten past particularly the socio-cultural aspects. Documentation and compilation of this material since the colonial era has been a significant breakthrough for researchers, facilitating the study of various hitherto unnoticed aspects. While perspectives have widened considerably, it is important to note that research inputs and fresh interpretations have brought forward numerous issues which till recently remained unexplored: for instance, since the 1980's, *Suba*ltern concerns are increasingly being addressed, giving a more balanced picture of the historical past. It is noteworthy that Harbans Mukhia, in his recent work on the Mughals has amply drawn upon literature, folk

[13] Athar Ali, ' The Eighteenth Century: An Interpretation', *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1-2, July 1978- January, 1979, pp. 175-86: see also ' The Passing of the Empire: The Mughal Case', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1975, pp.358-96.

lore and oral traditions thereby presenting pertinent insights of the popular perception and response to the Mughals[14]

While the overall structure of the regimes concerned has assumed primacy, it is significant that scholars are taking cognizance of the obvious variations in the regional experiences concerning the developments that defined the eighteenth century. Moreover, the nature of interpretations pertaining to this period has also changed considerably. The earlier notions of a sharp drastic change is somewhat softened, with historians extending greater emphasis to patterns of evolution relating to decline and ascendancy during this era wherein traces of continuity located therein are increasingly becoming visible.

Though the Empire had shrunk to irrelevant levels, numerous of its politico-economic institutions and ideals survived, sometimes with nomenclatural alterations and essential innovations in the emerging successor states. For instance, the *Nawab* of Arcot in the far south introduced Mughal principles of governance in the area for the first time In fact; these institutions served as an operational model and became the basis of early British rule when it was grappling to evolve mechanisms to structure its newly acquired political authority.[15]

Besides fiscal dimensions, it is also pertinent to note that at the socio-cultural level, a strong element of resilience and durability is traceable. Hermann Goetze has highlighted this aspect in relation to evolving musical and architectural styles, which survived in the new regional order despite the collapse of the Mughal political economy and extend essential support to the same.[16] For instance, in the case of Awadh, the disassociation of the region was predominantly in economic

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[14] Harbans Mukhia, *The Mughals of India*, Oxford 2004, Indian Reprint, Delhi, 2005.
[15] P. J. Marshall, *The Eighteenth Century: Revolution of Evolution*, Oxford, 2003, p. 6
[16] Hermann Goetz, *The crisis of Indian Civilization in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: The Genesis of Indo-Muslim Civilization*, Calcutta, 1938.

terms. However, at the political level the Mughal Emperor persisted as the reference point of legitimacy till the turn of the century and in the cultural context the region has been classed as highly Mughalized.[17] Likewise, Persian continued to be the administrative linguistic medium in the post-Mughal regional kingdoms despite the Mughal decline[18].

Currently, the eighteenth century is being viewed in terms of two crucial transitions: the first being the transition from the Mughal political economy to the regional political formations in the first half of the eighteenth century and the second was the transition in the polity, society and economy in India which facilitated the establishment of British colonial rule during the second half of the century. These transitions interestingly display patterns of both continuity and change which were facilitated by linkages and reconfigurations at the level of polity, economy and society.[19] Interestingly while certain lines of continuities are discernible between the Mughal Empire and what followed subsequently, the pattern of continuity is also seen in regard to the history of those people and areas which never effectively came within the frame work of the Mughal system and still remained to be drawn in the colonial setup which was still nascent. The latter category in some instances included polities which pre-dated the Mughal era and remained on the fringes, somewhat insulated from the larger mainstream political structure. In the context of south India such entities have been classed as 'Little Kingdoms' by Nicholas Dirks[20]. On the whole, the nature and implications of these developments, the Imperial

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[17] Seema Alvi, ed., The eighteenth Century in India, Oxford, 1999, p, 16

[18] The bainamas or sale deeds, in the collection of eighteenth and nineteenth century documents at the Department of History, M. S. University of Baroda indicate that the basic Mughal format continued despite the decline with Persian being the linguistic medium besides the *qazis'* seal a legacy from the preceding era.

[19] Seema Alvi, *op. cit,* pp.1-21.

[20] Nicholas. B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethno history of an Indian Kingdom*, Cambridge, 1987, p. 5

decline and what followed thereafter are controversial issues being debated endlessly particularly with more and more data from different regions being subject to closer scrutiny. Broadly speaking, the general line of argument concerning the transition during this era is drawn along two extreme positions: the notion of the 'Dark Ages' versus economic prosperity'. While the shadow of the Empire does seem to persist, a strong plea among historians is the need to examine the era within its own frame.

An important dimension to the eighteenth century debate is also the review of the preceding phase in the light of emerging opinions characterizing this era. For instance, opinions pertaining to the nature of the Mughal state are marked by a pertinent shift in interpretation wherein the classical notion of a centralized integrated Imperial system is no longer maintained. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subramanian make an extremely important observation in this connection that the nature of Imperial control at any point of time at the operational level was never uniform akin to a 'wall to wall carpet', rather it resembled a 'patchwork quilt' of areas over which Imperial authority operated in an uneven manner with adjustments to local exigencies being inevitable during the course of its evolution.[21] Similarly, the explanation to the rise of the colonial state being external from Indian society and its connection to it merely through an economically exploitative relationship is debated with alternate positions. The standpoint of a distinct disjunction is undermined by patterns of continuities and British ascendancy is explained in relation to reconfigurations at the regional level besides the

[21] Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subramanyam (ed.), *The Mughal State, 1526 - 1750,* Delhi 1998, p. 57.

overall changes developing in regions beyond the Indian sub-continent which were linked to it through longstanding commercial networks.[22]

Intensive case studies have been undertaken with regard to developments in different regions during the course of the eighteenth century. It is significant that the insights drawn through these researches show that no single pattern of change was in operation. Different regions followed their own distinct course of events the nature of which was obviously determined by the circumstances prevailing therein. However, despite these specificities and distinct variations in regional experiences, one common feature that is discernible across the board, is the increasing prominence and pervasiveness of the local element in the changing circumstances. Reference is being made to the emergence and surfacing of the 'new' intermediary categories between the state and society, which broadly included merchants, traders, service gentry, revenue farmers, rural aristocracy, *zamindars*, local chieftains and mercenary military elements. In the context of Gujarat the role of the *kolis* and *Bhils*, *desais*, *nagarseths, Patels, vakils* and financiers/ bankers besides brokers/agents etc. is quite significant in the early phase of transition wherein the emerging political order and the hard pressed Mughal provincial authorities seek definite collaboration from either of these categories. Besides support they frequently figure as *naibs* in the emerging polities probably in view of their expertise in revenue administration besides local affairs. While the fiscal classes became an essential base for the ascendancy and consolidation of the regional polity in some cases, the *zamindars* and local chieftains, in the absence of a stable central authority, besides assuming greater autonomy, rose as protectors of the local populace. This dimension probably extended

[22] Seema Alvi, *op. cit*, p. 38.

legitimacy to their emerging regimes. Distinct patterns of collaboration and networking are discernible between the emerging regional polities, commercial classes, and social elites and in some cases even peripheral or rather marginalized categories like the *koli*s, Bhils and mercenary militia, besides the Europeans and the Marathas. In fact, often these elements varyingly served as bolsters to the emerging order extending to it some buoyancy in its incipient phase. On the other hand, sustained localism proved to be an inherent flaw in the new order, which in the absence of a stable financial and military base, had to depend all the time on the cooperation and collaboration of different intermediary groups. Another problematic dimension relating to these polities often was incessant warfare for territorial expansion. This was particularly so in case of the Marathas and the southern states besides the numerous less prominent polities in different areas and eventually these frictions facilitated new forces to establish their domination.

Researches concerning the experiences and responses to decline of the Mughal political economy and the emergence of the regional political orders from the regional standpoint constitute a huge corpus. In this connection, Awadh, Bengal, Hyderabad, the Sikhs, Marathas and important south Indian polities are areas that have been subject to close scrutiny and multidimensional insights have come forth. It is pertinent to mention here, that the recent studies on regional polities differ in their treatment of the subject in comparison to the earlier personality based historical narratives wherein the effort has been to examine the process within a larger, more relevant and wholesome political, social and economic perspective. A brief survey of the same is essential to contextualize the discussion and explain the basic rationale underlying this particular study.

Among the regional studies Muzaffar Alam's work on Awadh provides impressive insights on the emerging regional reconfigurations during the first half of the eighteenth century. In his study he discerns marked economic growth and prosperity, a consequence of increasing monetization and cash nexus in relation to agrarian economy during the course of the seventeenth century which continued to persist. Resultantly social groups: *zamindars*, *jagirdars*, *madad- i- mash* holders etc., which had hitherto shared power with the Mughals and extended stability to the Empire benefited from this economic growth and came to enjoy a relatively more stable economic base. Increasing fiscal stability emboldened this class to withhold revenue and turn rebellious against the Imperial authority besides encroach on the rights and privileges of others thereby undermining the basic Mughal principle of checks and balances. Recalcitrance of *zamindars* became a reason or a pretext for the *nazim* to seek additional powers. The central authority was left with little choice but to concede to the enhancement of the powers and purview of the *subedar.* Resultantly, besides the charge of *suba nazim*, the *subedar* also held additional charge of *faujdar* and *amil.* While the authority of the Emperor was getting emaciated, the new *subedari* emerged in Awadh. Significantly, a crucial dimension pertaining to the emerging regime was the prosperity and promotion of a new group of gentry which owed their allegiance to the local chief at Awadh and not the distant Mughal Emperor. However despite this change in the stature of the 'new' *subedar* due to the interplay of merchant and agrarian concerns, the Emperor persisted as the reference point of legitimacy until the nineteenth century.[23]

[23] Muzaffar Alam, *op .cit.*

Early studies on Bengal view the growth of the new *subedari* in relation to the agrarian economy. N. K. Sinha in his study on the economic history of Bengal draws attention towards the agrarian and landed base of the new regime. Murshid Quli Khan adopted firm measures for streamlining the land revenue administration by eliminating small intermediary *zamindars* and chastising other rebellious landed elements. In their stead he encouraged and consolidated a class of big *zamindars* who effectively assumed responsibility of land revenue administration. In his opinion these moves extended stability to the new regime.[24]

While this study was significant, a pertinent point is that agrarian regimes do not operate in isolation. Rather they are linked to larger networks and examination of these linkages drew the attention of subsequent research. Bengal constituted an important economic standpoint of the Empire particularly in face of the growth it experienced following the advent of the European trading Companies. The fortunes of this region were thus intimately linked to the course of the lucrative European trade and its ramifications. Murshid Quli Khan, the *Suba diwan*'s attempt at assuming autonomy was probably guided by these considerations when he merged the offices of the *diwan* and *nazim* in 1717. As far as Delhi was concerned this move towards the creation of the 'new' *subedari* was conceded in the hope of ensuring stability and regularity in revenue administration. The implications were however the reverse. As in the case of Awadh it proved to be a total antithesis to the basic Mughal principle of checks and balances.[25]

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[24] N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal from Plassey to the Permanent Settlement*, Calcutta, 1965.
[25] P. J. Marshall, Bengal: *The British Bridgehead, Eastern India 1740- 1828*, Cambridge, 1987.

Om Prakash in his study on the European Companies reiterates the centrality of European export trade in the inflow of bullion into Bengal. His research on the Dutch East India Company VOC highlights this dimension particularly in relation to the export trade in textiles and silk. It is noteworthy that despite the Maratha inroads of the 1740s the economic prosperity of Bengal persisted till the 1760s when it passed over to the company authority.[26] Likewise Sushil Chaudhary's recent study on eighteenth century Bengal highlights a strong link between merchants and the 'new' *subedari.* In his opinion the fiscal base of the new regime was derived not so much from the profits of European trade, as from the role of Asian Merchants in the export trade conducted with the support of the *Nawabs*. [27] This discussion is furthered by Philip Calkins who examines the role of bankers and merchants as a bulwark to the *Nawabi* power in wake of economic growth.[28]

Hyderabad under the aegis of Nizam ul Mulk also emerged as an important successor state. Among the recent works on this region, Karen Leonard's study is quite important.[29] He opines that the new regime at Hyderabad was based on a patron-client relationship wherein the Nizam was the key patron who presided over an entire network of patronage centres which included nobles, vakils, military and financial categories. The weakening of the Mughal Imperial authority provided an opportunity to the subedar of the Deccan to lay foundations of an independent regime. Nizam ul Mulk established his control over Hyderabad by dismissing Mughal officials and appointing his loyalists in their place. Resultantly a

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[26] Om Prakash, 'Trade and politics in Eighteenth Century Bengal' in Leonard Blusse and Femme Gaastra (ed.), *On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History: Van Leur in Retrospect*, Aldershot, 1998, pp. 237-60

[27] Sushil Chaudhary, *From Prosperity to Decline: Eighteenth Century Bengal*, Delhi, 1995

[28]Philip Calkins, 'The formation of A Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal 1700- 1740', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 29, no.4, 1970, pp. 799-806

[29] Karen Leonard, 'The great firm Theory of the Decline of Mughal Empire', *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, Vol. 21, no. 2, 1979, pp. 161-67.

network of intermediary landed and commercial interests soon began to flourish. Bankers, money lenders and military commanders had an important role in maintaining political stability as it was these categories which provided the essential financial and military service. However though the Nizam in effect assumed a defacto stature making treaties, wars, granting mansabs, titles etc, it is fascinating that symbolic manifestations of the Mughal Imperial authority remained. The Emperor again persisted as the reference point of legitimacy.

Besides these three successor states, attention has been particularly extended to the rebellious polities important among which were the Sikhs in Punjab and the Marathas who came quite close to replacing Mughal hegemony.

The pattern of change in Punjab appears to be quite different from other regions. Following the death of Guru Gobind Singh (1708) the process of regional autonomy began to gain momentum. However it is interesting that it fructified under a warrior aristocracy and not under the aegis of the Mughal subedar as in the case of Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad. Zakariya Khan, the Mughal *subedar* at Lahore did try to establish his independent authority but failed in wake of the Sikh movement getting transformed into a political movement under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh. Explanations relating to these developments are numerous and significantly quite varied.

Irfan Habib views the change in relation to the Mughal land revenue administration. In his opinion the peasantry burdened by the oppressive Mughal fiscal regime turned to the local leaders and thereby became their basis of support.[30]

[30] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, op. cit.*

Muzaffar Alam in his study on Punjab highlights the nature of the functioning of the core Mughal administrative institutions- *jagirdari* and *mansabdari* and the role of the *Khatris*, a dominant trading community in Punjab. According to him Zakariya Khan did try to associate with the Khatris to strengthen himself but his efforts failed as this class suffered miserably on account of the decline of trade and urban centres. This dimension coupled with the complexities of the working of the Mughal administrative framework and the overbearing presence of big *jagirdar*s in the region proved to be a major deterrent in Zakariya Khan's ambitions.[31]

Significantly more recent researches view these developments from other newer perspective- role of fringe tribal economies, trade linkages with Central Asia and Persia besides political upheavals located therein and more pioneering is the ecological standpoint. Chetan Singh in his study titled 'Region and Empire' redefines the entire course of Imperial crisis and the disassociation of the region from the Empire.[32] In his opinion the highly commercialised economy of Punjab suffered a setback in the late seventeenth century due to the silting of the Indus River which disrupted riverine traffic. Moreover the political upheavals in Turkey, the fall of Qandhar to the Shah of Iran and the Mughal attempts to retrieve it adversely affected overland trade. Further, tribal disturbances along these routes enhanced the disruption. Overall these developments weakened the economy which was based predominantly on a commercialised agrarian sector. The loosening of the socio-economic structure led to social unrest and revolts. These fluid circumstances helped the Sikhs consolidate their base. Though, it was only by the beginning of the 19th century, that an

[31] Muzaffar Alam, *Crisis of the Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and Punjab, op. cit.*
[32] Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Punjab in the Seventeenth Century*, Delhi, 1991.

autonomous regional regime finally came to be established under the leadership of Ranjit Singh.

Among the different regional polities the most prominent and pervasive were the Marathas. Interestingly Maratha historiography is numerous and multifaceted. Shivaji, the founder of this polity is treated as highly glorified figure in the earliest histories classed as Bakhars. Another recurring theme views Shivaji as the ideal Hindu leader. Following the British conquest of the region appeared the classic work of Grant Duff which became the basis of subsequent research on the Marathas. The studies that appeared from the late nineteenth century were particularly influenced by changes in the course of political developments. In recent studies the focus has shifted from the political narrative and military campaigns to the countryside wherein attempts have been to explain the rise of the Marathas in relation to larger political and economic processes.[33]

Irfan Habib explains the ascendancy of this polity as the consequence of the nature and functioning of the Mughal land revenue and administrative structure. In his view, its exploitative character pushed the oppressed peasantry towards the local *Zamindars* as an alternative.[34]

Andre Wink sees the rise of the Marathas within the framework of a redefined structure of Mughal Kingship. In his opinion the basis of Mughal Kinship was not particularly the much emphasised exploitative revenue structure. Rather it was a combination of multiple conflicting and shifting alliances that were established during the course of Mughal expansion. Constituted within this network of alliances was also the Maratha *zamindari* tenure. The expansion of the Empire in these parts

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[33] Stewart Gordon, *The New Cambridge History of India, The Marathas 1600- 1818,* Delhi, 2000, pp. 1-9

[34] Irfan Habib, *Agrarain system of Mughal India,* op. cit.

integrated these rights within the Mughal structure but simultaneously it also led to clashes and conflicts over land rights. While the Maratha chief Shahu tried to maintain a balancing act, these conflicts eventually brought the Peshwa regime to the forefront.[35]

More recent studies highlight the role of social intermediaries who conducted operations through various fiscal categories like traders, bankers etc. Frank Perlin examines the local level networks which sustained the regional polity. He focuses attention on the great families which were dominant in the Maratha region and the related process of money and credit. Significantly he questions the conventional notion that money economy and commerce in pre-colonial India was developed as a consequence of state taxation. His study indicates that 'taxation regimes' in Maharashtra operated through networks of credit and administration which often transcended political boundaries.[36]

Besides these studies, remarkable researches have come forth in relation to the ascendant polities in Mysore, Kerala etc. which seek to examine aspects like legitimacy, operational functioning and nature of networking and linkages specific to these regimes.

However, Gujarat as a region so far has remained beyond the purview of such an examination with the exception of a few case studies which are specific to certain areas. It is pertinent to mention that this province constituted the most important commercial zone of the Mughal Empire with its two principal cities: Ahmedabad and Surat. The port at Surat was assigned the honorific epithets of *Bandar Mubarak*, the Blessed Port and *Bab-al-Hajj*, Gate of Pilgrimage from where *Hajj* pilgrims sailed every

[35] Andre Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth Century Maratha Svarajya*, Cambridge, 1986.
[36] Stewart Gordon, op. cit, p.8

year to the Red sea.[37] This city was also the principal outlet which connected Gujarat with different parts of the Empire besides being the chief entrepot for overseas trade. Likewise, Ahmedabad, the commercial hub of the Empire and was ascribed the epithet of *Zinat- ul-Bilad*, the Beauty of Cities.[38]

The port town of Surat has been examined extensively by scholars. Ashin Das Gupta's study on the decline of Surat is a remarkable contribution, wherein he presents a comprehensive explanation to the decline of the famous town in structural terms, within the larger perspective of the dynamics of Asian trade.[39] In this study he illustrates the manner in which concerns of the corporate mercantile institutions transcend political boundaries more frequently so in troubled times. Besides this, Lakshmi Subramanium's study on the role of different commercial classes and the political order in the eighteenth century is remarkable significant. Similarly, Anirudh Ray's research on the port town of Cambay during this period is very insightful. [40] Gujarat also figures prominently as an important component in the studies on the Marathas, whose pervasive military onslaught and factional infighting contributed to the Imperial collapse, however the focus is obviously centred round the specific Maratha concerns in the region. An unpublished PhD thesis on the *zamindars* of Mughal Gujarat in the beginning of the eighteenth century is also a very insightful study on the region's polity.[41] Apart from these works, there are remarkable

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[37] M. S. Commissariat, *History of Gujarat*, vol. II, Bombay, 1957, p.164.
[38] *Ibid*, p. 396-97
[39] Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the decline of Surat 1700-1750*, Wiesbaden, 1979.
[40] Annirudh Ray, Brief History of the City of Cambay from the Early 16th to the Early 19th Century, in, V. K. Chavda (ed.), *Studies in Trade and Urbanisation in Western India*, Baroda, 1985, pp.27-67.
[41] Shaukatullah Khan, *Zamindars in the Mughal Suba of Gujarat during the first half of the 18th century*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1993.

contributions on urban institutions[42]. An unpublished Ph.D thesis on the region during the reign of Aurangzeb is also significant. However the subsequent period however remains unexplored.[43] An examination of the region of Gujarat in face of Mughal disintegration and its aftermath is an area which calls for attention. Also, the primary thrust of research has been the mainland which indeed constituted the crucial zone of politico- economic operations in the province and is better documented; however, Kathiawad and Kutch which were integral parts of the province remain peripheral in the region's historiography.

A general overview of the region's geographical features and historical background is discussed to contextualize this work.

GEOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Gujarat is situated on the northern extreme of the west coast of India. The region is bounded in the west by the Arabian Sea, on the north-west by Sindh, on the north by Marwar and in the north-east by Mewar, two important zones of Rajasthan, by Malwa and Khandesh in the east and Konkan and Maharasthtra in the south and south-east. The dividing line on the east is the forests and hills of the Vindhyas, Satapudas and the Sahyadri ranges, while the outliers of the Aravalli ranges and Mount Abu separate the region in the north. The province of Gujarat is divided into three well marked natural sub-regions: the flat plains of the mainland spread across the northern, central and southern portions, the rocky peninsular area covering Saurashtra, and the north-western region of Kutch. The mainland separated by the Gulf of Cambay, is basically an alluvial plain formed by the rivers: Banas, Saraswati, Sabarmati,

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[42] Dwijendra Tripathi and M. J. Mehta, 'The Nagarsheth of Ahmedabad: The History of an Urban Institution in a Gujarat City', in Satish Chandra (ed.), *Essays in Medieval Economic History*, Delhi, 1987, pp.263-275.

[43] Shama Mahmood, *Suba Gujarat under Aurangzeb*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Department of History, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, 1999.

Mahi, Narmada, Tapi (Tapti) and their tributaries. It is significant to mention that while the area was relatively arid up to Ahmedabad, the plains of central Gujarat constitute the most fertile area with the rainfall varying from 35 to 50 inches. In the south, the rainfall is relatively high 50 to 100 inches. In this zone the hills close in on the sea with numerous rivers flowing herein merging with the sea.[44] On the whole, while heavy and regular rainfall facilitated high agricultural productivity, the proximity to the sea coast enhanced the regions commercial viability. The rocky peninsula of Saurashtra though relatively less watered, is marked by an extensive coastline with numerous big and small ports and port towns. While Kutch, dotted with few ports along the sea on the west is basically an arid zone on account of the large desert areas classed as the Rann.

In geo-political terms, the province of Gujarat in the heydays of the Mughal rule was more or less analogous to the present state with its three sub-regions. It is significant to mention here that during the course of the medieval period, the notion of what constituted the region is marked by a subtle element of variance reflective of the distinct standpoints which characterised the region.

While the politico-economic concerns of the Gujarat Sultanate were spread across all the three sub-regions mentioned above and beyond, in the Portuguese sources, the Sultans are addressed as the kings of Cambay, suggesting thereby the prevailing economic standpoint of the Sultanate. Possibly, such a categorization was in view of the commercial pre-eminence that the port of Cambay enjoyed during the reign of Gujarat Sultans.[45]

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[44] S.B.Rajyagor, *History of Gujarat*, Delhi, 1982, p. 3

[45] Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese official who visited Gujarat in the early sixteenth century, in his account of Gujarat describes the Sultanate from the name of its principal seaport Cambay, classed as

Further, during the Mughal period, a reference in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, suggests that perhaps, Junagadh, in Saurashtra and Kutch were perceived as areas somewhat removed and separate from the main land.[46] Possibly, such a notion might be an expression of either an urge for autonomy at the sub-regional level or an allusion to the actual state of affairs which in a very subtle form continues to persist at the level of popular perception. A close examination of the region's historical experiences indicates that in socio cultural and economic terms these sub regions were quite distinct from the mainland. In fact Kutch enjoyed greater commonalities with Sindh rather than with the mainland in terms of language, ethnicity, occupations, climate and topography. Similarly, the sub-region of Saurashtra had more in common with Kutch than with the mainland. These two sub-regions were inhabited by numerous ethnic groupings many of which had migrated at different points of time. Poor rainfall and the long coastline made both pastoralism and trade important economic activities. Polities in these parts were strongly clan-based.

During the course of the medieval times though these sub-regions were integrated to the mainland in political and territorial terms, they continued to enjoy considerable autonomy. Under the Mughals while the degree of controls probably increased with the setting up of thanas and the appointment of *faujdar*s, it is pertinent to note that revenue collection infrequently remained a military affair. Imperial authority once established had to be reiterated and reinforced all the time.

Khambayat since early times. The Portuguese followed this practice from the Arab historian. Throughout the Middle Ages Arab sailors and merchants addressed Gujarat by its principal port. M. S. Commissariat, *History of Gujarat,* vol., I, Bombay, 1938, pp. 259-60

[46] In the narration relating to Dara Shikoh's march from Thatta to Ahmedabad as a fugitive during the course of the war of succession a reference describing Kutch states: "Length of that desert terminates at a place Lunah, included in the province of Kutch. It is here that a road bifurcates towards Gujarat and the other towards Junagadh". Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, Eng. Tr. M.F.Lokhandwala, Baroda, 1965, p.214. (cited hereafter as *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*)

The situation did not change much under the Marathas who were compelled to conduct regular mulkgiri expeditions to collect revenue from these areas. Nonetheless, the abovementioned reference is important in a very subtle way as it provides an insight to the nature of cohesion that characterized the Imperial presence in the province at the operational level.

It is important to mention that two coastal areas Div in Saurashtra and Daman in south Gujarat were Portuguese strongholds since the times of the Gujarat Sultans and continued to be so even under the mighty Mughals whose naval inadequacies frequently rendered them vulnerable.[47] However, on the whole, Mughal concerns were definitely spread across the province manifested through the *thanas*, *faujdaris* and *peshkashi zamindars* who however had to be subjected to frequent military chastisement for payment of revenue.

It is quite likely that there was variation in the nature of control and strategic importance of different areas within the province in view of the variation in topography, rainfall, agrarian productivity, distances and communications and the inherent politico-economic significance relating to the sub-regions providing scope to outlying areas to enjoy some leeway. The basic political thrust throughout the medieval period was however focused on the mainland which was defined by its high agrarian fertility and strong commercial linkages with areas within India and beyond.

Significantly since early times, on account of its frontier location and extensive coastline, Gujarat had attracted numerous foreigners who arrived in different capacities: traders, conquerors, fugitives, absconders, proselytizers, fortune seekers, etc. The entire experience is

[47] Commissariat, II, p. 473

discernible in the presence of different ethnicities besides a constant process of assimilation operating between the new entrants and the indigenous elements at different levels in varying degrees.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

During the pre-medieval era political authority was wielded by different dynasties whose concerns were localized, with exceptions during the Mauryan, Shaka and the Chalukya period. The medieval period in the region's history commences with the easy victory of the Khalji armies over the forces of the Waghela rulers and its incorporation to the Delhi Sultanate in 1304-5. As a province under the Sultans of Delhi, Gujarat experienced two phases: the Khalji and Tughluq.

The establishment of the Khalji rule marked the beginning of the displacement of the region's polity classed as Rajputs[48], which was clan based and hierarchical in nature. Alauddin Khalji's policy in dealing with the same was impressively practical. He was aptly conscious of the limitations drawn by geography and the nature of communications that prevailed during his time. His strategy was thus aimed towards striking at the apex of the power structure, leaving the components of the remaining layers effectively undisturbed, except for the acknowledgement of the suzerainty of the new rulers and payment of tribute which under most regimes was possible only with display of military force. Simultaneously a new oligarchy composed of efficient and loyal officials was supplanted over the undermined elements. The first governor appointed by him proved to be a statesman and placed the

[48] It is important to mention here that the pre Mughal sources for Gujarat do not style the polity under this classification. However in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, the author Ali Muhammad Khan claims to have referred to these very chronicles for his narrative on the region's history, and he classes the pre Mughal local polity as Rajput. Probably this was a categorisation that was either appropriated or ascribed to the indigenous polity by the Mughals following the annexation of this region to the Empire. This dimension has been frequently addressed by Hasan Mahmud in his lectures and informal discussions. In his opinion process of Rajputisation in Gujarat effectively began to gain momentum only during the Mughal phase.

region on a firm footing through conciliatory measures targeting only the relevant groups like the prosperous Jain community. The phase following his tenure was characterized by problems due to bitter feud within the new political order. The crisis assumed serious proportions with the extension of the power play at Delhi, in the region. These developments however provided an opportunity to the displaced elements who had never reconciled to the changeover, to reassert their authority. Interestingly, in economic terms this shift in central leadership in the province, brought about no major change except, possibly some obvious rearrangement in the distribution of revenue resources. For the dominant commercial classes, particularly the Jains, the political change merely signified a shift of the personnel at the seat of power with which linkages had to be nurtured anew to safeguard their commercial concerns.

During the Tughluq phase, while the internecine feuds within the Sultanate bureaucracy in the province persisted, no major change is visible, except for the revolt of the Afghans which brought Muhammad Tughluq to Gujarat. It is noteworthy that during his five year stay in the region he became apprised of the overbearing presence of the undermined indigenous clan based ruling class which was attempting to assert itself and he earnestly attempted to address the situation by chastising these elements which however proved to be a fleeting affair.

The situation under subsequent rulers was marked by the gradual loosening of central control over the province. The general tendency of recalcitrance and rebellions from different quarters in the region, possibly made revenue collection problematic. Firuz Shah attempted to remedy the situation by introducing a new device, of farming the charge of the province to the highest bidder. This sort of contractual arrangement

compounded problems. For instance, inflated revenue commitments were not viable at the actual operational level. Moreover, subsequent developments display a tendency on the part of provincial governors to establish their control and influence in the region assigned to them and assert their independence from the centre as and when an opportune moment came by. Timur's invasion in 1398 proved to be the final blow to the dwindling fortunes of the Delhi Sultanate and the next century witnessed the emergence of regional Sultanates which were off-shoots of the regime at Delhi.

The concerns of the Turkish regime during this phase were limited to the surface. While the political authority at the apex was broken, the lower orders more or less remained unaffected except for periodical chastisement. The focus of operations was also restricted merely to the mainland wherein again important strongholds like Idar and Champaner survived and became refuge zones for the dispossessed elements. However, Saurashtra and Kutch experienced little change except for instances of sporadic chastisement during this phase. On the whole, Turkish rule remained 'urban, superficial and distant'.[49]

In 1407, Zafar Khan, the last Tughluq governor of Gujarat asserted his independence from the Sultanate which for all practical purposes was anyway reduced to nothingness. He assumed the title of Muzaffar Shah and under his descendents classed as the Muzaffarids; the Sultanate gradually emerged as a major power exercising pre-eminent authority and influence within Gujarat and much beyond. While Kutch and Saurashtra were more effectively integrated in politico-economic terms, by the sixteenth century, during the reign of Bahadur Shah 1526-37 when the Sultanate was at its climax, the territorial limits had expanded right up to

[49] S.C. Misra, *Rise of Muslim Power in Gujarat*, 2nd ed., Delhi, 1982, p. 1.

Malwa, Khandesh, parts of Rajputana and portions of the Deccan in western India. More fascinating is the fact that instead of the earlier patterns of resistance against the reigning authority, in this period whole hearted support to the Sultan particularly in face of grave crisis is remarkably impressive and thought provoking. The Sultans displayed impressive foresight and strategy in dealing with the highly coercive presence of the Portuguese and the expanding concerns of the Mughals through their strategic alliances with other powers: the Mamluk Sultan, Qansawh-al- Ghawri of Egypt and the Afghan chief Sher Shah. Unfortunately however, Bahadur Shah's untimely death at the hands of the Portuguese in 1537 which was characterized by factionalism within the Sultanate bureaucracy and the reduction of the Muzaffarids to mere figureheads paving the way for transition of authority to the expanding Mughals.

It is pertinent to note that despite traces of religious fanaticism and the policy of proselytism adopted conveniently against the formidable Rajput chieftaincies during the course of penetrative expansion and consolidation across the region, the Muzaffarids over time came to establish and enjoy a strong element of legitimacy. This is evidenced in the nature of support which the last Sultan, Muzaffar Shah III (1561-73) experienced during his attempt to recover his lost patrimony from the Mughals.

In economic terms, despite the Portuguese dimension, the region's prosperity continued to thrive, with both the mercantile community and the ruling classes participating in commercial activity. In this connection an aphorism of Sultan Sikandar of Delhi in the early sixteenth century is quite insightful. "..... the throne of Delhi rests on wheat and Barley, and

that of Gujarat on coral and pearls, because the King of Gujarat rule dover eighty four ports".[50]

In 1572-73, Gujarat passed under Mughal control which was steadily expanding: Malwa was conquered in 1561, followed by chittor in 1568 and Khandesh in 1571. Gujarat with its inherent commercial importance was obviously the next target. Following the conquest during the reign of Akbar, the region was once again transformed into a province classed as the *Suba* of the Mughal Empire. It is significant that during this phase, the presence of the central authority became more much direct and penetrative in comparison to the earlier phases both on the mainland and in Saurashtra and Kutch. Subtle traces of continuity from the preceding era is noticeable both at the level of the polity and the economy is however quite significant.

The province with its impressive seaports came to be integrated and structured within the framework of the Mughal provincial administrative organization. Important components of the erstwhile political order came to be accommodated under the new regime with the classification of *zamindars*.

On the whole, the primary focus of the Imperial regime was more concentrated on the mainland which during the course of the seventeenth century came to experience great vibrancy. This was particularly so, following the truce between the formidable Portuguese and the Mughal Emperor Akbar; the arrival of the European trading companies, and the general patterns of economic growth facilitated by political integration and greater connectivity and networking at different levels within the Empire and beyond. The ports of Gujarat during this period have been described as the 'sea-gates' of north India. Merchants from here actively

[50]Sikandar-bin-Muahmmad (Manjhu), *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, Eng. Tr. Edward Clive Bayley, titled, History of Gujarat, London, 1886, ed, Nagendra Singh, Delhi, 1970, p. 386

traded with countries around the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, East Africa and South-East Asia.[51] Interspersed with this boom were instances of economic disruptions: periodical famines, forceful extortions from the prosperous mercantile elements by the Imperial princes[52] besides the famous raids of Surat by the Marathas under the leadership of Shivaji.

The Mughal regime structured within Akbar's broad frame of Sulh-i-kul ideology was characterized by a general line of stability. A pattern of exigent foresight is noticeable on the part of the reigning authorities including the provocative bigot Aurangzeb, to neutralize and pacify the tempers and sentiments of the crucially relevant commercial classes in the region.

This aspect is noticeable in the patronising Imperial *farmans* which were issued to the prominent Jain magnate, Shantidas Jawahari of Ahemdabad (d. 1659). He was a devout Jain and liberally spent his enormous wealth on religious pursuits specific to his faith. It is recorded that in 1645 when Aurangzeb was the *nazim* at Ahmedabad, he ordered the temple of Chintaman at Saraspur to be converted into mosque.[53]

However, resistance from certain quarters against the reigning authority persisted. Revenue collection from *zamindars* infrequently involved chastisement through military operations. It is noteworthy that Imperial authority once established had to be reiterated and reinforced all the time through military operations. Chronicles cite numerous instances wherein *zamindars* fail to willingly pay tribute and fulfil military obligations. The implications of such omissions were not seriously

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[51] Surendra Gopal, *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat: 16th and 17th Centuries,* Delhi, 1975, pp. 17-18.

[52] Reference is being made to the extortion of forced loan by prince Shahjahan from both the English factors and the Hindu merchants at Surat and Ahmedabad in 1627 following Jahangir's demise, when he arrived in the region from the Deccan on way to Agra. M.S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat,* Vol. II, opt. cit., pp. 106-108.

[53] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi,* p. 194. Also see M. S. Commissariat, *Studies in the History of Gujarat,*, Bombay, 1935, pp. 69-73

disruptive during the heydays of the Empire. Nonetheless, they are reflective of the nature of the Imperial presence and concerns in the region. The scenario, however, underwent gradual change from the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the subsequent course of events is a saga of turbulent developments. Following the Maratha intervention and the extension of factionalism and power play at Delhi, in the province a pattern of steady collapse of Imperial authority is discernible.

In 1758 the Mughal rule formally came to an end. After a long drawn duel with the Marathas, Ahmedabad was finally lost by the Mughals. During the subsequent phase political authority came to be wielded by different categories: the Marathas represented by the Gaekwads and the Peshwas, the East India Company, besides a multitude of autonomous and semi autonomous polities scattered in different parts of Gujarat. By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Gujarat passed under the complete control of the British, wherein five districts: Surat, Bharuch, Kheda, Panchmahals and Ahmedabad were under the direct rule of the East India Company, while in the remaining area comprising of polities classed as native states numbering more than 396, British residents were appointed.[54]

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

This study is basically an attempt at surveying the significance of developments at the level of the polity and economy in the region of Gujarat in face of the Mughal decline and its aftermath during the course of the eighteenth century and examining the nature and working of power relations besides reviewing the Mughal decline from the regional standpoint.

[54] S. B. Rajyagor, op. cit, p. 391

The loosening of Imperial control in the *Suba* marked the ascendancy of numerous polities of varying statures. Interestingly, the antecedents of some of these polities like the Jadejas, and the ruling house at Palanpur are traced to pre-Mughal and Mughal lineages indicating patterns of longstanding continuity despite the travails of time. Simultaneous to these elements are categories classed as *Nawabs*, offshoots of the Mughal bureaucracy *faujdar*s and *mutasaddis* in certain parts of the province. While some of these *Nawabs* come to be so recognized through *sanads* or Imperial order which were 'often arranged' and which invested them with virtually independent powers, they at their own initiative operated as independent rulers, there were others who simply assumed this title and began to wield independent authority. The inherent contradiction in the emergence of this class through *sanads* is intriguing. What prompted the Imperial authority to create polities of this sort particularly when the need of the hour was enhancing cohesion? Another crucial dimension concerning these *Nawabis*, was the nature of collaboration and supporting links with other ascendant and more and less prominent political and socio economic categories within the region, an indication that these rulers were probably not operating on their own. Allusion is being made to the Maratha and the English, the commercial classes or prominent merchants, besides categories like the desais, *diwan*s, nagarseths, the mercenary militia: Arab Jamdars, Kasbatis etc and the *koli*s Moreover, it is significant to identify the basis of legitimacy that characterized the new order. An examination of the factors which facilitated the mushrooming of the above mentioned polities styled as *Nawab*is is important as it provides insights to the functioning of the later Mughal regime particularly in view of the fact that Gujarat was of one of the most important provinces of the Empire. Also, interestingly, while some of

these survived as native states during the British era, the fortunes of others was short-lived. A pertinent concern of this study is to understand the factors and circumstances which marked the rise of these *Nawabis*.

Another fascinating category that figures numerously during this phase is the *koli*, which could be described as a less prominent and somewhat undefined component in the regions' power relations, whose antecedents are traced way back to the early medieval era. Though they are classed by the generic term *koli*, they appear in different roles and the sources refer to them variously: as petty chiefs with a clan based following, rendering protection to the cultivating classes on payment of a levy for security, as mercenary soldiers recruited either by the *Suba* authorities or by rebellious elements and most often as predacious groups and brigands making gains through plunder whenever opportunities came by. In coastal areas they indulged in piracy, raiding even the English vessels. Apart from these roles, during the course of the eighteenth century their chiefs seem to be working in conjunction with the *Nawabs* besides the *nazim*s. The longstanding presence of this category and the multifarious nature of their activities particularly their predaciousness during the phase of Mughal disintegration is significant and calls for an examination.

SOURCES:

This study is based on numerous primary and secondary sources. The primary sources firstly include the English Factory records, Gazetteers, besides historical works which are compilations and documentation of oral traditions and local histories undertaken during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the English administrators and scholars, which constitute a huge corpus of information. Besides these are the contemporary and near contemporary local historical works in Persian

and Urdu like the Tarikh-i-Sorath, Qissi-Ghamgin and relevant Mughal chronicles abd biographies. The Maratha sources pertaining to the early Gaekwad phase are particularly useful in relation to inputs in the Marathas.

Among the various primary sources the most important is Ali Muhammad Khan's Mirat-i-Ahmadi. M. S. Commissariat pertinently remarks on this chronicle thus "Gujarat has been most fortunate in its historians.....In fact we have no such complete and graphic account of the decline and the fall of the Mughal rule in any other province of the vast Empire"[55]. It is important to mention that the chronicler's father Ali Muhammad Khan held the important office of the official news writer of the *Suba* during the first half of the eighteenth century which gave him access to all possible information. Ali Muhammad Khan, the author of the Mirat, received hi father's title and office on his death in 1744. Later, in 1746 he held the important office of *Suba diwan* and probably wrote his history of the region till 1761. Thus he was an eye witness to crucial events spanning the tumultuous sixteen years before the final and formal collapse of Mughal Imprerial authority. His naarative signifciantly draws details from earlier chronicles besides contemporary *Farmans* and other state records maintained in the *diwan's* office. Besides chronological accuracy, the Mirat is important in view of its impartiality and unprejudiced treatment of events extending worthwhile judjements to specific evils and acts currnet during the period. Further, the Khatima or Supplement to the main narrative is very informative and serves as a Statistical Gazetteer of the province providing indepth information on various departments, administrative divisions'etc., alongwith

[55] Commissariat, II, p. 561

corresponding revenue details. This qualifies the Mirat as the basic source of information.

Besides the primary sources, in view of the eighteenth century being a much deliberated area, secondary work constituting a huge corpus, are very important and have been utilised considerably.

CHAPTER I

BREAKDOWN OF IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATION

From the Imperial perspective, the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 is classically viewed as the point of disjunction marking the decline of the Empire with the surfacing of a seriously irreversible situation of administrative crisis, manifest both at the level of the centre and in the provinces. However, numerous recent studies indicate that traces of this pattern are located much earlier, sometime during the latter part of the seventeenth century when the political and economic concerns of the Mughal Empire assumed significant progression. This was also the phase when the concerns of the European trading companies marked by ruthless competition were fast expanding. Rivalry and clashes between the different commercial categories both indigenous and foreign, and with the Mughal imperial authority necessitated negotiations, new linkages and collaborations, which resulted in the growth of a new set of Dynamics in the region. Overall seventeenth century was marked by a steady pattern of economic growth.

Alongside the patterns of unprecedented economic growth, the more penetrative expansion of the Mughal regime in the Deccan resulted in the addition of new areas and social classes that came to be integrated within the basic Mughal administrative framework. This however proved to be structurally quite complicated and problematic in the long run. Further Aurangzeb's complex personality, strategies and policies in dealing with administrative matters plausibly in right earnest compounded problems which started looming large after his death.

The subsequent phase from 1707 is characterized by the legacy of Aurangzeb's political and religious policies; bitter factionalism and court intrigues; rapid succession of rulers; the steady decline in the power and prestige of the Mughal Emperor; the increasing intrusion and prominence of the English East India Company and a steady pattern of Imperial administrative breakdown. Coupled with this, were the ravaging Maratha invasions in different parts of the Empire which enhanced their formidability to alarming proportions, a reality which the foci of power both at Delhi and in the provinces could not afford to ignore. It is noteworthy that in the post-Aurangzeb era, the 'rebels' gradually got transformed into inevitably exigent allies with whom collaborations were becoming quite a routine feature. The Marathas steadily emerged as the predominant dimension of power relations during the course of first half of the eighteenth century whose support was paradoxically sought by both, the Emperor, besides numerous ambitious elements within the Mughal bureaucracy aspiring for autonomy or independence.

In the province of Gujarat too, the period from 1707 is characterized by progressive civil strife and utter deterioration in the administrative system evidenced in the serious lapses, misrule and frequent inaction on the part of the provincial and in some instances even the central authority at Delhi. It is pertinent to mention here however that this pattern of administrative lapses in the province while progressively rampant during the first half of the eighteenth century was discernible way back in the latter part of the seventeenth century. An important insight to this is discernible in the response of the provincial administrative authorities to Shivaji's plundering raids on Surat, the premier Mughal port town.

During the first attack in 1664, the *mutasaddi,* governor of Surat, Inayat Khan along with other officials chose to seek refuge in the castle

instead of organizing resistance, a surprisingly striking contrast to the Europeans who effectively geared themselves and put up strong resistance.[56] The prosperous gentry of the town were left to fend for themselves and negotiate for their life and property with the invaders. Important merchants like Virji Vora, Haji Zahid Beg and Haji Qasim besides others, were forced to part with huge amounts which interestingly seemed to be a mere dent on their fortunes. The president of the English factory at Surat, Sir George Oxendon in his correspondence to the Company authorities has noted in this connection that "neither Virji Vora nor Haji Zahid Beg however appear to have completely lost all his fortune.....these two great merchants of the town hold up their heads still and are for great bargains, so it seems Shivajee hath not carries away all, but left them a competency to carry on their trade".[57] The total amount gained by the Marathas in this episode has been estimated to roughly about ten million rupees. [58]

It is significant to mention here that subtle references hint at the possibility of connivance between some Mughal officials and the Marathas. Though news of the Maratha advancement was received prior to the attack, no moves appear to have been made to organize resistance.[59] Surprisingly, the response of the *suba nazim* Mahabat Khan was even more disturbing. After Shivaji's departure, he arrived at Surat with a large army comprising of contingents led by the *zamindars* of Idar, Kadi, Dungarpur, Wadhwan, Jhalawar, Haldardas, Mandu, Lunawada,

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[56]J. Bruce the historiographer of the English east India Company graphically describes Shivaji's first sack of Surat. John. Bruce, *Annals of the East India Company,* Vol. *II*, London, 1810, p. 144

[57]William Foster ed., *English Factories in India, 1661-64*, Oxford, 1923, p. 313

[58]*Ibid*, p. 301

[59] Bernier refers to a possibility of a secret understanding between Raja Jaisingh in the Deccan and Shivaji. In response to this episode, the Raja was recalled from the Deccan. However instead of moving towards Delhi, he returned to his territories. Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, ed. Vincent Smith, Oxford, 1934, 3rd Ed., 1972, p.188. Shivaji was also assisted in his raids by the Raja of Dharampur, a small principality in Surat district. S. B. Rajyagor, *History of Gujarat*, Delhi, 1982, p. 271

Belpar etc., besides the *faujdar*s of Sanand and Dholka. He is supposed to have stayed in this area for three months collecting *peshkash* amounting to roughly three lac rupees from the local *zamindars*.[60] Possibly Shivaji's onslaught was not enough, with the residents of this area being subject to such a tyrannical experience of plunder and destruction and simultaneous *peshkash* or tribute collection by none other than the 'protector' to whom taxes were being paid. It is recorded that the people of the town expressed their deep anguish and displeasure by deriding and throwing dirt on the Mughal Subedar.[61]

Subsequently while some initiative to remedy the situation is visible: on concerted appeal to the Imperial authority exemptions were granted on the custom duties for a year, fortifications and barricading was initiated, and troops were promised for security, in effect these measures often proved to become a reason for civil plunder, as protection came at a price. The *suba* authorities demanded payments and presents from the French, the Dutch and the English and residents of the town in return for 'protection'.[62]

Ironically, when Shivaji revisited Surat in 1670, while the French and the Dutch negotiated with invader and prominent Muslim, Bania and Armenian merchants took refuge with the English, who put up stiff resistance, the local bureaucracy including the Shahbandar, the city *qazi*, besides the helpless residents once again fled the city taking refuge at Suwally marine, the harbour of Surat.[63] Shivaji settled for a *peshkash* and subsequently, Maratha demand for *chauth*, a kind of protection money

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[60] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* I Ahmadi, Eng. Tr. M. F. Lokhandwala, Baroda, 1965, p. 228.
[61] *English Factories in India, 1661-64*, op. cit., p. 306.
This episode also find a mention with interesting comments and expalantions in the accounts of N. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, tr. W. Irvine, Vol. II, pp.109-11, Jean de Thevenot, John. Oligby, Bernier,etc.
[62] Sir Charles Fawcett, ed., *The English Factories in India, 1670-77, (The western presidency)*, Vol., *I*, Oxford, 1936, p.190
[63] *Ibid*, pp. 195-97.

against depredations amounting to a fourth part of the revenue from this area became an increasingly routine affair even after Shivaji's death in 1680.[64]

Inertia and escapism on the part of the provincial administration in dealing with the Maratha menace was a serious lapse particularly in view of the Surat port being the crucial economic standpoint of the Empire. While the Europeans appropriately gauged the gravity of the crisis, promptly resorting to strategies of either forging convenient alliances or negotiations or resistance whichever was deemed suitable, the provincial administration appeared to be relatively indifferent. It was at this juncture that the English began to contemplate the possibility of shifting to Bombay which eventually happened in 1687.[65]

In the subsequent decade, the situation worsened further. While the Surat residents were fleeced for funds on the pretext of organizing troopers for defence, this never effectively materialized which became a cause of serious concern.[66] In 1706, the Marathas led by Dhana Jadhav, again arrived at Surat. Significantly, once again intelligence in this connection had been received sometime in 1704. The *suba* at this time was without a *nazim*, as Prince Muhammad Azam, the *nazim* appoint had relinquished his charge on the pretext of 'unsuitable climatic conditions', and the new *nazim* Ibrahim Khan had not arrived. Nonetheless, the *naib* or deputy, Abdul Hamid khan managed to mobilize a substantial force comprising of a large number of *mansabdars*, *faujdar*s and *thanedars,* which marched towards Surat. However the description of the attitude displayed by this contingent is quite appalling. Ali Muhammad Khan states that "it was astonishing that they indulged in pleasure on the river

[64] Steward Gordon, The New Cambridge History of India, Vol., II. 4, The Marathas 1600-1818, Cambridge, 1998, p.76.
[65] Commissariat, III, P. 292
[66] Charles Fawcet, op. cit., p. 221. Also see Commissariat, III, op. cit., pp. 293-94

bank till then negligently.... and did not proceed to Surat to perform royal duties".... They were under the impression that the Surat port is a place of safety and that the port officer had an army with him[67]. It may be noted that appointment of the *mutasaddi* was directly from the imperial court.[68] The ill organized and picnicking Mughal forces displayed total incoherence in the battle that ensued and were easily overpowered by the quick moving Marathas with the *suba naib,* Abdul Hamid Khan and other officials being taken as captives. They were released only on the payment of ransom which was possible only in phases, due to inadequate funds. An Imperial order to the *suba diwan* Muhammad Beg Khan, in relation to the due ransom amount is quite reflective of the indifference in the attitude of even the central authority to the seriousness of the problem. It states that ".... you should not allow any man of the *diwan* as far as possible to spend a rupee from the treasury.....the *naib diwan* should be emphatically informed that revenue of the khalisa land and balance *(baqi)* are fixed. Not a *dam* or *dirham* should be given to the *diwan's peshkar* from the revenue of the *khalsa* land and the royal *jagir*. Money due to the king should be remitted to the treasury as usual".[69] Abdul Hamid Khan thus remained in Maratha captivity for quite some time, untill the requisite ransom was arranged from his personal treasure and contributions from relatives and servants.[70]

A possible explanation to such an attitude could be Imperial preoccupations form other quarters: the Deccan, Rajputs and Sikhs. Besides this, a more crucial factor appears to be the failure in adequately judging the seriousness of the problem. It is quite likely that the notion of

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[67] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op. cit., pp. 318-320
[68] Ali Muhammad Khan, Supplement to the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, tr. Syed *Nawab* Ali and Charles Norman Seddon, Baroda, 1924, p. 214
[69] *Ibid*, pp. 324-25
[70] *Ibid*, p. 325

the Maratha leader being a 'rebel robber' in popular and the Imperial perception which was obsessed with the mystique of the *Timurid* aura and grandeur proved to be a serious misjudgment. It is quite likely that this notion percolated in the perception of the higher echelons of the Mughal bureaucracy who might have perceived the Marathas as political upstarts. While the region's chronicler Ali Muhammad Khan refrains from making this sort of a definite classification in relation to the Marathas, the English factors in Gujarat in their Letters and Dairies boldly adopted the word *Ganim* derived from the Arabic term *Ghanim,* meaning a bandit or plunderer to designate the Marathas which they found in ordinary usage in the region.[71]

On the whole the Surat raids of Shivaji were just the beginning of the Maratha incursions in the province. The easy gains in the Surat raids emboldened the Marathas to get more adventurous and penetrate further. The subsequent course of their progression with its multiple ramifications in the province proved to be disastrous from the imperial standpoint at Surat, and subsequently the *suba* at large, besides paving the way for a new set of political linkages wherein Maratha presence became increasingly pervasive and predominant.

Alongside, this sort of response to the Surat raids of Shivaji, the region's chronicler, Ali Muhammad Khan makes note of certain serious administrative aberrations and lapses in relation to the revenue

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[71] Letter dated 18th December, 1724 from William Phipps, the governor and president at Bombay to John Courtney, the chief of the Surat Factory referring to the conflict between Shujat Khan and Hamid Khan describes the Marathas as *Ganims*. Surat Factory Dairy, Letter from Bombay, 18th December, 1724. Quoted in Commissariat, II, p. 412. In numerous other references in English sources too this classification is quite frequent. The term gamin also appears in an important document in Gujarati is in the from of an instrument granted by the Mahajans, trade- guilds of Ahmedabad to Khushalchand *Nagarsheth* who bought off the Marathas in 1725 in face of their threat to plunder the city. This historical document preserved in the family papers of the direct line of the *Nagarsheths* of Ahmedabad has been transcribed in Gujarati and reproduced by M.S. Commissariat in, History of Gujarat, II, p. 423. In the Qissa-i-Ghamgin too the term *Ganim* is used to address the Marathas.(unpublished manuscript transcribed in devnagari in the possession of the Department of History, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda.(cited hereafter as Qissa-i-Ghamgin Unpub. MS)

operations, irregularities in relation to coinage, the usurpation of Imperial prerogatives and flagrant violations of the Imperial authority in the region. A brief account of these omissions and lapses is significantly insightful as it highlights the progressive crumbling of Imperial administrative apparatus in Gujarat.

Prohibited taxes were being levied in the *suba* capital Ahmedabad itself despite royal *farmans* admonishing and insisting against the same. An Imperial *farman* dated 1665 in this connection states that "it is reported to His Majesty that agents of the officers *gumashtas, kanungos, deshpandes*, footmen of the *Chabutra* in the city of Ahmedabad and its *puras* (dependencies) towns and *parganas* under the said *suba* take a sum contrary to the rules and a fixed sum by way of innovation from the residents and merchants as detailed below..... A royal order is therefore issued that fact.....be reported to His Majesty. They should bear in mind that henceforth, agents of officers....should not take prohibited taxes from the merchants and other residents".[72] The same *farman* also makes mention of the increase in the number of intermediaries or local officials who often violated state regulations, "....affairs of Khambhyat port have reached such a pitch due to the large number of *kanungos* that many merchants have left the port and gone over to Surat. People of round-about places have gone over to distant places".[73]

The chronicler further refers to the appointments of *faujdars* to *parganas* of high *mansabs* without requisite orders or consultation of the Emperor. Such appointments were an Imperial prerogative with exception to the *nazims* of distant areas like the Deccan and Bengal.[74] Again *jagirdars* and other officials at various levels seem to have taken to

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[72] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op. cit., pp. 232-35
[73] *Ibid*, p. 231
[74] *Ibid*, p. 314

assigning *madad- i- maash* grants to persons of their choice in the region which again was an Imperial prerogative. The Qazi-ul- Quzzat or the chief qazi, Khwaja Abdullah reported to the Emperor that the *jagirdars* at Sorath had given such grants afresh while the actual grantees were being harassed by officials as they did not possess Imperial *sanads* to that effect.[75] Besides this, administrative offices were increasingly tending to become hereditary thereby subverting the basic spirit of the principle of checks by frequent transfers.

It is pertinent to mnetion that Imperial *farmans* in such situations often failed to have the desired impact at the provincial level with the central authority not really being in a position to respond effectively to violations and irregularities except for transfers, admonitions and infrequently the confiscation of properties. In subsequent decades illegal levies, forged permits, fines, extortions, underpayment of wages to labor employed at public work sites, unauthorized check posts were becoming commonplace, often compelling hard-pressed populace to shift to safer places which were increasingly becoming scarce.[76]

Alongside these irregularities are further references illustrating poor governance during the 1680s and 90s: absence of horses at the Dak Chowkis, an important communication medium in medieval times besides frequent bungling in coinage conversion by Ahmedabad bankers. Ali Muhammad Khan refers "to a royal order bearing the seal of Madar-ul- Maham Umdat- ul- Mulk Asad Khan to the *sadr,* with the knowledge of His Majesty that city bankers have unanimously given currency to rupees of less weight. They give rupees at a discount of less weight and accept rupees from poor and indigent persons two and three tankas more

[75] Shama Mahmood, *Suba Gujarat under Aurangzeb*, Unpublished Ph. D thesis, M.S.University, Baroda, 1999, p. 45
[76] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op. cit, pp. 298-99

per rupee."[77]Ali Muhammad Khan refers to an incident of serious bungling at the Surat mint. He states that in 1716 "Gold and silver were turned into counterfeit coins by fraud officers at the Surat mint. Haider Quli Khan, the *suba nazim* made inquiries about it and being resolute to issue genuine coins, summoned assayers and melters from Cambay. He sent a letter in this connection to the father of the author who was then at Dholka to send these persons to Surat. Haider Quli found out difference between the genuine ashrafi and the rupee of Surat and Cambay in his very presence". He demanded nealy one lac rupees as penalty from the defaulters".[78] A similar tendency has been recorded at Ahmedabad mint during the *nazim*ship of Maharaja Ahbay Singh 1730-37 at Ahmedabad. Ali Muhammad Khan writes "As royal officers were removed from the mint, gold and silver were mixed with copper and turned into coins. Its income thus increased. Ashrafi and rupee of Ahmedabad mint were always without alloy and absolutely pure, but became notorious on account of this..... It continues so till now when the alloy is removed. It is notorious in many outside places."[79] While this practice obviously enriched the bankers, it is suggestive of a pattern wherein, weakening of aministrative controls became an opportunity for commercial classes to devise ways of seeking such gains. It is quite probable that such violations facilitated the commercial elite to survive despite the oppressive extortions which become a rampant feature during this period. In this connection it is significant that there is no reference to immediate action against the malafide elements. Further, in the narrative, it is recorded that nonpayment of salaries to bailiffs in court made them resort to illegal exactions. A disturbing element of non-accountability seemed to

[77] *Ibid*, pp. 284-299
[78] *Ibid*, p. 363
[79] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p.490

be in operation. It is quite likely that Imperial preoccupations in dealing with the Deccan, Rajputs and Sikhs emboldened the provincial bureaucracy at various levels to indulge in irregularities without apprehension of reprisals.

An interesting aspect from the 90s is the shift in the notion of the extent of the *suba* which possibly might possibly be an emerging consciousness, indicative of the gradual contraction in the area of effective control and viable authority. Instead of *suba* Gujarat, the regions' chronicler frequently refers to *suba* Ahmedabad, which is probably a mere slip or a reflection of the changing scenario wherein the Imperial controls in the province were in effect shrinking.[80]

Further, the developments during the *subedari* of Khan Firuz Jung 1708-10 amply testify the brazenness of the provincial authority. Besides the levy of prohibited taxes on essential commodities like foodstuffs, a marked departure from the earlier convention whereby essential commodities were provided with relief from such levies, the position of the locally appointed *karori* in the revenue office superceded even the royal officials. References also indicate tendencies of misappropriation of funds besides the tampering of records in the account books by the *nazim*'s accountants. In response, though Imperial orders were issued for the confiscation of the wealth and properties of Khan Firuz Jung and his supporters, the above mentioned violations indicative of the seriouness of abuses at the highest levels of the *suba* administration. [81] It is again significant to note that while spies were being recruited by the central authority to furnish information on the activities of the Marathas and Rajputs; their salaries were not being disbursed by the provincial

[80] *Ibid*, pp. 298 & 345 References correspond to the year 1694-95 and 1711-12 and subsequently the province is frequently classed as *Suba* Ahmedabad.
[81] *Ibid*, p. 343-44

authorities till specific orders were issued to that effect. A strange element of assertion and ambition appears to have gained momentum at the level of the provincial authority.The administrative gap between the province and the centre began to steadily widen in effective terms under successive *nazim*s.

Civil strife and lack of cohesion within the provincial administration worsened matters. In 1711, for the first time a serious civil war is recorded at Ahmedabad between the troops of Shahamat Khan, the interim *nazim* and Muhammad Beg Khan which eventually was neutralized with the intervention of Safdar Khan Babi and the royal Bakshi, Mehar Ali Khan (later *naib* of Ajit Singh).[82] Again in 1714 an armed conflict ensued between the Surat Mutassadi, Momin Khan and the Killedar of the castle Zia Khan. Further, in 1717 a serious skirmish took place between the forces of Haidar Quli Khan, *naib* of the *suba nazim* Samsam-ud-Dawlah Khan i Dauran and the powerful local noble Safdar Khan Babi. Eventually hostilities were pacified with intervention of Muhammad Firuz Khan Jalori, the ruler of Palanpur in North Gujarat. Initially while skirmishes occurred over trivial issues, from the 1720s, they became a chronic feature in the province wherein however, the issues involved were of a more serious nature. This was in view of ambitious aspirations at the highest levels gaining greater momentum. A frequent situation was military encounters between the *nazim* appoint and the outgoing *nazim* wherein the major brunt fell on the city residents who faced great hardships due to hasty exactions and loss of property which often compelled them to flee to safer zones which were not many.

Zahiruddin Malik explains this pattern of administrative breakdown as an outcome of a shift in Imperial policy in relation to the appointment

[82] Commissariat, II, op cit., p. 386

of the *nazim*s or provincial viceroys.[83] He opines that he entire period from the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign was marked by an increase in the enjoyed by provincial governors in the face of Imperial preoccupations in the Deccan besides the confidence he had in their ability and loyalty. This sort of enhanced empowerment however proved to be a serious departure from the basic maxim of checks on the Mughal bureaucracy, emboldening ambitious elements to pursue their personal aspirations for autonomy. The decade following the death of Aurangzeb saw furtherance in the relaxation of central control over the provincial authorities. Moreover, after Bahadur Shah 1707-12, the convention of giving the *nizamat* to royal princes was not always possible for various reasons. In the course of succession conflicts a large number of princes were killed, blinded or imprisoned. Moreover, in the new scenario of coups, court intrigues and fratricidal strife, the successors of Bahadur Shah did not want to take the risk of entrusting the remnant princes with positions of power especially in distant provinces. It is significant that despite the weak position of the Emperor and the struggle for the *wizarat*, no faction among the nobility felt strong enough to establish a new monarchy. The right of the *Timurids* to wield Imperial authority remained unquestioned.[84] In fact the Mughal Emperors' continued to remain the reference point of legitimacy to political authority even in the emerging regional orders despite their own emaciation. The reigning authority was therefore compelled to appoint his ministers in more than one capacity which emboldened them to aspire for more. This feature was unprecedented during the heydays of the Empire. Central ministers were concurrently allowed to hold the governorship of provinces. Important nobles too found this arrangement agreeable as they did not want to be

[83] Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah, 1719-1748*, Aligarh, 1977, p. 206-07
[84] Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1707-1740,* 4th ed., Delhi, 2002, p.. 294

away from the happenings and politicking at the Imperial court at Delhi. These compulsions created absentee *nazim*s who were more preoccupied with power play at the centre while the actual administration in the province which often was treated as incidental was managed through trusted *naib*s or deputies who though frequently proved to be highly oppressive and tyrannical showing little concern for effective governance. This dimension was numerously visible at Ahmedabad. A list of *nazim*s, *naib nazim*s and *diwan*s in the province of Gujarat since the reign of Akbar is provided in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* which illustrates the increasing presence of *naib nazim*s or deputies during the post Aurangzeb era.[85]

Yet another disturbing tendency discernible during the course of the early eighteenth century was the concentration of multiple assignments within the province in one person who managed the same through trustworthy deputies or *naib*s which created formidable foci of power and definite patterns of patronage within the provinces which often were further linked to higher levels of patronage at the centre. At the level of the *naib*s, such ties of patronage engendered an element of arrogance, autonomy and a disturbing notion of assurance or insulation, that they were not effectively accountable for their actions. While such concentration of authority was often an interim arrangement emanating in a situation of transfer of the concerned officials, frequent transfers were again problematic as they resulted in oppression of resident ryots who often felt compelled to migrate to other places. A more serious implication was the growth of familial power centres which definitely was an antithesis to the exigent essentiality of checks and balances. For instance in 1714, Momin Khan was appointed as the mutassadi of Surat besides being assigned the post of *faujdar* at Baroda, Petlad, Nadiad and

[85] *Mirat-i-Ahamdi*, pp. 930-33

Dholka which he managed through his relatives who were designated as *naib faujdars*[86]. On yet another occasion in 1715, Haider Quli Khan, an influential noble was appointed as the *suba diwan,* the *mutassadi* of Surat and Cambay besides the *faujdar* of Baroda, Broach, Nandod and Arhar Matar primarily due to the transfer of officials in these areas. He chose to take up the 'lucrative' office of Surat and appointed his relatives as deputies at all the other places.[87] Subsequently, he was assigned the charge of the *naib nazim* for two years from 1717-19. It is significant to mention in this context that when Mullah Abdul Ghafur, the famous Bohra merchant of Surat died in 1716, the *mutassadi* confiscated his vast property estimated at 85 lacs of rupees on the false pretext that the deceased had no issue. Subsequently, Mullah Abdul Haye, the late merchant's adopted son or grandson represented his case at the Imperial court and proved his claims as heir to the Mullah's property which was restored to him with due honors at the intervention of the wazir Abdullah Khan who ordered the recall of the *mutassadi.*[88]

The 1720s and 30s are marked by a steady pattern of erosion of Imperial authority and administrative deteroration in the region. In face of the dwindling Imperial fortunes at Delhi, *suba nazim*s were increasingly inclined to hold on to their offices which probably had become quite 'lucrative'. Resultantly, the change of *nazim*s had infrequently become a military affair between the outgoing and the new appointee. Further, illegal exactions were increasingly commonplace. It is noteworthy that *naib*s are often seen to play favorites with the prominent merchants at Ahmedabad. Such linkages proved to be quite detrimental to Imperial interests in the region.

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[86] Zahiruddin Malik, *Op.cit,* p. 361
[87] *Ibid,* pp. 367-68. Also see William Irvine, Later Mughals, I op cit., p. 414
[88] *Ibid,* p. 370

A more disturbing trend was of attempts by the *suba nazim*s to arrogate more and more authority possibly guided by an urge to establish their independent regime. Traces of tendency to assume de-facto authority are discernible in the nature of functioning of four successive *suba nazim*s or their *naib*s: Haider Quli Khan 1721-22, Hamid Khan (*naib* of Nizam-ul-Mulk) 1723-23, Sarbuland Khan 1725-30 and Abhay Singh 1730-37. These frivolous attempts however proved to be futile on account of inherent inadequacies besides the feeble though timely responses from the centre wherein *nazim*s were replaced which indicates the concern of the Imperial authority to try and hold on to the region. However, the tide of change could not be averted.

A fascinating dimension at this juncture is the evolving pattern of collaboration and linkages between these ambitious elements and the Maratha leaders who were desperately trying to define and consolidate their military gains in the province. It is important that the intruders were perceived as possible allies by ambitious aspirants in the *suba* and promised concessions in the form of rights to a share in the revenue of the province. Significantly, this was not unprecedented. The Mughal Imperial authority too made a bid for Maratha support to countervail Nizam-ul Mulk's ambitions in the Deccan. The difference probably was the levels at which linkages were being initiated which reflects the collapse of Imperial authority and the shifting patterns in the power relations.

It is important here to briefly survey the course of Maratha ascendancy in Gujarat as this was closely linked to the dwindling of Mughal fortunes in the province. The Maratha expansion in Gujarat proceeded in three stages: the first stage was the establishment of their claim for *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi;* the second stage involved the acquisition of territory which came to be divided into spheres of

influences among the Maratha *sardars* or commanders, the third and final stage involved outright annexation.

Shivaji's death in 1780 was followed by a pause from Maratha attacks on account of their preoccupations in the Deccan. However, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, Maratha intrusions became a regular feature particularly inspired by the regions' fertility and prosperity and the flimsy resistance experienced during Shivaji's attacks on Surat and even subsequently from the provincial administration. Also the possibility of winning over ambitious and disgruntled elements in the peripheral areas was always there. Moreover, Aurangzeb's death in 1707, and the succession crisis and bitter factionalism at the centre that followed, left the field open for ambitious elements both within and outside the province to recast themselves by assuming autonomy and asserting their independence or adopting a rebellious posture and intruding into neighboring areas for resources.

These were the circumstances which brought Dhanaji Jadhav, the *Senapati* of Shahu Raja to South Gujarat in 1706. Significantly, the nature of response that he encountered was indeed very encouraging.[89] The next expedition was undertaken in 1707 just a few weeks after the death of Aurangzeb. Meanwhile Balaji Vishvanath arrived in East Gujarat through Malwa by way of Jhabua with a huge force. For the first time the Maratha ravages were experienced in portions of the mainland especially the fertile tract of Charotar in the vicinity of Nadiad. It is important to note that the Mughal viceroy Ibrahim Khan felt compelled to negotiate with the invaders to withdraw. The enemy was bought off with payment of rupees two lac ten thousand which was taken from the royal treasury. Meanwhile Khanderao Dabhade was assigned the district of

[89] The entire episode is graphically described by Ali Muhammad Khan and has been discussed in the earlier part of this chapter.

Baglan in Khandesh in 1706 for the collection of *Chauth* which he developed as a base for predatory activities into south Gujarat that gave him control over the important trade route from Burhanpur to Surat. On his appointment as the *seanpati* or commander in chief of the Maratha forces in 1716, he remained preoccupied in the Deccan. However he almost annually sent his officers: Kanthaji Kadam Bande, Damaji I Gaekwad and his nephew Pilaji to establish claims to *chauth* in the Surat district.[90]

From 1719 a steady pattern of Maratha progression is discernible. Due to clashes with Kanthaji over the sphere of action in Khandesh, Pilaji was forced to develop alternatives which inspired him to focus on south Gujarat. In 1719 he established his control over the hill fort of Songadh in Surat district which served as a base. Befriending the ruler of Rajpipla and making common cause with the Bhils and *kolis* in south Gujarat he started developing fortifications herein to secure his base.[91] He next won the support of the disgruntled *desais* of Padra, Channi and Bhayali, all in the Baroda district who distrusted the Mughals.[92] They too made common cause with the Maratha *sardar* Pilaji which facilitated him in extending his influence towards the mainland.

By 1717 the Maratha leadership felt emboldened enough to officially make claim for the *chauth* of Gujarat. This aspect figures in the course of negotiations with Husain Ali, when Shahu insisted for the recognition of the Maratha claims over the *chauth* of Gujarat. Again when Balaji Vishvanath visited Delhi in 1719, he was instructed to try and secure the *chauth* rights of Gujarat.[93] Though these claims were not conceded, Maratha ravages in the provinces increasingly assumed larger

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[90] Commissariat, II, op. cit., p. 400
[91] Commissariat, II, p. 401
[92] *Ibid*, II, P. 402
[93] G. J. Duff, History of the Marathas, Vol. I, London, 1912, p. 273

proportions particularly on account of poor resistance from the provincial authorities which enhanced their formidability and 'prestige'. It is noteworthy that in 1724 when Nizam-ul-mulk rebelled, both he and the Emperor felt compelled to seek Maratha support. The Marathas again reiterated their claims which however were not conceded.[94] The subsequent course of events is a saga of steady Maratha progression in Gujarat following the extension of crucial revenue concessions by ambitious *nazim*s appointed in the province.

In economic terms an important dimension to the Maratha depredations was a strong possibility of a great deal of money being taken out of circulation due to both plunder and hoarding. While figures or data on actual losses is not known, insightful information is found in the Dutch sources. The Dutch council at Surat in its explanation to its superiors for low performance has provided a rough estimate of the losses incurred during 1725-26. The figures were collected by the *banias* of Surat district besides two Imperial reporters of the city. Accordingly, Ahmedabad paid Rs. 6,000,000/- as ransom while Ahmedabad district paid Rs. 3,900,000/-. The information on Baroda is ambiguous with the amount for the Baroda city and its villages varying between Rs. 900.000/- to Rs. 250,000/-. Surat interestingly paid less, the figure for the city and the district being Rs. 500,000/-. Cambay losses both the city and the district were estimated at Rs. 250,000/-. The figures for Bharuch cited along with Jambusar and Amod totaled to Rs.1, 300,000/-. A suburb of Bharuch inhabited by leading Parsis is supposed to have paid Rs. 300,000/-. Vadnagar, described as the home of the richest sarafs of Gujarat paid the largest amount estimated at Rs. 10,000,000/-. Besides such ransom amounts taken directly from towns and villages a figure of

[94] S. G. Sardesai, ed., Selections from the Peshwa Daftar, Vol. X, 1

Rs. 18,000,000/- has been estimated against general damages like that suffered in arson, personal ransom besides damage to trade.[95] Though the credibility of these figures is indeed questionable, they are definitely indicative of the seriousness of the depredations. Significantly, the tragedy was further aggravated with the general apathy, misrule and instances of extortion on the part of the Imperial provincial administrative authorities which left the residents to fend for themselves and evolve their own mechanisms for survival.

Meanwhile the debacle of the Sayyids at Delhi in 1720 brought about a change in administrative assignments with the wizarat passing on to Nizam-ul-Mulk, a very powerful noble who in all earnest was keen on improving the governance through reforms but failed.[96] Ajit Singh who had enjoyed favor under the king makers was replaced by Muiz ud Dawlah Haider Quli Khan as a reward for his role in their debacle.[97] Initially while *Suba* affairs were managed through his *naib* Shujat Khan, he remained at Delhi, preoccupied with attempts towards realizing higher gains at the centre which created clashes with the wazir. Eventually however Haider Quli Khan was ordered to proceed to his governorship of Gujarat.

During his brief stay of about five months, his presumptuous actions are indicative of his contemplation to establish himself as an independent ruler. He encroached on Imperial privileges by taking possession of several Arab horses that had been purchased at Surat for the royal stables,

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[95] These figures are quoted on the basis of the Dutch sources examined and cited by Ashin Das Gupta in his study on Surat. Ashin Das Gupta,, Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, op. cit, pp. 149-150.

[96] Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, op. cit, p. 211

[97] William Irvine, Later Mughals, II, op. cit., pp. 91,102. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* i Ahmadi, op. cit., p. 400. It is to be noted that Haidar Quli Khan was earlier appointed as the diwan of the *Suba* in 1715. In 1716-18 he was the governor of Surat and later in 1718 was assigned the charge of *naib* by Khan Dauran. He held the rank of 6000/6000. He steadily rose in the favor of the Emperor and by the time of Nizam-ul-mulk's wizarat he had risen to the rank of 7000/7000. *Maathir-ul-umara*, vol, I, pp. 601

when they arrived at Ahmedabad, en route to the capital. Some of these he kept for himself and the remaining he presented to his 'friends'. Further, he patronizingly granted some *suba* officials the privilege of sitting in a palkhi, which was basically a prerogative enjoyed only by the royalty or the highest nobility. He also heard complaints seated in an audience and when he rode out, the roads were cleared and guarded as was done for the Emperor. Besides these outward presumptions of authority, a more serious move was the confiscation of *jagirs* of royal *mansabdars*, provincial military commanders, besides *madad-i-mash* grants and redistribution of the same to persons of his choice. Ali Muhammad Khan makes a significant remark on the *nazim* stating that: 'He set aside submission and obedience and raised the banner of absolute authority. This innovation remained as his memento and a deed of boldness on the part of other *nazims*'.[98]

When these developments were duly reported to the Emperor, the *nazim*'s *jagirs* in the vicinity of Delhi were resumed in retaliation.[99] In response, Haidar Quli Khan tried to revoke his presumptuous behavior and actions by issuing permits for return of the confiscated *jagirs*. However it was too late as Gujarat was assigned to the powerful noble Nizam ul Mulk. Realizing that his forces and resources were far too weak in comparison to the Nizam's army and bereft of supporters in the province he feigned madness and wisely exited the province. It is noteworthy that despite all these actions, Haidar Quli Khan was received well by the Emperor at Delhi in 1723 and assigned the province of Ajmer to deal with Ajit Singh who had revolted.[100] This was a serious departure from the preceding era. Probably the Imperial authority was left little

[98] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op cit., pp. 402-10
[99] William Irvine, op. cit., p. 128
[100] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op. cit., pp. 409-10. Commissariat, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 407

option but to reconcile and negotiate with situations all the time making a choice between the existing components in the bureaucracy or sometimes resorting to pitting one against the other. Also, the central leadership at this juncture suffered a serious personality problem.[101]

The new *nazim* Nizam ul Mulk appointed his uncle Hamid Khan as his *naib* to administer Gujarat and went back to Delhi from where he subsequently returned to his *subedari* of the six Deccan provinces in 1723. The *nazim*ship of Gujarat was next assigned to Mubariz-ul-Mulk, Sarbuland Khan who like his predecessor entrusted the charge of administration to Shujat Khan who managed *Suba* affairs as his *naib*. As had become the routine practice, Hamid Khan was reluctant to hand over charge, thus an armed conflict ensued briefly. Eventually on the intervention of Safdar Khan Babi a compromise was worked out which ended hostilities temporarily. It is noteworthy that though Hamid Khan left Ahmedabad, he seemed to be unwilling to surrender his power, obviously being instigated in this regard by his nephew the ex-wazir Nizam-ul-mulk who was trying to carve out an autonomous regime in the Decaan, with Malwa and Gujarat as contiguous appendages.

Following this defiance of Imperial command, a bitter civil strife commenced in 1724-25 which proved to be extremely disastrous for the residents on the mainland, besides sounding the death knell for the Imperial concerns in the province. A significant dimension that was assoccitated to the Imperial breakdown was the crucial alliance between the rebel *naib* Hamid Khan and the formidable Maratha leaders in wake of the rising 'prestige' of the Marathas in the province at this point of

[101] According to Satish Chandra at this stage Muhammad Shah had an opportunity to improve governance. But he proved himself to be a weak minded and frivolous person, negligent of the affairs of the state and completely under the influence of his favorites. In yet another contemporary account (*Tarikh-i-Hind,* Rustam Ali Shahabadi, p. 535*)* he is described as 'the asylum of negligence'. Quoted in Satish Chandra, op. cit., p. 207 He was never of the same mind, being as a Maratha vakil observed, 'fickle by nature', *Selctions from the Peshwa Daftar*, XIV, 47, ed., G. S. Sardesai.

time. An agreement was made between Nizam-ul-mulk and the Maratha *sardar* Kanthaji Kadam Bande, whereby the latter was promised the *Chauth* of Gujarat if he would successfully assist in the restoration of Hamid Khan.[102] The alliance significantly proved to be worthwhile and the Marathas for the first time formally entered Ahmedabad in 1724. This event could be viewed as a major breakthrough for the Marathas as it was the first step towards transforming them from plunderers and intruders to somewhat 'legitimate rulers' which became a reality in the years to come.

In the warfare that ensued Shujat Khan and his brothers Ibrahim Quli Khan and Rustom Ali Khan were killed.[103] It is appalling to note that the rebel, Hamid Khan misquoted the events to conceal his perfidy in his letters to the centre which however was exposed very shortly when actual report of events written by the *naib* and Shujat Khans's own representatives reached the Imperial court. Further on, he blatantly displayed his defiance by assuming independent charge of the province. Hamid Khan dismissed all the *mutasaddi* and *taluqdars* in various mahals and appointed his loyalists. He next appropriated the *Khalsa*. Further he sent for records of all government offices from the *diwan* of the *suba* and assumed charge of the revenue office, arrears of revenue and *jagirs*.[104] Besides this he resorted to the exaction of *biwarah* from wealthy persons.[105] *biwarah* or *bewrah* was an innovation from Hamid Khan's time. Ali Muhammad Khan describes this as a fixed amount extorted forcibly from all sections of people.[106] Referring to this levy the translator of the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* comments that "the author had never heard the

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[102] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op. cit., p. 419

[103] Reference to this alliance and what followed thereafter is also found in the Surat Factory Dairy, Letter from Bombay, 18th December, 1724. Quoted from commissariat, II, pp. 412-13. In this letter the Marathas are classed as *Ganim*. This letter also seems to indicate that Shujat Khan was deserted by his troops.

[104] *Ibid*, p. 422-23

[105] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op. cit., p. 435.

[106] *Ibid*, pp. 426, 470

word *biwarah* from the day he arrived in Gujarat, but now *nazims* impose this unpleasant tax on various excuses such as differentiation in trade, community, head counting, house counting etc. Adoption of illegal and torturous methods for extortion however resulted in the collection of huge amounts of money.[107] It is noteworthy that in some instances the rebel is addressed as *Nawab* Hamid Khan.[108]

Meanwhile, the Maratha commanders, Kanthaji and Pilaji proceeded with their forces to collect the promised *chauth* causing great destruction and distress.[109] The Maratha concerns at this stage were primarily guided by monetary considerations rather than a definite policy of conquest and consolidation. Their presence was basically predacious in character. While Ahmedabad was spared from the ravages of plunder by the generous efforts of the *nagarsheth*, Khushalchand (grandson of the Jain magnate Shantidas Jawahri) who bought peace with payment of money from his personal resources on behalf of the city, other areas in the suburbs and the country side were subject to great hardships which were often compounded due to rivalry between the Maratha leaders.[110] For instance the events at the port town of Cambay were catastrophic. Ransom of rupees five lacs was demanded from the residents by the Marathas. Through negotiations, this amount was reduced to rupees one lac ten thousand. Apart from graphic description of these events by Ali Muhammad Khan[111], Daniel Innes, the English agent at Cambay in his letters dated 11th and 15th April 1725 to John Courtney at Surat gives interesting details stating '....My last advise they (the *Ganims*) had

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[107] *Ibid*, p.435

[108] Document of agreement to *Nagarsheth* khushalchand, reproduced in Commissariat II, pp. 422-23

[109] As per the agreement, the *Chauth* for the *parganas* to the north of the Mahi river was assigned to Kanthaji, and that to its south as far as Surat to Pilaji. However it is significant that often conflicts arose in this regard much to the detriment of the residents. Hamid Khan's rule at Ahmedabad after his return in 1725 has been described as the 'reign of terror'. Commissariat, Vol. II, pp. 419

[110] Copy of the Instrument is reproduced in Commissariat II, pp. 422-23

[111] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op. cit., pp. 419-435

agreed with the city for a Lakh and ten thousand rupees, for the collection of which Kanthaji has sent his *diwan* with a party of men into the city; the worst step that could be permitted; for the city is now at their mercy, and I can make no judgment of its condition, as our lives and fortunes are dependent on the caprice of armed villains, (who) among the rest have cessed me 5000 rupees. I have absolutely refused the payment, pleading the Imperial *farman*, (issued by Farrukh Siyar, 1716 granting tax exemptions against a lumpsome payment) etc., friendship with Sau Raj (Shahu Raja); all which they laugh at and have renewed their threats.' In the postscript, Innes states that the demand on the English had been reduced to 3000 rupees. Eventually, the English managed to get off with a small payment of only rupees 500.[112] Following the departure of the Marathas, this town was further terrorized by Hamid Khan who was desperately in need of funds to continue with his rebellion.[113]

When news of these all these developments reached the capital, Sarbuland Khan, the absentee nazim, was ordered to immediately proceed to and take charge of his assignment in the province in April 1725. He reached Gujarat sometime in December. It is noteworthy that a sum of one crore rupees was sanctioned from the Imperial treasury to enable him to organize a powerful force to deal with the Marathas. Of this amount, fifty lac rupees were released at once and the remaining amount was to be disbursed to him in monthly installments of three lac rupees.[114] A strong force was organized and offensive was initiated against the Marathas under the leadership of Khanzad Khan, Safdar Khan Babi and other important nobles in January 1726. It is significant that the *suba* armies did gain initial success over the Marathas who were forced to flee beyond

[112] Gense and Banaji, The Gaikwads of Baroda, Vol., I, pp. 5-6 (hereafter as Gense and Banaji with specific vol. details)
[113] *Ibid*, p. 7
[114] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op. cit., p. 436

the Mahi towards Chhota Udaipur.[115] However, though the rebel Hamid Khan left the province, the Maratha problem persisted and became more complicated due to rivalry over the division of *chauth* between Maratha leaders and the addition of a new dimension, the Peshwa.

In 1726, while the Marathas were being chastised by the *nazim*'s officers, the Peshwa's forces arrived at Vadnagar a prosperous town inhabited by wealthy nagar Brahman bankers and merchants in north Gujarat. Despite urgent requests for help from the capital, none was provided. The residents were thus compelled to negotiate for their safety. Peace was arrived at with the payment of a sum of rupees four lacs. Shortly after this calamity, another Maratha contingent under Kanthaji arrived at Vadnagar and resorted to plunder and destruction. A large number of residents left the town and migrated to other areas within and outside Gujarat at distant places like Mathura and Benaras. [116]

Increasing pressure from the progressing Marathas on the mainland perhaps induced Sarbuland Khan to accept the hopelessness of the situation and drift away from his commitment to salvage Imperial concerns in the *suba*. Subsequently he assumed a de facto stature by collaborating with the Marathas. He accepted the offer of Kanthaji in 1726, whereby the *chauth* of all the *parganas* to the north of the Mahi River, with the exception of the capital and the *pargana haveli*, were formally granted to Kanthaji.[117] The Imperial response to this alliance was hopelessly the discontinuation of the subsidy of rupees three lacs.

Meanwhile the Peshwa's agents too were gaining ground on the mainland much to the annoyance of the Maratha *sardars*, Kanthaji and Pilaji who at this juncture were acting in unison. Initially, when the

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[115] *Ibid,*
[116] *Ibid,* p. 445
[117] *Ibid,* pp. 447

Peshwa sent his agents to the *nazim* to negotiate the claims for the *chauth*, no definite settlement came forth. Consequently, the towns of Petlad, Dholka and Cambay were subject to severe extortion and damage. An extract from Daniel Innes's letter from Cambay to Henry Lowther at Surat dated 25th March 1730 furnishes interesting details of these ravages and the utter breakdown of governance besides significantly addressing the *nazim* Sarbuland Khan as *Nawab*, '..... The loss sustained cannot as yet be known, but must be vastly great: multitudes say a crore of rupees, others more moderate say half at least. This to be done, and so near the *Nawab* (Sarbuland Khan) makes it plain that he is far from having the good or safety of Gujarat.'[118]

Eventually after negotiations and numerous abortive agreements from 1726-29, Sarbuland Khan concluded a formal treaty with the Peshwa in 1730 in anticipation that the *peshwa* might be able to undermine Kanthaji and Pilaji, the agents of the *senapati* Dabhade. Accordingly it was decided that the *sardeshmukhi* amounting to ten percent of the entire revenue both, from the land and customs, excepting that from the port of Surat and the districts attached to it along with the *chauth* from the same sources and five percent of the revenues of the city of Ahmedabad were to be ceded to the Peshwa.[119]

Besides this act of defiance, the tenure of Sarbuland Khan provided no succor from misrule and oppression. It is noteworthy that the *nagarsheth* Khushalchand who saved the city of Ahmedabad from Maratha depredations was taken into custody on the provocation of his enemies led by *sheth* Gangadas who aspired for the position of *nagarsheth.* He was ultimately released on the payment of sixty thousand

[118] Gense and Banaji, Vol., I, p. 10
[119] Details of this treaty are based on the Maratha sources. See Grant Duff, ed., 1912, I p. 374; V.G Dighe, op. cit. pp. 32-33

rupees. Further the Sarbuland Khan is also reported to have confiscated all the *parganas* assigned in *jagirs* to nobles residing in Delhi.[120] Though this was remedied when his *jagir* in Punjab was resumed, repeated complaints against him finally marked his exit from the province which as had become a routine practice was a military affair. It is noteworthy that despite all his excesses the outgoing *nazim* was given one lac rupees to enable him to reach Delhi. Abhay Singh who was appointed as the next *nazim* had to battle for assuming his charge over Gujarat.

Abhay Singh was the third rathod ruler to be appointed as the *nazim*. The Rathod phase in the region's history too was characterized by progressive breakdown of law and order, oppression, extortion and illegalities and the deplorable implications of poor governance and tyranny on the economy of Ahmedabad. It commenced with the appointment of Ajit Singh as the *nazim* 1715-17.[121] It is noteworthy that the *farman* relating to his appointment as the *nazim* classes the province as *suba* Ahmedabad and not *suba* Gujarat. [122] In his tenure of about two years the administration was managed by his *naib* Vijayraj Bhandari who was highly oppressive and thus unpopular.

Farrukh Siyar's reign came to an end after six years in 1719 amidst high level intrigues, following which was again a quick succession of rulers. It is significant to note at this juncture that Ajit Singh opted for the 'politically right' position by treacherously associating himself with the powerful Sayyid brothers despite plea for support from the hard pressed

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[120] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 452-53

[121] Ajit Singh was the son of the prominent Rajput noble Maharaja Jaswant Singh who had been persecuted and deprived of his patrimony during Aurangzeb,s reign which made him a rebel. Hostilities ended eventually in 1714 in Farrukh Siyar's reign from when he played an important role and held high favor at the Imperial court, both as the leading Rajput noble and the father-in-law of the Emperor to whom he gave his daughter in marriage. However despite this marriage, he had secretly sided with the Saiyid brothers against the Emperor.

[122] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 367. In the Balmukund Nama too, in a letter to Ajit Singh concerning the appointment of a *naib* to administer the province, the reference is to Ahmedabad and not Gujarat. Balmukund Mehta, Balmukund Nama, Eng. Tr. Satish Chandra, Aligarh, 1972, p. 35

Emperor who was desperately trying to free himself from the yoke of the 'Kingmakers'. He was rewarded for his role in this episode with the viceroyalty of Gujarat which lasted for two years 1719-21.[123] During this phase again he remained absent from the province and the administration of the *Suba* was managed by his deputies: Haider Quli Khan, Mehar Ali Khan and Anupsingh Bhandari.

It s significant that at the instance of Ajit Singh an Imperial order was issued for the abolition of *jizyah* a symbolic manifestation of hindu leadership.[124] While this amounted to a loss of revenue for the State treasury it is ironical that the level of oppression irrespective of religious affiliations during regime of the marwari *naib nazim* Anup Singh Bhnadari had assumed very serious and unprecedented proportions. Moreover, administrative irregularities persisted unabated. In wake of the steady progression of the Marathas in the region, organization of defenses was a primary concern for both the central and the provincial authorities. A royal order was issued to this effect whereby the *naib* mazim Anup Singh took one lac, eight thousand rupees and the *diwan* Nahir Khan took four lacs, ninety two thousand, and three hundred and eighty three rupees against expenditure for defence funding from the provincial treasury. In this connection Ali Muhammad Khan alludes to a possibility of serious misappropriation by stating that "it was heard from reports of certain scribes that Nahir Khan took the amount by a forged permit which he himself issued in his own name". [125]

He further remarks that "the *naib* of the *suba* extorted illegal fines and charges from citizens with false accusations". Kapurchand Bhansali, the prominent Jain Magnate and *nagarsheth* of Ahmedabad intervened by

[123] It is noteworthy that after the deposition of Farrukh Siyar, his daughter was allowed to renounce Islam and return to Jodhpur with all her property. *Ibid*, p. 36.
[124] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 388
[125] *Ibid*, pp.396-97

trying to persuade Anup Singh to refrain from such oppression. He also engaged a personal corp of five hundred horses and footmen for the protection of his life and property. It seems that recruitment of militia by the non political classes was a new trend in face of Imperial administrative crisis. The *nagarsheth* frequently secured the release of all those citizens who were taken into custody by the marwari officials on false charges. These actions of the *nagarsheth* were disliked by the arrogant *naib* who decided to get rid of Kapurchand. He employed Khwaja Bakshi who approached Kapurchand in the guise of a courier man. The Khawaja handed him a bunch of fake letters and kept him busy reading them and killed him in the darkness of the night when he was alone.[126] This sort of discord between the reigning authority and the chief of the merchant community in the *suba* capital which incidentally was an important economic zone in the *suba*, was a serious departure from the basic essentials of a stable regime and amounted to the corrosion of state legitimacy to wield authority.

Subsequently, the debacle of the Sayyids at Delhi and the ascendancy of Nizam-ul-Mulk as the *Wazir* resulted in the change of the provincial leadership and action was ordered against the tyrannical *naib* Anup Singh and the *diwan* Nahir Khan. It is noteworthy that while the Nahir Khan initially resisted and later compromised seeking permission to leave on payment of one lac rupees, the *naib* secretly made an exit. [127]

The Rathod regime reappearing in 1730 for the third time lasted for about seven years till 1737. As discussed earlier during the intervening period the Imperial fortunes were rapidly withering away while those of the Marathas were ascendant despite infighting and rivalry beteen the *sardars* and the Peshwa. Moreover, poor governance and attempts at the

[126] *Ibid*, pp. 396-99. Also see Commissariat, II, pp. 396-99
[127] *Ibid*, pp. 402-4

assumption of de-facto authority were progressively becoming glaring realities. Abhay Singh in all earnest adopted every possible strategy ranging from diplomacy, infighting by pitting one side against the other, military offensive and even assassination to deal with the Marathas who by this time had gained a firm footing in the province of Gujarat up to the mainland and north Gujarat. Meanwhile the Peshwa, Baji Rao was desperately trying to induce the Maratha *senapati* Dabhade and his officers to agree to share the *chauth* of Gujarat and Malwa jointly which they turned down, insisting that the Peshwa should restrict himself to Malwa which had been assigned to him by Raja Shahu as his sphere of action and leave Gujarat to them. In response to this confrontation with the Peshwa in Gujarat, Trimbakrao Dabhade the *senapati* allied with Nizam-ul-Mulk stationed in the Deccan against their common enemy.[128]

At the very outset Abhay Singh realized that he could not resist the Maratha claim to Gujarat *chauth* with his limited resources. The *suba* treasury had been left virtually empty by the ex-*nazim* Sarbuland Khan. Though he had been granted rupees eighteen lacs from the Imperial treasury the cost of organizing and maintaining an effective contingent needed recurring funds. Representations to this effect were made to the *wazir*. A letter dated 10th April 1731 by Abhay Singh from Ahmedabad to his *vakil* at Delhi provide an insight to these aspects wherein he clarifies that the military action against Sarbuland Khan was carried through at his own expense. 'Only consider,....if he (*wazir* Khan Dauran) does not care to support us, we are not prepared to keep the province, What advantage can one have in Gujarat these days? On the contrary, though we have to bear all the expenses from the revenue of Marwar, yet the *Nawab* has

[128] V.G.Dighe, *Peshwa Baji Rao I and the Maratha Expansion*, 1944, pp. 33-36. Also see G.S. Sardesai, New History of the Marathas, Vol. II, pp. 122-25

neither done anything for our own *jagir*..... ?' [129] Possibly these compulsions forced him to resort to extortion of a very serious nature in a highly presumptuous manner.

The Nagarsheth Gangadas had secured a written guarantee for his security naming *sardar* Abhaykaran, son of the famous Durgadas Rathod as his surety from the *nazim* as was the tradition. Despite this, a false *farman* from the Emperor ordering his arrest against charges for having cooperated with Sarbuland Khan in extortions was concocted. Eventually he and his supporters were released on the payment of rupees nine lacs. This event caused great consternation among all citizens. Describing the impact of this Ali Muhammad has noted that "a great panic was caused especially among workers of silk factories from spinners, dyers and weavers of various sorts. A great loss in silk revenue of 5 percent accrued in Bengal and again in all its imports in Ahmedabad. Various kinds of cloth were prepared and sent to all parts of India, Sindh, Rum, Firang, Arabia, Abyssinia, Iran and Turan. Land as well as sea merchants carried a variety of silks. From that time, silk-merchants who formed a community of their own vanished. Now sundry persons more or less bring it". [130] It is significant to note that Abhay Singh appointed a person named Ahmed of the minor Bohra community as the new *nagarsheth.*[131]

As regards the Marathas, Abhay Singh's strategy was thus to associate with the more formidable Maratha party which in his reckoning was the Peshwa. Consequently, he confirmed the grant of *chauth* to Baji Rao on the condition that the Peshwa would assist him in the ouster of Maratha commanders like Kanthaji Kadam and Pilaji Gaekwad from the

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[129] This letter was discovered in the Jodhpur archives. A full translation of the same by Pundit Bisheshwar Nath Reu has been published in Proceedings of the Historical Records Commission, Vol. XVI, 1939, pp. 211-14.
[130] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, opt. cit. pp. 487-89
[131] *Ibid.*

province. Abhay Singh was however sadly disillusioned as the Peshwa failed to provide the promised help once he had defeated his rival Trimbakrao Dabhade in 1731 at Dabhoi. Further he was also upset with the policy of the Khan-i-Dauran the *wazir* of supporting Nizam-ul Mulk's antagonism with the Peshwa. [132] Next in 1732 we find him treacherously getting Pilaji murdered. However, on the whole his efforts failed to make any decisive or lasting impact in dealing with the Maratha progression. In anticipation that the province would eventually pass under Maratha control he left for Delhi in 1733, assigning the charge of administration to his trusted marwari deputy Ratan Singh Bhandari.

This regime proved to be even more oppressive than the preceding one. The malpractices of false charges, illegal fines and exactions had become a regular feature the only difference with the passage of time was the rising seriousness and magnitude of irregularities.

It is interesting to note that religious affiliations often proved to be irrelevant. Khushalchand the hereditary *nagarsheth*, who had returned to Ahmedabad from Delhi, was forced to exit the city for two years. Further, the properties of the veteran Mughal noble Shaikh-ul-Islam-Khan were ransacked for buried treasure on his death. When this was not found, his heirs were subjected to great hardships.[133]

When repeated reports and representations relating to Ratan Singh Bhandari's tyranny reached the capital, *farmans* were issued ordering the transfer of the *naib* and the appointment of Momin Khan as the interim *nazim* in May 1736. It is to be noted Abhay Singh's relations with the *Amir-ul-umara*, had become strained around this time.

The magnitude of Imperial crisis is discernible at this juncture particularly with provincial bureaucrats forging alliances with Marathas

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[132] *Ibid*
[133] *Ibid*, pp.553-54

in their bid to outdo each other. While *farmans* ordering transfers were issued from Delhi, their implementation was a purely military affair to be actuated without any Imperial aid in the province from this period. Ratan Singh was well stationed in Ahmedabad and obviously not inclined to easily yield. Momin Khan thus had to battle his way to the *nizamat* of whatever remained of *suba* Gujarat.

These circumstances compelled him to enter into an alliance with the Maratha leader Rangoji the representative of the Gaekwad to secure his military assistance to oust Bhandari. According to the agreement, Momin Khan granted to the Gaekwad half the revenues of the entire *suba* excepting only the city of Ahmedabad, the *pargana haveli* and the town and port of Cambay. These terms clearly indicate that the *suba* revenues were to be somewhat halved between the concerned parties, wherein Momin Khan made provision for a separate or rather personal sphere of activity in case of an eventuality arising in the future.

The siege of Ahmedabad lasted for about nine months from August 1736 to May 1737, which shows the formidability that Ratan Singh had acquired. Meanwhile significantly parleys were initiated by Ratan Singh with Damaji Gaekwad who arrived at Ahmedabad wherein he offered to equally share the revenues of the entire province without the exclusions insisted upon by Momin Khan in return for switching sides. When this was communicated to Momin Khan he too perforce had little choice but to agree to these terms. However, he offered to Damaji undivided control of the *pargana* of Viramgam in exchange for half the share of the revenues of Cambay which was accepted.[134] Eventually Ratan Singh was forced to surrender in May 1737.

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[134] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p.560

The subsequent course of events is a saga of infighting between contending Maratha elements namely, the Gaekwads and the Peshwa, fleeting alliances and counter alliances between the Marathas and the prominent elements of the local nobility besides internecine strife between rival Mughal nobles. Meanwhile the English were closely monitoring the course of developments and effectively devising strategies ranging from neutrality, interventions and diplomacy which ever was deemed suitable to their current and future concerns in the region. .

From 1737-53 commenced the phase of the dual regime of the Marathas and the Mughals at Ahmedabad wherein areas of operations though defined were a contentious issue subject to frequent encroachments, negotiations and renegotiations. Exactions and illegal extortions too were marked by this dimension of dualism. The terms 'Mughal' and 'Maratha' shares were becoming increasingly familiar to the residents of Gujarat and oppression assumed unparalleled proportions with frequent encroachments in each others spheres and fascinatingly connivance in some instances wherein extorted money was secretly shared by both sides.[135]

Despite this dualism Momin Khan I managed to administer the *suba* affairs uncontested for about seven years till his death in February 1743. He could be regarded as the last effective *nazim* of the province. Momin Khan I was succeeded by his cousin Fida-ud-din Khan and his son Muftakhir Khan who jointly wielded authority which complicated matters on account of mutual distrust.

The period from this juncture was characterized by suspicion, internecine strife, intrigues, flimsy alliances, and a situation of virtual anarchy in the *suba* with prominent elements from both the Maratha and

[135] *Ibid*, p.621

the Mughal camps initiating attempts to assume independent charge of the province while the formal reigning authority was too distant and anyways too powerless to salvage the situation. In May 1743, Rangoji, the Gaekwad's representative in Ahmedabad in collaboration with Anandram enlisted the support of important local officials like Qaim Quli Khan, Vajeram and Sher Khan Babi[136] to enact a coup which however failed with Sher Khan defecting during the course of military operations. Meanwhile mutual suspicion between Fida-ud-din and Muftakhir Khan culminated in estrangement between them with both of them seeking independent line of supporters. Surprisingly five months later Rangoji and Fida-ud-din Khan are seen to operate in close conjunction with one another.

A further insight to the magnitude of Imperial breakdown is the visible in the arrival of a forged *farman* in September 1743 shortly after the abortive coup of Rangoji announcing the appointment of a new *nazim* Abdul Aziz Khan, *qiledar* of Junnar (near Poona) who was holding this fortress on behalf of Nizam-ul-mulk. Along with this *farman*, messengers also presented the aforesaid *qiledar*'s own letter nominating Jawan Mard Khan as his deputy.[137] While these documents were examined by Ali Muhammad Khan the region's chronicler who declared them to be fabricated, the feeble Fida-ud-din Khan failed to respond to these pretensions. Jawan Mard Khan emerged as the child of destiny, usurping power at Ahmedabad while Abdul Aziz Khan the pseudo-viceroy proceeded from Junnar in the vicinity of Poona towards Gujarat to

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[136] It is to be noted Anandram was a loyal official under Momin Khan I and after his death was the mastermind behind strategies of extortions and intrigues and connivance between the Mughal and the Maratha leadership while Sher Khan was the deputy Governor of Junagadh and was promised the position of *naib nazim* if the coup would be successful.

[137] Jawan Mard Khan had been appointed as the *Faujdar* of Patan at the instance of Momin Khan I in his bid to oust the Rajputs from the province. By this time he had become very powerful. Ali Muhammad Khan graphically narrates details pertaining to this fabricated document and what followed thereafter. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, op. cit., pp. 636-47

assume charge of the province. However he failed to reach Ahmedabad being slain by the Maratha Forces who were firmly entrenched in South Gujarat.

The province by this time had become an open play-field for ambitious aspirants from within and outside. Subsequent developments clearly reflect the hopeless state of affairs. In view of these developments in 1744 Fakhr-ud-daullah Fakhruddin Khan Bahadur Shujaat Jung was appointed as the *nazim* on the payment of valuables worth rupees two lacs. The new *nazim* appoint sent a *sanad* for a deputy or *naib* leaving a blank space for the name, to a banker named Sitaram with whom he was acquainted, with instructions that the latter should enter therein the name of a suitable prominent noble who could effectively handle this high office. When Jawan Mard Khan became apprised of this document he intervened and entered his own name in the said order and with great pomp and protocol befitting the receipt of only Imperial *farmans*. He received the *sanad* aiming to attach an element of legitimacy to his usurped authority. It is fascinating to note that when the new viceroy arrived with his contingent in the vicinity of Ahmedabad he had to encounter opposition from his own deputy who was had organized resistance by enlisting support of Gangaji, the deputy of Khanderao, brother of Damaji II, by promising to pay one thousand rupees a day as expenses for troops. After five days of military operations Fakhr-ud-daulah along with his entire contingent and equipage valued at lacs of rupees were made prisoners and subject to ruthless plunder by the Marathas. It is significant that Fakhr-ud-daulah was a very prominent noble holding a *mansab* of 7000 Zat and 7000 Sawar besides having familial connections with Nizam ul-mulk. That an Imperial *nazim* designate of such a high stature could be subject to such humiliation and

belligerence at the instance of his own *naib* is representative of the complete collapse of Mughal rule in the province. Mughal presence was reduced to a lurking shadow too paralyzed to assert itself except for making appointments and issuing *sanad*s and *farman*s which it had no capacity to effectively or even partially implement.

It is interesting to note that in view of the political anarchy, appointment to the province of Gujarat ceased to be an attractive proposition any longer. In 1748 the rathod Chief Vakhat Singh, brother of Abhay Singh made a request to the Emperor through the *Amir-ul-Umara* Sadaat Khan for appointment to the post of *nazim* of Gujarat. The request was accepted subject to a formal undertaking to abide by stipulated conditions. An examination of the conditions specified in the bond indicates a final though feeble attempt on the part of the central authority to salvage its dwindling fortunes in the province. Eventually though Vakhat Singh was appointed he did not assume charge of the *suba* in view of reports on the political turmoil that he secretly gathered from his agents in Gujarat.[138] Disintegration had assumed serious proportions with polities of varying statures assuming autonomy while the Maratha preponderance was a glaring reality.

Besides these developments at Ahmedabad, the predatory activities of the *koli*s and *kathi*s seem to have increased considerably and tribute collection from them and other *zamindars* in Saurashtra and even in the environs of Ahmedabad was increasingly becoming viable only with resort to military action.[139] Further, the increase in demand for mercenary recruits particularly in situations of civil strife in the early eighteenth century emboldened the *koli*s who are frequently visible in numerous situations, either as mercenaries, or serving as diversions during Maratha

[138] *Ibid*, pp. 707- 9
[139] John Fryer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 302

incursions and ironically as collaborators of the state in its final attempts to survive the final Maratha changeover in 1758. It is fascinating to note that the support of *koli* chiefs was sought even by the prosperous commercial classes under duress. This is recorded in relation to the prominent *nagarsheth* of Ahmedabad, *sheth* Khushalchand who was compelled to leave Ahmedabad to escape the tyranny of Anupsingh Bhandari, the marwari *naib nazim* of Maharaja Abhaysingh the *suba nazim* 1730-37. [140]

The combined effect of all these developments was often disruptive in relation to the region's economy with trade, industry, and agriculture suffering while a general state of insecurity became a regular feature. The region's economic classes were desperately trying to negotiate with the changing times. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the economy was able to sustain despite the political instability and chaos which is possibly indicative of growth or resilience or both, testified in the enhanced revenue figures furnished the the Mirat Supplement.[141] This pattern of anarchy continued to persist till 1758, when Momin Khan II was forced to surrender Ahmedabad to the Marathas.

It is important to mention that conditions of turmoil continued to prevail even under the Marathas subsequently on account of the succession disputes among the heirs of Damaji Gaekwad and the friction between Gaekwads and the Peshwa. During this phase the Maratha concerns had unquestionably extended right up to Saurashtra where regular *mulkgiri* expeditions were conducted for collecting tribute from the multifarious chieftaincies located therein. Besides the Marathas were numerous other components in the new political configuration: the *Nawabs,* and multifarious chieftaincies both pre Mughal and nascent in

[140] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 517-18
[141] Mirat Supplement, pp. 184-213

different parts of Gujarat. Alongside these were the fringe categories like the *kolis* and the mercenary soldiery which experienced an important shift, taking to alternate professions when warring failed to sustain them and the spaces available to them under the Mughal regime were fast disappearing during the subsequent times.[142]Interestingly, the general lawlessness prevailing during the Maratha phase has been described by Krishnaram, a comtemporary poet in one of his Garbas aptly titled "Kalikala nu Varnan"[143].

[142] This changeover has been discussed in chapter four at length.
[143] Hiralal.T.Parekh, ed., *Gujarat Vernacular Societyno Itihas*, (Gujarati) Part I, Ahmedabad, 1932, p. 1.