

CHAPTER III

NOBILITY AND THE ELITE

During the sixteenth century in Gujarat there was a group of people who were the nobles. They formed the elite of the society and wielded a lot of influence in their capacity. The appointment of the nobles by the Sultans in the various administrative units, itself speaks of the importance of the former during the said century. In this chapter emphasis has been laid on the role of the nobles in the Gujarati society, their functions and participation in various spheres. For the sake of clarity and convenience the chapter has been divided into, (a) the Sultanate period 1500 - 1573 and (b) the Mughal period 1573 - 1600.

A noble in Gujarat during the said century could be termed as a member of the court who was given important governmental assignments by the ruler¹. Amongst these could be included the Rajputs and Kolis, apart from the muslims who were appointed by the rulers. The nobles were called as Khan, Malik, Amir and Sipar-salar² in the court hierarchy.

Composition of nobility

The nobility in Gujarat was composed of various racial groups. In this connection one could see that the qualification for being noble was not restricted to only certain group of

people. Tracing the rise of nobles here would not seem out of place. The Ilbari nobles rose from the class of slaves and had a leader who was to be elected only from Delhi which was to be the centre of political activities during the thirteenth centuries³. This naturally weakened the principle of nomination and heredity as the basis of power. The reign of the Khalji's saw the nobility based on blood relationship and personal service⁴. Though the real power lay in the hands of the Sultan, still important portfolios were given to the various kith and kin of the rulers.

But in due course the Sultan turned suspicious of his relatives and started giving due importance to his personal slaves. The Alai nobles, as the slaves were called, were fed up with the constant vigilance of the Sultan and hence decided to revolt. The result of the revolutions and differences of opinion culminated in the birth of a new type of nobility under the Tughluqs⁵. These nobles got a new lease of life, because apart from being hereditary they were also heterogeneous. These characteristics helped them to appropriate lands and positions for their own dependents and progeny. The loyalty shown by the foreigners towards the rulers helped them getting a place in the nobility.

During the sixteenth century the rank of nobles also belonged to the various classes. While their functions as military and administrative heads continued, a new dimension was added to the role of the nobles during the sixteenth century, in

the form of merchants. Due to the commercial activities conducted by some of the nobles their importance grew even greater in the eyes of the Sultan. Among the most notable merchant - nobles or nobles who were merchants were Khwaja Safar, Malik Gopi and Malik Ayaz respectively.

Recruitment of the nobles

As mentioned earlier nobles were either selected from among the slaves or they were considered a noble when an Iqta was assigned to them by the Sultans. This assigning of Iqta meant assignment of revenue and not assignment of lands. It implied that the nobles had the right to collect revenue and not own land. ⁶ Thus the main characteristics of the Iqtas could be broadly classified as :- (a) Iqtas were conferred by the Sultans, (b) they could be resumed by the Sultan, (c) they were not hereditary possessions and (d) they were transferable. The Sultan by balancing the Iqtas among the various racial groups bettered his position. As a result each new ruler created a new nobility and the old nobility had divided loyalties. The bigger the Iqta a noble possessed the better the position he enjoyed at the court. With the help of the Iqta he could raise an army. The army owed its allegiance to their chief in return for the protection they received from the Sultan.

The Iqtas allotted reflected the dignity of the nobles. In fact it was stated that the nobles were known for their wealth they had amassed through the lands rather than for the victories

they had won. They were encouraged to develop a local base of power. Sultan Mahmud Begada even went to the extent of encouraging his nobles to appoint relatives to continue with their possessions. As a result when an Iqtadar died, his heir would inherit the Iqta and if there were no sons, the daughter would be given half of it.⁷ Many nobles founded or developed towns or villages.⁸

There were nobles who were from the aristocratic families and were hereditary and also had Iqtas. The new set of nobles who belonged to the categories other than the royal or hereditary had to prove their mettle and win favours of the Sultans for attaining the position of a noble. Here it is interesting to note the case of Malik Ayaz who by his sheer bravery and skill became one of the most important nobles during his time. He hailed from Russia and was a christian.⁹ He was sold as a slave to one of the merchants of Constantinople. The story goes that while his master was travelling along with his caravan, a group of brigands attacked them and the goods which they were carrying. Malik Ayaz came forward and saved his master's life and the merchandise. As a result of this he was gifted to the Sultan of Gujarat - Muhamud Begada. Malik Ayaz was considered a precious gem because of his accuracy in archery, his loyalty and courage.¹⁰

After being freed he was made the governor of Junagadh, and Diu was given in his possession. Diu was Malik Ayaz' creation and

he made it one of the most important marts both, nationally and internationally known,¹¹ replacing even Cambay.

With Diu in his possessions Malik Ayaz realized his role as an enterprising merchant and trader. He fortified the city by building a fortress and also by installing a bastion at the the centre of the creek where he attached a protective chain to the mainland. This chain served as a security and warded off unwanted ships from entering or anchoring at Diu. His ambition to become rich and to make Diu into a rich emporium made him invite merchants who were both Hindus and Muslims, apart from foreigners,¹² to settle there. In the course of time this dream saw daylight when Diu became an important entrepot and¹³ merchandises were being imported and exported from here.

Malik Ayaz made great profit through trade and commerce. The It is said that Malik Ayaz got 1,60,000 Cruzados per year from trade in Diu. This amount was calculated after paying dues to the Sultan of Gujarat.¹⁴ During his visits to the Sultan he was accompanied by 900 horses. Apart from this he had thousands of water carriers at his service. Also it is said that his troops were the best dressed. They were clad in velvet and gold brocade. Their swords, quivers, daggers, bars and rivets were made of gold.¹⁵

Apart from being a merchant he proved his mettle in the battle field, at the very beginning of his career, when he, along with the Sultan of Cairo and the Zamorin of Calicut defeated the

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Portuguese in the battle of Chaul in 1508. This celebrated battle was the first naval encounter and this shows clearly that Ayaz had a very good retinue. There is no doubt about the fact that this battle proved that he was well equipped with a powerful navy as well as an infantry. His obsession for having a chain tied across the creek to the mainland also shows that he was well prepared with arms and ammunitions if ever there was to be an intrusion from the outside.

His liberality was another important trait in him. Once during an attack on Rana Sanga Malik Ayaz who was summoned by the Sultan for help, pursued the Rana. After the battle, everyday, when everyone retired Malik Ayaz made it a point to provide food for the amirs. Some of them who could not attend the dinner every evening, received it from Malik Ayaz. But they were displeased with the fact that they were entertained with people who were below their ranks too. So the amirs ¹⁷schemed that they would not return the china wares to Ayaz. Unperturbed by the protests from his servants Ayaz continued serving the nobles with food. When this prolonged for a month the amirs overcome by Ayaz' magnanimity returned all the dishes held back by them. Also Ayaz did not recognize certain social taboos. He used to serve food for all types of people at the same dining table. Similar types of food were served for everyone. Drinks of good taste were also ¹⁸served, which was followed by atr and pan.

Functions Of The Governing Nobles

The Sultanate period saw Gujarat divided into five divisions for the sake of supervision and management. Sultan Mahmud Begada who monitored this division placed himself at Mustafabad (Junagadh), Bet and Dwarka were placed under Farhat-ul-Mulk, Tughan Sultani, Ahmedabad under Khudawand Khan, Songrah under Imad-ul-mulk and Godhara division under Kiwan-ul-Mulk.¹⁹ Though this distribution was prevalent, the ultimate authority lay in the hands of the Sultan.

The nobles had to perform both military and civic duties. The divisions of the kingdom into units which were both 'big' and 'small' were known as thanas. The thanadars were assigned the duties to quell the risings amongst the local chieftains. For example, Davar-ul-Mulk a governor during the time of Mahmud Begada was asked to chastise the Rajputs who had not submitted to Islam.²⁰

As military chiefs, the nobles had a retinue of army, cavalry, infantry and navy variously. The nobles had to be ready with their troops whenever they were called for military services by the Sultans. The nobles and the army were an important group because during the said century the rulers or Sultans of Gujarat had an iconoclastic zeal for conquering and expanding their territories. The strife for power within and outside Gujarat was one of the main cause for employing soldiers.

The militia in Gujarat consisted of not only the Rajputs who were Hindus but also the Muslims, Persians, Abyssinians, Mamluks²¹ and the Portuguese. The inflow of the foreigners in Gujarat in the sixteenth century was immense. Two reasons could be attributed to the inflow of the foreign warriors. (a) they came to Gujarat since they could not face the dangers their respective nations were facing and (b) the Sultans of Gujarat were paying handsome salaries which lured these people to filter into the²² Gujarat army.

Amongst these foreigners were the Abyssinians who came from Ethiopia as a result of the Arab - Turk conflict. They were employed by the Portuguese as slaves and in other less important ranks, hence they came along with the Portuguese.²³ The Moors were inhabitants of Spain and were also the product of the Portuguese entry into Gujarat. Their chief arm seems to have been light cavalry.²⁴ The Mamluks were the slaves who were purchased or captured and were employed by the Portuguese as soldiers. They also included the Khorasanis, Abyssinians and some Arab light²⁵ cavalry.

The Tartarians were the descendants of the Mongols and were²⁶ basically horse archers and were superb on horses. The Hindus consisted of the Rajputs who were one of the oldest warrior races and were very daring and chivalrous. Apart from chivalry and heroism, pride and honour were also some of their features. They were of noble genre.²⁷ A Rajput soldier was well-built and had

various skills like wrestling, marksmanship and riding to his credit.²⁸ In fact it was believed that they had devised rules of chivalry which was said to have brought to full scope to exhibit their personal valour and courage. War was said to be heroic pastime for the Rajputs.²⁹

The nobles had to see that the militia had loyalty towards them and constantly had to put down rebellions which were rising. The military organization was determined by the troops which were maintained by the nobles. There was a systematic gradation of the officers. No doubt there were changes in this system from time to time, when the number of grades increased. During the time of Sultan Muzaffar Shah II, Sher Khan and Dharkar Khan commanded³⁰ 7,000 and 5,000 horsemen, respectively.

Whenever there was a clarion call from the Sultan the nobles had to be ready with their military service. Also, the advice of these chiefs was sometimes followed by the Sultan. Thus for example, under the advice of the nobles Muzaffar Shah II did not send immediate relief to Nizam-ul-mulk when he was attacked by³¹ the Rana of Chitor.

Naval Supremacy

Due to the maritime activities conducted during the century under discussion the navy of Gujarat was very strong. Some of the important naval enterprises were during the time of Mahmud Begada. He maintained a large fleet in order to suppress the activities of the pirates in the Arabian sea.³² Similarly the

defeat of the Portuguese fleet speaks of naval superiority of the Sultanate of Gujarat. Another important event was the defeat of the Portuguese off the coast of Chaul in 1528.³³

Accordingly Kiwam-ul-mulk captured a Portuguese ship which was loitering in the waters and imprisoned the crew after seizing the cargo. All the captives were brought before the Sultan of Gujarat, Bahadur Shah and were compelled to embrace Islam. Also, Humayun was so impressed with the navy of Bahadur Shah that he described the latter as 'Lord of the Sea'.³⁴ The boats used by them were called as baghalahs. It was constructed basically from wood with nails which were used for the joinings and mats which covered the decks. The overall dimensions of these boats were 74 ft. by 25ft. and were slightly broad in size. They were of approximately 150 tons and their holds were as deep as 11 1/2 ft.³⁵

Cavalry

The Arab merchant Suleiman has rightly described that even in the times of the Gujarat - Pratiharas the kings had a very good cavalry.³⁶ This could be because most of the horses were imported. These horses were from Arabia and Persia and were imported annually at the cost of 10,000 to 2,200,000 dinars during the time of Abu Bakr in the seventh century. The two different types of breed of horses were called as kohi (mountain horse or indigenous or country breed) and bahri (sea-horse or imported) from Yemen and Egypt.³⁷

The Portuguese traveller Duarte Barbosa has given an apt description of the cavalry in Gujarat during the sixteenth century. He says that the cavalry consisted of both Moors and the Gentiles. They sat on saddles and were very bold riders. The weapons used by them were very strong and consisted of two swords, a dagger, a Turkish bow with arrows and a shield which was lined with silk. Apart from this some of them carried maces and coats-of-mail.³⁸

Not much importance was given to the infantry since the strength of a ruler or state was dependent basically on the strength of the elephants and cavalry.

Role As Merchants

Apart from being able administrators and military chiefs the nobles during the sixteenth century performed yet another work too. Due to the importance of trade and commerce and due to the numerous seaports and harbours on the coast of Gujarat commercial activities were carried out. The nobles too conducted trade and enriched themselves in the Gujarat society. In this connection Malik Gopi was an important noble who conducted trade.³⁹

Though a man of meagre means he was chosen to the rank of a noble by Mohammad Shah I of Gujarat. His origin greatly confused the Indo-Portuguese writers during that period, due to the complex nature of the nobility which consisted of Turks, Arabs, Mamluks, Persians, Abyssinians and Hindus.⁴⁰ As a kingmaker,

Malik Gopi along with Kiwan-ul-mulk or Malik Sarang was responsible for electing Muzaffar Shah to the throne of Gujarat in 1511. For this he was awarded an important portfolio in the ministry.⁴¹ Apart from this he was also in-charge of both Champaneer and Surat. Armed with baneas and chatis he conducted trade.⁴² His network spread to the areas of Pegu, Malacca, Siam, Pedir, and Pace. In fact it is said that a large group of merchants presumably under Malik Gopi were found in Malacca for trade.⁴³ Added to this he had great establishments in Cambay, and it was from here that ships went to places like Aden, Cairo, Ormuz, coast of Malabar, Goa and Bhatkal.⁴⁴

Aware of the fact that the Portuguese presence in Gujarat would enhance the commercial activities in general and also help boost his private trade in particular, he maintained a good relationship with them. Due to commercial activities he had to depend on the Portuguese for various reasons. Apart from being a successful merchant he was also very close to the Sultan of Gujarat, Bahadur Shah. So the Portuguese on their part too needed a person from the Gujarat Sultanate to accede to their demands with regard to commercial activities. In fact during the battle of Chaul, Malik Gopi had warned the Portuguese about Malik Ayaz' preparations for the naval confrontation. He was thanked by the Portuguese commander Lourenco d'Almeida for this act.

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This friendship turned out to be more firm after a series of events wherein Malik Gopi stated sympathizing with the Portuguese

when they lost Goa to the Adil Shahi kingdom. During an attack in 1510 one of the Portuguese ships was destroyed near the coast of Gujarat and its crew were taken as captives by the Gujaratis. His influence with the Sultan on the one hand and his personal friendship with the Portuguese on the other, prompted him to retrieve the captives free. In addition to this they were escorted to his palace at Champaneer and at his personal expense he treated them well and sympathetically. This particular act of Malik Gopi pleased and convinced Affonso de Albuquerque, so much so, that all the ships of Malik Gopi were given protection by the Portuguese and were not troubled by them. Malik Gopi on his part aided the Portuguese in whatever way he could. Thus when Malik Ayaz had dissuaded the Sultan from allowing the Portuguese to build a fort at Diu, it was Malik Gopi who informed the Portuguese of the same.

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Malik Gopi's trade operations were so successful that they reflected on his standard and way of living. Apart from leading a luxurious life, he built palatial buildings and even kept dancing girls for his entertainment. He played host to a Portuguese emissary in Surat. He saw to it that they were comfortably placed in one of his rich and well-furnished mansions. On another occasion, at Champaneer, he received Portuguese ambassadors at his residence so well that not a single robe was available in the market on that particular day. Dancing girls were also organized for entertaining the guests.

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It was a couple of years previously that the Portuguese had introduced the cartaz system. Malik Gopi's ships also had to take the cartaz and were permitted to go to any specific port. Due to his commercial interests and also due to his friendship with the Portuguese he encouraged them to build a factory at Malacca and also suggested the issue of cartazes in Malacca. The Governor, Albuquerque pleased with Malik Gopi and on his request sent an emissary to conduct talks with the Sultan of Gujarat.

Malik Gopi told the Portuguese that the Gujarat Sultan on the advice of Malik Ayaz was not permitting the Portuguese to build a factory at Diu. Hence he suggested that the representatives of the Portuguese Governor could make a direct deal with the Sultan regarding the building of a fortress in Diu. On their part the Portuguese, weighing the importance of Malik Gopi in the Gujarat Sultanate, took up the proposition and in this connection Diogo Fernandes de Beja came to Gujarat in 1514. But no amount of requests or pursuance would make the Gujarat Sultan change his mind as he had already been strongly advised by Malik Ayaz not to accept the Portuguese overtures. It is here that Malik Gopi's friendship with the Portuguese could be really seen. The latter aware of the strained relationship between the Gujarat Sultan and Malik Gopi did not on their part neglect their relationship with him.

This point is further proved when Malik Gopi's son Amir Gopi (Mercopim) came on the scene after his father's death in 1533.

Like his father he also acted as mediator between the Portuguese and the Gujarat Sultan, Bahadur Shah. Once when commodities were to be transported to Dabhol twenty of his ships were given cartazes by the Portuguese. As in the case of his father his ships were also given the freedom by the Portuguese to trade ⁵⁶ wherever they liked.

Thus Malik Gopi as a noble balanced his relationship with the Sultan along with his friendship with the Portuguese so well that he personally did not confront any misfortune. Since his commercial operations were very important for him, he was prepared to go to any length to pacify both, his ruler and his ruler's enemy.

Khwaja Safar was another person in office and conducted trade. He was a merchant and due to his capabilities as a merchant he was chosen to be a noble in the Gujarat Sultanate under Bahadur Shah in 1527. He was the son of Antonio Britime ⁵⁷ and Maria Afria, who were both Catholics and hailed from Albania and were subsequently residents of Brinde. Initially he was a ⁵⁸ soldier in the Italian wars and came to India to seek a fortune. In fact he was one among the soldiers who participated in the battle against the Portuguese on the side of the Sultan of Cairo in 1508 at Chaul and later in Diu.

⁵⁹ In due course he started visiting Diu and Cambay in the capacity of a merchant. Naturally with a colourful background it was not long before that, he was recognized for his business acumen and strategy by the Sultan of

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Gujarat. Thus his career began by his being one of the most trusted nobles of Bahadur Shah. He was appointed as the governor of Surat in 1527.

His influence on political matters was so great that the Sultan sought his advice on several matters of the state. One such matter was when the Portuguese wanted to occupy Diu. The Sultan did not know what to do and sought the help of his noble, Khwaja Safar who gave the suggestion that Diu could be given to the Portuguese. This counsel was given because at that time Humayun was making serious attempts to capture Gujarat. So it was thought that the Portuguese would help them out against the Mughals if Diu was given to them. Accordingly a treaty was signed⁶¹ between the Portuguese and the Sultan of Gujarat. But a misfortune occurred when Sultan Bahadur was murdered and drowned⁶² in the sea, by the Portuguese.

The outcome of the Sultan's death was that the people of Gujarat rose in rebellion under the leadership of Khwaja Safar who on his part had to surrender to the Portuguese. He thanked the Portuguese for sparing and saving his life. His main aim to have cordial relations with the Portuguese was due to his commercial endeavors. Because inspite of all the confusion and mis-happenings in Gujarat after Bahadur's death Khwaja Safar⁶³ continued unabated with his trade activities.

But soon he was in for a rude shock when the Portuguese demanded from him cartazes for his ships. A treaty had been

signed between the Portuguese and the Sultan of Gujarat wherein cartazes had to be taken by all the ships leaving and entering Gujarat.⁶⁴ As a successful merchant he found it odious and wanted to revenge the Portuguese. He started his plans by instigating the ruler Muhammad Shah II of Gujarat against the Portuguese. Accordingly he called a meeting of all the counsellors and captains along with the Sultan.

He declared that Gujarat was an important place due to its commercial activities and the constant attacks and threats by the Portuguese were hindering his progress. So the best solution would be to attack the Portuguese fort in Diu. For this he personally got the help of the Turks through his cousin Nacode Hamede who was the ruler of Zebit.⁶⁵ But the result of this attack ended in a fiasco. The Turks due to some confusion and difference with Khwaja Safar left for their country. On the part of Khwaja Safar he burnt part of Diu. The result of this siege was the signing of another treaty with the Portuguese where once again emphasis was laid on the taking of cartazes from the Gujarati merchants.⁶⁶ Khwaja Safar lost his life when he once again tried to attack the Portuguese in 1546.⁶⁷

The above discussion shows that Khwaja Safar who was an alien to the Gujarati society actually carved a niche for himself due to his commercial activities. Without any recommendations or personal favour and just based on his commercial operations he was chosen to be a noble. Unlike the other nobles, who in their

capacity as Government officials conducted trade he did vice versa.

Power Of The Nobles

Apart from playing the role of successful merchants the nobles were very powerful and at a time took the reins of the Gujarat Sultanate in their hands. In matters of election or appointing a heir they were consulted and they totally involved themselves as 'king - makers'. During the absence of law of primogeniture, the new Sultan had to be dependent on the nobles. After the death of Mahmud Begada in 1511 a rift was created between the nobles. One group wanted Khalil Khan and the other Bahadur Khan. It was only due to the instigation of Malik Gopi and Kiwam-ul-mulk or Malik Sarang that Khalil Khan, titled⁶⁸ Muzaffar Shah II was enthroned as the Sultan of Gujarat.

Similarly, after the death of Muhammad III, the nobles⁶⁹ raised Ahmad Khan (Ahmad Shah II) to the throne. This act was done after consultations were held amongst them. But since Ahmad Shah II was found to be a minor, Itimad Khan the Prime Minister,⁷⁰ was appointed to run the government, in the name of the king. At this time the ruler of Khandesh, Mubarak Shah found it an opportune moment to attack Gujarat. But the nobles were aware of it and after mutual negotiations Mubarak Shah returned to Khandesh and the nobles to Ahmedabad. At this time due to disunity amongst the nobles there was no peace. Ikthiar-ul-mulk⁷¹ raised another Prince called Shahu to the throne of Gujarat. As

a result a battle ensued between the two groups of nobles. The outcome of this was that Gujarat was divided in the following manner :- The regions of Ahmedabad and Parkrohi subdivisions were allotted to Ahmed Shah's private expenses. Kadi, Khalavar, Petlad, Nadiad, Bhal, Radhanpur, Sami, Manjpur, Godhra and the country of Surat were given to Itimad Khan and his party. Sayyid Mubarak and his men received Patan, Cambay, with the Chorasi, Dholka, Gogha, Dhanduka, Sarhal, Champaneer, Balasinor and Kapadvanj. Imad-ul-mulk and his group got Broach and Surat as far as Sultanpur and Nandurbar frontier and finally Modasa and other districts were for the Gujarati nobles under Itimad Khan.

Likewise in the case of Muzaffar shah III (1561), he was elected king only in name, but in reality the nobles had divided Gujarat in the following manner :-The sarkar of Patan went to Musa Khan and Sher Khan Falaudi. Changez Khan got the sarkars of Surat, Broach, Champaneer and Baroda. Dholka, Dhanduka and other sarkars were allotted to Sayyid Hamid grandson of Sayyid Mubarak and Amir Khan Ghorı got Junagadh with the country of Surat. What followed was not a picture of tranquility and peace, but one of disunity and dissension among the nobles. Simultaneously, there were the Mirzas who entered Gujarat after having been expelled from Delhi by Akbar. They along with their remaining forces took sides with the warring nobles, adding more confusion. Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, found it a very convenient picture to enter and capture Gujarat in 1573.

The Other Governing Class

Another set of people who were found in the nobility were the ulemas. The ulema and sufis who belonged to the theological group could be slotted in the ranks of the nobles who came second only to the Sultan - the ruler. They belonged mostly to the Muslim literati classes.⁷⁶ Apart from being granted iqtag by the rulers for their subsistence they were also patronized by them. They were consulted on matters of state and court and by this, they had acquired a very important position in the state.⁷⁷ They were placed on an equal rank of the higher echelon.⁷⁸ Sayyid Mubarak Bukhari was a noble in Sultan Bahadur's court. He was one of the many Bukhari Sayyids who had migrated to Gujarat from Bukhara during Timur's invasion. Initially he held the rank of an amir which was elevated to a higher rank by the Sultan. When asked to participate in the war against Idar king he refused to do so.⁷⁹ In spite of this the Sultan behaved in a venerable manner towards him. Sayyid Mubarak Bukhari preferred Amirship along with service to God.

Mubarak Bukhari's involvement in the various political activities, according to the writers of that period seems to have a tint of religious sanctity. In the clash between Itimad Khan and Imad-ul-mulk Sayyid he acted as a mediator.⁸⁰ Even the Sultan was his disciple so much so, that it was Mubarak Bukhari who recommended the former to Imad-ul-mulk the Prime Minister. His approach to problems of political nature was very peace-loving and philosophical. Apart from having Sayyids as his faithful

disciples he also had a following of the Faloudi Afghans. In fact it is said that the leaders of these Afghans - Musa Khan and Sher Khan achieved success because of their dedication to Mubarak Bukhari.⁸¹ He was so benevolent and kind that he gave away Patañ, which was under his jurisdiction to Musa Khan Falaudi. Added to this he distributed all his wealth and treasured to the needy and poor.

Another noble who reformed all his posts and connections with active politics was Taj Khan Narpali.⁸² He was one of the nobles who invited Sultan Bahadur to occupy the throne of Gujarat after Sikandar was assassinated. Considering that Gujarat was in safe hands he resigned from his post as wazir and requested the Sultan to grant him a village for his subsistence.⁸³ Being a man of wisdom and solitude he enjoyed a renounced life in his village. He spent the rest of his life in charitable and generous activities. He built the Mausoleum of His Highness Shah Alam and populated Tajpur.⁸⁴

Amongst these nobles there was enmity and jealousy. Shaykh Wajih-ud-din Ahmed al-'Alwi was an accomplished scholar and a renowned Sufi during the time of Muzaffari dynasty.⁸⁵ Being honoured by a person not less than the Sultan he settled in the town of Champaneer. As a student he studied various branches of Sufism and acquired knowledge and spent the rest of his life in teaching students. In his spare time he wrote commentaries and prepared notes.⁸⁶ Shaykh Ali who was also an ulema accused

against Shaykh Ali Muttaqi by writing a fatwa. He said that the latter was holding heretical views and that he should be hanged. But due to the benevolence and spiritual nature of Shaykh Ali Muttaqi the fatwa was never considered.

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The iqtas which were granted to these set of nobles were revenue free grants (madad-e-mash). In contrast to the iqtas which were granted to the other nobles the madad-e-mash were unconditional or charity grants. They were unconditional because they did not have to render their service to the State or Sultan. In fact it may have been a sort of bribe given by the Sultan for gaining the ulemas' confidence during some important governmental decisions. Since the muslim dynasties during the sixteenth century were basically military organizations the ulemas did not have an equal status to that of the other nobles. In fact they did not play the role of either 'kingmakers' nor did they possess any military appointments.

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Nobility Under The Mughals

In 1573 Gujarat came under the suzerainty of Mughals. The nobility consisted of the muslim nobles apart from the zamindars and Rajput chieftains. These Rajput chieftains were variously known as Rai, Rawal, Rajahs or Rana of Mewar, Jam of Nawanagar, Kangar of Bhuj etc. These members of the ruling class were both chiefs and nobles. They had a military contingent and had a fort or fortress in their domain.

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During the time of the Mughals in Gujarat the chiefs were either subdued or owned by the former. They were not created by the Mughals but were formed into a separate body. Apart from being autonomous they were hereditary and their suzerainty was acknowledged by the rulers from Delhi. Some of the important features of these types of ruling class were (a) they had to pay tribute to the Mughal Emperor which was called peshkash. Thus these tributary chiefs were called peshkashi. This peshkash could include anything from precious stones like diamonds and jewels to hunting animals, horses and war elephants, (b) in exchange for the protection they received from the Emperor they had to lend military services.

The nobles being military chiefs during the Mughal time in Gujarat were granted mansabs involving revenue assignment. Thus the mansabdars were given zat (personnel) and sawar (troopers). The mode of payment for these mansabdars was tankwah jagir or naqdi (cash). Thus a mansabdar was always not a jagirdar but a jagirdar was definitely a mansabdar. The word zat meant that noble had to keep command of a certain number of horses and horsemen.

The peshkash brought monetary satisfaction to the nobles. In Gujarat there were the tributary chiefs rather than the mansabdars. The chiefs were enrolled into the Mughal administrative wheel by being granted mansabs. This included the watan already owned by the chief and hence it came to be known as

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watan-jagir. It was distinct from the jagir system because by the watan-jagir system the chief received additional income. The zamindars and chiefs had hereditary rights which were recognized by Akbar, even though in the strict sense the zamindari lands could be transferred. One of the advantages of bringing watan-jagir under the jagir system was that the common principles and regulations held by the Imperial power could be applied to them.

The areas held by the zamindars in Gujarat during the Mughal rule were Kacch, Sirohi, Somnath, Ramnagar (Dharampur), Dungapur and Banswada. The other sarkars administered by the Imperial officers were Ahmedabad (with 33 divisions), Broach, (with 14 divisions), patan (with 17 divisions), surat (68 divisions), Baroda (4 divisions), Nandod (12 divisions), and Navanagar (18 divisions). Thus there were 184 divisions in all which were called parganas. The districts which totalled to ten were called sarkars.

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The nobility during the Mughal rule was composed of various racial groups which included the Turanis (Central Asians), Iranians, Afghans, Shaikhzadars (Indian Muslims) and Rajputs. The reason to encourage the Rajputs and other Hindu zamindars was to give importance to hereditary factor which was important because by this the areas under the Imperial government would continue to be the same.

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As the Mughal nobility also belonged to the military institution they had good navy. Surat was the chief ship -

building centre under Akbar and also the base for their naval activities.⁹⁶ The flotilla which was built by Akbar consisted of 3,000 vessels which varied in size. Maintained for both defence and offence, it was owned and furnished by the vassals and chiefs of Gujarat.⁹⁷ It was constructed under the supervision of Mir Bahar. Apart from looking after the construction of the ships and boats he had to see that they were kept in a proper condition. He was also in total command of the navy.

The Mughals had to depend on the Portuguese for the cartaz (license)⁹⁸ and for the protection of their pilgrims going to Mecca. The navy according to Abul Fazl apart from providing support for the army and military was also used for domestic purposes. For example, it furnished ways to obtain things for agriculture and the household in general.⁹⁹

The sails which were used for these vessels were made from the cloth got from Gujarat. These manufactured cotton cloths were mainly of white and pink colour. The whole process of manufacturing was supervised by officers.¹⁰⁰ Realizing the importance of the sea and navy Akbar recruited the Portuguese who were considered expert seamen. Coming into contact with them¹⁰¹ Akbar was very impressed with their naval superiority.

Conclusion

The characteristics of the Gujarat nobles of this period compared to the nobles of the earlier period differs in a minor way. The nobles during the earlier period were either loyal to their rulers or rebels. But these two extremities took a backseat and during the sixteenth century nobility became the prop of the Sultanate. They exercised a predominant influence in the state as generals, administrators and sometimes as kingmakers. Unlike the nobles of medieval Europe they were not hereditary homogeneous and well - organized factions. Comparing the nobility in Gujarat to the one prevailing in medieval Europe, the latter owed its political position to the decline and weakness of the monarchy; in Gujarat it owed its position to the strength of the ruler. That is; it existed due to royal patronage. The sixteenth century saw a combination of the different characteristics from the various stages and what resulted was not something new, yet there was something unique about the nobility and the nobles.

No doubt, the nobility was created by the Sultan. Due to the constant changes among the rulers, the nobles could not establish themselves as a separate body. But this cannot be said of the time towards the end of the sixteenth century. One could see that the nobles were divided into two groups and were sponsoring their own protege to the throne. So when they started asserting themselves as king - makers, they were more or less becoming like their counterparts in Europe. In a sense they could be called as neo - feudals as compared to the nobles in medieval Europe.

Itimad Khan, a noble formed the link between the Sultanate and Mughal Gujarat who entered and conquered Gujarat in 1573. What was misfortune for one kingdom (Gujarat Sultanate) was fortunate for another (Mughals). That is, the nobles who had helped in degenerating the rule of the Sultans of Gujarat with their power, found a place in the Mughal Government. The case of Itimad Khan serves as an example. During the reign of Sultan Muzaffar III Itimad Khan ranked as an important noble. But he betrayed the Sultan and invited Akbar to rule Gujarat. No doubt, he was suitably rewarded in 1583 by Akbar when he was appointed the Viceroy of Gujarat. He was given the sarkar of Patan as jagir, apart from having to take care of the crown lands in Gujarat.

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Mir Abu Turab was appointed amin of the subah of Gujarat. He was trusted person because he was the first of the nobles from Gujarat who had paid respects to Akbar's suzerainty over Gujarat.

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Thus whether it was during the Sultanate or the Mughal period in Gujarat the nobles during the sixteenth century owed their loyalty to the state not because it was expected of them. Their main objective was to keep aside their loyalty and patriotic feelings for the state and replace it with selfish motives and ambitions. The involvement in commercial activities by certain nobles like Malik Gopi who favoured the Portuguese for selfish motives is a classic example. He knew that by being cordial with the Portuguese his own position would be secure. For

achieving this he even had ill-feelings towards his compatriot - Malik Ayaz, who was also a noble like him. Then Khwaja Safar's relations with the Portuguese was one of love and hatred. He chose to side with them when it suited him, while when he wanted to take revenge on them he personally went about organizing a battle against them by inviting various powers from both India and abroad.

Also due to material interest the activities of the noble lead him to settle in Gujarat. Putting aside caste considerations restrictions, even a Brahmin like Malik Gopi opted for a very luxurious life due to his commercial activities. In the case of Malik Ayaz he considered and established Diu as a permanent base. As a result he invited merchants from all over to settle there. It was only due to commercial activities that he had enmity with the Portuguese. He even went to the extent of protecting ships which harboured at Diu for the sake of trade. In fine, the merchant nobles or nobles who were merchants were a new phenomenon in the sixteenth century nobility or ruling class and led a very successful life and took personal interest in conducting trade.

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