

**THE EMERGENCE, CONSOLIDATION AND DECLINE  
OF BANARAS RAJ: POLITY AND COMMERCIAL  
ECONOMY IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in the partial fulfillment of the requirement  
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**Doctor of Philosophy**

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### DECLARATION

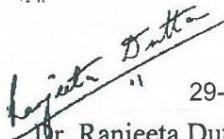
I, Swati Nishad, hereby declare that the thesis entitled 'The Emergence, Consolidation and Decline of Banaras Raj: Polity and Commercial Economy in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century' submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of any degree of this or any other university.



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### CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



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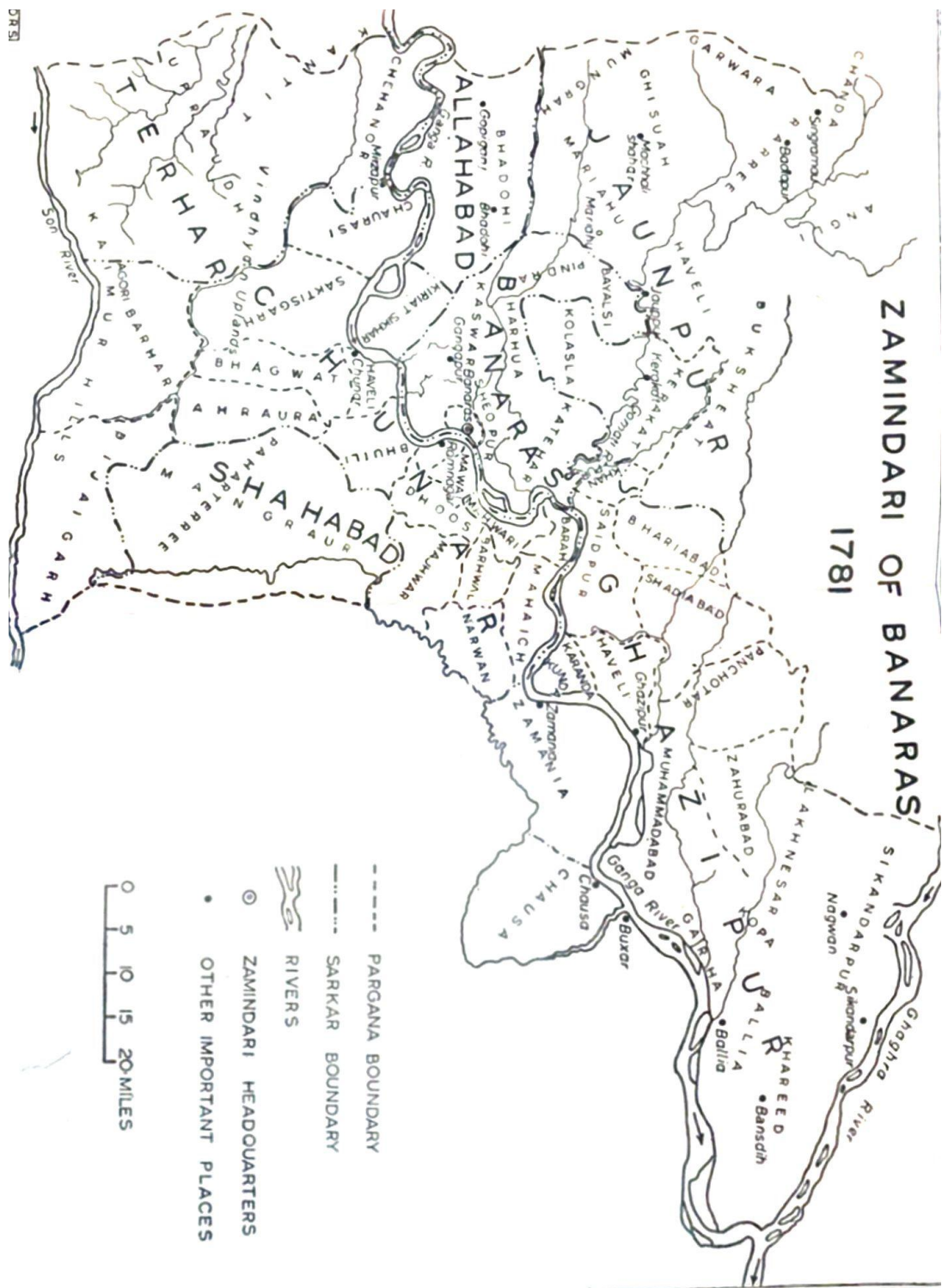
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# **CHAPTER -1**

## **BANARAS RAJ: AN INTRODUCTION**



Map: K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in transition: 1738-1795.*



Banaras popularly referred to as Kashi, situated on the left bank of the holy Ganges river, is considered one of the oldest surviving cities in the world. It is named after two tributaries of the river Ganga: 'Barna' or 'Varna'<sup>1</sup> and 'Asi',<sup>2</sup> both of which stretch across the region. There is no doubt about the antiquity of Banaras; it has a glorious past not only in religious and spiritual context but also in the political as well as commercial history of India. The region under study in this work is not just the city of Banaras but the entire Banaras region also referred in the historiography as the Banaras zamindari<sup>3</sup> or kingdom (Balwant Singh assumed the title of the Raja)<sup>4</sup> or Banaras Raj which evolved in the eighteenth century around the period of 1730's. And the capital of this state was the city of Banaras. The Banaras zamindari or the Banaras state encompasses the districts of Jaunpur, Ghazipur, the city of Banaras and Mirzapur, and the district of Chunar. Though located in the regional state of Awadh the Banaras Raj had enormous power and the local political elite of Banaras that held this region as the zamindari behaved and functioned as the rulers themselves claiming a parallel sovereignty to the *Nawab* of Awadh whose subordinates they were in real terms. Thus the Banaras zamindari referred also as the kingdom and the Raj had a crucial and decisive part in the history of Indian especially during the eighteenth century. Situated between the period of the decline of the Mughal Empire and the rise of the British colonial state, Banaras Raj had the ability to influence and shape the fortunes of both these empires. The majority of studies that have been carried on Banaras have a central theme of religion, culture and educational history. Needless to state, the study and analysis of the political, social and economic aspects of this region especially pertaining to the period of the eighteenth century have been overlooked in the historical scholarship. Thus in this work an attempt is made to study these neglected aspects of Banaras region.

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<sup>1</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, Vol.-2, Tr. H. Blochmann, The Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873, p-158.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-1.

<sup>4</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 2-3.

## THE GEOGRAPHICAL MILIEU

The geographical setting of Banaras Raj is significant as it shaped the historical processes of the politics and economics of the area in the eighteenth century. The entire area of the Raj, that we are about to deal with in this work has been irrigated by the Ganges and its various tributaries, like Yamuna, Gomti, Ghaghara, Karmnasa, Sone, Barna and Asi, etc.<sup>5</sup> These rivers formed a dense network and irrigate the entire plain. The alluvial soil carried by these rivers make this area as one of the most fertile regions in the entire subcontinent. Because of this prosperity coupled with the sacrality of Banaras city, this region has sustained a large population and has seen the maximum influx of people from every nook and corner of the subcontinent and other parts of the world since time immemorial. Banaras,<sup>6</sup> Mirzapur,<sup>7</sup> Chunar<sup>8</sup> and Ghazipur<sup>9</sup> are situated on the bank of river Ganges, while Jaunpur<sup>10</sup> was situated on the banks of the river Gomati. The river Gomati is a tributary of the Ganges network, and flows into the Ganges near the city of Banaras, thus, interconnecting the important cities of this region. Other than this, the Ganges served as an important highway for trade and travel and connected both the Banaras city and the other cities of the Banaras state to the commercial marts of Bengal and Bihar. While in the west along with the river Yamuna, Ghaghara and Gomati, the Ganges formed an intricate network and connected the political hubs like Delhi and Agra of the Mughal Empire and the newly formed capitals under the *Nawabi* regime of Awadh i.e., Lucknow and Faizabad during the eighteenth century. The rivers Karmnasa and Sone formed the boundary between the borders of Banaras kingdom and the *suba* of Bihar. All these rivers were navigable throughout the year thus forming a mainstay of communication for the region which boosted the economic growth of this kingdom.

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<sup>5</sup> F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Province of India: Banaras*, vol-14, Allahabad, 1884, pp- 9-15.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p- 15.

<sup>7</sup> F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Province of India: Mirzapur*, vol-15, Allahabad, 1883, p-11.

<sup>8</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, Vol.-2, ed.. H. Blochmann, The Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873, p-159.

<sup>9</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical and Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepoor District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1876, p-1.

<sup>10</sup> F. H. Fisher and J. P. Hewett, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of North Western Provinces of India*, Vol. XIV, part 3- Jaunpur, p-7.

Other than the riverine routes, all the areas of this region were well connected through land routes as well. The famous Grand Trunk Road or *Sarak-e-Azam* built by Sher Shah Sur in the sixteenth century from Peshawar in Pakistan to Sonargaon near Dacca (present Bangladesh) covering a distance of 1500 *kos*, passed through the kingdom of Banaras thus connecting it, in the west to the capital cities of Agra and Delhi and extending further to the east, till the *suba* of Bengal.<sup>11</sup> Such interconnections formed a major link of transit as the Banaras region acted as a nodal point between the eastern and western parts of the Indian sub-continent. Many other roads fanned out from Banaras in all directions, providing an efficient network of transportation and communication. According to the Rai Chatar Man Kayath, the author of *Chahar Gulshan*, a Persian text written in 1756 A.D. that, there were two major roads that connected via Banaras in the eighteenth century. One such road was between Delhi and Patna via Muradabad and Banaras, while the other was from Agra to Banaras via Allahabad.<sup>12</sup> Another important transit road that emerged in the eighteenth century as a popular route was between Banaras and the capitals of Awadh that is Faizabad and Lucknow. According to Bayly, “the commerce, urban development and specialist agricultural production which had once existed along the route between Delhi and Mughal Bengal was replicated along the link between Lucknow and Calcutta via Banaras and Patna.”<sup>13</sup>

Another facet that made the Banaras zamindari stand out was its topography. Banaras was situated in between the route of Delhi and Calcutta. The region consisted of ravines and dense forests providing security to this region. It was protected by the hilly tracts of Vindhya in the south,<sup>14</sup> which we later see in the next chapter that it served as a perfect hideout for the Raja of Banaras, Balwant Singh during his reign from 1739 A.D.<sup>15</sup> to 1770 A.D.<sup>16</sup> in times of danger. Balwant Singh often retired to these hills and took shelter, especially when the *Nawabs* of Awadh would march to

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<sup>11</sup> K. Qanungos, *Sher Shah: a Critical Study Based on the Original Sources*, Calcutta, 1921, pp-388-389.

<sup>12</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *India of Aurangzeb*, 1901, pp- cviii-cxii.

<sup>13</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-67.

<sup>14</sup> F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Province of India: Banaras*, vol-14, Allahabad, 1884, p- 15.

<sup>15</sup> F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Province of India: Banaras*, vol-14, Allahabad, 1884, p-106.

<sup>16</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1770-72*, vol-3, Calcutta, 1919, letter no -320, p- 96.

Banaras in order to oust the Raja from the *zamindari*. Mirzapur,<sup>17</sup> Bijaygarh, Latifpur, Chunar, all important places in the vicinity of Banaras *zamindari* were situated on a hilly terrain.<sup>18</sup> Apart from the natural topography if we a look at the political geography of the region the state of Banaras shared its political boundaries with Awadh in the west and Bihar in the east. Awadh in the mid-eighteenth century was under the *Nawabi* regime. Saadat Khan (1722 A.D.) was the first *Nawab*. Both these prosperous *subas* were politically and economically quite stable and provided secure borders to the Banaras region. Thus, the geographical location of this region proved to be an advantage in the eighteenth century, due to which it attained prosperity and emerged as an important political region that connected various areas of economic and political interests.

The *zamindari* of Banaras apart from Banaras city had four major districts of Ghazipur, Mirzapur, Jaunpur and Chunar that were in a flourishing state during the eighteenth century. And for the economical and political upliftment of this region, all these districts played a very crucial part. All the five districts were in close proximity with each other and were well connected. The city of Banaras situated on the left bank of river Ganga in the Banaras *zamindari* was the seat of the Rajas of Banaras. According to the Persian text, *Chahar Gulshan*, 'It is an old town, with the habitations forming a bow, while the river Ganges flows by it like the bow-string'.<sup>19</sup> Banaras stretched in between the river Barna and river Asi. It extends between the latitude of 25° 8' N to 25° 35' N and the longitudinal extend is from 82° 42' to 83° 26' E.<sup>20</sup> The Vindhya ranges formed the borders of Banaras *zamindari*.<sup>21</sup> The district of Jaunpur was towards the north and north-western periphery of the Banaras city, while on the northeast and east laid Ghazipur, and to the south was Mirzapur. To the extreme south-east lay the *pargana* of Shahabad of the Bihar suba which was separated by the river Karmnasa.<sup>22</sup> The next was Ghazipur, a town in the vicinity of the *zamindari* of Banaras, which stretched between 25° 19' and 26° 2' north latitude and between 83° 7'

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<sup>17</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, ed. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 30.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp-30-35.

<sup>19</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *Khulasat: India of Aurangzeb*, 1901, p-28.

<sup>20</sup> F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Province of India: Banaras*, vol-14, Allahabad, 1884, p- 2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p-15.

<sup>22</sup> H.R Nevill, *Banaras: A Gazetteer, Being Vol. XXVI of District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Awadh*, Allahabad, 1909, p-1.

and 84° 40' east longitude.<sup>23</sup> It encompassed the land lying between the east of Jaunpur and north-east of Banaras. From the north to the east this district was bounded by the river Ghaghara, while the Ganges flowed to its south. Ghazipur was surrounded by the town of Jaunpur, Banaras, Azamgarh, Sarun and Shahabad.<sup>24</sup> It stood on the north side of the Ganges, about forty one miles North-East from Banaras.<sup>25</sup> Then there was the district of Mirzapur, which was a large and flourishing town in the eighteenth century that extended from 23° 52' to 25° 32' north latitude and from 82° 7' to 83° 33' east longitude.<sup>26</sup> It stood on the bank of the Ganges, which separated it from Chunar and Banaras, thus forming a natural barrier and providing security to the region. Mirzapur stretched from the foot hills of Vindhya ranges to the Kaimur hills.<sup>27</sup> It was thirty miles away from Banaras. As attested by many travelers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Mirzapur was one of the greatest inland trading towns.<sup>28</sup> Then was the district of Jaunpur whose latitudinal and longitudinal extent was 25° 46' North and 82° 39' east respectively.<sup>29</sup> It was situated on the banks of the river Gomati, about forty miles North-West from Banaras. To the north and west lay the dominion of the *Nawab* of Awadh, to the south was the river Ganges and to the east it was bounded by the river Ghaghara.

## POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE BANARAS REGION

The eighteenth century witnessed decline of older regimes as well as the emergence of new powers and it was a period where various political, economic and social changes were taking place. Similarly, the administrative divisions and political territories of the Gangetic plain including the region of Banaras also went through considerable changes from the Mughal period, to its decline until the close of the eighteenth century, roughly between the periods of 1707 A.D. to 1795 A.D. From

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<sup>23</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical And Statistical Memoir of the Ghazee-poor District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p-1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> H.R. Nevill, *Ghazipur: A Gazetteer, Being Vol. XXVI of District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Awadh*, Allahabad, 1909, p-1.

<sup>26</sup> Drake -Blockman, D.L., *Mirzapur: A Gazetteer, Being Vol. XXVII of District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Awadh*, Allahabad, 1911, p-1.

<sup>27</sup> F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Province of India: Mirzapur*, vol-15, Allahabad, 1883, p- 11.

<sup>28</sup> Walter Hamilton, *A Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindustan, and the Adjacent Countries*, Vol. I, London, 1820, p- 311.

<sup>29</sup> F. H. Fisher and J. P. Hewett, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of North Western Provinces of India*, part 3- Jaunpur, p-2.

being a *pargana* under the jurisdiction of the Mughal *suba* of Allahabad during Akbar's period (1556-1605 A.D.) to becoming a zamindari (1738 A.D.) under the *Nawabs* of Awadh, emerging as a full-fledged state or kingdom in the eighteenth century under the Banaras zamindars, Mansaram and Balwant Singh and finally becoming a part of the East India Company under the Bengal government (1795 A.D.), this region has a chequered political history which is crucial to understand if one has to do justice to the analysis of the eighteenth-century politics.

**Early History:** Banaras traces its history that dates back to the ancient period. It is also considered as a sacred place for the Hindus and Buddhists alike. In the early sixth century B.C., Banaras popularly known as Kashi was among the sixteen *mahajanpadas*. In the ancient times it was one of the most extensive and powerful kingdoms in India. Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang), a celebrated Buddhist pilgrim from China visited India in the first half of the seventh century. On visiting Banaras Xuanzang noted, that the kingdom of Kashi covered a vast area of around eight hundred miles and its capital city roughly stretched around an area of four miles.<sup>30</sup> During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Banaras was included in the kingdom of Kannauj. It was then ruled by Jaichandra, the ruler of the Gaharwal dynasty in the last quarter of the twelfth century.<sup>31</sup> Jaichandra was a powerful ruler and Banaras was at its zenith. The glory of Banaras can be testified from the description in a Persian text called the *Kamil-ut-Tawarikh* written around 1230 A.D. by Sheikh Abul Hasan, who was contemporary of Muhammad Ghori.<sup>32</sup> According to him, Banaras extended 'lengthwise from the borders of China to the province of Malwa and in breadth from the sea to within ten days journey of Lahore'.<sup>33</sup>

It was during Raja Jaichandra's reign that Muhammad Ghori entered the Indian subcontinent. And Raja Jaichandra was defeated at the battle fields of Chandwar in the district of Etawah by Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, a General of Muhammad Ghori in

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<sup>30</sup> M.A. Sherring, *The Sacred City of the Hindus: An Account of Banaras in Ancient And Modern Times*, Trubner and co., London, 1868, pp- 8-9.

<sup>31</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p- 127.

<sup>32</sup> *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians: the Muhammadan Period*, vol. 2. (ed. - Elliot and Dowson), Trubner and co., London, 1869, pp- 244-246.

<sup>33</sup> *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians: the Muhammadan Period*, vol. 2. (ed. - Elliot and Dowson), Trubner and co., London, 1869, p-251.

1194 A.D.<sup>34</sup> After the defeat the army of Muhammad Ghori sacked Banaras. The celebrated poet and historian Hasan Nizami, the author of *Tajul-Ma'asir* refers that,

‘From that place the royal army proceeded towards Banaras, which is the centre of the country of Hind, and here they destroyed nearly one thousand temples, and raised mosques on their foundations’.<sup>35</sup>

Henceforth the region and city of Banaras became an integral part of the Delhi Sultanate. The Khiljis (1290-1320 A.D.), Tughlaqs (1320-1413 A.D.) and Lodhis (1451-1526 A.D.) ruled over Banaras for the next few centuries till finally Babur along with his son Humayun, captured it and annexed it to the Mughal Empire in 1527 A.D.<sup>36</sup> According to Tuzuk-I-Babari of Mughal Emperor Babur, ‘Humayun, who had proceeded against the rebels (Afghans) of the East, having taken Jaunpur, marched expeditiously to Ghazipur’<sup>37</sup>. When Sher Shah Sur defeated Humayun near Buxar (Bihar) in 1539 A.D., on the battle fields of Chausa, though for a short duration, but all the territories of the Mughal regime along with Banaras slipped into the hands of the Afghans.<sup>38</sup> Humayun fled to the east, but was once again defeated in the battle of Kannauj in 1540 A.D at the hands of Sher Shah Sur.<sup>39</sup> After both these battles Humayun almost became fugitive and led a life in exile. However, he soon regained his lost territories.

Mughal Emperor, Akbar during his fortieth year of coronation (1594 A.D.) reorganized the territorial boundaries of his empire and according to *Ain-I-Akbari*,

‘His Majesty apportioned the Empire into twelve divisions, to each of which he gave the name of Subah and distinguished them by the appellation of the tract of country or its capital city’.<sup>40</sup>

Among these *subas* was the *suba* of Allahabad that comprised ten *sarkars* and 177 *mahals* or *parganas*.<sup>41</sup> Amongst these ten *sarkars*, Banaras along with Jaunpur, Chunar, Ghazipur and Mirzapur became the part of the Allahabad province and were

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p-251, Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p- 129.

<sup>35</sup> *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians: the Muhammadan Period*, vol. 2. (ed. - Elliot and Dowson), Trubner and co., London, 1869, pp- 223.

<sup>36</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p-203

<sup>37</sup> *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians: the Muhammadan Period*, vo-4, (ed. - Elliot and Dowson), Trubner and co., London, 1868, p-266.

<sup>38</sup> K. Qanungos, *Sher Shah: a Critical Study Based on the Original Sources*, Calcutta, 1921, pp- 195-197.

<sup>39</sup> S.K. Baneerji, *Humayun Badshah*, Oxford University Press, London, 1938, pp-228-248.

<sup>40</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, Vol.-2, ed. H. Blochmann, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873, p-129.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p-171.

kept under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Allahabad.<sup>42</sup> The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D., created an atmosphere of confusion and strife and Banaras and its adjoining region had to pass through many vicissitudes, until 1772 A.D., when it was made over to the *Nawab Wazir* of Awadh, Saadat Khan. Saadat Khan further farmed it out to Mir Rustam Ali. It was at about this time that the foundations of Banaras kingdom were laid.

## BANARAS AND AWADH

During the eighteenth century, the most important aspect of this period was that a new political system had emerged and which had a unique relationship with the collapsing Mughal Empire. In north India one such power that emerged was the *Nawabi* regime in Awadh under Saadat Khan, the then Governor of the Awadh province. Usually in the days of the Mughals regime, the internal administration of the suba of Awadh was controlled by the Mughal court, through the office of a *diwan* (Mughal official). But in the eighteenth century Saadat Khan, the imperial Governor laid the foundation of a new dynasty in Awadh in 1728 A.D., which had a well-defined historical region as well as an administrative unit. Saadat Khan assumed the title of the *Nawab* of Awadh. The process of gaining an autonomous status was gradual and took years as in the nascent stage these Governors or provincial officials could not directly challenge the Mughal supremacy, so they coexisted together. First of all, they had to muster resources, diplomatic skills and ties, administrative skills, force etc, in order to expand and build their own networks. By that time Delhi lost its control and could not function as an efficient centre and hold back its provinces. Due to this weak central government, the Mughals also did not confront these regional powers which gave the latter an opportunity to flourish and hence they began asserting their authority over a certain region.

In the same manner Saadat Khan kept the imperial system in a working mode and along with this he successfully manipulated the new circumstances as a consequence of the Mughal decline to carve out a niche for himself and his successors. The incapability of the Mughals to keep a check on him provided him with an opportunity to engage in independent and diplomatic military activities. He subdued several neighbouring territories and their zamindars and made sure that he had the approval of

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<sup>42</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *Khulasat: India of Aurangzeb*, 1901, p-30.



the Mughal Emperor, so that he could easily legitimize his actions. The Mughals who were considerably weakened by now had no will to confront the rising regional power of Awadh under Saadat Khan and hence gave the relevant legitimacy much needed to Awadh which was fast becoming independent and powerful under their own ambitious official, Saadat Khan, the Governor of Awadh. Saadat Khan, also obtained the lease of Jaunpur, Ghazipur and Chunar on the payment of annual revenue of seven lakhs rupees from Murtaza Khan, one of the Mughal *jagirdars* in charge of these regions<sup>43</sup> and in turn he farmed it out to Rustam Ali, one of his own courtiers in Awadh, who in the past was also bestowed by Murtaza Khan with the *ijaredari* or revenue farming of these regions. These activities of Saadat Khan pushed the frontiers of Awadh further in the east and the Banaras region remained in the possession of his successors till the English acquired it from Asaf-ud-Daula, the *Nawab* of Awadh in 1775 A.D.<sup>44</sup>

## THE ADVENT OF THE ZAMINDARI

Eighteenth century was the time of the political upheaval in India, especially in the Gangetic basin. And amongst all this, the Banaras region of the Mughal suba of Allahabad gradually started emerging as an important political and commercial entity despite the administrative jurisdiction of *Nawabs* of Awadh over Banaras. Around 1719 A.D., Emperor Muhammad Shah rented out the *jagir* of Banaras, Jaunpur, Chunar and Ghazipur to Murtaza Khan, one of his courtiers,<sup>45</sup> who further rented it to Rustam Ali for collecting revenue from the region. And when Saadat Khan gained prominence in Awadh, he on the pretext of poorly managed revenue farming, acquired these sarkars from Murtaza Khan and re-rented it to Mir Rustam Ali. Thus the jagir of Banaras along with Jaunpur, Chunar and Ghazipur confirmed to Murtaza Khan, and now under Saadat Khan went on to become a small kingdom within a span of few decades.

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<sup>43</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, trans.- F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 8.

<sup>44</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries: the Treaties, etc., Relating to the North-Western Provinces, Oudh, And Nepal*, Vol. 2, R. Cambray And Co., Calcutta, 1893, p-47.

<sup>45</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, trans.- F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 2.

Despite the fact that the region was given on lease to Rustam Ali for the payment of rupees eight lakhs annually, but we find that since the start of the eighteenth century, within the perimeters of the area a number of zamindars of different clans, especially Rajputs and Bhumihars were striving hard to get hold of the region. Many small and big zamindars, local tax officials who turned into political leaders and indigenous chiefs had emerged during this period in the region and managed to acquire authority with the help of their kinsmen and armed forces. They enjoyed dominance over a group of villages or a *pargana* and assumed the titles of Raja. They even got hold of strong forts of the region and made them their base.

According to the *Ain-i-Akbari*, before the eighteenth century the Rajputs were a dominant class of landholders in the entire Banaras region,<sup>46</sup> but still the Brahmans and the Bhumihars (dominant landed caste group) of the Banaras district managed to get control of the Banaras zamindari. According to the eighteenth-century Persian text, the *Balwantnamah* the founder of Banaras zamindari, Mansaram was a Bhumihar Brahmin zamindar of Gautam subcaste<sup>47</sup> and a Resident of Titharea Village (Gangapur<sup>48</sup>) of Kaswar *Pargana* of Banaras. He inherited few hundred of *bighas* of land from his father<sup>49</sup> and possessed not more than half of the village of Gangapur.<sup>50</sup> Mansaram was under the service of Barisal Singh, the zamindar of Kaswar and from here he managed to get in the good books of Rustam Ali, the deputy of the *Nawab Saadat Khan*.<sup>51</sup> Then onwards Mansaram managed to maneuver the *Nawabs* of Awadh in his favour against Rustam Ali who was virtually absent as an *ijaredar*. Finally, Mansaram with the support of the Awadh *Nawabs* was able to oust Rustam Ali and gained the control of the Banaras *jagir*. Therefore, the political career of Mansaram registering a meteoric rise from being a servant to becoming a successful zamindar of Banaras and laying the foundation stone of a new kingdom in 1738 A.D., which came to be known as Banaras Raj.<sup>52</sup> He was conferred the *sarkars* of Banaras,

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<sup>46</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, Vol.-2, ed. Jadunath Sarkar, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1949, p- 173-177.

<sup>47</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, p- 193.

<sup>48</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, p-3. Latter, when Balwant Singh became the Raja of Banaras, he renamed the village of Titharea to Gangapur.

<sup>49</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1776-80*, vol-5, Calcutta, 1930, letter no -1407, p- 306.

<sup>50</sup> W.K. Firminger, *Affairs of the East India Company*, vol-2, B.R. Publishing, New Delhi, 1812, p- 468.

<sup>51</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1776-80*, vol-5, Calcutta, 1930, letter no -1407, p- 306.

<sup>52</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical And Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeeepoor District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p- 89.

Jaunpur and Chunar on an annual revenue payment of thirteen lacs rupees by the *Nawabs* of Awadh.<sup>53</sup>

If we look at the sources carefully, we find that Mansaram was a petty zamindar in the village of Gangapur. He was neither mentioned as *pargana* zamindar nor village zamindar of any influence. But he aspired to become a big zamindar of the area, for which he was actively engaged in acquiring resources for climbing the ladder of power and went on to become the de facto administrator of Banaras. According to G.R. Gleig, the author of memoirs of life of Warren Hastings, the annual income of Mansaram from his inherited property was estimated around rupees 4000 only.<sup>54</sup> But by the year 1739 A.D. Mansaram had expanded his zamindari into eighteen *mahals* which yielded revenue worth of Rupees 24,50,881.<sup>55</sup> Though the kingdom of Banaras was not an autonomous state rather, it owed allegiance to the *Nawabs* of Awadh and also derived its authority from the Mughal emperor as well. The Raja acted as a vassal to the *Nawab* and ruled his kingdom on the mercy of the *Nawab* of Awadh.

Balwant Singh succeeded his father, Mansaram in 1740 A.D. to the zamindari of Banaras with the title of '*Raja Bahadur*' which was obtained for him during his father's time. In true sense Balwant Singh consolidated his power and expanded the territorial boundaries of his kingdom. For the first decade of his rule Balwant Singh acted as a petty vassal of the *Nawab* and paid his dues regularly without any sort of interruption. But in the subsequent years the Banaras zamindari grew many folds, its territorial boundaries expanded exponentially at the expense of neighbouring zamindars and local chiefs. Balwant Singh often tried to shake off the authority of the *Nawabs* and set himself free from the shadow of the *Nawabi* regime. His policies and action were crucial in deciding the fate of the kingdom of Banaras as well as the Gangetic plain. Balwant Singh never shied away from joining hands with anyone for his benefit whether it be, the Marathas, Afghans, English or even the Awadh *Nawabs* themselves. Balwant Singh continued his expansion policy and acquired twenty-two

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<sup>53</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, trans- F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 10.

<sup>54</sup> G.R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of Rt. Hon'ble Warren Hastings*, vol-1, London, 1841, p-338.

<sup>55</sup> W.K. Firminger, *Affairs of the East India Company*, vol-2, B.R. Publishing, New Delhi, 1812, pp-468-469.

parganas of Ghazipur along with Bhadohi and Kuntit from Allahabad *suba*<sup>56</sup> and several other areas in the basis of his diplomatic skills.

It was not only Balwant Singh who tried to free himself from the *Nawab*'s authority, but even the *Nawabs* of Awadh had put all their strength in expelling the Raja of Banaras and acquiring the entire kingdom for themselves. But neither of them succeeded in their ventures. And hence Balwant Singh continued the zamindari under the pleasure of the *Nawabs* and the *Nawabs* had no other option than to tolerate Balwant Singh. Being an opportunist Balwant Singh always rolled on to the stronger side, whether it was the *Nawab* of Awadh or the Afghans and later on the English. His loyalty shifted in accordance with his gains. When Safdar Jung, the *Nawab* of Awadh was defeated by the Afghans of Farrukhabad, Balwant Singh at once in order to safeguard his position and territory tried to make allies with the Afghans and was quick enough to break the alliance when the *Nawab* of Awadh crushed the Afghans of Farrukhabad.<sup>57</sup> Similarly Raja Balwant Singh of Banaras tried to appease the English forces and remained neutral during and after the battle of Buxar in 1764 A.D. thus betraying the *Nawab* of Awadh.

Due to the continuous evolvment of Banaras and its adjoining region under the first two Rajas around mid eighteenth century, we again see a change in the political geography of the Banaras region as it emerged into a new zamindari. According to the Walter Hamilton, in the hay days, the zamindari of Banaras had an estimate area which measured 1,36,663 *bighas* and yielded revenue of 81,69,318 *dams*.<sup>58</sup> Under the autonomy of the Awadh government, the Rajas of Banaras not only succeeded in establishing themselves as principal revenue intermediaries but they also attained a degree of autonomy in internal affairs and carved out a territory for themselves popularly known as the Banaras Raj. The geographical boundaries of this region kept on expanding until the intervention of the English Company in the political affairs of the Gangetic plain. Balwant Singh added the *pargana* of Bhadohi and Kuntit from the *suba* Allahabad to his territory. In addition, Kera Mangraur, Bijaygarh and Agori Bahrar in the *sarkar* Rohtas of Shahabad *pargana* and twenty-two more *parganas* of

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<sup>56</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical And Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepeer District*, vol-1, p- 105-106.

<sup>57</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, p-173.

<sup>58</sup> Walter Hamilton, *A Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindustan, and the Adjacent Countries*, Vol. I, London, 1820, p- 303.

Ghazipur were merged into his zamindari<sup>59</sup> because of the expansionist policy that he adopted. The son of Awadh *Nawab*, Asaf-ud-Daula ceded the throne of Awadh after his father, *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula passed away, in the year 1775 A.D. to the British. And at this juncture the Banaras zamindari was subdivided into 63 *parganas* covering an approximate area of 12,000 square miles.<sup>60</sup>

## EAST INDIA COMPANY'S METAMORPHOSIS FROM MERCANTILE TRADING BODY TO DE-FACTO SOVEREIGN OF BANARAS

The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed the domination of English Company in the northern plains. The English rule had gradually crept out from the Bengal and expanded into the Gangetic valley towards the west. The process of expansion was slow and gradual and various phases of this can be traced from the events that occurred in Awadh as well as Banaras. The *Nawab* of Awadh after his defeat in the battle field of Buxar in 1764 A.D, became an ally to the English Company and was forced to pay large amount as war indemnity. And thus, the most powerful and influential ruler of north India was reduced to an insignificant position. Along with this, though for a very short duration of time, the kingdom of Banaras, that was incorporated in the dominion of the Company through the treaty of Banaras.<sup>61</sup> But after the formulation of the treaty of Allahabad in 1765 A.D, the Banaras treaty stood null and void and the *suba* of Awadh along with the Banaras zamindari was handed back to the *Nawabi* regime of Awadh and the jurisdiction of the Mughal Emperor was restricted to the territories of Allahabad and Kara.<sup>62</sup>

Chait Singh, the son of Raja Balwant Singh, ascended his father's legacy and occupied the seat of Banaras zamindari despite of claims of other candidates after the demise of his father. With the full support of the English he became the undisputed Raja of Banaras, regardless of the fact that Shuja-ud-Daula did not wanted Chait

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<sup>59</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical And Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepeer District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p- 105-106.

<sup>60</sup> Walter Hamilton, *A Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindustan, and the Adjacent Countries*, Vol. I, London, 1820, p- 302.

<sup>61</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical And Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepeer District*, vol-1, p- 103.

<sup>62</sup> D.C. Ganguly, *Select Document of the British Period of Indian History*, vol-2, Trustee of the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta, 1958, p- 74-76

Singh to continue as the Raja of the zamindari of Banaras. The initial years of Chait Singh's reign were peaceful but did not last long. *Nawab* Asaf-ud-Daula, after the death of *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula, his father, tried all his efforts to expel the Raja from Banaras zamindari but the English were equally deterrent on maintaining Chait Singh in the zamindari of Banaras. In doing so their primary objective was to protect their interest and gain maximum benefits. They were aware of the fact that if they did not interfere in the matters of Banaras, the zamindari would land in the hands of the *Nawab* which would hamper their political and commercial interests.

Initially the Raja was left free to administer his province but with the passing years the control of the Company kept on increasing thus reducing the powers of the Raja. The final blow to Chait Singh's authority came with his dispute with the Governor General, Warren Hastings which resulted in his expulsion from Banaras in 1781 A.D. And hence, once the most powerful person in the province of Banaras was forced to lead a life in exile.<sup>63</sup>

Mahip Narayan succeeded Chait Singh, after the revolt and expulsion of the latter from Banaras. His accession to the zamindari of Banaras was completely on the pleasure and mercy of the Company. And from here onwards the powers of the Raja were curtailed and a Resident was installed to ensure the regular payment of revenue. The English Company appointed Residents in mostly every Indian state right after the battle of Buxar in 1764 A.D. These Residents acted as political or commercial agents and their main task was to serve and promote the welfare of the East India Company and gain maximum profit. With the help of these Residents, the Company officials could easily interfere and keep an eye on the internal affairs of these Indian states. Similar was the case in Banaras zamindari as in practice the Resident in Banaras seemed to be more powerful than the Raja. The rulers of Banaras by then had become mere nominal heads and their status was equivalent to petty zamindar while the real authority was vested with the Resident. And finally around 1795 A.D, the Banaras zamindari was completely dissolved and Banaras was handed over to the Bengal government administered by the British and the Rajas were left with a small dominion called the Banaras state. Slowly and steadily the clutches of the Company rule became much tighter and with the permanency of the Resident Jonathan Duncan in Banaras

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<sup>63</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, (trans- F.Cruven), Allahabad, 1875, p-169.

and his land revenue settlements, Banaras went on the same line as of Bengal, completely subordinated to the control of the Company. Banaras region witnessed both firstly, the never ending pressure of greed and ambition of the English officials and secondly it was exposed to their policies and administrative practices that slowly drained Banaras of its resources. With the expansion of trade, the British influence on economic life of the region along with the political constraints increased by many folds.

Thus we see that with the progression of the colonial rule of the East India Company in the political realms of north India, especially after the battle of Buxar in 1764 A.D, the administrative boundaries of the Banaras were redefined and reorganized. And around 1795 A.D, the Banaras *zamindari* was completely dissolved and Banaras was no longer a part of Allahabad or Awadh *subas*. The East India Company handed over Banaras to the Bengal government and Banaras was now considered a part of Bengal province of the British Empire.

## TRADE AND COMMERCE

While there has been an extensive discussion on the medieval past within the framework of religion and politics, the commercial importance of the Banaras region is rarely touched upon. It is always over shadowed by the religious and cultural aspects of the city but this doesn't mean that we are marginalizing the importance of Banaras as a sacred city. The religious, cultural, social, political and commercial aspects are two sided of the same mirror.

Banaras occupied an important place which not only boosted its social and cultural life but also helped it to develop into an economic centre which was thriving in the eighteenth century especially after the foundation of the Banaras state under the authority of the Rajas of Banaras. It not only attracted pilgrims and worshipers in large numbers but also facilitated commercial intercourse between various mercantile groups like the Banjaras. The cities of Awadh and Banaras region emerged as new magnates of trade and commerce after commercial cities of Delhi and Agra of the Mughal Empire witnessed a slump in their glory. The geographical location further enhanced these trade networks with the cities like Agra, Allahabad, Awadh, Patna and

Bengal. It had a well connected network of roads and riverine routes, which played a fundamental part in the boosting up of the economy of Banaras.

Banaras witnessed heavy commercial activities and the other cities like Ghazipur, Jaunpur and Mirzapur of this region also gained prosperity and emerged as large markets in the eighteenth century. After the decline of Murshidabad, Banaras had gained a status of inland commercial capital of the subcontinent.<sup>64</sup> According to C.A. Bayly, during the period of 1750-90 A.D., Banaras grew rapidly and was among one of the fastest thriving cities of India.<sup>65</sup> Merchants from Gujarat, Marwar, Awadh, Delhi, Deccan and Bikaner came in search of new prospect and seeing the vast potentials of trade in this region got settled in Banaras and its adjoining cities. Among them the most influential mercantile community in Banaras, in the eighteenth century were the Gosains or Sanyasis merchants. They carried on their trade on an all India level. They used their *mathas* as trading houses and carried on their business transaction from them. Other than the Sanyasis there were other merchant communities also like the Banjaras, Khattris, Baniyas, Jains and Marwaris etc.

Banking and money lending had also become an indispensable part of the economy of Banaras, which played a vital role in growth and development of trade and commerce in this region. The indigenous bankers of Banaras carried out their business activities pan India. These bankers not only included petty money lenders, who served a small section of the society but also shroffs with massive business firms like the house of Lala Kashmiri Mal, Lala Bachhraj, Bhaiyaram, Kalyan Das and Gopal Das. These giant business houses carried out their business on a vast scale and had massive networks. They provided loans to individuals and were also engaged in revenue collection and its remittance on behalf of the Raja of the Banaras zamindari and also on behalf of the rulers of Awadh *suba*. And later on we see that, they even became bankers for the East India Company and transacted and financed their business.

Banaras was predominantly an agricultural economy like the rest of the Indian economies. The key source of earning was the agricultural produce for the state of Banaras as well as the local authorities and the subjects. The share of the produce was

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<sup>64</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-104.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



shared among the *zamindars*, *raiyyats* and even the state. Thus land revenue was extremely important source of income and control over it was very necessary and hence it went through considerable changes and evolutions. The political and the economic policies of the Rajas of Banaras and the East India Company affected the land control system of Banaras.

The intervention of the British in the realms of Banaras resulted in the commercialization of agriculture. A lot of stress was laid on the cultivation of cash crops leading to the displacement of traditional farming patterns and crops. The principal commodities of trade from the Banaras region were textiles, sugar, opium, salt peter and indigo which were added to the list much later in the late eighteenth century.<sup>66</sup> Before the English companies intervention in the Gangetic plain textile formed the bulk of export from Banaras. But with the Company's interference the annual export of commodities like opium, sugar, saltpeter and indigo witnessed sharp increase though textile retained its earlier position. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, the role and interference of the Residents had increased in full sway while the increase in the revenue demands by the Company also kept pressing on the Banaras zamindari. Both of these led to a decline in the agricultural as well as the commercial productivity, which resulted in the crumbling of the zamindari especially after Raja Chait Singh's expulsion from Banaras. Though Jonathan Duncan tried his best to restore the zamindari to its former position and glory but the abuse was so extensive that it was beyond repair.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DEBATE

Eighteenth century is considered a very important and crucial period in Indian History. This period is often referred as the time when the state machinery under the umbrella of the Mughal Empire was declining and collapsing. And the English East India Company, a commercial body whose main agenda was money making had turned administrators who were ready to take over the administrative power in their hands completely displacing the earlier regime. For a long time, the major theme of the historiography relating to the eighteenth century was that of the Mughal Empire's down fall and the intervention of British power and their consolidation. And the

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<sup>66</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publication, New Delhi, p-130.

British were seen as heirs to the Mughal dynasty. It was considered an era of darkness characterized by political disintegration, economic decline, and warfare and disorder. The historiography basically dealt with turmoil and chaos that was prevalent during this period which led to the decaying of the political and economic framework of the Mughal hegemony, which gradually paved way for the English East India Company's colonial rule in the Gangetic plain.

Whereas, the latter part of the eighteenth century focuses on the establishment of colonial rule of the English Company. And also that within a short span of time the East India Company changed into a powerful political body from a mercantile trading organization but the main focus of the Company was still commercial and economic profit. Initially, the East India Company tried to follow the established customs and administrative practices but later they introduced changes to suit their political and financial needs. Historians who have worked on the eighteenth century have portrayed this period as a dark age and according to them the only ray of hope and sunshine in this darkness was the establishment of colonial rule.<sup>67</sup> Prior studies on the eighteenth century have all their attention and focus mainly on imperial political decline, according to them this decline was result of the weak administrative and religious policies of the Mughals and the incompetence of the latter Mughal emperors. In the view of the historians, this imperial fallout of the Mughal hegemony was an outcome of the deteriorating moral fiber of its emperors and viewed its decline and fall under the compass of its ruling elite only. Scholars like, Jadunath Sarkar<sup>68</sup> and Satish Chandra<sup>69</sup> put the blame on the religious policies of Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb and also hold his Deccan campaigns responsible for digging the grave of the Mughal Empire. Jadunath Sarkar, in his books titled '*History of Aurangzeb*' has thoroughly scrutinized the religious policies of Emperor Aurangzeb<sup>70</sup> and even his Deccan campaigns are studied comprehensively.<sup>71</sup> The author has derived the analysis that Aurangzeb's faulty policies were the main reason for the Mughal power to collapse and crumble down, whether be its society, economy or any other institutions.<sup>72</sup> Sarkar also studied and scrutinized the peasant rebellions. And according to him that the

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<sup>67</sup> James mill, *The History of British India*, vol 1-9,

<sup>68</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, vol-5, S.C. Sarkar and Sons, Calcutta.

<sup>69</sup> Satish Chandra, *History of Medieval India*, Orient Blackswan, pp-346-349.

<sup>70</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, vol-5, S.C. Sarkar and Sons, Calcutta, pp- 485-495.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, pp- 451- 452.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, pp-439- 451.

stability of the Mughal political system was ruined mainly due to the Hindu reaction over Aurangzeb's Muslim orthodoxy.<sup>73</sup> Jadunath Sarkar has held Aurangzeb's discriminatory and biased religious policies accountable for the rise of Hindu groups such as the Rajputs<sup>74</sup>, Sikhs<sup>75</sup> and the Marathas<sup>76</sup> in reaction.

Historians like Satish Chandra have argued that the incapability of the imperial officials to manage and collect revenue efficiently resulted in the fiscal crisis and which was further hampered by the incapability of the Mughal state to fulfill the Mansabdar's demand for *jagirs*. According to Chandra, the *jagirdari* systems failure was due to the decline in the *jagirs* and the faulty functioning of the *jagirdari* system.<sup>77</sup> Irfan Habib was of the opinion that, the tyranny of the Mughal state had forced the peasant to resist and rise in revolt. This suffering, distrust and exploitation of the agricultural masses led to the peasant rebellions and an agrarian crisis.<sup>78</sup> Other than the Mughal state, even the *jagirdars* exploited the peasant which further exaggerated the situation adding to the misery of the peasantry. The *jagirdars* aimed at reaping maximum benefits as they could out of their allotted *jagirs* before it were transferred to some other person.

However in the past few decades, a series of new region oriented studies have been carried out, which see the eighteenth century with different lenses and emphasize on the more positive aspects of this century. These new studies have totally altered the previous perceptions related to the eighteenth century. According to these views, this century was an era of absolute chaos and darkness, and has enough evidences to prove that this was not the case. But rather viewed this period under a new spectrum which was not of the politico-economic decline of a few regions but also as a period of transition and continuity where many other regions flourished culturally, socially and economically.<sup>79</sup> Eighteenth century when viewed from the perspective of Delhi and Agra definitely seems gloomy and in a dilapidated state. The recurring invasions of

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<sup>73</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb: 1618-1707*, M.C. Sarkar and son, Calcutta, 1930, pp-160-163.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, pp- 181-183.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, pp- 163-168.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, pp- 315-318.

<sup>77</sup> Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court: 1707- 1740*, New Delhi, 1972, pp- 45-51.

<sup>78</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, 1962, p- 319- 351.

<sup>79</sup> B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, p-321-323.

Nadir Shah in the year 1739 A.D., and then the frequent attacks of Ahmad Shah Abdali between 1748 to 1767 A.D. left these cities and its inhabitants in a state of mess and the Marathas and Rohilas attempts to get hold of these cities further plagued the situation. But the case of these imperial cities cannot be generalized for the entire India. There were examples of cities and regions like Awadh, Bengal, and Banaras etc that were quite in a flourishing state.

But the recent works have completely altered this view and have seen the eighteenth century in a new light and away from the degeneration of the Mughal power. The illustration of the eighteenth century that thus comes onto the forefront is a more holistic one, it has more depth to it and throws light on many other aspects of growth thus eliminating the earlier ideas and theories that the century was completely 'dark'. The works of C.A. Bayly,<sup>80</sup> Richard Barnett,<sup>81</sup> K.P. Mishra,<sup>82</sup> and B.S. Cohn<sup>83</sup> have focused on the reallocation of supremacy from the core (Delhi and Agra) to the peripheries (regional states like Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad).

The newer historiography analyses in depth the concept of regionalism and diverts us from the old state-centric viewpoint. Thus the eighteenth century is viewed on its own terms and not under the shadow of the predecessor or successor empires. Rather than the fall of the Mughal Empire, they deal with the emergence and consolidation of the regional powers like the *Nawabi* regime of Awadh and the Banaras Rajas. They even focus on the changes and continuities in the Mughal system that was brought about in these regional powers. For Barnett, the Mughal Empire was made up of various blocks that were glued or conjoined to each other by the emperor and when the state collapsed these conjoined blocks merely fell apart without deterioration.<sup>84</sup> Sanjay Subramanian and Muzaffar Alam in their work 'the Mughal State' compare the Mughal Empire to a 'patchwork quilt' rather than a complete 'wall to wall carpet'.<sup>85</sup> According to these historians the eighteenth century needs to be viewed on a larger

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<sup>80</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Barnett, *North India between Empires; Awadh, the Mughals and the British 1720-1801*, Berkeley, 1980.

<sup>82</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition, 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi.

<sup>83</sup> B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Barnett, *North India between Empires; Awadh, the Mughals and the British 1720-1801*, Berkeley, 1980, p-241.

<sup>85</sup> M. Alam and S. Subramanian (eds.), *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998; p-57.

frame and not just under the microscopic lens of the Mughals or English only. Imperial cities like Delhi and Agra might have witnessed a decline, but *subas* like as Bengal, Awadh, and Punjab and cities like Lucknow, Banaras, Murshidabad, etc were in a flourishing state and witnessing dynamic changes and economic reorientation. Thus we see that historians like Sarkar and Alam, never really focused much on the concept of ‘decline’ and ‘collapse’ rather their studies aimed at elaborating the concept ‘decentralization’ and ‘regionalization’ in the eighteenth century. They have pointed out that the eighteenth century crisis worked at different levels.<sup>86</sup> While court politics was defining the political fortunes of these regional states, there were other equally significant factors which need to be studied. Similarly there were some powerful individuals, whose role cannot be overlooked either as they were the ones who could mediate with the local zamindars of the region. These regional states were based on the conflict and cooperation of different local groups and ability of the ruler to integrate them in the system determined its strength and power.<sup>87</sup>

One of the other major themes which all the major works on regionalization of power in eighteenth century highlight is the pivotal role played by different local and mercantile groups in these regional states. C.A. Bayly aptly marks out in his work that,

‘The requirement of the post Mughal regimes for cash and legitimacy had strengthened the influence of corporations for merchants and gentry and service people which had been consolidating themselves between state and agrarian society’.<sup>88</sup>

Merchants and bankers played a vital role in these regional states and had a great influence not only financial but also political in the governance of these states. The imposition of cash revenue demands and commercialization and monetization of economy in eighteenth century placed merchants and bankers in an important position in these regional states. C.A Bayly sees the fall of the Mughal Empire as important change and not as a catastrophe. According to him, in the commercialization as well as decentralization of the Mughal polity, the ‘Corporate groups’ or the ‘Social

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<sup>86</sup> M. Alam and S. Subramanian (eds.), *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p-70.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-34.

classes', rendered a pivotal part. These corporate groups intensified and extended agriculture and commerce under the Mughal regime. But later in the eighteenth century we find that their allegiance shifted towards the British so that they could reap maximum benefits and derive more powers. C.A. Bayly in his work, "*Rulers, townsmen and bazaar*" outlines the growth and rise of North Indian towns and merchant communities from the time span between the fall of the Mughal regime to the consolidation of the colonial rule under the English East India Company.

In fact during the eighteenth century, the north Indian society certainly did not fall apart into lawlessness. Rather these units became much smaller in size but they were still proficient enough so that they could easily keep themselves going. And even the local political magnates of these regions were contributing in sustaining and supporting these units. The imperial court and army of the Mughal Empire had been substituted by these local entities. Thus Bayly's new merchants and service people came to the fore front within these smaller units and began to thrive.

In the book, '*North India between the Empires,*' Richard Barnett, the author has challenged the conventional view of chaos and anarchy that prevailed in the eighteenth century and has provided an altogether a new understanding for this transitional period. A period where not only the central Mughal Empire was collapsing, but side by side, entirely new political entities were emerging in Awadh and Banaras. He emphasizes on the fact that Awadh emerged in the 1720's on from the ruins of the imperial power. The strength of its economic and political stability Awadh began to develop its own distinct cultural and historical identity.<sup>89</sup> Barnett also describes the way in which the *Nawabi* regime emerged and consolidated its power by legitimizing themselves. He also focuses on interaction and relations of Awadh with its neighboring states and the menace of the foreign invaders which continuously hampered the growth of this region. He also deals with the effect of European activities in this region. And ponders on the question that how the gradual economic penetration moved hand in hand with growing political control as the commercial body now started turning into administrators?

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<sup>89</sup> Richard Barnett, *North India between Empires; Awadh, the Mughals and the British 1720-1801*, Berkeley, 1980, pp-21-23.

The studies of the eighteenth century focus on the tension between monarch, military personnel's, nobles or *Mansabdars* zamindars (land holders) and peasants. They attribute that the Mughal decline was due to the decline in the nature of monarchy, breakdown of the *Mansabdari* system, zamindar and peasant rebellion but completely undermine the position of the bankers, Mahajans, Sahukars and Shroffs and especially the firms, which played a crucial role in shaking the pillars of the Mughal Empire as suggested by Karen Leonard in his work '*The great firm theory*'.<sup>90</sup>

All the government units needed credit or cash for proper functioning and diversion of resources by the bankers hampered the operations of the empire and this what exactly happened in the last fifty years of the eighteenth century. The latter Mughal rulers did not give patronage and the due respect and importance to these bankers resulting in the relocation of the firms and redirection of credit and finance to other parts leading to constrain in funds and resources thus hampering the unity of the empire and accelerating its decline. Though it cannot be the only reason for the Mughal Empire to collapse and fall but surely it was one of the major reason for its descend.

Banking firms were crucial in aiding the central government to function proficiently. Bankers and their firms were the ones who diverted trade and money to the local political entities from Mughals within the empire and even beyond its reach. Their involvement in the revenue collection at the local and regional level was unhindered. The rulers constantly needed funds that were readily available and flexible for their military expansion and for this, banking firms came in handy. The Mughal political stability provided them to flourish exponentially and made certain that there was an uninterrupted flow of money. According to Leonard Karen, "the position of bankers in India was that of an allied support group, one which provided essential resources to the state and had good bargaining position with respect to it".<sup>91</sup> But their decline in the other half of the seventeenth century led the bankers and their firms to shift focus from the Mughals to other potential regional powers that could patronize them thus leading to the relocation of banking firms from urban centers of the Mughal domain to the interior regional core.

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<sup>90</sup> Karen Leonard, 'The 'Great Firm' Theory of the Decline of Mughal Empire', *The Mughal State: 1526-1750*, eds. M. Alam and S. Subramanian, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p-398.

<sup>91</sup> Karen Leonard, 'The 'Great Firm' Theory of the Decline of Mughal Empire', *The Mughal State: 1526-1750*, eds. M. Alam and S. Subramanian, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p-416.

The East India Company also employed these banking firms as chief revenue collectors and major source of credit suppliers but as they gained territory, the Company was cautious of their influence and power hence took every possible measure to reduce the influence and role of the bankers. The Company downsized the bankers share in the revenue collections and also reduced their dependence on these indigenous banking firms and even kept a check on their involvement with the local and regional powers. And the bankers and banking firms by start of the nineteenth century were limited to funding of domestic trade and local agricultural loans and credits and were replaced by the modern European banking system.

Other than these above books which cover a wider issue and area of decentralization and regionalism than Banaras, there are books which deal with Banaras as the central theme. But majorly these writings have focused on the latter years of Banaras Raj. They have briefly summarized the history of the emergence and consolidation of Banaras Raj from the onset of Mansaram's rule to the eviction of Raja Chait Singh from the Banaras zamindari and the appointment of minor Mahip Narayan to the seat of Banaras.

B.S. Cohn's book, '*An anthropologist among the historians and other essays*,' is a collection of essays in which he has examined the regional politics and its relation with the imperial authority and various levels of the political systems that were prevalent in Banaras region during the eighteenth century. He has traced different levels of political power in the eighteenth century. According to this system there were four distinct levels of hierarchy that co-existed. At the top most rung was the imperial government under the Mughals. With the dissolution of the Mughal state there emerged successor states like Awadh. Cohn describes the successor states 'as being imperial in origin which set up their regimes in major historical, cultural and linguistic regions'.<sup>92</sup> Below these successor states, he puts the regional systems like Banaras Raj, where the leadership was granted by either of the two higher levels of authority on the basis of status. The fourth or local level comprised the lineages and local chiefs who controlled peasants, traders, artisans etc. He argued that these groups were at constant conflict and competition with each other where the unanimity and

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<sup>92</sup> B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, pp-485-486.



balance was attained through disagreement in ideas and were aware that there were always prompted individuals who could easily replace them.<sup>93</sup>

The work of C.C. Davies, '*Warren Hastings and Oudh*' has a complete chapter on the Hastings and Chait Singh case, which focuses on the relation between the Governor General, Warren Hastings and that of Raja Chait Singh of Banaras, and it deals with the role that the Resident played in undermining the position of the Raja. Chait Singh could not retain his autonomy for long as he fell prey to the Council politics which led to the deposition of Chait Singh from the throne of Banaras. Similarly, P.J. Marshall's work '*Impeachment of Warren Hastings*' also analysis the relationship between the supreme council at Bengal headed by Warren Hastings and the Raja Chait Singh.

V.A. Narain's work '*Jonathan Duncan and Varanasi*' is a biographical account of Jonathan Duncan, the Resident at Banaras. It covers mainly the period when Duncan was appointed as the Resident at Banaras in 1787 to 1795 A.D. It focuses on the reforms and measures that were introduced in the Banaras region to remold the administrative machinery. It gives a detail account of the changes brought in the land settlement measures and the judicial provisions of Banaras and the adjoining areas. It also deals with the steps taken by Duncan to revive the economy of Banaras majorly the problems related to the cultivation of indigo and opium.

## HISTORIOGRAPHY OF BANARS IN A NEW LIGHT

Thus we see that according to the recent studies, the weakness of the latter Mughal emperors and the economic constraints that they faced prevented them from interfering in the affairs of their own governors and such a situation provided these governors with opportunities that they started manipulating and negotiating their power with center and other local and regional groups in the region. The case of Bengal was the best example where Murshid Quli Khan rose to prominence. Awadh went on the same lines as that of Bengal here with Saadat Khan, the *Subadar* and *Faujdar* of Awadh enhancing his powers thus declaring himself as the *Nawab* of Awadh. He succeeded in controlling the powers of jagirdars and reducing the number of big jagirdars in his domain. He was also successful in controlling the powers of

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p-484.

intermediaries in the agrarian society. This not only helped him in securing better and increased revenues but also created stability in the region and in his position.

According to Barnett and Alam, Saadat Khan and Safdar Jang were able to carve out a semi-autonomous state of Awadh in the 1720's because of the weak and feeble Mughal authority. The case with Awadh was quite different from that of Punjab, in Awadh the new *subedari* was established on much firm and stable grounds. They took revenue and administrative affairs in their hands but in the initial years they accepted the allegiance of the Mughal emperor and regularly paid the revenue to the central treasury. Muzaffar Alam points out that Saadat Khan was strong enough to bring about changes in the administration of his region and suppress the local zamindars and chieftains in order to strengthen his position in the region.

According to Muzaffar Alam the Governor of Awadh was in a very stable position and was able to negotiate with the native political entities and petty jagirdars and zamindars of the region to form fresh arrangements with them, thus establishing his new subedari on much firmer grounds.<sup>94</sup> The case of emergence of Banaras Raj under the shadow of Awadh shows that the regional rulers were given a free hand in the internal affairs of the region, until and unless they directly attacked the superior authority or failed to pay their revenue dues. Balwant Singh, the Raja of Banaras, was able to carve out an independent zamindari by negotiating his powers with Awadh *Nawab* and by expelling the intermediaries and putting his men in their place. Though Awadh was the overlord of the region but Raja of Banaras, as both Mishra and Cohn point out, was virtually free in the region as long as he paid his revenue dues on time to the *Nawab* of Awadh.<sup>95</sup> These studies point out that the process of regionalization was not the process leading to anarchy, chaos or disruptions. Rather the transfer of power in Awadh and Bengal as Marshall pointed was peaceful.<sup>96</sup>

One of the most common debates among the works done on the eighteenth century is with regards to the economic slump that occurred after the collapse of the Mughal framework. But the works on regional history entirely depict the exact opposite

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<sup>94</sup> Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, pp-205-242.

<sup>95</sup> Mishra, *Banaras in Transition, 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-10.

<sup>96</sup> Marshall, (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Evolution or Revolution?*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, pp-11-12.

picture. The decline of the Mughal Empire led to the decline of urban centers like Delhi and Agra but it did not hamper the growth of new urban magnates in Awadh and Banaras. Similarly, the works of Bayly and Mishra, point out towards the flourishing economy and commerce of these new urban centers in the regional states. According to them towns like Lucknow, Faizabad in Awadh and Banaras, Mirzapur, Azamgarh, Bhadohi in Banaras region were the hub of economic activities in the eighteenth century. Numerous local *haats* (periodic village market), *ganjs* etc. were established by local zamindars and rulers in the interiors of the region showing that the commercial activities had made deep inroads in the interiors of region which served as a transit point between the rural and urban manufacturers and traders. These centers were well connected with long distance networks of trade. These networks were further strengthened with the penetration of the English in the marts of north India.

According to Muzaffar Alam a large number of new *bazaars* (markets) and *ganjs* (small regulated market) had sprung up in this region during the last quarter of the seventeenth century and in the early eighteenth century along with the older ones and were in a flourishing state. The rulers of Azamgarh, Azam Khan and Azmat Khan established many *ganjs* like Sufiganj, Husainganj, Jahangirganj, Maharajganj, Jahanaganj and Shahgarh in the Banaras region.<sup>97</sup> While in Mirzapur, a large *katra* (large town markets) along with *ganjs* like Muzaffar ganj, Lal ganj and Munnuganj were established which connected the rural hinterlands to the cities.<sup>98</sup> Thus a market system was established in this region which increased the commercial activity resulting in growth of monetization, and urbanization. Inter and intra regional trade encouraged the local industries in the Banaras zamindari and even the *jama* of Banaras had increased by up to eighty five percent.<sup>99</sup>

Therefore the emergence of regional states and regional powers like Awadh, Bengal and Banaras paint a very different picture of the eighteenth century before us which shows signs of a much stable political and administrative system and a flourishing economy. The corporation of the local groups and intermediaries provided a firm base

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<sup>97</sup> Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, pp- 248-249.

<sup>98</sup> Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, p- 250.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p- 252.

to these new rulers. The regional states were developing an effective administrative system with strong armed forces and consolidating their hold on their populations.

## SOURCES

This work is an amalgamation of primary as well as secondary sources. The sources have been broadly classified under two headings, the first being the primary or contemporary sources that provide us with the first hand information about the Banaras region. The most important and legit source that informs us about the dynasty of Banaras is the Persian text called '*Tuhfa-i-Tazah*' or '*Balwantnamah*'. It was written by Fakir Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, who was a contemporary of Chait Singh. The original text is in Persian language and has been translated to English by Fredrick Cruwen. It is written in a narrative style providing us with little details of the incidences that occurred during the reign of the Rajas of Banaras zamindari because the author was an eyewitness to many of the occurrences.

Even before the establishment of the political authority in Banaras the Bengal council at fort William was purposefully interacting with the Rajas of Banaras and other influential people like the bankers, etc of Banaras regarding the politico-economic conditions of the region in the eighteenth century. Therefore there series of documents those are quite useful in throwing light on the early phase of British contact with the Banaras zamindari. They are catalogued under '*The calendar of Persian correspondence*'. The collection of letters and documented under the Calendar of Persian Correspondence are basically letters that were exchanged between Indian rulers and the East India Company. Calendar of Persian Correspondence is a series of publication made by the imperial record department. They have nine volumes. These volumes consisted of *sanads*, *farmans*, treaties. They covered a period 1759 to 1791 A.D. These volumes provide a fair amount of detail about the Banaras zamindari. They also contain various letters exchanged between the banking firms of Banaras region and the Company.

Similar to the Calendar of Persian Correspondence, there is another collection of letters that provide a great deal of information about Banaras in the eighteenth century. These sources were '*The fort William- India house correspondence*'. It gives a broad perspective of the initial history of East India Company while controlling the

eastern part of India. It basically contains collection of three types of letters- the public letters, the select committee letters and the letter of the court. It gives us a clear view of the political and commercial activities of the Company.

Then there are various works on Warren Hastings, the Governor General of the East India Company. Like the collection of letter written by him to his wife compiled under the name of '*Letters of Warren Hastings to his wife*'. Another primary source is the account of warren hasting called '*The narrative of the insurrection which happened in the zamindari of Banaras*'. Then there is the chronicle of Hastings known as '*The memoirs relative to the state of India*'. '*Banaras Dairies of Warren Hastings*' edited by C.C. Davies, all provide a bird eye view of Warren Hastings dealing with the Raja Chait Singh of Banaras and the court politics that led to the insurrection in Banaras further leading to the expulsion of Chait Singh from the Banaras zamindari. And the events that unfolded after the goof up leading to the impeachment of the Governor General, Warren Hastings. Even give an insight on the political and economic conditions of the region.

'*Banaras affair*' has two volumes and the first text covers a period from 1788 to 1810 A.D. This includes dispatches of the Governor General, Residents at Banaras and Lucknow, officials and other distinguished personals. The book is broadly divided into four sections. The first part relates to Jahandar Shah, the Mughal prince. The second part is an account of the judicial system of Banaras. The third and the last parts deal with the trade and commerce and the revenue administration of Banaras respectively.

One of the most important source relating to the final settlement of the Banaras Raj are the unpublished '*Duncan records*' available at the regional archive of Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. They are in hundreds of volume. They are the most reliable sources that provide crucial information relating to the role of East India Company in Banaras. They are collection of letters, dispatches and papers i.e., they basically the proceedings between the Bengal council and Jonathan Duncan, the Resident of Banaras, who was sent to the zamindari after the expulsion of Raja Chait Singh. And was assigned the task of reforming the Banaras zamindari by the Governor General, Cornwallis. The records contain details regarding every aspect of Banaras whether it be politics, economy, rural society, judiciary, administration, banking etc.

'*The home miscellaneous series*' are the collection of letters that were exchanged among the Rajas of Banaras, the English Residents appointed in Banaras, the Company council at Bengal and the court of directors in London. There are volumes of these letters as the interaction among them increased too many folds as Banaras was ceded over to the Company in 1775 A.D. They contain material related to the administration, land revenue, taxes and customs, mints and coinage. They cover a period between the reigns of Chait Singh to the early years of Raja Mahip Narayan.

Among other documents are 'the report of G.H. Barlow: on the trade and coinage of Banaras' containing the information on trade and commerce of Banaras, '*The Selections from the state papers of the Governors - General of India*' is edited by G.W. Forrest are documents relating to the Governor General of India viz Warren Hastings, Marquis Cornwallis and correspondence of Francis Fowke, the Resident of Banaras during his residency in Banaras called '*The extracts from the records at the East India house of proceedings relative to Mr. Francis Fowke the Resident at Banaras*'

'*North western provinces: historical and statistical memoir of the Ghazee-poor district*' is a work of Wilton Oldham's on Ghazipur district that cover a large variety of subjects like the topography, history of the district, customs of its people, religion, castes and the system of land tenure. They are published in two volumes. Similar to Oldham's work F.H. Fisher's work '*statistical, descriptive and historical account of the north-western province of India*' is divided into three parts is on the same lines as the work of Wilton Oldham. The first part is related to the district of Banaras, the second deals with the district of Mirzapur and the last part contains details of the Jaunpur district.

The travelogues provide a great deal of information on the social and economic life of the cities and regions where the travelers have stayed or passed through. Some of the travel accounts of the eighteenth century that give a glimpse of Banaras and the adjoining areas of the zamindari are the account of William Hodge, '*Travel in India during the years 1780-1783*' while the other is Jemima Kindersley account called '*Letters from the island of Tenerife, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope and the East Indies*'

## CHAPTERIZATION

In this backdrop, this research is an attempt made to study the polity and commercial economy of Banaras zamindari popularly known as Banaras Raj in the eighteenth century, which encompassed regions like Banaras, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Mirzapur and even Ballia. The main objective of this work is to trace the shifts in the form and nature of structures of political authority as well as the commercial practices in the region. It also aims at documenting and analyzing the triangular relationship between the Rajas of Banaras with the *Nawabs* of Awadh and the English East India Company. These relations determined the political, economical and social growth of Banaras in the eighteenth century. The religious institutions and pilgrims were tied up with the networks of trade and credit, and new social groups were claiming a stake in authority. Such a study enables to counter effectively conventional views of the eighteenth century according to which, there was anarchy and turmoil which hampered the growth of the entire northern plain. However, the present research demonstrates that during this period Banaras and its vicinity showed signs of growth and prosperity. The study will also look into the emergence and consolidation of the British authority in north India along with Awadh and Banaras region.

The present work is divided into five chapters. The first is '*The emergence and consolidation of Banaras Raj*', second is '*The Banaras Raj and the English East India Company: Political Dynamics and Transformation from 1764- 1795 A.D.*', the third is '*Land control and the village organization of the Banaras zamindari*', the fourth is '*Trade and commerce in Banaras*' and the last chapter is '*Banking and money lending in the Banaras region*'.

The first chapter, '*The emergence and consolidation of Banaras Raj*' proposes to study the political structure of Banaras in the eighteenth century, when the Mughal empire was on the verge of collapsing and decentralization of power was taking place and as a result new regional powers were emerging away from the core. This chapter basically deals with the study of Banaras under the imperial umbrella that is under the Mughal emperor. While the second part deals with Banaras under the jurisdiction of the Awadh *Nawabs*. Simultaneously it focuses on the emergence of Banaras Raj in the 1730's under the capable headmanship of Mansaram and later under his son Balwant Singh.

It also throws light on how the rulers of Banaras consolidated their power and expanded their territorial boundaries. One thing that is worth noticing is that, with changing circumstances the Rajas shifted their loyalty so that they could gain maximum benefits. At first when the emperors were weak and the *Nawabs* had a strong foothold on the administration of the mid-Gangetic plain or the region of the United Province as referred by H.K. Naqvi, the Raja owed their allegiance to the mightier head. The Raja of Banaras, Balwant Singh always tried to gain an autonomous status but he never came in direct confrontation with the *Nawabs*. He derived his authority from the *Nawab* and the Mughal emperor and never challenged their supremacy. But with the defeat of *Nawab* at the battle field of Buxar the political scenario completely changed and the English Company emerged as the new masters of the land. And hence, shrewd Balwant Singh also shifted his loyalty and joined the English camp.

The second chapter, *'The Banaras Raj and the English East India Company: Political Dynamics and Transformation from 1764- 1795 A.D.'*, deals with the evolution and growth of East India Company in Banaras. It focuses on the Company's political interest that it had in Awadh in order to safeguard its position and protect its newly acquired territories of Bengal and Bihar and the impact it had on Banaras. It also throws light on the circumstances that prepared the grounds for the battle on Buxar. And on how the battle of Buxar and the changing terms and conditions of the treaty of Allahabad played a very imperative role in shaping the fortunes of north India along with this principalities. It also discusses about the role of the English Company in Banaras and how Banaras zamindari was left under the jurisdiction of the Awadh *Nawabs* without directly venturing into the political realms of this region.

This chapter deals with the emergence and consolidation of East India Company in the Banaras. Their emergence is gradual and can be seen in phases, the first phase is roughly the period from 1775 to 1781 A.D. This period could be considered as a period of virtual autonomy for the Banaras Raj, where the Rajas of Banaras was left free to administer his province without any interference on the part of the Company. This made the Raja all-powerful within the region. But on the closing of this period we find an increase in the Company's involvement in the province of Banaras. While, in the next phase starts with the expulsion of Raja Chait Singh from the zamindari of



Banaras and the appointment of minor Mahip Narayan on the throne of Banaras zamindari. It focuses on the interference of the Company which had increased to a certain degree from the presiding phase. Certain implications were also imposed on the Raja due to which his authority and power was reduced in order to keep a check on him by the new lords of the region. Whereas, the last phase marks the total subordination of the Raja under the English Company's rule. It throws light on how the Raja of Banaras had become a mere puppet in the hands of the English. His status was reduced to that of a zamindar and severe bondages were imposed on him, so that his powers could be curtailed and the new masters could easily proceed in their venture. Thus, this chapter also analyses the relationship between *Nawabs* of Awadh, the rulers of Banaras and the English Company.

The third chapter that is, '*Land control and the village organization of the Banaras zamindari*' focuses on the land revenue and its organization. It scrutinizes the role of the villages in the development of this zamindari. Being an agricultural driven region, the agriculture was one of the main sources of income for the Banaras Raj. This chapter deals with various aspects related with revenue administration like land ownership rights and the composition of the zamindari class. It also deals with the changes brought about in the structure of the village economy and the status of the rural elites. And even focuses on the changes that were introduced when Jonathan Duncan, the Resident at Banaras took over the control of revenue administration in his own hands and introduced many changes and made fresh settlement with *raiya*ts, zamindars and the *amils*.

After the decline of the Mughal Empire it bifurcated into smaller territories and successor states which were governed by the local zamindars and the local chiefs. Saadat Khan, the Governor of Awadh under the Mughal, carved out the state of Awadh and became a de facto ruler. Under his authority were a large number of chiefs and zamindars who were given hold of some regions to collect revenue and to administer them on behalf of the *Nawabs*. And the Rajas of Banaras were these administrators who were given the region of Banaras along with Jaunpur and Ghazipur to collect revenue from the cultivators and primary zamindars and to pay the lump sum amount to the *Nawabs*.<sup>100</sup> Mansaram overthrew his overlord Rustam Ali

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<sup>100</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *The first two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, pp-260-261.

and obtained the zamindari rights of Banaras. his successors the first two Rajas of Banaras that is Balwant Singh and his son Chait Singh, other than ruling the area remitted the revenue on the behalf of the *Nawab* and indulged themselves in expanding their territories by launching military campaign against the neighbouring Rajas, chiefs and zamindars and replacing them with their own trusted men. Thus, this pushed older zamindars of this region downwards and a new class of zamindars emerged.

But with the acquisition of Banaras by the British, many of the expelled zamindars were able to restore their proprietary rights but still there were many who failed to make a comeback and were permanently reduced to the status of a villager or cultivator. Thus, the position of the landed classes underwent a considerable change during the later part of the eighteenth century due to the economic and political policies of both the Rajas of Banaras and the English East India Company.

Whereas the fourth chapter, '*Trade and commerce in Banaras*' deals with the emergence of Banaras as an important center of commerce and trade in the eighteenth century. The changes brought about in the trade and commerce of this region by the British is scrutinized in this chapter. And it also ponders on the question that how the gradual economic penetration moved hand in hand with growing political control. It gave them a new economic perspective and this led to shift towards cash cropping. This shift towards cash cropping led to extensive cultivation of mainly sugar, opium, along with cotton and silk manufacture in Banaras. This resulted in the localization of production and brought about a major change and dislocation in the agrarian economy of Banaras. Other than this, it also throws light on the role of local merchant communities and significance of the new trade routes that emerged between Delhi, Agra, Awadh and Banaras and the nexus of trade thus shifted towards Awadh and Banaras from Agra and Delhi.

The last chapter is '*Banking and money lending in the Banaras region*'. It also deals with the banking system that emerged in this region under some influential bankers like Lala Kashmiri Mal, Gopal Das Manohar Das, Bachhraj and many more, who were not only bankers to common people and merchants but were also bankers to the *Nawab* of Awadh, the Rajas of Banaras and even to the East India Company.

**CHAPTER-2**

**EMERGENCE AND CONSOLIDATION OF  
BANARAS RAJ**

## INTRODUCTION:

The eighteenth century is often referred to as a period of transition from the Mughal Empire and its last days to the rise of the British power. It is often understood as an era of anarchy and disintegration which only is supposed to have ended with the coming of the colonial power of the English. Though it is true that the major developments of the eighteenth century was the dissolution of the Mughal empire, the rise of successor states and the gradual emergence and strengthening of the British empire, it was also a period of emergence and consolidation of regional political systems like Banaras Raj around late 1730s.

The chapter here focuses on the emergence of Banaras Raj in the 1730's under the rule of Mansaram, the founder of this small but strategic kingdom. It also ponders upon the question that amidst various political groups including the powerful states of Awadh, Bihar, Rohilas and the Mughal Empire, how did this principality emerge and consolidate itself? In what manner did it organize its resources to maintain its sovereignty? What were the processes through which it gained its legitimacy not only amongst the political groups and power holders, especially with the *Nawabs* of Awadh but also amongst the people of Banaras? The chapter will also analyse the political developments in the Gangetic plain during the period of the rise of the Banaras Raj and the crucial role of Balwant Singh in the expansion of its territorial boundaries and in the battle of Buxar.

The major problem while writing about Banaras during the reign of latter Mughals is regarding the sources. There is a lack of substantial sources that tell us about Banaras after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D. as it was now reduced to a mere religious town under the Allahabad province, and no longer was a flourishing mercantile and political centre which Jaunpur and Mirzapur in the Allahabad province were. The most important primary source that gives a lucid and narrative account of incidents that happened during Mansaram's, Balwant Singh's and Chait Singh's reign is *Tuhfa-i-Tazah* or *Balwantnamah* written in the late eighteenth century. It was written by Fakir Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, who was a contemporary of Chait Singh. The original text is in Persian language and has been translated to English by Fredrick Cruwen. Henry Blochmann (the translator of *Ain-I-Akbari*) suggests that "the *Balwantnamah* by Khairuddin Muhammad of *Illahabad* is a work of great value. It

contains history of *nazims* and Rajas of Banaras, and is full of interesting details referring to the times and transactions of Warren Hastings.”<sup>1</sup> Other than this Wilton Oldham’s books on Ghazipur titled, *Northwestern provinces: a historical and statistical memoir of the Ghazee-poor district*, which is in two volumes provide detailed account of the district of Ghazipur and even the Banaras zamindari.

## BANARAS RAJ AS A REGION

The city of Banaras in the Banaras region has been a centre of learning since ancient times.<sup>2</sup> Around the tenth and eleventh century, Banaras was under the Gaharwal dynasty and was a part of the Kannauj kingdom. It was ruled by Raja Jaichandra of Kannauj when Qutub-ud-din Aibak, a general of Muhammad Ghori defeated him at the battle fields of Chandwar near Etawah in 1194 A.D and laid the foundation of the slave dynasty in India.<sup>3</sup> After the slave dynasty Ghiyas-ud-din Balban captured the throne of Delhi and Banaras came under his control. Likewise the Khiljis and the Tughlaqs ruled over Banaras and subsequently it was abandoned for either Jaunpur or Ghazipur. The only importance of Banaras was that it lay on the route of Kannauj, Ayodhya, Jaunpur and Ghazipur.<sup>4</sup>

Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodhi on the battle fields of Panipat and laid the foundation of a new empire in India thus capturing the seat of Delhi and Agra in 1526 A.D.<sup>5</sup> But still the eastern provinces were out of their control and were under the Afghans. Humayun was sent on an expedition to these provinces of Ghazipur and Jaunpur. Babur himself marched towards Banaras to dislodge these Afghan chiefs and appointed Jalalud-din Khan Sharqi of Jaunpur (his ancestors ruled over Jaunpur around the fourteenth and fifteenth century) and merged Banaras and the adjoining areas into the Mughal Empire in 1527 A.D.<sup>6</sup> As soon as Babur and Humayun returned to Delhi, the Afghans revolted and took over the control of the eastern districts

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<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Asiatic society of Bengal, 1870*, Calcutta, pp-218-219.

<sup>2</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, Vol.-2, ed. H. Blochmann, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873, p-158.

<sup>3</sup> H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The history of India, by its own historians, the Muhammadan Period*, vol- 2, Trubner and Co, London, 1869, pp- 250-251.

<sup>4</sup> H.R. Nevill, *Banaras: A Gazetteer, Vol. XXVI of District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Awadh*, Allahabad, 1909, p- 191.

<sup>5</sup> Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur*, Tr. A.S. Beveridge, Oriental books, 1979, p-472.

<sup>6</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p-203.

including Banaras under the leadership of Sher Shah Suri in 1529 A.D. According to the Baburnama,

‘Sher Khan Sur whom I had favoured last year with the gift of several pargana and had left in charge of this neighbourhood, had joined these Afghans who thereupon had made him and a few other *amirs* cross the water; that Sl. Jalalu'd-din's man in Banaras had not been able to hold that place, had fled, and got away’.<sup>7</sup>

After the death of Babur, Humayun became the ruler of India but he could not hold back the rebels and lost the Mughal territories to Sher Shah Suri and fled to Persia. Humayun returned back to India a few years later and regained his territories but despite all the efforts Banaras did not come under the Mughal control.

Akbar defeated Hemu in the battle of Panipat and regained the Mughal territories in 1556 A.D. but could get hold of Banaras till the year 1559 A.D. He came to Banaras twice to crush the revolt of Ali Quli Khan and establish peace in this region.<sup>8</sup> Hence Banaras was only a *sarkar* in the *suba* of Allahabad, which was under the jurisdiction of the provincial governor or the *subedar* of Allahabad province but that doesn't mean that the importance of Banaras had declined. Princes of royal blood resided here as governors.<sup>9</sup> Till Aurangzeb's accession to the throne, Banaras was under the jurisdiction of the Allahabad *suba* but he transferred it to the *suba* of Awadh. Though it became a part of Awadh officially but practically was never annexed as *sarkar* but maintained its distinct identity as a kingdom with Banaras as its capital like the *sarkars* of Satara, Dhara and Kolhapur which were a part of Deccan but had their own separate identity.

After the death of Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah ascended the throne in 1707 A.D. and Banaras remained a part of the Mughal Empire during his reign from 1707 to 1712 A.D. In his regime, the zamindars of eastern province refused to pay the revenue and rose in rebellion against the Emperor. In addition, the zamindars of Jhakini division in Kaswar in the Banaras region revolted in order to acquire independence from the Mughal control. They even drove out the imperial forces from their area and ‘began to

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<sup>7</sup> Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur*, Tr.- A.S. Beveridge, Oriental books, 1979, pp- 651-652.

<sup>8</sup> H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History of India, by its own Historians, the Muhammadan Period*, vol- 5, Trubner and Co, London, 1873, pp-259-260.

<sup>9</sup> Eldest son of Shahjahan, Dara Sikoh resided in Banaras for several years. Anonymous, *A History of the Province of Banaras*, Inverness, 1875, p-2.

follow the trade of robbers'.<sup>10</sup> But with the accession of Farrukhsiyar to the throne of Mughal Empire in 1713 A.D., Banaras came under his control. In order to curb the rebels of Jhakini, he sent Munowur Khan, a Mughal official, with a large convoy of soldiers. The army under Munowur Khan attacked the rebel forces and brutally suppressed them and pardoned and rewarded those who submitted to the imperial forces.<sup>11</sup>

Another main city in the Banaras region was Jaunpur, which was established by Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq, of the Tughlaq dynasty in the year 1360 A.D., while returning from the Bengal expedition. And the city was named after his cousin Fakhruddin Jaunah.<sup>12</sup> The following account given in the Tarikh-I-Firoz Shahi corroborates this fact,

'The Sultan then marched through Kannauj and Oudh to Jaunpur. Before this time there was no town of any extent (Shahr-i-abadan) there, but the Sultan, observing a suitable site, determined upon building a large town. He accordingly stayed there six months and built a fine town on the banks of the Kowah, to which he determined to give the name of Sultan Muhammad Shah, son of Tughlaq Shah, and as that sovereign bore the name of Jaunan, he called the place Jannanpur (Jaunpur).'<sup>13</sup>

In the year 1390's sultan Mohammad bin Tughlaq conferred Banaras to Malik Sarwar. He was a eunuch who had risen to the position of the Governor (*wazir*) under Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Malik Sarwar under the title of Khwaja-i-Jahan laid the foundation of Sharqi dynasty and established an independent kingdom in Jaunpur in the year 1394 A.D. Around 1480's the Lodhis captured Jaunpur thus uprooting the Sharqi kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

Babur in 1526 A.D. laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire in India, defeating the Lodhis in the battle of Panipat and sent Humayun to capture Jaunpur.<sup>15</sup> By the end of 1526 A.D. Jaunpur was in the hands of the Mughals. The local Afghan nobles rose in

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<sup>10</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p- 2.

<sup>12</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, Vol.-2, Tr. H. Blochmann, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873, p-159.

<sup>13</sup> H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The history of India, by its own historians, the Muhammadan Period*, vol- 3, Trubner and Co, London, 1871, p- 307.

<sup>14</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, Vol.-2, Tr. H. Blochmann, The Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873, p-170.

<sup>15</sup> H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The history of India, by its own historians, the Muhammadan Period*, vol- 4, Trubner and Co, London, 1872, p-266.

revolt against the Mughal power and declared Mahmud Shah, son of Sikandar Lodhi as the king of Jaunpur. But the rebellions were quickly suppressed. Thus Jaunpur remained an integral part of the Mughal Empire except for a short while when Sher Shah Suri had defeated Humayun. Akbar re-annexed Jaunpur to his dominion from the Afghans. Aurangzeb and latter the *Nawabs* of Awadh often came to Jaunpur but despite all this once a centre of political importance was not more than any other provincial town.

Not much is known about the Mirzapur and Ghazipur as there is a substantial lack of sources. Mirzapur was under the control of the Chandel zamindars before the thirteenth century. It became a part of the Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur. During the reign of Akbar, Mirzapur was incorporated in the Allahabad *suba* and the zamindari rights were in the hands of the Mona Rajputs.<sup>16</sup> Thus we see that the region of Banaras Raj that comprised of Banaras, Jaunpur, Mirzapur and Ghazipur was a part of the Allahabad *suba* under the Mughal rule, which slowly and steadily was annexed under the *Nawabi* rule and became a part of the Awadh *suba* around 1720's.

## POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE BANARAS ZAMINDARI

One of the important aspects that we come across in the eighteenth century with the decline of the Mughal Empire was the emergence of a new political order or system. According to B.S. Cohn the political system of the eighteenth century consisted of four distinctive levels of hierarchy that existed side by side or parallel to each other.<sup>17</sup> At the apex level of the hierarchy was the Mughal Emperor, who was reduced to the position of being a nominal head and a symbol of legitimacy. At the next level were the successor states like Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad which to some extent were imperial in origin and exercised suzerainty over a historical, cultural or linguistic region. They ruled over a certain area but did not challenge the authority of the Emperor and derived their legitimacy from the Emperor. At the tertiary level of hierarchy were the regional powers like the Banaras Raj. The head of this level were individuals or families, who were granted authority by the apex or the secondary level. According to Cohn, 'These leaders were loosely incorporated through rituals of

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<sup>16</sup> F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Province of India: Mirzapur*, vol-15, Allahabad, 1883, p-124.

<sup>17</sup> B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, pp- 485- 486.



allegiance and financial obligation to the national power and were in completion with potential regional leaders'.<sup>18</sup> While at the lowest rung were the local tax officers turned political leaders or local chiefs or zamindars, who owed their allegiance to the regional power. These leaders directly controlled and extracted money in cash or kind from the peasants, merchants and artisans on behalf of the regional powers.

Thus if we carefully scrutinize the Banaras region during the late eighteenth century, these four levels and loci of power and authority were quite evident. At the highest level of hierarchy was the Mughal Emperor, whose powers had diminished and was an Emperor just in name with no or just a little say in the political matters of the state. At the next level were the *Nawabs* of Awadh, who were the political overlords of the Banaras region and they derived their authority from the Mughal Emperor. From 1720 to 1738 A.D., Banaras was directly under the control of the *Nawab* but with the emergence of the Banaras Raj in 1738 A.D., the Raja of Banaras became the *Nawab's* vassal and ruled this region on his behalf till 1775 A.D. The Raja was responsible for extracting and collecting revenue and remitting it to the *Nawab* of Awadh. He derived his power and authority from the *Nawab* of Awadh as well as the Mughal Emperor, thus we see that the Rajas of Banaras were at the third rung of the ladder. At the lowest tread of the hierarchy were the local chieftains, petty zamindars and jagirdars who remitted the collected revenue from the subjects to the Raja of Banaras so that he could further advance it to the other higher levels in the hierarchy. These local zamindars and jagirdars were directly under the control of the Banaras Rajas and owed their allegiance to him. But it is important to note here that despite of being at the second lowest level in the hierarchy graph, the Rajas of Banaras had full sway over their land and were equally important in the politics of the northern plains and in the subsequent chapters we see that though the kingdom of Banaras was very small as compared to the states of Awadh or Bihar with confined boundaries and powers at their disposal, the *Nawabs* of Awadh and latter on even the East India Company could not deny their importance and were in constant urge to keep the Rajas of Banaras to their sides.

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<sup>18</sup> B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, p- 485.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE BANARAS KINGDOM

Like in other parts of the Awadh state, the powerful nobles and zamindars of this Banaras region were in continuous conflict with each other and were striving to get hold of this region. The city of Banaras in this region also became the centre for contending political claims and rivalries. Because of its religious importance the monarchs of various states and queens and their families often visited Banaras and even resided here which made Banaras more susceptible to political clashes and unrest and to this the Maratha menace added fuel to the already burning situation. The Marathas were constantly on a lookout to get hold of the Banaras zamindari so that the religious city of Banaras along with the commercial marts of Mirzapur and Jaunpur could easily be claimed and could prove fruitful for the budding Maratha Empire in the north. This can be corroborated from the fact that in 1736 A.D., Peshwa Baji Rao had demanded the then Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah to give away Banaras as jagir to the Marathas.<sup>19</sup> But along with all this Banaras was under the process of achieving a new identity and witnessed the emergence of a new regime and a new political order.

After the death of Farrukh Siyar, Muhammad Shah ascended the throne in 1719 A.D. as the Mughal Emperor. Muhammad Shah granted the *sarkars* of Banaras, Ghazipur, Jaunpur and Chunar as *jagir* to Murtaza Khan, one of his courtiers, who were sent on an expedition to Banaras to curb the rebel forces that had risen after the death of the former Emperor, Farrukh Siyar.<sup>20</sup> Murtaza Khan was thus able to crush the rebels and hence was entrusted with the management of these *sarkars*.<sup>21</sup> But Murtaza Khan further rented out the Banaras *jagir* to Rustam Ali, one of his relative, against the payment of five lacs rupees annually.

But the shrinking Mughal Empire and the incapability of the Mughal rulers gave an opportunity to the regional powers to break themselves into successor states. Muhammad Shah's rule from 1719 to 1748 A.D. was extensive enough for a revival of the Mughal Empire but his incapability ruled out this possibility. And as a result, in

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<sup>19</sup> Z.U. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah: 1719-1748*, Asia Publishing, 1977, p-131

<sup>20</sup> Alam, *The Crisis of the Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707- 48*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, pp- 129-130.

<sup>21</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 2.

the hearts of the Gangetic plain especially in the Awadh region, Saadat Khan, an official under the Mughal regime, also known as Burhan-ul-Mulk rose to prominence as one of the most powerful and respected nobles in the service of the Emperor. He was also appointed as *subedar* of Awadh in 1722 A.D., by the then Mughal Emperor, Muhammad Shah.<sup>22</sup> In the beginning Saadat Khan maintained the imperial control of the Mughals and continued to send annual payments to the Mughal treasury as the political legitimizing power was still in the hands of the Emperor. But later on, Saadat Khan resigned as the *wazir* of the Mughal Empire and set up an independent state of Awadh in 1728 A.D., declaring himself as the *Nawab* of Awadh. After establishing the autonomous state of Awadh in 1728 A.D., Saadat Khan continued to extend his control over the adjoining territories, though this was done with the consent of the Mughal Emperors. The Mughal Emperor had no choice but to support their nobles. Thus taking advantage of the fluid situation and poorly managed revenue farms Saadat Khan managed to obtain the lease of the districts of Banaras, Jaunpur, Ghazipur and Chunar on the payment of annual revenue of seven lacs rupees from Murtaza Khan.<sup>23</sup> And thus these four districts became a part of the *Nawabi* regime. The *Nawab* once again as earlier, rented out the region of Banaras to Rustam Ali, this time on a payment of eight lacs rupees, thus increasing it by one lac rupees annually.<sup>24</sup>

Thus we see that the Banaras region that comprised the *sarkar* of Ghazipur, Chunar, Jaunpur and Banaras city were incorporated in the Awadh's dominion under the new regime of the *Nawabs* of Awadh, the first one being Sadat Khan. And from here onwards this region saw a series of changes in the political realms and even witnessed the emergence of a new kingdom known as the Banaras Raj around 1730's under Mansaram, an employee of Rustam Ali and his successors.

The founder of the Banaras Raj, Mansaram was a Bhumihar Brahmin zamindar of Gautam subcaste<sup>25</sup> and a Resident of Titharea Village (Gangapur<sup>26</sup>) of Kaswar *pargana*, which was six miles away from Banaras. According to the book of

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<sup>22</sup> Walter Hamilton, *A Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindustan, and the Adjacent Countries*, Vol. I, London, 1820, p-339.

<sup>23</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 8.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p- 8.

<sup>25</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, p- 193.

<sup>26</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, p-3. Latter, when Balwant Singh became the Raja of Banaras, he renamed the village of Titharea to Gangapur.

Khairuddin Muhammad, *Balwantnamah*, his father Manranjan Singh had four sons and Mansaram was the eldest of all.<sup>27</sup> He was a zamindar and official of Rustam Ali. His prime duty was to collect the revenue of the Banaras region and remit it to Rustam Ali, who further remitted it to the *Nawab* of Awadh. Mansaram gained Rustam Ali's confidence and from being just an employee under Rustam Ali, he rose to the status of the Raja of the Banaras zamindari, which we would see in the latter part of the chapter. He also represented his master in the court of the *Nawab* Saadat Khan. Rustam Ali had full confidence in Mansaram so as a mark of appreciation for his duties, he solicited Mansaram's name to the Mughal Emperor, Muhammad Shah through Murtaza Khan and requested him to confer the title of '*Raja bahadur*' upon Mansaram. But Mansaram smartly refused the honour for himself, rather begged it to be conferred on his eldest son, Balwant Singh.<sup>28</sup> Thus later Balwant Singh ascended the zamindari of Banaras with the title of Raja and he was popularly known as *Raja bahadur*.

Entrusting the duties and the management of Banaras zamindari to Mansaram, Rustam Ali led a luxurious life thus neglecting the administration of the four sarkars of the Banaras region. The news of Rustam Ali's lack of interest and mismanagement of Banaras zamindari reached to Saadat Khan and the Mughal Emperor. Emperor Muhammad Shah summoned the *Nawab* to Delhi in this context. Saadat Khan went to Delhi, appointing Safdar Jung, his son-in-law as his deputy.<sup>29</sup> And as a result despite being friends with the *Nawab*, the mistrust between Rustam Ali and the *Nawab* had deepened. Safdar Jung marched towards Banaras to expel Rustam Ali. And when he reached Jaunpur in 1738 A.D., he was welcomed by Mansaram with lavish gifts on behalf of Rustam Ali. First Mansaram negotiated for a deal on his master's behalf but soon acted for his own interest on the question of removing the district of Ghazipur from Rustam Ali's jurisdiction and conferring it to Sheikh Abdullah, an official of the *Nawab*, Saadat Khan.<sup>30</sup> Now he believed that 'the influence with Rustam Ali would go with his loss of favour'.<sup>31</sup> Mansaram took advantage of this fluid situation and

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<sup>27</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-1-2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p- 2-3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p-8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p-15.

<sup>31</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 10.

negotiated with the deputy *Nawab*, Safdar Jung for himself and succeeded in getting a *sanad* from him. According to the *sanad* the three sarkars of Banaras region viz Banaras, Jaunpur and Chunar on the payment of annual revenue of thirteen lacs rupees were conferred to him and he became the rightful and legitimate ruler of Banaras. Though the *kotwali*, the mint at Banaras and the fort of Jaunpur were kept away from his jurisdiction and were bestowed on other officials of the *Nawab*.<sup>32</sup> While on the other hand, the *sarkar* of Ghazipur was rented out to Sheikh Abdullah on annual payment of three lacs rupees to the *Nawab* of Awadh. The troops were even sent by the *Nawab* to duly install the Raja in the zamindari of the three provinces.<sup>33</sup>

Rustam Ali on learning about the treacherous act on the part of Mansaram was grief stricken and could not take any further steps to ensure his position in Banaras zamindari and hence on arrival of Mansaram in Banaras, he retired to the province of Allahabad where he later committed suicide. Thus we see that Mansaram was able to oust Rustam Ali from Banaras within a decade and took complete control of the Banaras zamindari. And being a person of great energy and resolution, Mansaram lost no time in reducing, by force of arms, his refractory and rebellious subjects to order, and in establishing his own authority within the territorial limits of the kingdom assigned to him by the Emperor and the *Nawab*. However within a year of attaining the zamindari Mansaram, fell prey to his illness and finally died leaving behind the seat of Banaras for his son. He was succeeded by his son Balwant Singh to the zamindari of Banaras in 1739 A.D.<sup>34</sup> When Mansaram was installed to the zamindari of Banaras, he possessed not more than half of the village of Gangapur but by the time of his death in 1739 A.D., he got hold of eighteen new *mahals* (a revenue unit in the Mughal fiscal and administrative division) with total revenue of rupees 24,50,889. The areas under his control were as follows<sup>35</sup>:

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1776-80*, vol-5, Calcutta, 1930, letter no -1407, p- 306.

<sup>35</sup> W.K. Firminger, *Affairs of the East India Company*, vol-2, B.R. Publishing, New Delhi, 1812, pp-468-469.

Parganas in the Sarkar Banaras		Revenue collected
1	Havelli Banaras, with zamindari of Soorhy, Chietpur, & c., to Pertabrooder	1,02,700 Rs
2	Sayer of the city, & c., farmed by Chiet Rai, &c.,	1,35,000 Rs
3	Pargana Katehar, with the town of Sheupore, to Ragoobynsy Rajput	1,65,905 Rs
4	Pargana Kaswar, with Chekny, the zamindari of Aley Singh, &c.	87,522 Rs
5	Pargana Afrad, the zamindari of Ragoobynsy	55,611 Rs
6	Pargana Punderha, the zamindari of Ruberbaboohar	75,309 Rs
7	Pargana Byalsy, the zamindari of Ragoobynsy	51,200 Rs
8	Pargana Kole Asselah, zamindari of Kerpanaht taken from Townpoor	82,107 Rs
9	Pargana Ahtgongkerowa, the zamindari of Soorwar Rajput	63,042 Rs
10	Pargana Keryatseekim, zamindari of Ainder Singh, the half of which to Chunar	85,752 Rs
Total revenue in rupees		9,04,148 Rs
Parganas in the Sircar Allahabad		
11	Pargana Bhudorn, zamindari of Holas Rajput	5,06,400 Rs
12	Pargana Mutafurukat, jagir villages of the same pargana	1,22,115 Rs
Parganas in the Sircar Townpoor		
13	Pargana Murriahoo, divided in farm to Amrow Singh, &c.	5,17,504 Rs
14	Pargana Gurwara, zamindari of Doorgbynsy Rajput	1,07,005 Rs
15	Pargana Moongera Santere, in farm	60,822 Rs
16	Pargana Keerakut, zamindari of Ragoobynsy	55,005 Rs
17	Pargana Meypoora Lanel, zamindari of Bhirhar	1,03,500 Rs
18	Pargana Goushia, or Muchlisher, zamindar afghan	74,382 Rs
Total acquisition of Mansaram		Rs. 24,50,881

But here it is important to note that how Mansaram rose to such a power? To answer the question, we need to have a look into the prevailing situations in Banaras and around its vicinity. Banaras held a very significant position because of sharing its borders with the *suba* of Awadh and Bihar. It had a commercial importance as both the land as well as the riverine routes passed through this region making it an important entrepot of intra and inter regional trade leading to the flourishing of local industries. Agriculturally this region was a prosperous region. All these factors made Banaras and its adjoining areas prosperous which meant that the Banaras zamindari could easily generate a good amount of revenue and any kind of rebellion meant loss of this revenue which the Mughals and the *Nawabs* of Awadh could not afford to lose. Earlier, the Mughals were quite powerful to suppress any kind of revolt but now they were more susceptible to such uprisings and revolts like the Maratha incursions, the Afghan and Rohilla menace. While on the other hand, the *Nawabi* regime had their focus on the affairs of the new state of Awadh. Hence Mansaram was the only person in their eyes who could release revenue from this region, which had a history of nonpayment of revenue for a long time. The reason for him being able to extract revenue from Banaras could have been that he was a very resourceful and tactful person. He was the head of an ancient and powerful clan of Trikarma Brahmans, who constituted the majority portion of the population of Banaras and the adjoining areas,<sup>36</sup> thus was readily accepted by the population of Banaras. The revenue that Mansaram paid was around rupees five lacs but the actual collection was around rupees twenty lacs which was much higher.<sup>37</sup> This clearly depicts the strength and power of the Mansaram on the basis of which he held back a large portion of the revenue collected and amassed resources and this explains the facts that how he was able to out throw his Mughal master within a span of few years. According to Muzaffar Alam, on conducting a comparative study of the revenue collection of the Banaras region, there is an increase of hundred and seven percent under Mansaram.<sup>38</sup> The two different periods taken into consideration for revenue collection in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the eighteenth century are as follows-

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<sup>36</sup> Anonymous, *A History of the Province of Banaras*, Inverness, 1875, p-3

<sup>37</sup> Alam, *The Crisis of the Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707- 48*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, p-252.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

Region	Revenue in the Ain-I-Akbari (in dams) <sup>39</sup> in the sixteenth and seventeenth century	Revenue in the mid-18 <sup>th</sup> century (in dams) <sup>40</sup>
Sarkar Banaras	88,69,315	1,93,38,895
Sarkar Jaunpur	5,63,94,107	9,27,02,303
Sarkar Ghazipur	1,34,31,308	3,42,30,204
Sarkar Chunar	58,10,654	2,88,36,578

## BALWANT SINGH: THE TRUE ARCHITECT OF BANARAS RAJ

After Mansaram's death, his son Balwant Singh assumed the title of "*Raja bahadur*" and took charge of the Banaras zamindari in 1738 A.D. which had already been conferred to him during his father's lifetime. With his accession Banaras entered a new phase of political development which witnessed struggle and tussle among powers like *Nawabs* of Awadh, Afghans of Rohilkhand and Farrukhabad, Marathas and latter around the 1760's even the English regime, all striving hard to outdo each other so that they could expand their territorial boundaries and reap maximum benefit for their regime.

After the demise of Mansaram, his son Balwant Singh sent a gift (*nazzar*) of rupees 21,775 to the Mughal court in Delhi through Amir Khan, the governor of Allahabad and obtained a *sanad* (royal orders) under the seal of Mughal *wazir* (*diwan*) named, Qamruddin Khan. Through the *sanad*, he was granted the zamindari of Kaswar and three other *parganas* of Afrad, Katehar and Bhagwat in the Banaras region.<sup>41</sup> In lieu of these privileges Balwant Singh was to collect and remit revenue of rupees thirteen lacs annually to the *Nawab* of Awadh.<sup>42</sup> The new Raja enjoyed and exercised all the powers of government within his dominion, as his father did before him. However, Raja Balwant Singh's powers were limited in some areas of the administration which was a prerogative reserved for the *Nawabs* of Awadh and the Mughal Emperor. He

<sup>39</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, Vol.-2, ed. H. Blochmann, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873, pp- 162- 165.

<sup>40</sup> Alam, *The Crisis of the Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707- 48*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, p-253.

<sup>41</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 21.

<sup>42</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p- 3.



was prohibited from issuing money in his own name, which was a privilege reserved only for the supreme power in the country, which was retained by the Mughal Emperor despite of the fact that they were just nominal heads.

As soon as Balwant Singh took control of the zamindari of Banaras, the first thing that he did was, he renamed his village Titharea to Gangapur. And made Gangapur as his capital and ruled the Banaras zamindari from here. He constructed a mud garrison at Gangapur for his defence and erected a residence for himself. He appointed Mehrchand, a friend of his father, as his *diwan*. While the *Nawab* of Awadh, Safdar Jung appointed Namkeen Singh, the deputy governor of Awadh and Roop Singh, one of his officials as the *sazawal* (an official for collection of revenue) of Banaras. Their primary duty was to collect the stipulated revenue in monthly installments from the Raja and further advance it to treasury of *Nawab* Saadat Khan.<sup>43</sup>

Later on Balwant Singh was granted the zamindari of Ghazipur and Bhadohi also, as Fazl Ali, the son of deceased Sheikh Abdullah could not maintain the Ghazipur zamindari and failed to fulfill the revenue obligations, the *Nawab* of Awadh granted the zamindari to Balwant Singh on increased revenue of five lacs rupees yearly.<sup>44</sup> Balwant Singh was a mere zamindar of Banaras region whose prime duty was to levy and collect taxes and then remit the revenue to his overlord that is the *Nawab* of Awadh. Other than this he was to maintain a standing army to control the rebels in his region and assist the *Nawab* whenever the need be. Though Balwant Singh had the title of Raja but, he did not possess any legal authority over the mint at Banaras and *kotwalis* of Banaras and Jaunpur and they were still under the direct control of the Awadh *Nawab*. Even the *qazis* of the principal towns were appointed by the Emperor. While the fort of Chunar and Jaunpur were also not in the jurisdiction of Balwant Singh. These forts were used as garrison by the troops of the *Nawab* and the Mughal Emperor.<sup>45</sup> But despite all these limitations, in practicality the *Nawab* of Awadh and the Mughal Emperor had very little or no control over the local and regional politics of Banaras zamindari. They tried to exercise power through force but all in vain and by the mid of the eighteenth century Balwant Singh was almost free of the *Nawabs*

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<sup>43</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven , Allahabad, 1875, p- 21

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, pp-38-39.

<sup>45</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-10.

control. Till 1748 A.D. Balwant Singh acted as a submissive vassal and paid his revenue to the Awadh treasury quite punctually<sup>46</sup> but not anymore.

Balwant Singh being an ambitious administrator always tried to free himself from the authoritative shadow of the *Nawab* and the Emperor. And he gained a similar opportunity when the *Nawab* of Awadh, Safdar Jung was summoned by Muhammad Shah to Delhi for his aid because of Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasion. The invasion of Ahmad Shah gave a severe jolt to the imperial throne and crippled its power, while this served as a boon for Balwant Singh. Seeing the *Nawab* engaged in the imperial obligations, he tried to shake off the authority of the *Nawab* and gain independence. He expelled the *sazawal* appointed by Safdar Jung in Banaras and even stopped paying the installments of the stipulated revenue.<sup>47</sup> According to B.S Cohn, "Balwant Singh had built up his own administrative organization, apart from that which existed in the region under the Mughals".<sup>48</sup>

After establishing himself firmly in the Banaras zamindari, Raja Balwant Singh tried his hands on expanding his territorial boundaries and subduing his contemporaries. On finding an apt opportunity he launched a series of attacks on various zamindaris adjoining the Banaras region. He advanced towards the zamindari of Bhadohi and attacked Duswant Singh, the Rajput chief of Bhadohi *pargana* with the help of Rustam Khan, the *rissaldar* (a military official) of Bengal Nizam and Raja Prathipat Narain of Pratapgarh in the Allahabad *suba*.<sup>49</sup> Duswant Singh took shelter in the fort of Bhadohi which was besieged by the army of Balwant Singh for many days and finally the fort was taken over. Duswant Singh was taken a prisoner and later murdered by Balwant Singh. On learning about this treacherous act on the part of Balwant Singh, the governor of Allahabad, Ali Quli Khan, who was also a principal officer of the *Nawab* Safdar Jung, marched towards Chunar via Mirzapur to inflict punishment to the Raja for his deed. At this Balwant Singh got alarmed and fled to Latifpur. Ali Quli Khan recaptured the fort of Bhadohi. He expelled the forces of

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<sup>46</sup> F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Province of India: Mirzapur*, vol-15, Allahabad, 1883, p-106.

<sup>47</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 22.

<sup>48</sup> B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, p- 323.

<sup>49</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 22.

Balwant Singh and replaced them by his own and returned to Allahabad. On this Balwant Singh returned to Gangapur and again attacked the fort of Bhadohi, taking it under his control.<sup>50</sup> Ali Quli Khan enraged with this act of the Raja took aid of the sons of Bairi Sal and Darriao Singh (zamindars of the Banaras region), who were waiting to take revenge of their father's murder.

On hearing of the combined forces of Ali Quli Khan and sons of Bairi Sal and Darriao Singh, Balwant Singh negotiated for peace and offered a *nazrana* of rupees one lac to the *subedar* of Allahabad in lieu of the complete possession of the *pargana* of Bhadohi.<sup>51</sup> But Ali Quli Khan refused to accept these terms and marched towards Bhadohi. While in the meantime Balwant Singh being a shrewd man managed to win over the military commander of Ali Quli Khan. And the treachery of these two commanders turned the tables for Ali Quli Khan and they remained mere spectators on the battle field. This proved as the greatest opportunity for Balwant Singh and he defeated Ali Quli Khan near Bhadohi in mid 1750's. Thus capturing the *pargana* of Bhadohi and merging it into his dominion. This event even boosted the morale of Balwant Singh.

Safdar Jung was miffed by the actions of Balwant Singh but could not take any stringent action against the unruly Raja because of his engagement with the Afghans. And being an opportunist, Balwant Singh in order to safeguard his position and territory, tried to make allies with the Afghans as soon as he got the news of Safdar Jung's defeat by the Afghans. Later Safdar Jang had been appointed as the governor of the Mughal Empire.<sup>52</sup> He found a good opportunity when Ali Mohammad, the Afghan chief of Rohilkhand died, for promoting his own interest in the Rohilla territory which bordered his own dominion of the state of Awadh. Safdar Jang then encouraged another Afghan chief of Farrukhabad, Kaim Jang, to attack the Rohilas, he was aware that, whatever might be its result, war between the two Afghan powers would surely turn to his own advantage. In 1750 A.D., Kaim Jang invaded Rohilkhand. He met the forces of Hafiz Rahmat and Dundi Khan, Rohilla chiefs and after a battle near Budaon. Kaim Jang was defeated and killed. Safdar Jung, thinking that this opportunity was favorable for his own profit, seized Farrukhabad and the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p- 23.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p-24.

<sup>52</sup> Sir John Strachey, *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1892, p- 16.

territories of his Afghan ally, but Ahmad Khan, the son of Kaim Jang, soon succeeded in collecting his adherents, and defeated the troops of the Vizier at the battle of Ram Chatauni on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1750 A.D.<sup>53</sup>

After the defeat of the *Nawab*, Ahmad Khan made some speedy arrangements to take possession of Awadh. He deputed his eldest son, *Nawab* Mahmud Khan, with Jahan Khan, an old adherent of the family, along with ten thousand horses and a large force of infantry to take possession of Lucknow and the *suba* of Awadh. At the same time, another son named Shadi Khan, with the assistance of Kali Khan was ordered to advance towards Kara and Jahanabad, in the *suba* of Allahabad and Muhammad Amir Khan his nineteenth son, was sent to occupy Ghazipur.<sup>54</sup> A battle was waged between Shadi Khan and the Governor of Allahabad, Ali Quli Khan at Kara-Jahanabad.<sup>55</sup> On seeing Shadi Khan loosing, Ahmad Khan, himself marched towards Allahabad. On reaching Kara, he halted here for several days, and intended to return home himself, leaving the battle on the capable shoulders of his three officers Mansur Ali Khan, Rustam Khan Bangash, and Saadat Khan Afridi. But he was persuaded to go on with his endeavors and he plundered the *suba* of Allahabad. In the meanwhile the Bangash *Nawab*, Ahmad Khan appointed his relative Sahib Zaman Khan of Jaunpur as the Governor of Banaras,<sup>56</sup> who was also a man of high rank in the army of Balwant Singh. Under the guidance of Sahib Zaman Khan, the Afghan forces marched to Jaunpur and captured the small forts Soorhoolpoor, after the siege of fifteen days and then the fort of Jaunpur was captured.<sup>57</sup>

The main motive of the Bangash *Nawab* and Sahib Zaman Khan was to take over Banaras by completely expelling Balwant Singh from the zamindari of Banaras. But Raja Balwant Singh was equally shrewd and cunning and on sensing the danger of losing his zamindari, tried to win over the Afghan commandant by lending a hand of friendship towards him. He even sent a message to Zaman Khan saying that,

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<sup>53</sup> William Irvine, *The Bangash Nawabs of Farrukhabad: a Chronicle (1713—1857)*, Fatehgarh, 1878, pp-71-77.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p- 76.

<sup>55</sup> Jahanabad was a place some thirty-four miles north-west of the town of Fatehpur.

<sup>56</sup> F. H. Fisher and J. P. Hewett, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of North Western Provinces of India*, Vol. XIV, part 3- Jaunpur, p- 93.

<sup>57</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 26-27.

If whatever he had heard was true, he was ready to obey, and, moreover had the greatest desire to assist in arranging for the transfer of the country, in ruling for which he was even prepared to act as Zaman Khan's deputy.<sup>58</sup>

Zaman Khan pretended to agree with Balwant Singh but making an excuse left for Jaunpur, where he received the next set of orders from the Afghan *Nawab* to expel Balwant Singh. Being aware of Balwant Singh's power, Zaman Khan requested Ahmad Khan to send more troops. The Afghan *Nawab* dispatched Akbar Shah the chief of Azamgarh and Shamshad Khan, the zamindar of Mahaul to assist him against Balwant Singh.<sup>59</sup> And thus in a short span of time a huge army consisting of seventeen hundred cavalry and ten thousand infantry was collected.<sup>60</sup> Balwant Singh in order to defend his territory crossed the Ganges and marched towards Murahoo and camped here to resist the attack of the Afghans. While on the other hand, instead of marching into the capital of Balwant Singh, Zaman Khan encamped at Nizamabad, which was thirty two miles north east of Jaunpur.<sup>61</sup> This provided Balwant Singh with an opportunity to mend his fortunes as Ahmad Khan had reached Allahabad by then. And in order to win over the *Nawab*, he presented him with large offerings and gifts through his *rissaldar* named, Lal Khan and Rasul Khan, his *bakshi*.<sup>62</sup> He even sent costly gifts for the Afghan chiefs in order to win their support.

Ahmad Khan also acted diplomatically and sensing the need of the hour agreed to meet Balwant Singh. And similarly Balwant Singh quick in grasping the opportunity at once went to Allahabad to meet the Bangash *Nawab*. And offered him a *nazrana* of one lakhs of rupees and in lieu of this payment, he received a *khilat* from the *Nawab* conforming him the authority of half of his province, that is, he retained all the places situated on the south of the Ganges while the other half was granted to Zaman Khan.<sup>63</sup> Though despite of the negotiation made between the Afghan *Nawab* and Balwant

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<sup>58</sup> Khan, Khairuddin Muhammad, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 26.

<sup>59</sup> William Irvine, *The Bangash Nawabs of Farrukhabad: a Chronicle (1713—1857)*, Fatehgarh, 1878, p- 82.

<sup>60</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 26.

<sup>61</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, The World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-4.

<sup>62</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 27.

<sup>63</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 27- 28.

Singh, Ahmad Khan desired that once all the settlements are made in Awadh he would completely dispose off, Balwant Singh from the territory of Banaras.

But before he could act, Safdar Jang enraged at his defeat, marched in person with a large army to Farrukhabad to attack Ahmad Khan. He even called the Marathas for his aid in order to completely wipe off the Rohilla power from the Gangetic Doab.<sup>64</sup> The Marathas agreed, on receiving the promise of large subsidies, to join Safdar Jang with their troops and their united armies marched towards Farrukhabad. Ahmad Khan applied for assistance to Hafiz Rahmat and Dundi Khan, urging that all Rohilas should combine against a common danger.<sup>65</sup> Ahmad Khan was soon defeated and in 1751 A.D., the Marathas and Safdar Jang entered Rohilkhand. The Rohilas were unable to resist the attack and they retreated to the forest tract below the mountains, and the province was soon overrun and devastated.<sup>66</sup> While on the other hand in Banaras when Balwant Singh got the news of Safdar Jung's victory over the Rohilas, he at once refused to give up the territory and attacked the Afghans and drove out Zaman Khan from Jaunpur and he fled to Champaran.<sup>67</sup> Thus Balwant Singh recovered his former possession.

Though Balwant Singh regained his zamindari but the dagger of Safdar Jung was still hanging on his head. The *Nawab* after freeing himself from the Rohilla menace directed his attention towards punishing the traitors who had sided with his enemies in his dark times. As a result in order to teach Balwant Singh and Raja of Pratapgarh a lesson, he immediately marched towards Banaras. When the *Nawab* reached Sultanpur, which was some thirty six miles south of Faizabad, the Raja of Pratapgarh, Prathipati, presented himself before the *Nawab*.<sup>68</sup> He came unarmed as he was unaware of the angry *Nawab*'s intention which proved fatal for him as he was deceitfully killed by the *Nawab*.<sup>69</sup> On hearing the murder of Prathipati and the *Nawab*'s advancement towards Jaunpur, Balwant Singh became alarmed and along with his family fled from Gangapur to the mountains of Mirzapur, south of the

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<sup>64</sup> William Irvine, *The Bangash Nawabs of Farrukhabad: A Chronicle (1713—1857)*, Fatehgarh, 1878, p-86.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p-91.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p-103.

<sup>67</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, p-173.

<sup>68</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, p-191.

<sup>69</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F. Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 29-30.

Ganges.<sup>70</sup> From Jaunpur the *Nawab* made advancement towards Banaras and plundered Gangapur, the capital of Balwant Singh. He even sent a convoy across the Ganges in search of Balwant Singh.

Seeing Safdar Jung's attitude, Balwant Singh decided that the apt thing for him at this moment was to negotiate for peace with the furious *Nawab*. So in order to win over the *Nawab*'s favour he, himself avoided direct confrontation with Safdar Jung, rather he diplomatically sent his most trusted man, Lal Khan with two lacs rupees and also offered annual increment of rupees two lacs on his revenue to the *Nawab*.<sup>71</sup> Through the intervention of Syed Nurul Hassan Khan Bilgrami, one of the officers of the *Nawab*, Safdar Jung agreed to pardon Balwant Singh. The *Nawab* tried several attempts to tempt the Raja to come and meet him. He even sent Nurul Hassan to Balwant Singh but the Raja on remembering the incidence of Prathipati refused to meet the *Nawab* in person saying that, 'no one who had gone to the presence of god had ever come back'.<sup>72</sup> The *Nawab* tried very hard to entrap Balwant Singh but all in vain and in the mean while he was summoned to Delhi by the Emperor urgently due to the invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali and having no time at his disposal, Safdar Jung secretly sent a *khilat* to the Raja confirming him all his possession and fixed the revenue at rupees fifteen lacs annually.<sup>73</sup> He also appointed Nurul Hasan as the *sazawal* of Banaras to ensure regular payment of the revenue and after making all the arrangements with the Raja of Banaras, he immediately returned to Faizabad.<sup>74</sup>

After the departure of the *Nawab* Safdar Jung from Banaras, Balwant Singh returned to Banaras and the first thing he did was to shift his capital from Gangapur to Ramnagar, which was on the south of the river Ganga.<sup>75</sup> At his new seat he built a strong fort and a residence for himself. And in the mean while he tried to strengthen his position and gain autonomy but he was well verse with the fact that he could not completely free himself from the suzerainty of the *Nawab*. So he devoted himself to,

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<sup>70</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-10.

<sup>71</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F. Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 30.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p-30.

<sup>73</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-5.

<sup>74</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F. Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 31.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

consolidate his power further by seizing various zamindaris and bringing them under his control. All these incidences and Balwant Singh's uninterrupted success "taught the Raja his power and his aggrandisement progressed rapidly to the intense dismay of the Oudh government, which was now powerless to resist him."<sup>76</sup> Thus Balwant Singh once again shifted his focus on consolidating his power and planned a series of expeditions on the neighbouring zamindaris which had come to a standstill during the Rohilla and Afghan conflict.

Balwant Singh's main motive was to get hold of the fort of Bijaygarh, which was strategically important for him as this fort was situated on a hill and was protected by mountain ranges from the east and the south. Because of the terrain, the Bijaygarh fort was difficult to annex and almost inaccessible to the enemy. It was perfect place for shelter during invasion and for this reason Balwant Singh had planned to shift his treasury here as according to him Bijaygarh fort would be the safest place.<sup>77</sup> But before he could make a move, it was necessary to capture the land lying between his dominion and this fortress. The movement of the garrison to and fro from the fort of Bijaygarh would be obstructed by the fort of Patita from one side and by Latifpur from the other side.

And for this reason Balwant Singh turned his attention first towards the fort of Patita, which was situated in the *pargana* of Bhagwant. It was erected by the ancestors of the Governor of Bhagwant, Jamait Khan, in the foot hills about miles east of Chunar. Balwant Singh tried all attempts to capture the fort of Patita but failed miserably. But soon the fortunes turned in favour of Balwant Singh and Jamait Khan fell ill. Taking advantage of the old age and illness of the Governor of Bhagwant and the Raja attacked the fort of Patita. Despite of Jamait Khan's sickness, Balwant Singh had to cordon the fort for a month before it finally fell in his hands in the year 1753 A.D.

With the annexation of the fort of Patita and the zamindari of Bhagwant, Balwant Singh shifted his attention to the fort of Latifpur, which was ten miles from Chunar. Latifpur was a strong stone fort that was surrounded by ravines and dense forests. It

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<sup>76</sup> F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Province of India: Mirzapur*, vol-15, Allahabad, 1883, p-106.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



was erected by Malik Farrukh, the zamindar of Ahraura. He died leaving behind his two sons Malik Ahmad and Malik Ehsan. The fort of Ahraura was in the possession of his son Malik Ahmad, while Latifpur fort was held by Malik Ehsan. When their father died, Balwant Singh treacherously attacked the fort of Ahraura and within few hours the fort was seized by the Raja.<sup>78</sup> And Malik Ahmad was killed while he was trying to escape to Latifpur fort. On receiving the news of his brother's murder horrified Malik Ehsan evacuated Latifpur and fled to a place called Zamania, some thirty five miles east of Banaras.<sup>79</sup> Thus Latifpur fell into Balwant Singh's hands without any stiff resistance. These two victories cleared the passage of Balwant Singh for the conquest of Bijaygarh fort.

In order to achieve his motive the army of Balwant Singh marched to Bijaygarh fort. But before the army could do anything, the governor of Bijaygarh, Vijay Singh opened a deal with the Raja and sold the fort for rupees fifty thousand.<sup>80</sup> The governor was aware that he could not resist the power of Balwant Singh so he readily surrendered it to him. Thus the most important fort was held without any difficulty. The next in line was the fort of Agoree situated on the bank of river Sone about twelve miles south of Bijaygarh. It was erected by the kinsmen of Vijay Singh.<sup>81</sup> And it was captured by Balwant Singh in 1754 A.D.

In the meantime the news of Balwant Singh's military expedition reached Awadh and Safdar Jung immediately marched towards Banaras and reached here on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1754 A.D. to reprimand the Raja. But as usual Balwant Singh had crossed the Ganges and already fled to Chandrauti, some twelve miles east of Banaras. Fully aware of the *Nawab's* difficulties Balwant Singh decided to play a waiting game and waited patiently for his departure. Safdar Jung could not wait owing to the urgent calls from the Emperor. He was summoned to join him in an expedition against the Marathas. And hence he returned to his capital without taking any actions against the Raja.<sup>82</sup> On learning about the *Nawab's* departure, Balwant Singh came out from his hidings and shifted his attention to a new mission. This time he set forth for the

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<sup>78</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical and Statistical Memoir of the Ghazee-poor District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1876, p- 101.

<sup>79</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 32.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p-33.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-Daula: 1754-1765*, vol-1, Midland press, Calcutta, 1938, p-26-27.

eastern frontiers of his territory and expanded his territory by annexing the zamindaris of local chieftains and rulers.

The *pargana* of Kyra Mangraur was under the jurisdiction of Daim Khan, who was a descendant of Rajput Gaharwals but had embraced Islamism. On the instigation of Balwant Singh, his uncle Dasa Ram attacked Daim Khan but he was taken as a prisoner by Daim Khan. Balwant Singh himself marched to Kyra Mangraur and freed his uncle ousting Daim Khan from his zamindari. And acting wisely Balwant Singh sent the *naib subedar* of Patna, Raja Jankiram as his *vakil*, who promised to pay rupees seven thousand annually as revenue of the *pargana*. And thus in 1754 A.D. the zamindari of Kyra Mangraur came under the control of the Banaras zamindari. Later on during the reign of Mughal Emperor, Alamgir II, Balwant Singh managed to obtain a rent-free grant of the entire *pargana*.<sup>83</sup>

After this Balwant Singh moved his attention to the zamindari of Garwara and Machlishahr. This was an act of revenge as the zamindar of Garwara, Himmat Bahadur and the Zamindar of Machlishahr; Sheikh Kabul Muhammad had revolted against Balwant Singh and taken sides with Sahib Zaman Khan during the Rohilla insurgency. Balwant Singh was waiting for the right time and he got an opportunity when Himmat Bahadur expelled a *pattedar* (a lease holder) named Ratan Singh. And on the pretext of managing the affairs of Garwara, the Raja sent a large army. On seeing the army Himmat Bahadur fled from Garwara and his son Sukhnand Singh was taken a prisoner by the Raja. And Budh Singh was placed in the zamindari on the payment of eighty thousand rupees annually to the Raja.<sup>84</sup> Similarly the zamindari of Machlishahr was also taken into possession by fraudulent methods from Sheikh Kabul Muhammad. Till 1755 A.D., Balwant Singh had merged all the *jagirs* of smaller zamindars of Jaunpur into his zamindari.<sup>85</sup>

The death of Safdar Jung in 1754 A.D. created an atmosphere of confusion in the *Nawab's* territory. And taking full advantage of the situation as the new *Nawab*, Shuja-ud-Daula was busy settling his own affairs in Awadh. Balwant Singh now

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<sup>83</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-34-36.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p- 37.

<sup>85</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical and Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepeer District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1876, p-102.

shifted his focus towards the historical fort of Chunar as it was strategically located on the commanding trade route and was the only place within Balwant Singh's territory that was not under his control. The Chunar fort was under the official directly appointed by the *Nawabs* of Awadh but Balwant Singh's recent successes encouraged him to move forward with his plan. The majestic Chunar fort was erected on a lofty mountain and was situated on the bank of river Ganges, which was twenty miles east of Mirzapur.<sup>86</sup> The *qiladars* of the fort, Mirza Ahmad Beg died in 1753 A.D. leaving behind a minor son named Agha Khale and his slave, Agha Mir as the regent to his son. This provided Balwant Singh with an excellent opportunity to raid Chunar fort and bring it under his jurisdiction. He wanted to resort this matter peacefully as any use of force would alert the *Nawab* at Faizabad, so he gave a bribe of rupees one lacs to Agha Mir, 'the de facto *qiladar*'<sup>87</sup> to entice him. But the news of the deal spread like wild fire. As soon as Shuja-ud-Daula came to know about the collusion, he at once marched to Banaras to chastise the unruly Raja. But on the way to Banaras, the old mother-in-law of Balwant Singh gave a tough resistance to the *Nawab* at a place some nineteen miles away from Banaras. The *Nawab* could move forward only after compromising a deal with her. In the meanwhile, on getting the news of the *Nawabs* arrival Balwant Singh along with his family fled to the Latifpur fort whereas Agha Mir went absconding. Shuja-ud-Daula appointed one of his officials as the in charge of the fort and confiscated the property of the late *qiladars* due to which he received a property worth four lacs rupees and seven lacs rupees in cash.<sup>88</sup>

After settling the matter of Chunar, the infuriated *Nawab*, Shuja-ud-Daula entered Banaras to expel Balwant Singh from the zamindari of Banaras. He directed Fazl Ali Khan, the *faujdar* of Ghazipur to drive Balwant Singh out of Latifpur fort. The *Nawab* was advised by the celebrated Sheikh Ali Hazin, one of the holiest men of his time, to go soft on the Raja as the turmoil and confusion that was prevalent in Awadh after the death of Safdar Jung would extend to other parts of his territory. Because Balwant Singh had become powerful and if he resorted to violence then it would create an atmosphere of uncertainty and would be hazardous for his empire. But Shuja-ud-Daula, mad in rage did not lend ear to this advice. *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula summoned

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<sup>86</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-Daula: 1754-1765*, vol-1, Midland press, Calcutta, 1938, p-26.

<sup>87</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-8.

<sup>88</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 38.

Fazl Ali, the *faujdar* of Ghazipur to undertake the onerous task of suppressing Balwant Singh. Fazl Ali was aware of the strength of Balwant Singh and hence taking full advantage of the situation demanded from the *Nawab* that if he defeats Balwant Singh, he should be installed as a ruler in place of Balwant Singh in the zamindari of Banaras, on the same annual tribute as the Raja was paying. He further wanted an exemption from payment of one year's revenue that amounted to ten lacs of rupees and he was to be furnished with a cavalry of ten thousand for at least a year for this expedition. Whereas on the other hand, Balwant Singh set fire to the Latifpur fort and took refuge in the Bijaygarh fort. He at the same time, called upon the Marathas for his aid from the vicinity of Patna.<sup>89</sup> While these negotiations were going on news came from Delhi about the invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali and the *Nawab* was summoned to the capital. And at this juncture of time Muhammad Ali, one of the courtiers of the *Nawab* suggested him not to adopt such a defiant policy towards the Raja as no one would be able to collect the revenue of turbulent Banaras state in opposition from Balwant Singh and not even Fazl Ali, because he could hardly fulfill his liabilities and paid the revenue of Ghazipur with much difficulty. And the need of the hour was that it would be better to overlook Balwant Singh's wrong doings and impose a heavy fine on him.<sup>90</sup> Deposing Balwant Singh at the crucial juncture would mean an additional threat to the *Nawab's* dominion as if Fazl Ali succeeded in taming down Balwant Singh, which was unlikely to happen, would become the master of an extensive region and could become a menace for the *Nawab*. Whereas if Balwant Singh came out victorious, it would do nothing but put a constrain on the treasury of Awadh (loss of ten lacs rupees worth revenue and the cost of retaining ten thousand troopers for an indefinite period). In the meanwhile adopting his old diplomatic policy, Balwant Singh sent Lal Khan with a *nazrana* of five lacs rupees to the *Nawab* and offered an increment of five lacs rupees on the annual revenue of Banaras zamindari. And because of the little time at his disposal, Shuja-ud-Daula confirmed Balwant Singh in the zamindari of Banaras with increased revenue and even granted him the possession of the *pargana* of Bhadohi and returned back to Faizabad in 1757 A.D.

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<sup>89</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-38.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p- 39.

As soon as the *Nawab* departed from Banaras, Balwant Singh returned to his capital Ramnagar. But this time he was set to take revenge on Fazl Ali Khan for raising his head against him and siding with the *Nawab*. The *sarkar* of Ghazipur was granted to Sheikh Abdullah in 1738 A.D. by Safdar Jang for an annual tribute of rupees three lacs after the expulsion of Mir Rustam Ali.<sup>91</sup> Sheikh Abdullah died in 1744 A.D., leaving behind the *sarkar* of Ghazipur to his eldest son Fazl Ali. But because of Fazl Ali's absence from Ghazipur, the *sarkar* was granted to his younger son Karimullah. Later on Fazl Ali applied to Safdar Jung and obtained the zamindari of Ghazipur with an increase of rupees one lac in his revenue obligations.<sup>92</sup> But due to his ill management, the *sarkar* was handed over to his brother, Karimullah. He died in 1748 A.D. and on his death Fazl Ali was reinstated as the Governor of Ghazipur on an annual payment of five lacs rupees. Two years later when Safdar Jung was defeated by the Rohilas, the Bangash *Nawab* deputed his official, Muhammad Amin Khan to Ghazipur and Fazl Ali fled without resisting the invaders. As a result when Shuja-ud-Daula ascended the throne he installed Muhammad Ali to the *sarkar*. But Muhammad Ali failed to control the Rajput. And hence Ghazipur was once again handed over to Fazl Ali. This time he was given the jurisdiction of the Azamgarh also.<sup>93</sup>

Balwant Singh was all set to annex the *sarkar* of Ghazipur in his territory. And for this he paid a large sum of one lac rupees as bribe to the officials of the *Nawab* to win them over to his side. After this he made regular trips to Ghazipur, seeing the Raja in his region Fazl Ali sent messages to the *Nawab* but due to the corrupt officials nothing was done to resort his problem and as a result Fazl Ali raised an army to fight back Balwant Singh. This action of Fazl Ali was considered as an act of rebellion by Beni Bahadur, the deputy governor of the *Nawab*, who himself was bribed by the Raja.<sup>94</sup> Beni Bahadur marched to Ghazipur with a large army to depose the governor. On receiving the news of his approach Fazl Ali fled to Patna. And thus the *sarkar* of Ghazipur was taken over by Balwant Singh. The property of Fazl Ali was confiscated

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<sup>91</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F. Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-10.

<sup>92</sup> H.R. Nevill, *Ghazipur: A Gazetteer, Being Vol. XXVI of District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Awadh*, Allahabad, 1909, p-168.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p-169.

<sup>94</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical And Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepeer District*, vol- 1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1876, p- 102.

by Balwant Singh and he gave all the twenty two *parganas* on rent to his followers. Accordingly,

‘of these *parganas* Chausa, Zamania and Kunda fell to Baboo Baijnath Singh, Syaidpur to Lala Nandkishore, Muhammadabad to Bhaiyaram, Mahajun, Haweli Ghazipur to Nandram Diwan and Lal Khan, Sikandarpur to Muzaffar Khan, Shadiabad and Zahoorabad to Baboo Durvijay Singh and Jagdeo Singh’.<sup>95</sup>

Balwant Singh followed a vigorous policy of expansion and consolidation and as a result he was able to oust Bhoabal Deo, the Hyobans Raja of *pargana* Ballia<sup>96</sup> and even took control of the fort of Serigah by expelling Durvijay Singh.<sup>97</sup> His victory mission did not end here and in 1759 A.D. Balwant Singh annexed the *pargana* of Kuntit in the *suba* of Allahabad and removed Raja Vikramajit.<sup>98</sup> After annexing the *parganas* the first thing that Balwant Singh did was that he replaced the officials of the annexed region by his own men in order to create loyal gentry for himself. But despite of these successes and efforts, Balwant Singh was not able to expel the most troublesome Seyngur Rajput zamindars of Lukhnesar *pargana*. They refused to pay the revenue because of which the Raja marched against them. However he was not able to defeat them and came into an agreement. According to which their zamindari was left in their possession and the annual revenue was fixed at a very low rate.<sup>99</sup>

In 1760 A.D. when Ahmad Shah Abdali returned to his country leaving the Indian subcontinent; *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula summoned the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II from Patna. So that he could take his seat and to welcome the Emperor he, himself marched to Banaras with a hidden objective of crushing Balwant Singh and taking him a prisoner. But before he could reach Banaras, Balwant Singh along with his family fled to the hills. The *Nawab* tried all the possible methods to entrap the Raja but all his efforts proved futile. As Balwant Singh being a hard nut to crack did not give in to the temptations and persuasions of the *Nawab* and did not come to receive him or the Emperor. Rather sent a nazrana of rupees one lac twenty thousand, through

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<sup>95</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 41.

<sup>96</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical And Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepeer District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1876, p- 102.

<sup>97</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 41-42.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p- 42-43.

<sup>99</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical And Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepeer District*, vol -1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1876, p- 103.

Lal Khan to the *Nawab*.<sup>100</sup> And finally the *Nawab* enraged with anger returned to his capital.

The relation between the *Nawabs* of Awadh and the Raja were at first cordial but with the passing of time we see that they got strained. Balwant Singh's administration proved as vigorous and successful as that of his father, and he was able to bring a large chunk of adjoining land under his dominion and there was no one who could challenge his uncontrolled authority, he recovered almost all the forts and districts which remained untouched by his father. He continued to consolidate and expand his kingdom as before, under the *Nawabs*. It is said that at the time of Balwant Singh's death, his territory incorporated ninety six more *parganas* which was just the double in number that he had acquired from his father Mansaram.<sup>101</sup> Apart from the eighteen inherited *parganas* the table below gives a detailed lists of *parganas* that Balwant Singh acquired by sheer dint of his hard work and diplomacy during his reign.<sup>102</sup> The East India Company records inform us about the *parganas* in each *sarkar* and the revenue income earned from each of them:

Pargana in the sarkar Chunar	Revenue collected
1. Agoree Bijaygarh, a hill zamindari to Rajputs	70,312 Rs
2. Singrory, another hill zamindar	4,109 Rs
3. Bhagwat, or Pattuta to an Afghan zamindar	62,203 Rs
4. Lutteefpoor, in zamindari to Syed	40,975 Rs
5. Bhooly, zamindari of Daim Khan Afghan	80,609 Rs
6. Dhoos, farmed by Tokrai Amrora Singh	45,112 Rs
7. Mowy... Ditto...	51,745 Rs
8. Muchwar, Mowary	80,307 Rs

<sup>100</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 46.

<sup>101</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical and Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepoor District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p- 106.

<sup>102</sup> Firminger, *Affairs of the East India Company: Being the 5th Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons 28th July, 1812*, Vol-2, B.R. Publishing Corporations, pp- 469-470.

9. Nerome Ram Town Singh	96,208 Rs
10. Mehach or Danapoor, Baboo Doorybzey Singh	61,905 Rs
11. Burhul, farmed to Dhoonda Baghet	35,107 Rs
12. Ragoopoor, or Ramnagar	60,300 Rs
13. Havilla Chunar in several villages	26,572 Rs
14. Kera Mungrove, formerly belonging to Chainpoor Circar, Shahabad Soobah Behar, now attached to Chunar	1,15,300 Rs
<p>Parganas in the Sarkar Ghazipur</p> <p>(Obtained from Shuja-ud-Dowla, first in farm, then in zamindari, through means of Raja Beni Bahadur, on the dismissal of Fazl Ali).</p>	
15. Haville and the town of Ghazipur, Mehal and Sayer to Aga Mehndi	1,51,000 Rs
16. Seydpoor Phittree to Oussan Sing, fixed 73,000	92,700 Rs
17. Behryabad to Bukhshi Sadanund now to Beni Ram Pundit	20,000 Rs
18. Shadiabad 19. Bhadowan 20. Zahoorabad 21. Bahadurgunge	1,90,000 Rs
22. Belliah 23. Pachooter 24. Lucknisser 25. Kharced Townpoor, and now altogether composing 26. Secondapoor 27. Gossah	5,36,000 Rs
28. Zemanean	2,00,000 Rs
29. Chounsah	1,15,000 Rs
30. Kurindah	58,000 Rs
31. Gundeah 32. Dahnea	50,000 Rs



33. Kerryat Pallee } 34. Mahomedabad }	1,25,000 Rs
35. Chandpore (formerly in Circar Townpoor, to Baboobeem Singh's)	18,000 Rs
36. Boorgan and Burragong Nugrah Zemindarry	25,000 Rs
Parganas in the Sarkar Townpoor	
37-41. Havillee, the city, Hajeypoor, Mulhee, and Seopoor, five Mehals obtained from Safdar Jang	3,00,000 Rs
Parganas in the Sarkar Allahabad	
42-51. Canteel-Bijeypoor, the Zamindari of Lal Gobind Jeet, subdivided into 10 mehals, of which some belonged to Chunar, Suckteesgur Chowrasse Agory, Chenahi, and c. obtained from Shuja-ud-Dowla, on the death of Mohammad Kuli Khan, through Beni Bahadur	5,23, 212 Rs
Total acquisition of Raja Balwant Singh	32,34,676 Rs

The power that Balwant Singh was increasing which was a matter of concern for the *Nawabs* as they were petrified that their own state would fall prey to the ambition of Balwant Singh if he was not kept in check. Being a shrewd and clever man, Balwant Singh never missed an opportunity to reap maximum benefit. Balwant Singh being an ambitious administrator always tried to free himself from the authoritative shadow of the *Nawab* and the Emperor. And he gained many opportunities to full fill his ambition whenever the *Nawabs* of Awadh were busy in their own state affairs Balwant Singh would create a ruckus in the adjoining territories. For example- On seeing the apt opportunity he even made a march towards the zamindari of Bhadohi and attacked Duswant Singh, brought Chunar, Bijaygarh, Latifpur and many more under his control without the permission of the Mughal Emperor or the *Nawabs*. When ever given a chance Balwant Singh always tried to gain an autonomous status and become an independent ruler. But he could not succeed in his endeavor. Whenever he created ruckus, the *Nawab* would march to Banaras, to teach the unruly Raja a lesson. Balwant Singh never dodged the fuming *Nawab* rather and as usual every time he would along with his family, treasure and retainers flee to remote places or to the mountain forts of Latifpur or Bijaygarh. And from there he would always negotiate for peace with the *Nawab* and pay him large monetary tributes as *nazrana*.

He was very well versed with the power of the *Nawabs* and that if he directly confronted him, he could easily lose his zamindari.

Though, Balwant Singh never missed a chance to join hands with the enemies of the *Nawab*. When the news of Safdar Jung's defeat by the Afghans came, being an opportunist, Balwant Singh tried to make allies with the Afghans in order to safeguard his position and territory. But later on when the Bangash *Nawab* of Farrukhabad was defeated by Safdar Jung, Balwant Singh took a complete u-turn and broke his alliance with the Afghans and drove them out from his province. Enraged at this act of the Raja, Safdar Jung marched towards Banaras. Balwant Singh as usual fled from Banaras to a remote place. And from here he decided that the apt thing for him at this moment was to negotiate for peace with the furious *Nawab*. So in order to win over the *Nawab's* favour he, himself avoided direct confrontation with Safdar Jung, and rather he diplomatically dealt with the situation. He sent out his most trusted men to negotiate with the *Nawab*.

Similarly, the Awadh *Nawabs* whether it be Saadat Khan, Safdar Jung or Shuja-ud-Daula, they also tried very hard to depose the turbulent Raja from the zamindari of Banaras, but they never succeeded in getting hold of the Raja. Whenever they got the chance they tried hard to topple the Raja from the zamindari of Banaras and replace him by their trusted men. On many occasions they marched to Banaras to punish him but would every time return back without ousting him from the zamindari and they even had to renegotiate with him. The *Nawabs* were also conscious of Balwant Singh's power. Every time the *Nawab* was advised by his trusted officials to go soft on the Raja as the turmoil and confusion that prevailed in Awadh and at the centre due to the Marathas, Afghans and Pathans of Rohilkhand and Farrukhabad and the danger of Ahmad Shah Abdali, could easily extend to other parts of his territory. Because Balwant Singh had become powerful and if he resorted to violence then it would create an atmosphere of uncertainty and would be hazardous for his empire.

Consequently we see that being a region of great repute Banaras was strategically and geographically very important firstly because of sharing border with the *suba* of Awadh and secondly it laid on the trade route between Delhi to Bengal. And some of the most important markets of the eighteenth century lay in the vicinity of this region, which made this region more vulnerable and all the powers whether it be the

Mughals, the Awadh *Nawabs*, the Marathas, the Pathans or the Afghans of Rohilkhand and Farrukhabad all were on a constant look out to get hold of the Banaras zamindari. And at the same time at center the Mughal framework was collapsing and in Awadh the new regime was strengthening it hold hence both the powers were in no position to take risk as they feared that any further revolt or clash would result in anarchy and loss of revenue which would seriously cripple their interest and on top of all this it could even leave the doors ajar for the Marathas to sweep away the Banaras region from their control. All these factors forced the *Nawab* and Mughal Emperor to let the emergence of a new dynasty in Banaras and attune themselves to the prevailing situations.

And in all these circumstances, Mansaram laid the founding stone of Banaras Raj and built a strong foundation for his generations to come but in true sense the real architecture of the kingdom will always be Raja Balwant Singh. He was the one to strike the balance between the two political powers- the *Nawab* of Awadh and the East India Company. We'll come to see in the latter years of the eighteenth century how he protected his people and kingdom from being sandwiched between these two gigantic powers.

One of the most important question that arises is that despite both the powers viz the Mughal Emperor and the *Nawab* of Awadh being Muslim, how could they allow a Hindu kingdom to emerge in the vicinity of their territory? The answer to this question lies in the fact that from the time immemorial Banaras has been a spiritual center for the Hindus and Safdar Jung was cognizant of the fact that only a Hindu ruler would be acceptable to the masses of Banaras. It should be noted that this region has always been difficult for the Mughals and the *Nawabs* where revenue collection was been concerned. Apart from the refusal to pay the revenue, the agrarian population frequently revolted and opposed the state officials appointed there in the previous times. In fact several zamindars in the past unsuccessfully negotiated with the peasant groups. However, credit goes to Mansaram for dealing successfully on the behalf of the *Nawab* of Awadh with the peasants and the rural elites. It should be remembered that the *Nawab* of Awadh was also a Mughal representative in the region and hence Mansaram indirectly served the Mughals too. This was recognized by the *Nawabs* who also accepted the local influence, networks, and efficient management of

Mansaram. He was the only person who could easily collect the revenue which was an onerous task for others. He had good experience in administration of the region as he worked under Rustam Ali and most important, he was the head of the Trikarma Brahmins and enjoyed great influence in Banaras, as Trikarma Brahmins were a powerful clan and constituted a major portion of the population of this region. Therefore, this added to the power of Mansaram.

Several historians feel that the rural society in the Banaras region was recalcitrant because their Hindu identity was under attack due to the destruction of various temples. According to M.A. Sheerings,

‘We believe it was the boast of Alauddin, that he had destroyed one thousand temples in Banaras alone. How many more were razed to the ground, or transformed into mosques through the iconoclastic fervour of Aurungzeb.’<sup>103</sup>

He further adds on that,

‘If there is one circumstance respecting the Mohammedan period which Hindus remember better than another, it is the insulting pride of the Musulmans, the outrages which they perpetrated upon their religious convictions, and the extensive spoliation of their temples and shrines.’<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, such views are also expressed by Shreya Pathak in her work ‘*The ruling dynasty of Banaras state*’ that, ‘under Muslim subjugation, the history Beneras is full of plunders, temple destruction, revolts that brought great dissatisfaction among the Beneras people’.<sup>105</sup> The sources inform us that the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb in the year 1669 A.D. had ordered for the destruction of temples in Banaras. The famous Vishwanath temple was also demolished on Aurangzeb’s instruction,<sup>106</sup> which might have hurt the religious sentiments of the people of Banaras. But the Balwantnamah does not mention about any temples destruction nor links the recalcitrance of the Banaras peasants to the destruction of the temples. Neither does it refer to their Hindu identity being under attack. Probably the negotiations and networks of the previous zamindars who were Hindus too did not appeal to the sections of the agrarian society. Whereas, Mansaram due to his kinship

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<sup>103</sup> M. A. Sheering, *Sacred City of the Hindus: An Account of Banaras in Ancient and Modern Times*, London, 1868, p-31.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Shreya Pathak, *The Ruling Dynasty of Banaras State: 1740 to 1950 A.D.*, New Delhi, 2014, p-13.

<sup>106</sup> Saqi Mustad Khan, *Maasir-I-Alamgiri*, tr. J.N. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1947, p-55.

network and the ability to negotiate successfully could manage to make the peasants pay. Therefore, the complexities in a rural-state relationship cannot be understood in the restrictive binaries of Hindus and Muslims, rather they need to be understood in the light of the political and social networks and relationships that existed in a particular context at that point of time.

Mansaram's legacy was carried forward by his son Balwant Singh, who was equally accepted by the people of Banaras. By the dint of his determination and diplomacy, he not only ruled over Banaras and the adjacent areas but also expanded its territorial boundaries from eighteen inherited *parganas* to ninety six *parganas* at the time of his death. It would not be wrong if we say that the kingdom of Banaras was at its zenith during the reign of Balwant Singh regardless of the fact that both the *Nawab* as well as the Raja of Banaras had to grudgingly tolerate each other. Both the *Nawabs* of Awadh, Safdar Jung and Shuja-ud-Daula tried every possible way to push the Raja to the background but could not succeed in their endeavors. They failed in their accomplishments firstly, because of their engagement in the affairs of Delhi, the Maratha incursions, the activities of the Pathans and Afghans of Rohilkhand and Farrukhabad especially the Bangash *Nawab* of Farrukhabad. And to top it all Delhi was invaded by Ahmad Shah Abdali on various occasions which was another reason for keeping the Awadh *Nawabs* busy and away from Banaras. Secondly, whenever they tried to take any stringent action against the Raja, he would never appear before the *Nawab* and flee away to distant places. Thirdly, despite being a rebel, the *Nawab* would allow Balwant Singh to continue in his possessions with an increased revenue demand as there was no viable alternative to Balwant Singh. He was the only hope for them as he was the only person who could easily administer the population of Banaras as well as fulfill the demand of increased revenue that to on time and regularly.<sup>107</sup>

Other than the military conquest Balwant Singh and his father Mansaram tried all diplomatic tactics to secure their zamindari. Balwant Singh negotiated and established kinship relations with the fellow zamindars of the region and thus formed a network of interaction and influence like his father Mansaram had developed. And in this direction they never even hesitated from forming matrimonial alliances with the neighbouring zamindars. In case of Balwant Singh, the matrimonial alliances that he

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<sup>107</sup> B.S. Cohn, 'Political Systems in Eighteenth Century India: The Banaras Region', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 82, American Oriental Society, 1962, p-315.

struck enhanced his power and influence, thus giving us an insight into his and his father's political aspirations. As his power increased the neighbouring zamindars having no choice had willingly submitted to the authority of the Rajas of Banaras. Except for Barriar Singh, a zamindar of the Kote Islaha *pargana*, in the Banaras region. Barriar Singh refused to submit to the authority of the Rajas of Banaras, hence Mansaram tried to bridge this gap by asking his daughter, Gulab Kaur's hand in marriage for his son Balwant Singh. This matrimonial alliance destroyed any kind of opposition thus further strengthening and cementing the position of Mansaram and his son in Banaras region. According to the Balwantnamah, 'the marriage put an end to the endless disputes and quarrels that had previously existed.'<sup>108</sup>

The second time Balwant Singh married the sister of Baboo Partab Roodar, zamindar of Chunipoor, near Banaras.<sup>109</sup> Then he married Bishoon Kaur, the sister of Baboo Shewsum Singh, who lived in Pandehra, in *pargana* Kote Islaha. Burriar Singh, the father-in-law of Balwant Singh got furious with this nuptial alliance ousted Shewsum Singh and every one belonging to him out of the Kote Islaha and here we see that Raja Bulwunt Singh came to their rescue and offered them a village opposite Ramnagar in Kaswar, and further, bestowed upon them a *jagir* in Dondawa, near Machlishahr.<sup>110</sup> This union was to further brace his position and build loyal gentry around him who could lend support and stand with Balwant Singh in times of dire needs. If sources are to be believed then not much is known about his forth marriage except that his wife belonged to the *pargana* of Kaswar. But seeing his earlier alliances it can be deduced that this matrimonial alliance would have been no different from others and was meant to further enhance his position through his kinship ties. Balwant Singh's fifth marriage was with the daughter of a Chandel Rajput, Zamindar of Bijaygarh.

According to historian Nalini Singh,

'All these marriages of Balwant Singh, besides providing a financial support must have had made Mansaram and his son Balwant Singh an unchallenged authority in the Banaras sarkar. The four marriages which were made within the Sarkar of Banaras in the clan of Bhumihars would have helped in strengthening the network of

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<sup>108</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 11.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

relations in the name of loyalty and the fifth marriage perhaps would have lend him some Rajput support if not in action but in their mind as kind of legitimacy to his rule.’<sup>111</sup>

Balwant Singh was not an independent sovereign rather a subordinate of the imperial government as we know that some offices of the government were in the hands of the *Nawab* and even still in the hands of the Emperor. There were imperial forts at Chunar and Jaunpur manned by imperial troops and troops of the *Nawab*. Important legal and administrative officers within the zamindari, such as the *kotwal* and *qazi* of the principal towns, were appointees of the *Nawab*. The minting of coins was in the hands of the *Nawab*. The success of Balwant Singh in his ambitious projects can be attributed to his capacity to adapt himself according to the circumstances in which he was placed. He never garnered the sentiment of honour or pride that the Rajput possessed. The Rajput preferred to dies rather than disgrace but in the case of Balwant Singh, he was brave and willing to fight but at the same time if he had the option to avoid clash or doubtful about his victory in his endeavors we would preferably avoid it and find a viable alternative. The case where he could not crush his enemies, he was quick to form allies.

And hence even when the East India Company entered into the political arena of the mid Gangetic plain after the battle Buxar in 1764 A.D., Balwant Singh was quick enough to negotiate with the East India Company and tried to reap maximum profits from his alliance. The English always gave Balwant a helping hand. He cultivated good relations with the new masters and deployed considerable military and diplomatic skills to free himself from the *Nawabs*. But little did he know that his successor would not be able to enjoy the status and respect that he had. In the next chapter we would see that in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the Banaras zamindari completely depended on the favour and support of the English and from almost an autonomous state it went on to become a part of the British dominion within a span of few years.

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<sup>111</sup> Nalini Singh, ‘The interplay of caste, adventurism and banditry: Emergence of Banaras Raj- 1730s to 1760s’, *Dimensions In Indian History*, ed. A.K. Sinha, New Delhi, 2005, pp-126-127.

## **CHAPTER-3**

### **THE BANARAS RAJ AND THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY: POLITICAL DYNAMICS AND TRANSFORMATION FROM 1764- 1795 A.D.**



## INTRODUCTION:

The British East India Company's authority and control over polity and commerce had gradually moved to the interiors of the northern parts of India from the region of Bengal between 1757- 1856 A.D. In order to establish its domination in the entire northern plain, it became imperative for the Company to acquire control over the state of Awadh which was a major province under the Mughal Empire and the home domain of the Mughal *wazir* (*Nawab* of Awadh). In 1764 A.D. the East India Company defeated the *Nawab* of Awadh and forced him to form an alliance which bound him to pay higher war indemnities and large annual subsidies. By 1795 A.D., within a span of thirty years approximately, the East India Company even took control of the zamindari of Banaras that comprised then of the present districts of Ballia, Banaras, Ghazipur, Jaunpur, and Mirzapur, and made it a buffer zone. Based on the initial consolidation of power of the English, we find that the British had merely taken advantage of the disturbed conditions that prevailed after the decline of the Mughal hegemony around 1707 A.D. and that was only possible because of the support which they received from important groups of Indian people (may be the local chiefs, zamindars, petty rulers or powerful intermediaries).

Therefore this chapter will emphasize that the battle of Buxar in 1764 A.D. which the British won by defeating the combined forces of the Mughals and *Nawab* of Awadh was crucial and decisive as it cemented the foundation of the British East India Company in the northern part of India ushering in an era of colonialism subsequently. The victory in the battle also enabled the English East India Company to establish its influence and control over the entire *Nawabi* regime up to Allahabad by the end of the eighteenth century. Therefore, one of the major concerns will be to analyze the nature of the political system before the establishment of British rule and the changes that transformed the entire political system of Banaras and its adjoining areas within a short span of three decades.

One of the earliest endeavours of the *Nawab* of Awadh was to obtain control of the principality of Banaras, by reducing the Raja of Banaras to the position of a mere zamindar of Awadh. It needs to be restated here that Banaras was a zamindari of the state of Awadh, but always asserted its power and independence that became an eyesore for the *Nawab* of Awadh. Balwant Singh, the zamindar of Banaras although

politically inferior in status to the *Nawab* and the British, had managed to maintain his independence by his skillfulness, energy and courage with the exception of Chunar, a strong foothold of the Banaras zamindari which he had to surrender to the *Nawab*. *Nawab* Safdar Jung died in 1753 A.D., and was succeeded by his son Shuja-ud-Daula, who, following his father's footsteps, was set to destroy the independent position of Raja Balwant Singh. The Raja, however, succeeded in resisting his efforts and laid the foundation of the strong fortress of Ramnagar in order to strengthen his position. It should be noted that even Raja Balwant Singh had the ability and capacity to protect his zamindari from getting sandwiched between the two mighty powers viz, the *Nawabs* of Awadh and the East India Company simultaneously. No doubt that the *Nawab* was far more superior and powerful than Raja Balwant Singh, and had the capability of successfully absorbing the zamindari of Banaras and overthrowing the authority of the Raja of Banaras, thus reducing him to a status of a petty zamindari. But fortunately, for Balwant Singh, the *Nawab's* attention was diverted to other important issues that were his major concerns at that given point in time. And one of these major concerns of the *Nawab* was the occupation of the Bihar and Bengal *suba* which were under the jurisdiction of the East India Company, after the victory of the British in the battle of Plassey in 1757 A.D. against the *Nawab* of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daula.

## BATTLE OF BUXAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

Before getting on to the politics of the East India Company in the region of Awadh and Banaras, it is quite necessary to have an understanding of the events and occurrences of Bengal *suba* and its dynamics with the English Company in Bengal. Siraj-ud-Daula became the *Nawab* of Bengal in 1756 A.D. and soon after took on the mission to oust the English settlers from Bengal for which he overran the English trading posts like Kasimbazar and Calcutta. In order to secure the Company's interest in Bengal Robert Clive was sent to Bengal by the East India Company. Where, he managed to bribe over *Nawab*, Siraj-ud-Daula's commander-in-chief, Mir Jaffar. As a result of this maneuver the battle of Plassey was fought in 1757 A.D. in which the English came out victorious and appointed Mir Jaffar as the new *Nawab* of Bengal, who was a mere puppet in their hands.<sup>1</sup> The victory in the battle of Plassey further

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<sup>1</sup> G.B. Malleson, *The Decisive battles of India: from 1746-1849*, London, 1914, pp-36-71.

cemented the position of the English East India Company and ajar the doors of northern India for them.

Mir Jaffar was the first *Nawab* of Bengal completely under the sway of the English East India Company but soon fell from the good books of the English. Until 1759 A.D., Mir Jaffar received full military support from the East India Company. But the increasing British demands resulted in fallout between the two and Mir Jaffar made a secret alliance with the Dutch East India Company (VOC) at Chinsura leading to the battle of Chinsura in 1759 A.D. Thus Mir Jaffar was abdicated from the throne of Bengal and in his place Mir Qasim, the son-in-law of Mir Jaffar, was made the new *Nawab* of Bengal in 1760 A.D.<sup>2</sup> Though their alliance was a short lived one as Mir Qasim was over thrown by the East India Company over disputes regarding the trade policies. The Company restored Mir Jaffar, as the *Nawab* of Bengal in 1763 A.D., as according to the company they wanted a more pliant *Nawab*, who could easily dance to their tune.<sup>3</sup> However the deposed *Nawab*, Mir Qasim fled to Bihar and then to the territory of Awadh *Nawab* in order to seek his help against the English with the motto of regaining his former territory.

While on the other hand the growing power of *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula boosted his morale and after his victory over the Afghans, his attention was now focused on getting hold of the eastern territories of India. Mir Qasim's request to help him in Bengal against the English forces further aggravated his desire. Shuja-ud-Daula, the Awadh *Nawab* was determined to invade Bengal, and deposing the then, *Nawab* of Bengal, Mir Jaffar, and incorporate the province of Bengal into his own state. For this *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula designed various plans to invade Bihar at first and then march towards Bengal. This could be attested from the letter of Mr. Watts, the Resident at Murshidabad dated May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1757 A.D., that was sent to the Governor of Bengal, Robert Clive and the Council:

.....the Nabob (Siraj-ud-Daula of Bengal) wrote sometimes ago to Shujait Dowlah (Shuja-ud-Daula), the Nabob of Owd (Awadh), to request his assistance against us (the English East India Company); accordingly a considerable person is arrived from him to settle the terms of agreement, when his army which is at Elibass (Allahabad)

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<sup>2</sup> Harry Verelst, *A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal*, London, 1772, p- 46.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p- 49.

under the command of Mahomed Kuli Cawn (Muhammad Quli Khan) will march down.<sup>4</sup>

In 1758 A.D., *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula arrived at Ghazipur having been invited by the Rajas of Bihar to further march to Rajmahal in the Bengal *suba* with his own force.<sup>5</sup> But before he could march to Bengal, it was necessary for them to get a strong footing in Bihar first and hence once again in the year 1759 A.D. Shuja-ud-Daula advanced with a large army to Patna. It is to be noted here that Raja Balwant Singh also encouraged the *Nawab* to invade Patna as he was very much aware of the fact that the English Company had firmly established themselves in Bengal and had also captured Bihar and in order to protect their new acquired territories, the East India Company could decide to move forward in their endeavours. And hence there was a possibility that the English could march towards the west to the interiors of the Gangetic basin, then Banaras would be the first to confront them and they were conscious of the fact that they could not hold the English power from entering his zamindari for a long time. Hence for this reason Balwant Singh had profound interest in Patna. And according to the letter of an agent of Mir Jaffar at the court of *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula, 'the Raja of Benaras has written several times to Shuja-ud-Dowla to enter the country or that Patna is empty.'<sup>6</sup>

The English had been keeping a close eye on the movements of the *Nawab* as they were suspicious about his ambitions. And for this the Select Committee at Calcutta had directed Scarfton, an English official 'to endeavour to get the best intelligence he can of all Sujait Dowlah's (*Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula) motion.'<sup>7</sup> The *Nawab* of Bengal, Mir Jaffar, aided by a British force, advanced towards Patna in 1759 A.D., to oppose the invaders that are basically the combined alliance of the *Nawab* of Awadh, the Mughal Emperor and the Raja of Banaras whom they drove back for the time being. *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula renewed his attempts to conquer Bengal on various occasions. But with the diplomacy of Clive, the English forces were able to drive back the Shuja-ud-Daula into Awadh. Thus, for the *Nawab* of Awadh, the Patna siege proved to be an

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<sup>4</sup> *Indian Record Series Bengal in 1756-1757*, vol-2, ed. S.C. Hill, London, 1905, p- 392.

<sup>5</sup> *Proceedings of the Select Committee at Fort William in Bengal- 1758*, ed. Walter K. Firminger, Calcutta, 1914, p- 37.

<sup>6</sup> *Fort William- India House Correspondence 1757-1759*, vol -2, ed. H.N. Sinha, Delhi, 1957, p-34.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

utter failure. But for the British, it opened the doors of Upper India for the expansion of their nascent British Empire in India.

After their defeat at Patna, Shah Alam (the Mughal Emperor) and Shuja-ud-Daula were once again devising futile plans for rejuvenating the Empire and were attempting to vandalize Farrukhabad under the Bangash Pathans during the early months of 1763 A.D., but at the same time, the events in Bengal were heading towards a deadlock between Mir Qasim and the East India Company. This dispute led to a far-reaching consequence and resulted in a disastrous battle of Buxar which in true sense established the English as the masters of Bengal and Upper India which we are going to see in the latter part of this chapter. Mir Qasim, the *Nawab* of Bengal was successively defeated by the British forces at Katwa, Gheria and Udanala<sup>8</sup> which forced him to retreat towards Shuja-ud-Daula's territory and seek his help to regain his lost province from the English. According to the *Balwantnamah*,

‘At this time Meer Kasim Ali, having broken faith with the English, and suffering, from the consequences of his acts, and, notwithstanding his great wealth and high rank, finding himself obliged to abandon his kingdom, came the best way he could to Banaras. He sent Mirza Shums-ood-deen to the Emperor to beg for aid, and to open friendly correspondence with *Nawab* Shooja-ood-dowla’.<sup>9</sup>

Mir Qasim's plight provided *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula, with an opportunity to expand his territorial boundaries beyond Awadh and accomplish his own interest. In lieu of the *Nawab's* aid, Mir Qasim had to present a hefty amount to the *Nawab* of Awadh and the Emperor for their assistance. The terms of this agreement were that,

‘on the Vezir's crossing the Ganga, and entering the enemy's country, Mir Cassem from that day, and for so long as the expedition might last, would pay him for the expenses of his army a subsidy of eleven lacs of rupees per month.’<sup>10</sup>

And hence Shuja-ud-Daula once again proceeded towards Patna, and this time along with Mir Qasim and Shah Alam to wage a war against the English forces. Balwant Singh, the Raja of Banaras was to join them on the way to Bihar. The English along with the army of *Nawab* Mir Jaffar were still stationed at Patna. The English forces

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<sup>8</sup> G.B. Malleson, *The Decisive battles of India: from 1746-1849*, London, 1914, pp- 126-162.

<sup>9</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 51.

<sup>10</sup> Seid Ghulam Hussain Khan, *The Seir Mutaqherin*, vol-2, Delhi, 1926, p-524.

under Major Carnac were comparatively very less in numerical strength as compared to the allied forces of the Awadh *Nawab*. On March 17<sup>th</sup>, Major Carnac reached Buxar and was advised by the council at Calcutta to cross the river Karmnasa and march towards *Nawab*, Shuja-ud-Daula's territory. The members of the council at Calcutta were of the opinion that if they carried out the war in the *Nawab*'s territory, then he would not be able to cut off their supplies. But major Carnac was hesitant in moving forward rather he preferred to retreat back to Patna and stand on defence there.<sup>11</sup> Major Carnac was horror stricken by the fact that Shuja-ud-Daula's expertise in the battle and his army was much larger than his.

While on the other hand along with all these insecurities and uncertainty, the English forces were busy forming secret alliance with Raja Balwant Singh against the *Nawab*. In a letter to Carnac the Government recorded, on March 29<sup>th</sup>,

'Having duly considered the letter of Major Carnac, we are unanimously of opinion that as Shuja-ud-Daula having openly avowed his designs of aiding Qasim Ali Khan in invading Bengal, it is our duty to form against him all the enemies we possibly can, that the proposed alliance with Balwant Singh will, therefore, be a very proper measure, and prove, as well now as in all time to come, a strong barrier and defence to the Bengal provinces'.<sup>12</sup>

The *Nawab* of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daula, renewed his efforts to oppose Mir Jaffar and the British with the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II, in whose times he was very powerful and a *wazir* of the Mughal Empire. But unaware of Balwant Singh's evil designs and his friendly alliance with the English government, the *Nawab* of Awadh, once again tried to capture Bihar. The *Nawab* was displeased with Balwant Singh's campaigns on the local zamindars but was advised not to embrace himself into a fresh conflict with the refractory Raja of Banaras due to his engagement in planning a war against the English. And hence the combined forces of Shuja-ud-Daula, Mir Qasim and Shah Alam II marched towards Daudnagar and ordered Balwant Singh to join them. On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Balwant Singh advanced with 2000 cavalry and 5000 infantry to join the allied forces at Daudnagar.<sup>13</sup> Seeing Balwant Singh march along with the *Nawab*'s army Carnac wrote to the Calcutta Council about the double dealing of the

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<sup>11</sup> G.B. Malleson, *The Decisive battles of India: from 1746-1849*, London, 1914, p- 186.

<sup>12</sup> *Secret Proceedings of Foreign and Political Department: January to July, 1764*, vol- 3, p-97.

<sup>13</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 52.

Raja of Banaras and his dubious role in aiding the war strategy of the *Nawab* of Awadh. Carnac was sure that Balwant Singh's proposed alliance with the English was a strategic ploy of the *Nawab*. But here we could easily make out from the actions of Balwant Singh that in the midst of the forces of Shuja-ud-Daula, he had to depict that he was on the *Nawab's* side, but in reality, Balwant Singh was the last person to espouse the cause of *Nawab*. On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1764 A.D., a fierce battle of Panch Pahari was fought on the outskirts of Patna in which the English proved victorious. Although Balwant Singh participated in the battle but never took an active part in it, he was a mere spectator. He had brought with him a large number of thieves disguised as soldiers who were 'very active in the camps of army and ceased not day and night from stealing'.<sup>14</sup> Daily complaints were made to the *Nawab*. And hence rather than being a boon to the *Nawab*, Balwant Singh's alliance proved to be an obstacle. This raised the *Nawab's* suspicion on Balwant Singh and he ordered him to watch the movement of English and to encamp in the village of Amla in the Muhammadpur *pargana* of Ghazipur district, south of Ganges, which was just opposite to the direction of Buxar.<sup>15</sup> This action of the *Nawab* of sending away Balwant Singh, gave the authorities at Fort William a ray of hope that they could win him over to their side and in the long run his alliance would prove beneficial for the Company's goal.

After the defeat, Shuja-ud-Daula marched away from the vicinity of Patna close to his own dominion. This time Shuja-ud-Daula tried diplomacy over direct confrontation with the English forces so, he decided to use other means to achieve his objective. He aimed at removing the English forces from their advantageous and safe spot around the city of Patna. And hence when the negotiations were still going on, the *Nawab* marched away from Patna and retired to a more strategic position that is Buxar. His aim was to send his troops from the backdoor and attack the English. But Shuja-ud-Daula was badly defeated by the English troops on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1764 A.D. at the battle fields of Buxar<sup>16</sup> thus ending his eastern campaign. According to the Balwantnamah,

On the armies being drawn up in order of battle, and a few cannon shot falling among the *Nawab's* men, they broke and fled like crows or kites, leaving the *Nawab* with a

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p- 52-53.

<sup>15</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical And Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepeer District*, vol -1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1876, p- 103.

<sup>16</sup> *Fort William- India House Correspondence: 1764-1766*, vol.-4, ed. C.S. Srinivasachari, The National Archives, New Delhi, 1962, p- 260.

few followers in the field. He, although confounded at this turn of fortune, held his ground, until his officers persuaded him to turn his horse; and Sumroo, the Foringhee, whose troops had not till then been arrayed, escorted him towards Jounpoor, whence he went to Fyzabad.<sup>17</sup>

The stakes were very high for everyone engaged in the battle at Buxar. *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula had put his entire dominion at risk including the Banaras zamindari to get possession of Bengal and Bihar. Whereas, for the English their defeat at Buxar would result in complete wipeout of the British Empire from India. But their victory in Buxar cemented their position and they became masters of the entire north India up to the province of Allahabad. They emerged as one of the most important powers in India. Disposed *Nawab* of Bengal, Mir Qasim was completely subdued and was no longer a political figure. Mughal Emperor Shah Alam sought for protection under the East India Company. Though the *Nawab* of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daula after the battle was theoretically at equal footing with the English as he was restored as the *Nawab* of Awadh, and was considered as the counterpart of the British, but in practicality his power was reduced and he became a protected subordinate ally of the Company, while Awadh became a subservient state.

Here it is important to note that despite heading a cavalry of two thousand and an infantry of five thousand, Balwant Singh remained neutral and did not participate in the war on the pretext of his illness. This attitude of Balwant Singh gave way to deep rooted enmity with Shuja-ud-Daula. Initially Balwant Singh had offered a helping hand and portrayed that he was one of the most loyal among all the allies of the *Nawab*, but at the time of the crisis, he detached himself from the war and remained lukewarm. While, the English Company also accused Raja Balwant Singh of betraying them. Fort William had written to Raja Balwant Singh that,

‘Medec, a Frenchman, who served in the English army, had come to some altercations with the English Commander on that failure; and the matter went so far, that the Frenchman at the head of above a hundred soldiers of his nation, quitted the camp with arms and baggage, and I believe also, with a field-piece, and marched into Radja Balvand sing's (Raja Balwant Singh) country.’<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-55

<sup>18</sup> Seid Ghulam Hussain Khan, *The Seir Mutaqherin*, vol-2, Delhi, 1926, p-524



The authority at Fort William asked Balwant Singh to not give asylum to deserters who fled from Bengal and was told to send back these traitors back to Bengal and warned him that, ‘there cannot subsist any concord between the addressee and the English’ and ‘is surprised that this has not yet been done’.<sup>19</sup> But Balwant Singh did not pay heed to this rather helped them to reach the court of the Awadh *Nawab*.

Being a product of the context of the eighteenth century India, the actions of Balwant Singh can be determined by certain factors. Firstly Banaras was in the vicinity of *Nawabs* territory and being his overlord, it would have been unwise for Balwant Singh to openly defy Shuja-ud-Daula. Secondly being a shrewd and highly diplomatic person, his strategy was to sit and watch so he could easily slip into the camps of the victorious party and strike a favorable bargain for himself. He was cautious of not coming in the bad books of neither the *Nawab* of Awadh nor the East India Company. There are allegations on Balwant Singh for double timing both the parties. But if we closely study his position it appears to be politically pragmatic, especially for his survival. If he had openly joined hands with the English before the battle of Buxar, the *Nawab*’s army would have completely plundered his kingdom. While on the other hand if he actively joined the *Nawab*’s army and entered into no agreement with the English, then after the battle of Buxar, the English army would have ruined his zamindari. He was quite aware of the fact that turning against any of the powers at that moment would mean direct confrontation with them and he and his small kingdom would be the first to suffer. The victory of the British at Buxar had shattered the military strength of the *Nawab* of Awadh, the only power that could have posed serious menace on the borders of Company’s possessions in Bengal. The English knew that Raja Balwant Singh’s relation with the *Nawab* was hostile, so any agreement with him would be a proper measure to keep the *Nawab* at bay.

After the defeat of the *Nawab* in the battle of Buxar, the Awadh *Nawab* fled to his own dominion and Balwant Singh along with his force came back to Ramnagar from Ghazipur where he was formerly stationed.<sup>20</sup> While the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam was quick enough to change camps and join the English who were the new masters of the land. He sent a representative to Major Munro to congratulate the English on their

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<sup>19</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1759-67*, vol-1, Calcutta, letter no- 2093, pp-287-288.

<sup>20</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-55

grand success.<sup>21</sup> The British accepted his patronage just in name and were fully aware that the Mughal Emperor was only a mere nominal head and possessed no power to exercise. Munro taking advantage of this changed situation after the battle of Buxar at once crossed the river Karmnasa with the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam and reached Banaras on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1764 A.D.<sup>22</sup> He was aware that the presence of the Mughal Emperor in the English camp would provide a legal colour to every action of the Company.

On receiving the news of the arrival of Major Munro and the Mughal Emperor at Banaras, Balwant Singh retreated to the fort of Latifpur.<sup>23</sup> And from there he tried to win over Munro without directly meeting him. He sent a tribute of eleven gold *muhars* (coin) to him along with a congratulatory note for their splendid victory at Buxar.<sup>24</sup> He professed the will to continue the zamindari for which he had written to Munro that, 'if English choose to possess themselves the *wazir's* country, the *sarkar* of Banaras, Ghazipur, Jaunpur and Bijaygarh may be leased out to him on the customary terms', he also desired to acquire the management of Azamgarh.<sup>25</sup> Munro summoned the Raja and assured him for his safety and promised him to grant the possession of the zamindari. But Balwant Singh avoided the question of coming back until Munro sent him the duly signed articles of treaty.<sup>26</sup> And soon, the Raja returned to Ramnagar.

Munro then proceeded with the aid of Raja Balwant Singh, to invest and capture Chunar, which the *Nawab* had previously wrested from the Raja, in whose dominion it was situated, and which had been one of the places specially bestowed, by the *sanad* of the Mughal Emperor Mohamed Shah, on Raja Mansaram around 1738 A.D. And hence, the British troops laid siege to Chunar,<sup>27</sup> but after assaulting the place on two occasions unsuccessfully, Major Munro was compelled to leave Chunar expedition, as intelligence had reached him that the *Nawab* of Awadh was advancing with a large force to relieve the fortress, and to attack the British troops. Major Munro

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<sup>21</sup> Seid Ghulam Hussain Khan, *The Seir Mutaqherin*, vol-2, Delhi, 1926, p-571.

<sup>22</sup> *Fort William- India House Correspondence: 1764-1766*, vol.-4, ed. C.S. Srinivasachari, The National Archives, New Delhi, 1962, p-263.

<sup>23</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 53.

<sup>24</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1759-67*, vol-1, Calcutta, letter no- 2468, p- 357.

<sup>25</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1759-67*, vol-1, Calcutta, letter no- 2476, p- 359.

<sup>26</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 53.

<sup>27</sup> Seid Ghulam Hussain Khan, *The Seir Mutaqherin*, vol-2, Delhi, 1926, p-577.

at once retreated to a safer place abandoning Chunar and he marched towards Banaras with his retainers as the kingdom of Balwant Singh would provide a better security to the English troops. The circumstances of the British army at this juncture were undoubtedly most critical, because they had already lost many soldiers in the Chunar siege and their numbers were reduced and were threatened by the large and well-equipped army of the *Nawab*, which kept hovering in their immediate neighbourhood. The alliance of so powerful a chief as Raja Balwant Singh was therefore of the most vital importance to the Government in this emergency, as it enabled the British Commander to take up so strong a position close to the city of Banaras that the *Nawab* was now cautious to attack them while by the Raja's friendly gestures, he became a faithful ally, the troops were abundantly supplied with provisions and all necessaries amenities. Major Munro was therefore in a position of comparative security and could wait for the reinforcements from Bengal. The British forces remained in their camp close to Banaras for a period of nearly two months, until the January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1765 A.D., when they were joined by the new Commander-in-chief, Sir Robert Fletcher and Major Steinbelt (Stibbert) who at once resumed active operations against the Shuja-ud-Daula<sup>28</sup>. Raja Balwant Singh wrote a letter to Major Fletcher telling him that, 'As desired, has sent Babu Samir Singh, his brother's son, to the Royal presence and to the addressee with an army. Those in the fort are much afraid of the English army. Hopes that the fort will soon be taken'.<sup>29</sup> And hence they proceeded to again attack Chunar, which, after a strong resistance finally capitulated.

An agreement known as the treaty of Banaras was signed between the English and the Emperor Shah Alam II on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1764 A.D.<sup>30</sup> And according to the royal *farman*, Ghazipur along with the rest of zamindari of Balwant Singh that earlier belonged to the *Nawab* of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daula was made over to the Company. The *farman* mentioned that, 'the aforesaid Raja having settled terms with the chiefs of the English is according thereto to pay the revenue to Company'.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, an English officer named Marriott was appointed as the *sazawal* (an official for revenue collection) on behalf of the Company to ensure that the revenue installments are paid

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<sup>28</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 55.

<sup>29</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1759-67*, vol-1, Calcutta, letter no- 2585, p- 387.

<sup>30</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical and Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepoor District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p- 103.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

duly.<sup>32</sup> The revenue of the four *sarkars* was fixed at rupees 22, 86,607. After reducing the sundries, the revenue of Balwant Singh was fixed at rupees 16, 42,500 for that year. The Raja was also to maintain law and order in all the four *sarkars* including the fort of Chunar.<sup>33</sup> The duties of the *amin* (official to supervise and regulate the revenues) and *faujdar* (chief magistrate) were given to him.

Though Raja Balwant Singh remained inactive during and after the battle of Buxar, his role cannot be denied as Banaras's strategic position between both the powers had automatically placed him in a position where he could hinder the supply chain and communication of both the parties. When the English came out victorious, Raja Balwant Singh had demanded to hold all his possessions on the same payment of rupees twenty four lakhs as revenue. The Fort William authorities had strictly instructed Major Munro, commander of the English army, to have no confidence on the Raja for the double part that he played and deprive him of his possessions, still the *sanad* was granted to him. But despite of all this Major Munro had to accept the demands of Balwant Singh against the instructions of the upper echelon. Major Munro was well aware that there was no viable alternative to Raja Balwant Singh and giving command of such a strategic territory to any other person would mean deployment of armed forces in Banaras for an indefinite period for the installation of the new Raja which would put an unnecessary economic strain on the Company's treasury. And it would prove highly dangerous for them to leave a disgruntled Raja.

But treaty of Banaras signed between the Mughal Emperor and the Company was not approved by the Court of Directors at London and hence a new treaty was formulated known as the treaty of Allahabad.<sup>34</sup> This new treaty was signed between the *Nawab* of Awadh and Lord Clive, the Governor General on August 16, 1765 A.D.<sup>35</sup> By this treaty, the old dominion of Shuja-ud-Daula including the Banaras zamindari was restored to him except the fort of Chunar which was garrisoned by the English. While on the other hand, Allahabad and Kara came under the jurisdiction of the Mughal

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<sup>32</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-55.

<sup>33</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-30.

<sup>34</sup> H.R. Nevill, *Banaras: A Gazetteer, Being Vol. XXVI of District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Awadh*, Allahabad, 1909, p- 201.

<sup>35</sup> Wilton Oldham, *North Western Provinces: Historical and Statistical Memoir of the Ghazeepeer District*, vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p- 104.

Emperor.<sup>36</sup> The *Nawab* was also to pay a war indemnity of rupees fifty lacs to the Company.<sup>37</sup> But by the Article Seven of the treaty, it was resolved that the zamindari of Balwant Singh would officially be transferred to the *Nawab* once the agreement between Balwant Singh and the Company expires in November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1765 A.D. and he pays the stipulated amount mentioned in the treaty. The article seven mentioned that,

‘Restore to His Highness the country of Banaras and other districts now rented to Balwant Singh..... they shall remain in the hands of English Company with their revenues, till the expiration of Agreement between Balwant Singh and the Company, being on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1765; after which His Highness will enter into possession and the fort of Chunar to be handed over to the *Nawab* after the amount of war indemnity was cleared’.<sup>38</sup>

And by the article eight of this treaty, ‘his Highness shall allow the English Company to carry on a trade, duty free, throughout the whole of his dominions’.<sup>39</sup> The treaty of Allahabad was significant as the masters of Raja Balwant Singh changed. The Banaras zamindari was once again transferred from the East India Company’s control to the *Nawab* of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daula. It is important to note here that by the end of the day East India Company was a commercial body that had turned political but their ulterior motive was monetary gain which can be testified from the letter written to the PResident and the Council at Fort William on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1771 A.D. According to the letter,

‘the political interests of the Company make us no less solicitous to obtain from Soujah Dowlah an exchange of the territories of Bulwan Sing for the provinces of Khorah and Allahabad, now held for the King, since by such an exchange our frontiers would be more easily defended, a greater influence would be preserved by us over the neighbouring powers, and we might possibly be relieved from the

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<sup>36</sup> C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol- 2, Calcutta, 1893, p-71.

<sup>37</sup> D.C. Ganguly, *Select Document of the British Period of Indian History*, vol-2, Trustee of the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta, 1958, p- 74-76.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p-76.

<sup>39</sup> C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol- 2, Calcutta, 1893, p- 71.

necessity of keeping up so large and expensive a military establishment as we have at present in Bengal'.<sup>40</sup>

In the meanwhile the Chapra Conference was held in June 1766 A.D. between *Nawab* and Lord Clive. The *Nawab* enraged with the Raja expressed his resentment and annoyance against Balwant Singh to Clive and asked his permission to eliminate him from the Banaras zamindari.<sup>41</sup> But Clive favouring the Raja asked the *Nawab* to forgive him. And hence the *Nawab* agreed with Clive only on the condition when Balwant Singh would pay an increased annual revenue of ten lacs rupees and thirty lacs rupees as *peshkash*.<sup>42</sup> Shuja-ud-Daula paid the entire stipulated amount in the treaty of Allahabad by May 1766 A.D. and the Banaras Zamindari was officially transferred to the *Nawab* on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1766 A.D., when Isaac Sage, an English official formally installed the *Nawab* in the province of Banaras.<sup>43</sup> Isaac Sage was sent to Banaras as the chief revenue officer (*sazawal*) in place of Marriott.<sup>44</sup>

After the Chapra conference and departure of Clive in 1767 A.D., Shuja had renewed his designs against the Raja. He complained to the British that the Raja was not paying the full revenue and amount of *peshkash* agreed at the Chapra Conference and asked their permission to act against him. In the same year John Cartier, the new Governor General, and Hector Munro, the Commander-in-Chief, came to Banaras. The *Nawab* came to visit them at Banaras where he offered rupees ten lakhs to Cartier for his permission to oust the Raja to which Cartier showed his assent.<sup>45</sup> At this, he hatched a plot to arrest Balwant Singh when he came for customary visit to his *darbar* (court) next day. He ordered the *darogha* of his artillery to disarm the Raja and not to allow any of his retainers to enter *darbar* with him and bring the Raja to him as prisoner. Next when Raja came for the audience of the *Nawab*, he got suspicious when the officials of *Nawab* tried to disarm him. At this his officers made a

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<sup>40</sup> *Fort William- India House Correspondence: 1770-1772*, vol- 6, ed. B. Prasad, The National Archives, New Delhi, 1960, p-87.

<sup>41</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. 2, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1914, Letter No. 741.

<sup>42</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 58.

<sup>43</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-36-37.

<sup>44</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1759-67*, vol-1, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, letter no- 2733, p- 438.

<sup>45</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepeer District*, Vol. I, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p-104.

commotion over the payment of wages and covered the Raja as instructed by him beforehand. Before the officers of *Nawab* could react, Balwant Singh was put into his palanquin and was on the way to the camp of Governor General. *Nawab* followed him but failed to catch before he reached to the English and demanded the surrender of his vassal. Balwant Singh threw himself at the feet of Cartier and demanded protection, alleging that “it was only on his account of his loyalty to the English that he was regarded with hatred by the *Nawab* Wazir”. He won over the support of English by offering rupees ten lakhs to the Governor General and rupees one lakh to Munro in return for his protection which he later did not pay.<sup>46</sup> And, *Nawab* was obliged to give up his designs to arrest Balwant Singh who survived because of the support of English and clever use of diplomacy and money.

And thus with the treaty of Allahabad, Balwant Singh once again came under the jurisdiction of Awadh *Nawab* after a small interval of time. The relation between the *Nawab* and the Raja were never cordial. The *Nawab* when ever got the chance tried to oust the Raja from his zamindari. So was the Raja of Banaras, he always ready to free himself from the clutches of Awadh. But after the battle of Buxar, the English used the hostile relations between both of them to reap the maximum benefit out of it. They always gave him a helping for their own advantages. Hence his zamindari completely depended on the favour and support of the English. For the next decade Balwant Singh and his son, Chait Singh had gained a certain limit of autonomy under the *Nawab* but were still vassals to the *Nawab*. They continued to consolidate and expand their kingdom as before under the *Nawabs*.

After the battle of Buxar, *Nawab*'s dominance was challenged by the armies of English East India Company. *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula submitted to the Company's policies and demonstrated loyalty towards it and became one of the most important allies of the English. After the battle, the English were not prepared to get directly involved in the affairs of north India neither were they interested in following any sort of expansionist policy, at the most they were hoping for an alliance where their interest could be safeguarded. Keeping in mind this Clive, initiated a policy which made the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II, a mere puppet in their hands. The old dominion of *Nawab* of Awadh was restored to him with the exception of Kora and

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<sup>46</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepeer District*, Vol. I, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p-105.

Allahabad which were given to Shah Alam.<sup>47</sup> Clive knew that Shah Alam would not be able to maintain himself in Awadh without the English help. While Shuja-ud-Daula, on the other hand, was likely to provide a better security for Bengal's western frontier. This is clear from one of the letters sent to the court which mentions that,

“You will please to observe that this war with Shuja O Dowla has never been a matter of choice, but of absolute necessity and the same holds good respecting the treaty with the king. It would have been prudent in us, and it was our desire not to have entirely ruined Shuja. But to have had him rather a barrier between us and other powers, could be we have once brought him to a conviction that it was his real interest to have been on friendly terms with us”.<sup>48</sup>

Hence they placed the regime of Awadh under the *Nawabs* by curtailing his power to a certain extent so that he could not raise his head again. The proposal to hand over Awadh to the powerless puppet Mughal Emperor was dismissed as under the rule of Shah Alam, Awadh would never make the Awadh region strong enough to serve as an efficient buffer territory against the Maratha encroachments. But in the case of Banaras the scenario was quite different from that of Awadh. The wealthy zamindari of Banaras though was under the control of the Awadh *Nawab* was undisputedly to the advantage of the Company as Balwant Singh was hostile towards the *Nawabi* regime. In order to protect their newly acquired territories of Bengal and Bihar and to separate them from the influence and interference of *Nawab* of Awadh, they needed to create a buffer zone. And Banaras served as buffer territory between Awadh and Bihar. A letter of Shitab Ray, deputy Governor of Bihar, to Governor General Cartier regarding the treaty of Allahabad also points towards this. It mentions that, “the sole object of Lord Clive in conducting treaty which he did between the *vizier* and Balwant was to place his zamindari under the Company's protection in order that since the boundaries of Behar and Banaras are contiguous, it may prove serviceable to the English in times of need”.<sup>49</sup>

But Banaras was too small and was not strategically well placed to serve as a buffer against the powerful Marathas, who had infiltrated the province of Delhi. Thus, it was

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<sup>47</sup> D.C. Ganguly, *Select Document of the British Period of Indian History*, vol-2, Trustee of the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta, 1958, p-74-76.

<sup>48</sup> Fort William- India House Correspondence: 1764-1766, vol.-4, ed. C.S. Srinivasachari, The National Archives, New Delhi, 1962, p-324.

<sup>49</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. 3, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1919, Letter No. 377.



quite a diplomatic and a far sighted move on the part of the English Company to maintain the *Nawabs* of Awadh as the overlords of the region and placing Banaras under his subordination. Balwant Singh was definitely to the advantage for the Company to keep an eye on the *Nawab*. C. C. Davies sums up the position of English on the issue as “it was disputably to the advantage of the Company to recognize and protect a friendly Hindu neighbour whose power might serve as a check upon the Muslim ruler of the Oudh”.<sup>50</sup>

However, the Company also humoured Shuja-ud-Daula as it was fully aware that only Shuja-ud-Daula was strong enough to guard its western frontiers. But it had to keep a check on the *Nawab* by curtailing his powers. The well calculated move was out of fear, that Shuja-ud-Daula was a person too important and if became hostile would join the Marathas thus would create a ruckus and disturbance for the Company in Bengal and Bihar. But after Warren Hastings took over as the Governor General, he wished to draw up a fresh agreement with Awadh as according to him Clive’s policy (basically the treaty of Allahabad) had some inadequacies and shortcomings. According to Hastings, Clive’s alliance with Awadh was not profitable to the Company as the advantages that could be derived from this alliance rested with the *Nawabi* regime. This former arrangement had severely drained the Company’s economic resources. The payments were completely out of proportion and irregular for the services that the English had rendered to the *Nawab*. Further, Hastings argued that the Mughal Emperor had ditched them in dire need against the Marathas, which prompted them to draft a new alliance in place of the treaty of Allahabad. According to which Allahabad and Kara were also reverted back to the Company. Initially after the battle of Buxar, Banaras was handed over to the *Nawab* of Awadh as before. But while signing the new treaty with *Nawab*, Asaf-ud-Daula in 1775 A.D. after the death of Shuja-ud-Daula, the English were cautious about the military powers of the *Nawab* of Awadh. And had their inhibitions and doubts that when given a chance the *Nawab* could attempt to free himself from the British dominion. And thus from 1775 A.D. onwards the English brought Banaras zamindari directly under their control. Though, they did not exercise complete control over the Banaras zamindari. The English placed Banaras under their vassalage on regular payment of stipulated revenue. In the initial years of this arrangement, the vassal or the Raja had the power to administer his

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<sup>50</sup> C.C. Davies, *Warren Hastings and Oudh*, Oxford University Press, London, 1939, p- 7.

province without the interference of the East India Company. But in the latter part of the chapter we will come to see that this independence was short lived and gradually the company completely took over the control of Banaras zamindari that to in a phased manner.

## WAR OF SUCCESSION AND THE ENGLISH INTERVENTION

After the death of Raja Balwant Singh due to sudden illness, in August 1770 A.D.,<sup>51</sup> there was chaos and commotion regarding the heir to the throne of Banaras. There were three claimants to the zamindari of Banaras Raj. First there was Mahip Narayan, the minor son of Balwant Singh's daughter Rani Gulab Kaur. She was the daughter from his principal wife. Till Mahip Narayan was minor his father, Durbijay Singh would act as his regent and deputy or Naib.<sup>52</sup> Rani Gulab Kaur along with the pundits and the orthodox circle of Banaras stood in favor of the minor Mahip Narayan because according to them, he was the most apt heir to the throne in the absence of a legitimate son of Balwant Singh.<sup>53</sup>

The second claimant was Chait Singh, the son of Balwant Singh, by a Rajput wife. The Brahmins and the orthodox circle of Banaras stood against Chait Singh's claim to throne because of his irregularities of birth as in those days a Bhumihar Brahmin and Rajput marriage alliance was rare. And secondly he was not considered the legitimate son of Balwant Singh<sup>54</sup> because his wife was a slave girl.<sup>55</sup> Despite the fact that the ailing Raja Balwant Singh had appointed Chait Singh as his successors to the throne of Banaras, they were against the nominated heir. But there were few officials of Balwant Singh who were in strong support of Chait Singh as the heir of the former Raja like Ausan Singh, Nanada Bhagat, Gulam Hussain Khan, Balkisan, Bhairam and few others.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1770-72*, vol-3, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1919, letter no -352, p- 104.

<sup>52</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-63.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p-116.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p-116.

<sup>55</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries: The Treaties, Etc., Relating To The North-Western Provinces, Oudh, And Nepal, Vol. 2*, R. Cambay And Co., Calcutta, 1893, p-42.

<sup>56</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, The World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-51.

While the third contender was Maniyar Singh, the grandson of Daya ram, who was the brother of Mansaram.<sup>57</sup> Balwant Singh considered Maniyar Singh as his son and was said to have adopted him. Maniyar Singh claimed the zamindari of Banaras on the pretext that in the absence of the legitimate son of Balwant Singh his adopted son should inherit his throne. Initially Balwant Singh too wanted to appoint Maniyar Singh as his successor but Rani Gulab Kaur was adamant on the name of Mahip Narayan as the successor. But finally Balwant Singh decided in favour of Chait Singh on the advice of his diwan, Ausan Singh, the most influential man in the court of Balwant Singh. He put forth his views that ‘Chait Singh was the Raja’s offspring, and in the presence of a son, neither a nephew nor a grandson has any right to succeed him’.<sup>58</sup>

The relations between the *Nawab* of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daula and the Raja of Banaras, Balwant Singh were never cordial but after the battle of Buxar in 1764 A.D, the trench between them had deepened enormously. Shuja-ud-Daula was aware of the fact that the Raja of Banaras was in alliance with the English and had openly joined hands with them after the battle of Buxar. After the death of Balwant Singh, the *Nawab* of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daula had his eyes on the zamindari of Banaras and wanted to turn it to his own advantage.<sup>59</sup> He was not in a mood to abide by the treaty of Allahabad signed after the battle of Buxar as according to him the treaty was exclusively related to Balwant Singh and there was no need to follow it after his death. But owing to the close relation of Chait Singh with the English and the extreme pressure from the English authorities, the *Nawab* agreed to continue Chait Singh in the zamindari of Banaras. As for the English, ‘the succession on to the zamindari that holds is a matter of concern as it appears to be of great importance to your political interest’.<sup>60</sup>

And finally along with all the hindrances, Chait Singh succeeded Balwant Singh to the zamindari of Banaras. With the mediation of Captain Harper, an English official, a

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<sup>57</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p-63.

<sup>59</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries: The Treaties, Etc., Relating To The North-Western Provinces, Oudh, And Nepal*, Vol. 2, R. Cambay And Co., Calcutta, 1893, p-42.

<sup>60</sup> *Fort William- India House Correspondence: 1770-1772*, vol- 6, ed. B. Prasad, The National Archives, New Delhi, 1960, p-220.

conference was held at Banaras between the *vakil* of the *Nawab* (chief minister), Muhammad Elich Khan and Chait Singh. According to this settlement the Raja had to pay annual revenue of rupees 2, 50,000 more than his deceased father and also a *nazrana* of seventeen lacs of rupees, from which the amount of ten lacs was to be paid immediately while the remaining amount of seven lacs was to be paid latter.<sup>61</sup>

And from this point of time we see the English intervention into the zamindari of Banaras started with full force. The English authorities were equally determined to save their position and interest in the province of Banaras. So in a letter to the *Nawab*, the English authorities ask him to treat Chait Singh kindly and settle the Banaras affair in such a manner that all the parties are satisfied.<sup>62</sup> The main motive of the English was to create a buffer state between their dominion (Bihar and Bengal) and the *Nawab* of Awadh's dominion in order to safeguard their position in the northern plains. Their biggest fear was that if they do not interfere in the affairs of Banaras, the Banaras zamindari would land up into the hands of some favourite of the *Nawab* which would adversely affect the Company's commercial interest.

For a short period of time the relation between the *Nawab* of Awadh and the Raja of Banaras remained cordial. *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula had invited Chait Singh to Faizabad on the occasion of the wedding of his son.<sup>63</sup> Latter on Shuja-ud-Daula visited Banaras in February, 1771 A.D. and Chait Singh came to Phulepur, some twenty miles away from Banaras to receive the *Nawab*. The Raja paid respect to the *Nawab* and acted as his vassal. This act of the Raja impressed the *Nawab* and he conferred Chait Singh with a *khilat* and a sword. And as an honor to Chait Singh, the *Nawab* also paid a visit to his house in Ramnagar. The Raja gave a grand welcome to the *Nawab* and offered him expensive presents like a 'chabutra (an elevated platform)' of one hundred and twenty five thousand rupees, two trays of jewels, precious and semi-precious stones, five elephants, fifteen good bred horses and forty five costly cloths.<sup>64</sup> The *Nawab* was so pleased with the submission of his vassal that at the time of returning to his capital Faizabad, he commanded his son and heir Asaf-

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<sup>61</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1770-72*, vol-3, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1919, letter no- 424, p-118.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, letter no -350, p- 104

<sup>63</sup> *Fort William- India House Correspondence: 1770-1772*, vol- 6, ed. B. Prasad, The National Archives, New Delhi, 1960, p- 140.

<sup>64</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwanamamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-66.

ud-Daula to exchange his turban with Chait Singh to signify brotherhood<sup>65</sup> and honored him with a sword.

But this friendship between the *Nawab* and the Raja could not last any longer. The Governor General, Warren Hastings came to Banaras in 1773 A.D. for a conference. The *Nawab* paid a visit to Banaras in order to meet the Governor General, but on reaching Jaunpur, the *Nawab* got furious on learning that Chait Singh was not present to receive him and in fact he had gone to receive Warren Hastings at Saidpur.<sup>66</sup> Thus the *Nawab* was enraged at the Raja for giving more importance to the English. On hearing this Chait Singh immediately took farewell from Hastings and reached Sheopur to welcome the *Nawab* and presented him with a bag of gold *muhars* (coin) as *nazzar* (gifts), but all in vain.<sup>67</sup>

During the conference the *Nawab*, Shuja-ud-Daula asked Warren Hastings to expel Chait Singh from the zamindari of Banaras<sup>68</sup> but the Governor General refused his demand. And due to the Governor's intervention and the guarantee from the British government, the *Nawab* of Awadh granted Chait Singh a *sanad* in 1773 A.D. According to the *sanad*,

‘the affairs of the zemindary and tahud of the *circar* of Beneras, and *circar* Chunar, and of the mehals of Jaunpoor, Bejeypoor, Buddohy (Bhadohi), Suknesegurrah, Mulboos Khan, sarkar Ghazeepoor, Sikanderpoor, Khereed Shadeyabad, Toppeh and Serinch, &c.’ which were under the charge of Rajah Bulwunt Sing, deceased, I do hereby grant and confirm unto you, upon their former footing.<sup>69</sup>

And he was also to pay annual revenue of rupees 22, 48,449 to the *Nawab*.<sup>70</sup> The agreement made by Shuja-ud-Daula stated that ‘this Agreement is made between me and my heirs, and you and your heirs, and it shall never be deviated from’ and was counter signed by the Governor General.<sup>71</sup> Hastings even assured Chait Singh that ‘in

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p-66.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p-68.

<sup>67</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-68.

<sup>68</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-70.

<sup>69</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries: The Treaties, Etc., Relating To The North-Western Provinces, Oudh, And Nepal, Vol. 2*, R. Cambay And Co., Calcutta, 1893, p-45.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p-45.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p-45-46.

any case the Company will always attend to your welfare, and afford you their care and protection'.<sup>72</sup>

Asaf-ud-Daula succeeded his father, Shuja-ud-Daula as the *Nawab* of Awadh, after his death in 1775 A.D. Asaf-ud-Daula continued his father's policy regarding the zamindari of Banaras but in a more rigorous way. And with his death, the Company also started thinking of renewing the treaty of Allahabad with the *Nawab* of Awadh. The Supreme Council considered all the treaties made with the *Nawab* were purely personal and consequently invalid on the death of one of the contracting parties. It was decided, to make a heavier bargain with the *wazir's* successor. And hence, Warren Hastings, the Governor General made the final settlement with the then *Nawab* of Awadh Asaf-ud-Daula, after the death of his father, Shuja-ud-Daula known as the treaty of Faizabad which was signed on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1775 A.D.<sup>73</sup> According to the new treaty, the sovereignty of Banaras was ceded to the English and Chait Singh was brought under the direct control of the Company and was no more under the subordination of the *Nawab* of Awadh. He was left free and allowed to manage the zamindari of Banaras as earlier. This was done due to the strategic position of Banaras as it created a buffer zone between the Company's dominion of Bengal and Bihar and the *Nawab's* dominion. And the most important market of Mirzapur lay in the province of Banaras, which held a strategic position in the trade and commerce of the eighteenth century as all the important routes passed through this province.

And accordingly a draft was made in keeping the views of all the council members. Francis, one of the council member at Calcutta stated: 'My opinion is that we may with propriety guarantee to the present *Nawab* of Oudh for his life all the countries guaranteed to the late *Vizier* by the treaty of Allahabad, except the dominions of Chait Singh'. While according to Warren Hastings, they should confer to the *Nawab* of Awadh, the *subedari* of Awadh, the districts of Kara and Allahabad, and the country lately conquered from the Rohilas, but no more. He further stated that,

'I do not wish to see the Company's forces carried within the line of the Rohilla country for its defences, I believe that an engagement to defend the country for him

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p-46.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p-78.

would render it unnecessary. I fear he may lose it. We shall in that case have a greater burden imposed upon us in the defence of the *Nawab* of Oudh'.<sup>74</sup>

And then by a majority votes it was decided that according to the treaty of Faizabad, Raja Chait Singh shall exercise a free and independent authority in his own dominion and would be subjected only to the payment of his tribute.<sup>75</sup> With the signing of this treaty between the *Nawab* of Awadh and the English, Banaras was removed from the jurisdiction of the *Nawab* of Awadh and was brought under the British sovereignty. Initially during this period the Raja was left free to administer his province on the payment of stipulated amount of revenue. And a *sanad* was granted to Raja Chait Singh for the zamindari of Banaras and Ghazipur on April 16th, 1776 A.D.

The provisions made by the *sanad* stated that,

‘all the inhabitants and people Resident and belonging to sarkar Banaras, Ghazeepeer, and Chunar, in the Subah of Allahabad; that whereas, by virtue of a Treaty with the Nabob Asaf-ud-Dowla, concluded on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1775, the government and sovereignty of the sarkars above mentioned has been ceded to the Honourable East India Company, from 4th July 1775; the said East India Company, therefore, pursuant to the rights thereby obtained, do confirm unto Rajah Chait Singh, the zamindari and faujdari of the said Circars, together with the kotwalis of Jaunpur and Banaras, and the Mint of Banaras, from the said date’.<sup>76</sup>

Accordingly the Raja was, now, left free to administer the province without any kind of interference from the *Nawab* and the Company. His only obligation was to pay fixed revenue to the Company. It was fixed that an amount of rupees 22, 66,180 was to be paid at Calcutta or rupees 23, 40,249 was to be paid at Banaras.<sup>77</sup> It was also recommended by the authorities that the Raja should maintain two thousand horses for the service of the Company, but this clause was not made mandatory.<sup>78</sup> It was completely left on the Raja to decide on this clause and Chait Singh did not give his consent.

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<sup>74</sup> *Secret Select Committee's Proceeding, 3rd March, 1775, vol-2, pp. 262- 263.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid, p-264.*

<sup>76</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries: The Treaties, Etc., Relating To The North-Western Provinces, Oudh, And Nepal, Vol. 2, R. Cambay And Co., Calcutta, 1893, p-47.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid, p-47.*

<sup>78</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-13.

Thus with the new agreement of 1775 A.D., the powers of the Raja of Banaras had enormously increased than his predecessors. Chait Singh exercised more power than his father, Balwant Singh, had held under the *Nawabs* of Awadh. At this juncture of time even the English though had a complete suzerainty over Banaras, did not exercise any authority over this region. Francis Fowke was appointed as the Resident at Banaras for collecting the revenue on behalf of the Company from the Raja; he did not possess any legal authority. It may be noted here that within a short span of time the treaties and policies of the East India Company with regards to Awadh and Banaras kept on changing. After the battle of Buxar the English were indecisive of the fact that they wanted to keep Banaras in their jurisdiction or give it away to the *Nawab*. Between the years 1764 to 1775 A.D. within a span of eleven years, the three different treaties were formulated and the Banaras zamindari was bouncing like a ping pong ball, landing in the hands of the English and then going in the hands of the *Nawab* and once again merging into the Company's dominion. The moot question here is that what might have been the reason for the formulation of these new treaties? But on profoundly studying the obscure political scenario of this region we come to know that fundamentally their policies were guided by extraction of maximum commercial benefit out of the new relationship and the English were in no mood to expand their political boundaries but the repeated Maratha attacks and their influence on the politics of Delhi impacted their policies. And in the latter years we see the roots of British Empire slowly getting deep into the politics of northern India. This period was the time when the British were in dire need of money and financial aid as their funds were on the verge of exhaustion. The English had just come out from the long Carnatic wars (1763 A.D.). Then after the battle of Buxar, they were once again engrossed in another battle in Mysore and to all this, the 1770's Bengal famine added insurmountable difficulties on them. The East India Company could not rely on aid from their home country as they were also engaged in war in Europe. And the only solution to all their exacerbated problems was to extract as much money as they could from Awadh and Banaras. And hence these circumstances led the Company to establish them as the new masters of the land and build a new Empire for themselves. The final transfer of Banaras to the East India Company opened the doors for the English to step into northern India.



## COUNCIL POLITICS AND EXPULSION OF RAJA CHAIT SINGH

The newly attained autonomy and power of Chait Singh could not last any longer and he became a victim to the Council politics. The Council at Calcutta was bifurcated into two groups; the first group consisted of Philip Francis, Clavering and Monson and the second group, comprised of the Governor General, Warren Hastings and Barwell.<sup>79</sup> While Fowke, the Resident at Banaras joined into the group of Francis. There was a time when it appeared that the governorship would slip out of Hastings's hands and would land up into the hands of Sir John Clavering.<sup>80</sup> Seeing this Chait Singh is said to have sided with the group under Clavering and sent money as offerings to him for his support. But with the death of Monson in 1776 A.D., the tables turned in favour of Warren Hastings. He got full control over the Council as he had the veto power. With this change in the Council, Warren Hastings took full advantage of the situation and deposed every possible person, who stood against him. He removed Fowke from the office and appointed Thomas Graham as the new Resident at Banaras.<sup>81</sup> Even the position of Chait Singh could not remain intact. Until now he was given full sovereignty over Banaras and was treated as an independent ruler. The Council under Hastings himself had decided not to interfere into the Raja's jurisdiction and advised the same to the Court of Directors of English East India Company at the time of treaty with Chait Singh.

However, the situation was different now as Chait Singh had joined the opposite side and was assertive against Hastings. In order to teach Chait Singh a lesson, Warren Hastings sent Ausan Singh, once the *diwan* of Banaras, who was living a deserted life in Murshidabad back to Banaras. And an order was sent to Chait Singh stating that, 'Ausan Singh being a friend of the Company's, his relatives must at once be released from confinement, and a *jagir* amply sufficient for their wants given to them'.<sup>82</sup> Graham and Barwell wanted Chait Singh to hand over the *jagir* of Jaunpur to Ausan Singh but the Raja did not comply with it.<sup>83</sup> And latter on it was decided that the zamindari of Saidpur would be given to Ausan Singh and out of the gross income of

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<sup>79</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-75-76.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p-84.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p-85.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p-86.

<sup>83</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p-269.

rupees sixty five thousand he shall be required to pay rupees fifteen thousand to the Raja and retain rupees fifty thousand as his personal income.<sup>84</sup> And with this act of Warren Hastings we see that the English started interfering in the internal matters of Banaras zamindari. This was wrong on the part of the British as according to the *sanad* granted to Chait Singh there was a clause that the Company would not intervene in the Raja's jurisdiction.

The troubles of Chait Singh did not end here, the Resident at Banaras Mr. Graham did all the possible things he could do in order to trouble the Raja. If the payment of the revenue lapsed beyond the date even by one day, officers were sent over to him who prevented the most necessary acts until the money was paid.<sup>85</sup> In the year 1778 A.D., the East India Company got involved in wars with the Dutch, French, and Maratha and with Haider Ali, which drained the Company's wealth and it faced an economic crisis and was in dire need of money. Lately the news of Raja's riches and extravagant expenditure reached the ears of Hastings.<sup>86</sup> He sent orders through Graham to Chait Singh, instructing him to pay an amount of rupees five lakhs a year,<sup>87</sup> the cost of two regiment of sepoy, which were to be deployed for the protection of Banaras, by replacing the regiment of Deccan. At first Chait Singh refused to pay the amount but initially he was forced to pay it. Chait Singh paid the amount on the condition that he was paying it this year only and would not do so the next time.

But a similar demand of payment of rupees five lakhs was made the next year also on the pretext that the war was still continuing.<sup>88</sup> He was advised to hand over the money to Graham. But Chait Singh showed his incapability to pay the amount and wrote a letter to the Governor General. According to him he had taken a loan in the first year to pay this sum which he had still not repaid and to pay this year amount he will have to sell all the gold and silver articles and utensils, which he possessed.<sup>89</sup> Hasting got furious at this and wrote a letter to Chait Singh, which stated that he had to pay the amount to Thomas Graham and if he failed to do so then Graham, with the help of

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<sup>84</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1776-80*, vol-5, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1930, letter no- 554, p-129-130.

<sup>85</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-100.

<sup>86</sup> E. B. Havell, *Banaras: The Sacred City*, London, p-211.

<sup>87</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1776-80*, vol-5, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1930, letter no- 1067, p-195.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, letter no- 1547, p- 348.

<sup>89</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p- 274.

two battalions stationed at Dinapore would march against him and recover the money by any means. And he was also to pay the extra expenses incurred by those battalions.<sup>90</sup> When Chait Singh refused to pay the stipulated amount, two regiments marched from Dinapore to Ramnagar, and he was forced to pay the amount, despite the provision made in the *sanad*.

Due to the ongoing wars, the Council on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1780 A.D., ordered Chait Singh to furnish two thousand cavalrymen and this was later reduced to one thousand. Chait Singh agreed to provide two fifty cavalrymen but did not fulfill the demand and again showed his helplessness. The Governor General was already enraged with him and at this point of time he came to know that Chait Singh was planning to revolt as he was accumulating money and ammunitions in the forts of Latifpur and Bijaygarh and was in constant link with the Marathas.

In order to curb the power of the rebellious Raja and teach him a lesson, Warren Hastings started off from Calcutta for Banaras on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1781 A.D. He was received by Chait Singh at Buxar. At Buxar, Chait Singh privately met with the Governor General. It is reported that Chait Singh took off his turban and placed it on the feet of Hastings and repented for his past deed and asked for his forgiveness. But the Governor was unmoved by his gesture, stated that, 'once I have been deceived by you and now can place no faith in your assertions. What your conduct towards the Company has been is notorious: when I reach Banaras steps shall be taken in regard to it'.<sup>91</sup>

When Hastings reached Banaras, Chait Singh was not allowed to meet him. On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1781 A.D., a letter was sent to the Raja through Markham, the Resident at Banaras demanding his explanation on the delay in payment of the subsidy, his refusal to furnish cavalry, his misconduct and allegedly conspiring against the Company. Chait Singh immediately sent a reply but in vain.<sup>92</sup> In the same evening Governor General ordered Markham to put Raja under arrest at Shivala Ghat. As soon

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<sup>90</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1776-80*, vol-5, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1930, letter no- 1569, p-344-345.

<sup>91</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p- 160- 161.

<sup>92</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1781-85*, vol-6, Manager of Publication, Delhi, 1938, letter no-207, p-84.

as the Raja was arrested, news of his arrest broke out among his troops and supporters and they gathered at the gates of Shivala in order to rescue him.

The very next day Chait Singh had sent a letter to the Governor General to pardon him. Till now the Governor General also had calmed down and asked the Raja to pay a cash of rupees seventy lacs and increased annual revenue of seven lacs.<sup>93</sup> While these negotiations were going on a ruckus broke out between the Raja's supporters and the English forces on the misbehavior of Chait Ram with the Raja. Chait Ram was a messenger, who was sent by Markham, the Resident at Banaras. This ruckus took a drastic turn and a sort of war broke out between the English forces and the followers of the Raja. In this confusion the Raja fled from Shivala Ghat to Ramnagar and from here he went to Latifgarh along with his family.

And with this Raja Chait Singh was expelled from the Banaras zamindari and a *parwana* was issued against him stating that, 'he had rebelled against him, slain the Company's soldiers and fled to the hills, so he was no longer considered as the Raja of Banaras'.<sup>94</sup> Ausan Singh was appointed as the *Naib* of Banaras and entrusted with the job of collecting the revenue on behalf of the Company, till the Company appointed a new Raja. But the revolt of Raja Chait Singh of Banaras and his followers and the massacre of the English officials (August to November, 1781 A.D.) had wide repercussions on the adjoining provinces. The rising power of the English had to face serious troubles not only in Banaras Raj but also in parts of Awadh and Bihar. It did not remain confined to the four walls of Banaras or citadel of Ramnagar. The moment this revolt broke out, there was an outburst of anti-British feeling in the area owned by Chait Singh. In fact, the atmosphere in the adjoining districts of Awadh was also not favourable to the English as rightly said by Colonel Hannay. According to him, "the greatest anarchy prevails; this present insurrection is said and believed to be with an intention to expel the English".<sup>95</sup> On September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1781 A.D., Col. Hannay reported from Faizabad, "This town has more the appearance of belonging to Chait Singh than the Vizer".<sup>96</sup> He also informs us that one Sheikh Chaan marched from

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<sup>93</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-165.

<sup>94</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, p-169.

<sup>95</sup> G.W. Hastings, *A vindication of Warren Hastings*, Oxford, 1909, pp-155-156.

<sup>96</sup> G.W. Hastings, *A vindication of Warren Hastings*, Oxford, 1909, p-155.

Faizabad to Banaras with nearly thousand horses. He believed that they were raised with the help of Jowar Ali Khan and Bahar Ali Khan, the Chief eunuchs of the Begums of Awadh. He even suspected that all the disturbances from Faizabad to Azamgarh were stirred through their agents.<sup>97</sup> These reports were also confirmed by Middleton, the Resident at Lucknow.<sup>98</sup> Similarly the condition in Bihar was even worse for the English. They had to face serious troubles in parts of Bihar even after the revolt subsided in Banaras. Continuous attempts were made to overthrow the English yoke. The people from Bihar came out in active support and raised the standard of revolt in Bihar also. Many powerful Rajas, Zamindars and amils in the Districts of Gaya, Shahabad, Patna and Saran rose against the Company rule.<sup>99</sup> But with extreme force and power the East India Company was able to curb the revolt. The suppression of rebellion at Banaras acted as a damper on the spirit of the Bihar as well as Awadh. Their demoralization was evident from the fact that after the rebellion of Chait Singh, no incident of a similar nature caused the aristocracy in these regions to react so strongly. The end result of the whole scenario was that the zamindars gradually began to show their attachment to the Company's government, as they now came to believe that through their loyalty to the English their zamindaris would be settled and safe guarded. Thus the aristocracy maintained peace and tranquility.

With the expulsion of Chait Singh from Banaras, British interference in Banaras started and gained a new momentum in the later years. After Chait Singh's plight from Banaras, Mahip Narayan Singh at the age of eighteen was proclaimed the Raja on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1781 A.D., with the support of Rani Gulab Kaur. Babu Durvijay Singh, his father, was appointed as the new Naib. This was done because Warren Hastings was dissatisfied on some reasons with the earlier deputy, Ausan Singh and as a result he had ordered Ausan Singh to leave Banaras and Ramnagar and settle down in Saidpur. He was even asked not to leave his place without the permission of the *Nawab*.<sup>100</sup> With the accession of Mahip Narayan, a settlement was signed between him and the Governor General. According to this settlement the revenue demand from

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, pp-155-156.

<sup>98</sup> *Fort William India House Correspondence*, vol 14, National Archives of India, New Delhi, pp-117-122.

<sup>99</sup> D. N. Saha, 'The revolt of Raja Chait Singh and its repercussions on Oudh and Bihar', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 39, pp. 740-744.

<sup>100</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1781-85*, vol-6, Manager of Publication, Delhi, 1938, letter no-296, p-110.

the Raja was increased considerably and he was ordered to pay forty lacs of rupees annually.<sup>101</sup> This was exactly double the amount paid by Chait Singh. But this time the authorities and status of the Raja were limited and he was made weak as compared to their predecessors. He was just a nominal head and his main duty was to extract revenue from the Banaras zamindari on behalf of the Company. Constitutionally he was the head of revenue administration and the judiciary except the city of Banaras. The administration of the mint was also taken away from the hands of the Raja and was placed under the supervision of the Resident. He was not allowed to erect forts or any other kinds of defences. He was also forbidden from employing any kind of troops of his own and if he needed the sepoys for the collection of the revenue and maintaining law and order in the province, then he would have to send request to the Company and on the recommendation of the Resident at Banaras, he would be supplied with sepoys.<sup>102</sup> Initially the Raja was now left with the duty of improving agriculture, encouraging trade and commerce and maintaining law and order in his zamindari.<sup>103</sup>

After settling the revenue matters of Banaras zamindari, Warren Hastings moved his attention towards the deteriorating condition of the administration of Banaras, which according to him was in a state of decay.<sup>104</sup> In order to achieve his goal and limit the powers of the Raja, Warren Hastings established three distinct departments for the police, criminal and civil jurisdiction and put it under the control of the city magistrate. He placed the capital city of Banaras under the jurisdiction of Ali Ibrahim Khan, who was appointed by the British as the chief magistrate of the newly established courts at Banaras. He was kept directly under the authority of the Company and was responsible to the Governor General and the council. He was no longer under the jurisdiction of the Raja. But placing the city magistrate under the control of the Resident proved more disastrous as the Resident had become more powerful than before. The Residents were instructed only to collect revenue from the Raja and were to restrain themselves from interfering into the internal matters of the

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<sup>101</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries: The Treaties, Etc., Relating To The North-Western Provinces, Oudh, And Nepal, Vol. 2*, R. Cambay And Co., Calcutta, 1893, p-51.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p-55-56.

<sup>103</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-16.

<sup>104</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepeer District*, Vol. I, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p- 2.

Raja. But in practicality the situation was just the opposite. They misused their powers for their personal gains. By making these new settlements with the Raja, Hastings wanted to deprive the Raja of his privileges and authorities so that he could curb the chances of future insurrections. And through this Hastings claimed that, 'I lost the zamindari with a rent of rupees twenty two lacs. I recovered it with a revenue of forty. The Company possessed only its stipulated rent under Chait Singh. It is now as much a member of their government as the zamindari of Burdwan and more effectively theirs than many parts of Bihar'.<sup>105</sup> But despite of all this, the Raja was not just nominal head, he still was the sole custodian of justice, law and order of the entire province except the city of Banaras.

The rebellions and disturbances were general throughout the province because of the weak government and the Raja and the growing power and interference of the Resident at Banaras, led to the arrest of *naib* Durvijay Singh as he was declared unfit for work and was accused of misappropriation of public money by Markham. He was replaced by Jagatdev Singh.<sup>106</sup> Despite of the fact that Mahip Narayan and Rani Gulab Kaur were of the opinion, that there was no need for a deputy, as the Raja himself was capable of managing his own affairs. The Raja even wrote to the Governor General requesting him to stop Markham from interfering in the matters of revenue collection and giving undue protection to the farm holders.<sup>107</sup> But all this was in vain as Jagatdev Singh had to work in accordance to Markham. After few days of Jagatdev Singh's appointment, Markham was succeeded by Francis Fowke as the Resident of Banaras on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1783 A.D. Jagatdev Singh paid the installment of the revenue but the methods of collection were erroneous and full of fraudulent transactions. He extracted more money than stipulated from people who paid in cash. The management of the custom duties was unjust. He even did not pay due respect to the Raja as Ramnagar, the capital of Mahip Narayan, was put under the control of *kotwal*, who was under the subordination of Jagatdev Singh. Mahip Narayan received 'neither any share of the *rusum* and *adab*, the symbol of royal authority, nor a single *dam* as *madad karach*

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<sup>105</sup> G.R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the life of Rt. Hon'ble Warren Hastings*, vol-2, London, 1841, p-421.

<sup>106</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1781-85*, vol-6, Manager of Publication, Delhi, 1938, letter no- 641, p-233-234.

<sup>107</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1781-85*, vol-6, Manager of Publication, Delhi, 1938, letter no- 641, p-233-234.

from the *Naib*, though six lacs four hundred rupees had been sanctioned by the government on that head'.<sup>108</sup>

All these complains of Jagatdev Singh to Hastings led to the removal of the *naib* and some reforms were brought about in the province of Banaras to ensure regular payment of revenues without encroaching upon the rights of the Raja that were granted to him by the agreement of 1781 A.D. According to new reform, the Raja was made and declared the head in all official zamindari acts and all the business of the zamindari was to be transacted in the name and under the seal and signature of the Raja. The *naib* was to run the actual administration and the Raja was asked not to interfere in his work. The portfolio of the Resident was enumerated. He was to receive the Company's revenue and was to be acquainted with all the business of the zamindari. He was also to provide the *amils* with military assistance. The *naib* was put under the constant scanning of the Resident and the *amin*. Thus with this arrangement Warren Hastings curtailed the power of the Raja and brought him to the status of a mere zamindar, who had the charge of Banaras but was not in a power to manage it. With this settlement the office of the *naib* was given to Ajaib Singh, the brother of Rani Gulab Kaur<sup>109</sup> and Ali Ibrahim Khan<sup>110</sup> was asked to perform the duties of the *amin* as well. While returning from Lucknow, Hastings visited Banaras and here Mahip Narayan requested to the Governor General to grant him some compensation. But Hastings did not give any extra privileges rather conferred upon him the *jagirs* of Bhadohi in Allahabad *suba*<sup>111</sup> and Mangror in the *suba* of Bihar.<sup>112</sup>

Francis Fowke resigned in December 1785 A.D. and the office of the Resident was filled in by James Grant. Grant did some outstanding works in Banaras but like Fowke he could not keep himself away from siding with his favourites, who took undue advantage of their position for their own selfish interest. Sher Jang, the *daroga* of the mint under the patronage of Grant established a parallel court and tried civil and criminal cases. This adversely hampered the position and prestige of the Raja as

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p-131-132.

<sup>109</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1781-85*, vol-6, Manager of Publication, Delhi, 1938, letter no- 1228, p-375.

<sup>110</sup> Ali Ibrahim Khan of Patna was a trusted man of Governor General, Warren Hastings. Latter on his was also appointed as the first magistrate of Banaras. C. E Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian biography*, London, 1906, p-10.

<sup>111</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1781-85*, vol-6, Manager of Publication, Delhi, 1938, letter no- 1440, p- 408-409.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, letter no- 1442, p- 409



the countrymen believed that the Raja was just a nominal head without any powers and even his revenue collection suffered badly. Grant also interfered in the trade and commerce of the province. After the death of *naib*, Ajaib Singh in April 1787 A.D., Mahip Narayan requested to Grant to entrust him with the seal of *huzuri-naibat*, but he kept it under his custody and appointed Shankar Pandit, as the new *naib*. In order to bring under the notice of Bengal government the state affairs of Banaras, Mahip Narayan sent representatives to Calcutta.<sup>113</sup> And as a result Cornwallis, the then Governor General, set out for the province of Banaras in 1787 A.D.

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1787 A.D., Cornwallis wrote to Dundas that, 'Banaras on its present system must be a scene of grossest corruption and mismanagement'.<sup>114</sup> On reaching Banaras Cornwallis found that the situation of Banaras was worse than what he had conceived and was now fully convinced to remove James Grant from the post of the Resident.<sup>115</sup> But he was not sure as whom to appoint as the next Resident of Banaras because according to him, 'Banaras was six hundred miles from Calcutta, there was a danger, unless it was put in good hands'.<sup>116</sup> Cornwallis on seeing the condition of Banaras placed the residency at Banaras under the direct control of the board of revenue at Calcutta and appointed Jonathan Duncan, the secretary of public and revenue department, as the Resident of Banaras.<sup>117</sup>

## BANARAS ZAMINDARI UNDER JONATHAN DUNCAN, THE RESIDENT AT BANARAS

In the year 1787 A.D., Jonathan Duncan was appointed as the Resident of Banaras<sup>118</sup> and with his appointment; many new reforms were introduced in the zamindari of Banaras. Cornwallis appointed Duncan because according to him, he was the most suitable person for the post of the Resident of Banaras and could manage the province efficiently. In his letter to Dundas, Cornwallis exclaims that, 'Duncan is held in

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<sup>113</sup> *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, Vol 1, ed. Charles Ross, London, 1859, p-284.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p- 253.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, p- 270.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, p-271.

<sup>117</sup> G.N. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs: Selection from English Records, 1788-1810*, vol-1, Government Central Record Office, Allahabad, p- 7.

<sup>118</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Manager of Publication, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 1503, p-383.

highest esteem by every man, both European and native in Bengal'.<sup>119</sup> His appointment and the new reforms gave the English an upper hand over the Raja of Banaras as the powers of the Raja were curtailed and the Resident at Banaras was given much more powers than his predecessors. The first reform that was introduced was that, two Europeans, J. Neave and P. Treves were appointed as senior and junior assistance respectively to assist Duncan in his work.<sup>120</sup>

According to the new reforms introduced in Banaras by Cornwallis, Duncan was appointed with instructions that the Raja was left with the sole authority to collect the revenue from his zamindari. Even the office of *naib* or the deputy was withdrawn because Cornwallis believed that the Raja was qualified to conduct his business without the assistance of the *naib*<sup>121</sup> and as a result the acting *naib*, Shankar Pandit, appointed by Grant was removed from office. The Raja was also required to transact all the business in the public courts and had the power only to appoint officers to assist him on his administration.

But certain restrictions were imposed on the Raja by the Resident. Duncan appointed officers on his behalf to keep the accounts of all the transaction of the Raja. He appointed a native official called *sarishtadar* (a chief officer in the court, who supervises the working and keep the records) and five *muharrirs* (clerk in the court) to attend the Raja's court on his behalf. Shankar Pandit was appointed the first *sarishtadar* on behalf of Duncan, who was once removed from the post of the acting *naib*. Duncan appointed officials at the custom houses of Banaras, Mirzapur, Jaunpur and Ghazipur. The Raja was also required to provide the wages of these officials that were appointed by the Resident. The *amils* were brought under the direct control of Duncan. He assisted them in the work of revenue collection. Thus we see the Resident became the supervisor of the Raja. He had the authority to interfere and disapprove of any order or act of Raja and the Raja was compelled to obey him.

In the first year of Duncan's residency at Banaras, the Raja, Mahip Narayan was left to collect land revenue on the guidelines of Duncan. He had advised the Raja not to

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<sup>119</sup> *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, Vol 1, ed. Charles Ross, London 1859, p-271.

<sup>120</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-17.

<sup>121</sup> *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, Vol-1, ed. Charles Ross, London 1859, p-302.

give out any large farms to any tax collector. But Mahip Narayan did not follow the instructions and rented the farm worth ten lacs rupees to Kulb Ali Khan, a renter from Jaunpur. And a complaint against this was lodged by a farmer of Ghazipur, Mehendi Ali Khan. Later Mehendi Ali Khan refused to pay the first installment, the Raja summoned him to his court and as a result Mehendi Ali Khan felt insulted and tried to commit suicide. And at this point of time Duncan interfered into the matter as to him this was the most appropriate time to intervene and further curtail the powers of the Raja of Banaras on the pretext of mismanagement of his duties. He forced the Raja to grant him a remission of twenty five thousand rupees.<sup>122</sup> But after the failure of the Raja in this venture, the revenue administration was put under the management of the Resident, Jonathan Duncan. Duncan widely travelled throughout the zamindari and took firsthand account of the problems. The process of reforming general administration started by Warren Hastings was taken forward by him. As we have already seen he established courts of justice in Jaunpur, Ghazipur and Mirzapur. He streamlined the customs department and revenue administration. Fresh revenue settlements were made with *amils* and cultivators

In order to remove the defects that had crept in the zamindari of Banaras, Jonathan Duncan introduced a new settlement in 1788 A.D. According to this settlement, the new *potta* (lease) should be delivered to the *ryots* of all *parganas*. Secondly it was necessary to mention the mode of collection and the length of measurement in the lease. Thirdly the money value of payment was to be determined twice within a year according to the current rates. Fourthly it was mandatory to mention the ratio of distribution of the produce between the *amil* and *ryot* in the *potta*. Fifthly all the *abwabs* (taxes) introduced since 1787 A.D. were to be prohibited. Sixthly it was compulsory to write the name of the person in the *potta*, paying revenue in cash. Lastly original rent and existing *abwabs* or the cesses were to be incorporated under one head.<sup>123</sup> After the failure of the Raja in the earlier ventures and his opposition of this new regulation, the revenue administration was put under the management of the Resident, Jonathan Duncan in 1788 A.D. But the Bengal government advised Duncan not to exclude the Raja completely. In November 1788 A.D, Duncan concluded the four year settlement with the village zamindars and *pattidars* instead of farmers who

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<sup>122</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, The World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-148.

<sup>123</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p- 325-326.

previously held possession through the farming system or claimed it as heredity right.<sup>124</sup> Other than the revenue administration, Jonathan Duncan also introduced several reforms in judicial matters of the Banaras zamindari. According to the regulation of 1781 A.D., Raja of Banaras imparted justice to entire province except the city of Banaras, which was placed under jurisdiction of the city magistrate, who was directly under the Bengal government. While in other parts of the province, the agents of the Raja like the zamindars and the *amils* dispensed justice on his behalf.

Besides this Duncan was even entrusted by the Bengal government with the duty of establishment of city courts at Jaunpur, Ghazipur and Mirzapur. And as a result a court was established by Duncan at Ghazipur in January, 1788 A.D. Maulvi A. Mirullah was appointed as a magistrate of Ghazipur court.<sup>125</sup> He had the power to try both civil and criminal cases but in the cases where severe punishment was required was to be forwarded to Resident for his approval. The judge was restricted from hearing the cases related to revenue and custom houses. The copies of proceedings were to be duly sealed and forwarded to the Resident every month.<sup>126</sup> The monthly expenditure was fixed at Banaras *sicca* rupees seven hundred forty-four. On similar pattern two new courts were set up in the city Jaunpur and Mirzapur. Mufti Karimullah was appointed as the magistrate of Jaunpur<sup>127</sup> and Lala Bakshi Singh was appointed to the Mirzapur court.<sup>128</sup> Thus these three courts along with the Banaras court slipped out of the hands of Raja, Mahip Narayan, limiting him to the jurisdiction of the *molki-adalat* (country courts). *Molki-adalats* located in the Banaras zamindari were basically courts that handled and looked after cases related to the rural interest. *Molki-adalat* was the highest court of justice which functioned directly under the Raja. But that doesn't mean that these rural courts though they were under the Raja's jurisdiction, they were not free from the Resident's interference. He constantly kept an eye on the matters to these courts and supervised them.

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<sup>124</sup> G.N. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs: Selection from English Records, 1788-1810*, vol-1, Government Central Record Office, Allahabad, p- 185.

<sup>125</sup> G.N. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs: Selection from English Records, 1788-1810*, vol-1, Government Central Record Office, Allahabad, p- 63.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, p-64.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p- 76.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, p- 90.

And hence in order to further curtail the powers of the Raja, Duncan was advised by the government to bring about reforms in the *molki- adalat* as well.<sup>129</sup> Duncan found out that the expenditure incurred by the Raja was not adequate. He asked the Raja to increase the salary of the judicial officers and to increase the funds from rupees five hundred and sixty seven to twelve hundred thirty five for *diwani* division and from rupees two hundred one to rupees eight hundred seventy nine for the *faujdari* division of the *molki- adalat*. He also limited the jurisdiction of the *molki- adalat* by interfering in the pending cases. Duncan believed that the Raja was incapable of even managing the affairs of the *molki- adalat* and dispensing justice throughout the province. And hence, he proposed several new reforms to the government. He advised the government that the *molki- adalat* of the Raja should be made liable to regular inspection of the Resident. And a new court of revenue should be formulated, so that the dispute arising between the *ryots* and the *amils* or the collectors could be heard in these courts. He even suggested that two judges should be appointed to this court; one should be nominated by the Resident himself and the other by the Raja.

And with all these establishments in the judicial and administrative matters, the Raja was forcibly pushed into the background and the real authority was vested in the hands of the Resident. The growing power and authority of the Resident had curtailed the power of the Raja to an extent that in reality he was left with no powers. And the final blow to the Banaras Raj came when an agreement was signed between the Governor General and Mahip Narayan on October 27, 1794 A.D. According to this settlement the Raja's proportion of annual surplus collections was fixed at rupees one lakh exclusive of his *jagirs* and *Altamghas* (a royal grant) which yielded him an estimated profit of rupees four lakhs fifty thousand.<sup>130</sup> This agreement finally gave the administration of Banaras zamindari in the hands of the Company and the Raja was limited to the jurisdiction in an area, which latter came to be known as 'family dominion'<sup>131</sup> of the Raja, which consisted of pargana of Gangapar in the Banaras district and Kera Mangraur or Chakia and Bhadohi in the district of Mirzapur.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> G.N. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs: Selection from English Records, 1788-1810*, vol-1, Government Central Record Office, Allahabad, p- 76.

<sup>130</sup> C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries: The Treaties, Etc., Relating To The North-Western Provinces, Oudh, And Nepal*, Vol. 2, R. Cambay And Co., Calcutta, 1893, p-56-58.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, p-43.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, p-44.

When the East India Company took the administration of Banaras region completely in their hands in 1795 A.D. and made permanent the revenue settlements by Jonathan Duncan, they aimed at restoring existing system rather than creating a quite new one of their own. But with appointing Europeans officials to the administration of Banaras, they brought in a variety of changes. The most immediate change was the replacement of the nobles who had commanded the army of the Banaras Raj were replaced by the Company's European officials. The forces of the Raja and the zamindars were reduced considerably and even were dismantled. Similar was the case with the Rajas court. The Indian judges of the city court of Mirzapur, Banaras, Jaunpur and Ghazipur were replaced by European judges whose jurisdiction extended to their whole district. In the early years of the *Nawab wazirs*, they had inherited some of the administrative structure of the Mughal Empire. Many of the Mughal offices continued to operate like the offices of *qazi* and *kotwal* under the judiciary. The *qazis* were appointed at several grades from the higher level down to the level of *qazis* in the pargana which were subdivisions of *sarkars* (districts). Theoretically they had jurisdiction over most criminal and civil cases. In addition to this they even registered marriages for the Muslim population and certified documents. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, the position appears to have become hereditary within families and upon the death of the incumbent, his son or another male descendent would petition the sovereign for his installation in the office of his deceased relative. But by the late eighteenth century when the British influence on the Banaras zamindari increased, some of their judicial functions had been curtailed and the primary functions of the *qazis* were that of attesting documents and registering marriages for which they charged their fees. In the *parganas* the *qazi* along with his subordinates were down-graded and left with limited functions as adviser to the judges. The status and salaries also went down rapidly. According to early nineteenth century records concerning *qazis*, the British accepted the hereditary nature of the post, but it was maintained just to register deeds and marriages.

In the heydays of Mughal rule, the Empire and its provinces had been administered through bureaucracy that was centrally organized into departments with a body of *mansabdars* responsible for individual departments. These men were in charge of governing the province, lead armies, to serve at courts etc according to their ranks. There was a well maintained system. Similarly under Mansaram and his successors

the prior system was well intact but such duties whether it was collection of revenues, local administration, operation of imperial mint etc were given to the highest bidders. But in 1795 A.D., the East India Company sought to revive the entire Mughal structure. The Europeans presided over paid Indian subordinates. Similarly the fundamental duties of an imperial authority are to collect revenues needed to support itself and to recruit a standing army to protect its frontiers, impose taxation and keep law and order amongst its subject. Under the Mughals, the recruitment, employment and training of the different wings of the armed forces whether it was cavalry or infantry supported by artillery were all directly under the control of the Emperor. The *mansabdars* according to their ranks had the power to raise armed forces to impose their authority where ever they were posted. Likewise the local zamindar and the *jagirdars* were also allowed to retain sufficient forces to extract revenues and maintain law and order in the villages. However the East India Company maintained its own regular standing army which comprised of Europeans as well as Indians though with a lot of disparities in position among European and Indian troopers. They also enforced a reduction or complete disbandment of the forces and dismantling of forts of the local land controllers or zamindars. The East India Company therefore monopolized all legitimate forces and troopers, forcing the zamindars to extract revenues from the subject by the means of few of their musket men. The military dominance of the East India Company was much more than their counterparts.

With the breakup of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century, three political systems emerged; the Mughal (national), the regional, and the local. The systems were interrelated. The Mughal system, looking at it from Banaras, was represented by the new state of Awadh, which was a conglomeration of regional and local entities that were held together in the eighteenth century by the abilities and military powers of the *Nawab*. By the end of the eighteenth century, after thirty years of British influence and rule in the Banaras region, the political, administrative, and economic structure of the region had undergone remarkable changes. The three political systems which had existed side by side in the middle of the eighteenth century had been reduced to two. The main and all-powerful one, the British Government, had replaced the Mughal and regional governments with a salaried civil administration controlled from Calcutta and then later on in the nineteenth from the provincial capital of Agra under the control of the staff of the Governor General in Calcutta. This political

structure was rapidly destroying the third or local system. In many places through the workings of the revenue and legal systems, the old zamindars had been replaced by new groups who became landholders. In some places where the old lineages still remained, or where descendants of Rajas or *jagirdars* held some power, their authority was completely circumscribed by the regulations. The old local system survived in spite of the new administrative system, but it survived only so long as it did not come into open conflict with the new system and their positions in relation to their tenants. British through the establishment of their legal, revenue, and administrative systems, created new economic environment which gave a chance to individuals who had the necessary training and opportunity to join the new administration and become wealthy. These individuals bought land and became “respectable natives” and settled down as new land owners or landlords thus giving way to new gentry of landlords. On closely scrutinizing the land holding patterns during the reign of the Rajas of Banaras and the *Nawabs* of Awadh the lands in this region were specifically under the control of Rajputs, Bhumihars and few influential Muslims.

In the late eighteenth century in India there was no one system of law or one political system, but multiple systems which differed from place to place, from group to group, and from situation to situation. The East India Company of the middle of the eighteenth century had little experience in solving the problems of legal administration with which they were faced in India. They were basically a private trading Company that ruled the Indian territories with profit as its ulterior motive. They were completely ignorant about the actual nature of Indian society, indigenous law, economics, and political structure especially in Banaras region. They ruled this region completely on the basis of their experience of Bengal. Events in Awadh and Banaras in the last quarter of the eighteenth century suggest that British expansion, even into the hinterland of the subcontinent, had an economic dimension to it. The hunt for new sources of the commodities which were being exported in ever increasing quantities from the ports of British India to Europe or to other parts of Asia was taking merchants further and further into remote areas from Bengal and new opportunities were being created at several levels. Zamindars and *amils* were offered contracts to provide indigo, cotton and various other goods for European factories. According to Marshal, “this expansion and intrusion had political consequences, and,



as its volume grew, European trade was likely to erode the power of an Indian ruler bit by bit”<sup>133</sup>.

And thus we see that initially the English East India Company had just come to assist Mir Jaffar in the battle against Shuja-ud-Daula and Mir Qasim but within a short span of forty years became the new masters of Banaras and pushed the Rajas into the background taking on the center position. The initial years of their rule in Banaras were like a test and trial method which came to an end with the permanent settlement of the Banaras zamindari and from here they launched their all India campaign. According to P.J. Marshal, “the story of the Company's political penetration of Oudh followed a pattern frequently repeated in eighteenth-century India, with the Company trying on the one hand to preserve the autonomy of an Indian ruler, while on the other levying demands on him which severely restricted his freedom of action”.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> P. J. Marshall, ‘Economic and Political Expansion: The Case of Oudh’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p- 482.

<sup>134</sup> P. J. Marshall, ‘Economic and Political Expansion: The Case of Oudh’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p- 466.

## **CHAPTER-4**

# **LAND CONTROL AND THE VILLAGE ORGANIZATION OF THE BANARAS ZAMINDARI**

## INTRODUCTION:

After the decline of the Mughal Empire it bifurcated into smaller territories and successor states which were governed by the local zamindars and the local chiefs. Saadat Khan, the Governor of Awadh under the Mughal, carved out the state of Awadh and became a de facto ruler. Under his authority were a large number of chiefs and zamindars who were given hold of some regions to collect revenue and to administer them on behalf of the *Nawabs*. And the Rajas of Banaras were these administrators who were given the region of Banaras along with Jaunpur and Ghazipur to collect revenue from the cultivators and primary zamindars and to pay the lump sum amount to the *Nawabs*.<sup>1</sup> Mansaram overthrew his overlord Rustam Ali and obtained the zamindari rights of Banaras. his successors the first two Rajas of Banaras that is Balwant Singh and his son Chait Singh, other than ruling the area remitted the revenue on the behalf of the *Nawab* and indulged themselves in expanding their territories by launching military campaign against the neighbouring Rajas, chiefs and zamindars and replacing them with their own trusted men. Thus, this pushed older zamindars of this region downwards and a new class of zamindars emerged. But with the acquisition of Banaras by the British, many of the expelled zamindars were able to restore their proprietary rights but still there were many who failed to make a comeback and were permanently reduced to the status of a villager or cultivator. Thus, the position of the landed classes underwent a considerable change during the later part of the eighteenth century due to the economic and political policies of both the Rajas of Banaras and the English East India Company.

Thus this chapter focuses on the role of the villages in the development of this zamindari. Being an agricultural driven region, the agriculture was one of the main sources of income for the Banaras Raj. This chapter deals with various aspects related with revenue administration like land ownership rights and the composition of the zamindari class. It also deals with the changes brought about in the structure of the village economy and the status of the landed elites. And even focuses on the changes that were introduced when the East India Company took over the control of revenue administration of Banaras zamindari in their own hands and introduced many changes and made fresh settlement with *raiya*ts, zamindars and the *amil*s.

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<sup>1</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *The first two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, pp-260-261.

## THE LANDED ELITES IN THE BANARAS RAJ

The zamindar class played a vital role in the medieval period but their influence and power increased many folds during the Mughal period and even after the decline there was no such evident change in their status. Their position in the society became more complex. They exercised tremendous power over the agricultural production, commerce and economy of the subcontinent. The surplus production appropriated from the peasants was shared among the rulers, nobles and landlords. According to W.H. Moreland, the word “zamindar” was coined during the fourteenth century and finds mention in the works to two great historians like Barani and Afif.<sup>2</sup> The use of word zamindar gained a new momentum during the Mughal period. According to Nurul Hasan, it was used to denote the various holders of hereditary interests, ranging from powerful, independent, and autonomous chieftains to petty intermediaries at the village level. Before the Mughals, the chieftains were designated as *Rajas*, *Rais*, *Thakurs* and so on, while the small intermediaries would be termed as *Chaudhuris*, *Khuts* and *Muqaddam* etc.<sup>3</sup> The zamindars included various landed classes of autonomous state to primary zamindars at village level. They were allowed complete freedom in the internal matters of their region as long as they do not challenge the authority of the rulers and fulfill their revenue obligations on time. Along with the revenue obligations the zamindars often took over the administrative duties of their areas. Generally the zamindari rights were based on hereditary but could be terminated by the Emperor or the ruler if they failed to meet the revenue obligations.

According to the modern usage the word Zamindars basically implies to landlords,<sup>4</sup> but during the eighteenth century the word landlord is roughly applicable to the Indian circumstances. Nurul Hasan in his work on zamindars has categorized zamindars in three categories the first being autonomous chiefs, the second were intermediary zamindars and the third category comprised of primary zamindars.<sup>5</sup> Similarly on scrutinizing Banaras region we find three distinct groups of landholders. Firstly, those chieftains who held zamindari rights in the land; secondly, those who enjoyed the

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<sup>2</sup> W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, Heffer and sons, Cambridge, 1929, p-138.

<sup>3</sup> R.E. Frykenberg, *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, Wisconsin University Press, 1969, p-18.

<sup>4</sup> W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, Heffer and sons, Cambridge, 1929, p-136.

<sup>5</sup> S. Nurul Hasan, ‘Zamindars, under the Mughals’, *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, ed. R.E. Frykenberg, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, p-18

superior status of *taluqdars* and thirdly, those who held land revenue grants from the state in the form of *jagirs*.<sup>6</sup>

The autonomous chieftains had hereditary rights and enjoyed practically sovereign powers over the territory. Many of them were engaged in the imperial hierarchy and administrative machinery by the Mughals. They were responsible for maintaining law and order within their territories and maintaining a fixed number of armed retainers and in return were granted *jagirs* and *mansabs*.<sup>7</sup> These chieftains could inherit from a few villages to an entire district. These zamindars had to meet the states revenue demand and had the claim over rest of the village surplus.

The intermediary zamindars or *taluqdars* were the group which collected land revenue from the primary zamindars and paid to the imperial treasury or to the *jagirdars* or chieftains. In return for their services they enjoyed remissions, deductions and share in the revenue collected. These *taluqdars* were lower in status to the zamindars as they did not possess zamindari rights over the land.<sup>8</sup> For instance if a person is a *taluqdars* of ten villages it simply meant that he had to collect the revenue from these ten villages for the state. Intermediary zamindars appear to be the backbone of revenue system under the Mughals. They were supposed to prepare the details of revenue assessment for the perusal of the state, help in the realization of land revenue, and assist the imperial officers in the maintenance of law and order and to supply a fixed number of contingent.<sup>9</sup>

At the lowest level were the primary zamindars or *jagirdars* who were the holders of proprietary rights over land for all practical purposes. They included not only peasant proprietors who carried on cultivation themselves or with the help of hired labour but also proprietors of one or several villages.<sup>10</sup> They were responsible for collecting the revenue from the cultivators and depositing the share of state with the higher authorities. These were the various categories of landholders who had proprietary

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<sup>6</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-39.

<sup>7</sup> S. Nurul Hasan, 'Zamindars, under the Mughals', *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, ed. R.E. Frykenberg, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, pp- 19-24.

<sup>8</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-40.

<sup>9</sup> S. Nurul Hasan, 'Zamindars, under the Mughals', *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, ed. R.E. Frykenberg, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, p-25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p- 27.

rights over the land under the Mughals and played an important role in revenue assessment, collection and its remittance. On closely scrutinizing the prevalent scenario we find a many tiered system of zamindars, landlords and tax officials were hounding upon the rural population. A large chunk of rural people struggled under various forms of debt and land bondages due to the superior landed rights of the landlords and their sub holders and revenue collectors. The social structure of land control depicted extreme polarity. The zamindars over land and labour enjoyed absolute authority over the lower strands of hierarchy.

With the gradual decline of Mughal Empire and the political and economic constraint of the eighteenth century led to the emergence of new kinds of administrative mechanism in which the local chief and zamindars were able to carve out separate territories for themselves thus fragmenting the hundreds of years old Mughal regime. These regional rulers carved a niche for themselves and strived hard to maximize their gains to meet the revenue obligations, military and other expenses and to put their rule on a firmer pedestal. As a result we see a transition where significant changes were introduced in the existing Mughal administrative system but the regional states and kingdoms broadly followed their predecessor's forms and practices.

However despite the breakdown in the land control system of Banaras Raj, the village proprietary bodies were, for the most part, allowed to remain in possession but their position had changed. They were reduced to the status of the cultivators and were obliged to pay the total revenue dues of the village. Though proprietary rights of zamindars were curtailed but village administration appeared to be still in their hands. They held land on favorable terms and grazing, fisheries and forest produce of the village seem to be left in their undisturbed possession. They were allowed a part of local levies and taxes like Akbari or tax on spirits, house tax, taxes on looms and transit duties on grains and other articles of commerce which passed through their villages. They were allowed certain remissions under the name of '*choot*' and '*moafeemaoolee*' and '*nankar*' amounting to about a lakhs rupee per annum in the whole region. Oldham mentioned that these grants were intended especially for the

benefit of those zamindars whose turbulence and discontent would have given trouble, or as a reward for those who had made themselves useful to the Raja.<sup>11</sup>

Thus we see that by the end of the eighteenth century the land control system and position of the landed elites in the Banaras region underwent a considerable change due to the political and economic policies of the Awadh *Nawabs*, Rajas of Banaras as well as the English. The English governors tried hard to restore the old intermediaries but all in vain as they could hardly trace the zamindari rights of the dispossessed zamindars except in few cases as seen earlier. In 1795, when the decennial settlement was declared permanent in Banaras by the Governor General council, the *amils* stayed on under their changed designations of *tehsildars* and performed the dual duties maintaining law and order along with the collection of revenue in their respective jurisdiction with the assistance of *chaukidars* and village headmen.

## THE RURAL ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY

Other than the landed elites, the village economy also played a crucial role in shaping the fortunes for Banaras. The rural areas of Banaras zamindari could not remain aloof from the political changes and turbulences that were prevalent in the region. Land revenue was the main source of income for the Raja of Banaras and his income depended primarily on the agricultural resources of the country. So, attempts were made by them to encourage agriculture and also to bring uncultivated land under cultivation. Thus this part of the work focuses on the organization and the economic activities of these small villages and to examine the impact of the policies of the Rajas as well as the English Company on these village communities.

Considering the example of a smaller tract of Delhi Charles Metcalf deduced that “the village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mughals, Maratha, Sikh, English, are all masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same.”<sup>12</sup> But closely scrutinizing the areas of

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<sup>11</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazee-poor District*, Vol-II, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p- 94.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Metcalf, *The Selections from the Revenue Records of the North- Western Provinces: 1822-1833*, North Western Province Press, Allahabad, 1872, p-218.

Banaras zamindari Metcalf's deduction cannot be implied here. Despite of the fact that village produce was forwarded to urban centers and in return they received money or finished products. There is no concept such as a self sufficient economy. The economies whether urban or rural, cannot be self sufficient or a closed economy to some degree they are interdependent on one another. These rural communities were shaped by the process of evolution and dissolution over centuries. The imperial breakdown of the eighteenth century greatly impacted these communities. The villages were basically units which included zamindars, peasants, landless labourers, artisans etc.

The villages in the Banaras zamindari were not planned rather the settlement patterns lacked regular planning. There were small hamlets and even large settlements comprising of population up to ten thousand. The villages in this region consisted of a main site which was surrounded by small hamlets mostly occupied by people of lower caste. These fragmented land and main composite sites were often considered as a unit for administrative and revenue purposes. For instance Ghamar in the Ghazipur district had a composite site surrounded by many detached sites.<sup>13</sup> The villages were clusters of small mud houses with thatched roofs or tiles and the only building of any pretension was the dwelling of the village zamindar which on the contrary was large enough and spacious. While settling the affairs of Banaras Raj in 1790 A.D., Jonathan Duncan the Resident of Banaras found out that there were some 12000 villages that were recorded in all the four districts viz Banaras, Ghazipur, Jaunpur and Mirzapur of the Banaras zamindari. The total population of these villages was around twenty six lakhs and yielded revenue of forty seven lakhs to the zamindari.<sup>14</sup>

The rural population of Banaras zamindari was classified into classes according to the value of possessions of the villagers. The first class was a small group of landowners, village officials and money lenders. The second class comprised rich peasants and the third probably consisted of majority of the peasant population. These were small peasant who largely were cultivators but depended upon credit for their ability to cultivate. This category included the peasants of lower status which also included landless labours.

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<sup>13</sup> B.S. Cohn, *Structural Change in the Indian Rural Society: 1596-1885*, Wisconsin University Press, 1969, pp- 91-92.

<sup>14</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publication, New Delhi, p- 64.



The village zamindars held a very dominant position in the village community. Zamindars were basically regarded as persons responsible for the payment of government's revenue demands. But at the village level they were often designated as *hissardars* or *pattidars*. And in Banaras there were two types of landholding *pattidari* and *bhaichara* (brotherhood zamindar). In a *Pattidari* estate the descendant of common ancestor divided their ancestral land and held orchards, tanks and some waste land in common.<sup>15</sup> While "brotherhoods were held together by ties of common ancestry and each individual had separated possession of land that he cultivated, but the whole body acted together through its representatives in managing the affairs of the village and paying the revenue".<sup>16</sup> Unlike the *pattidari* in *bhaichara* or brotherhood estates the land was held together jointly and commonly undivided and only the share of produce was divided. They often cultivated their land with the help of hired labourers. In Banaras these brotherhoods were referred by the caste such as Brahmins, Bhumihar and Rajputs and even by their clans like the Sengar Rajputs of Lakhnesar, Bisen and Bais Rajputs of Jaunpur. Similarly Reotipur and Sheopur in Ghazipur together formed a large *taluka* consisting of approximately thirty five villages which was in control of the Sikarwar Bhumihars.<sup>17</sup>

Agriculture was the main occupation of the village zamindar and bulk of their income was derived from their *sir* lands (owned directly by landowners). Though they were agriculturalist but majority of the soil was worked upon by hired servants and labourers. According to the English land revenue settlement, in the Ghazipur district nearly one-half of the cultivated area was recorded as *sir* or *nij jot* land of the zamindars.<sup>18</sup> In some villages the brotherhoods were joint sharers of the proprietary rights and were collectively responsible for paying the revenue to the government. These brotherhood lands were split into divisions and subdivisions and each individual of common lineage held separate possession of land which they cultivated but they acted together and jointly managed the administration of the village and payment of the revenue to the government.<sup>19</sup> The working and the business of such

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<sup>15</sup> B.S. Cohn, *Structural Change in the Indian Rural Society: 1596-1885*, Wisconsin University Press, 1969, p-101.

<sup>16</sup> W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, Heffer and sons, Cambridge, 1929, p-162.

<sup>17</sup> H.R. Nevill, *District Gazetteer of United Province of Agra and Oudh: Ghazipur*, vol -29, Allahabad, 1909, p-240.

<sup>18</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepoor District*, Vol-2, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, p- 92.

<sup>19</sup> W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, Heffer and sons, Cambridge, 1929, p-162.

villages was managed by headmen or managers. They were even responsible for the village expenses and at the same time perform judicial and police duties. They were responsible for annual settlement of the accounts within the *bhaichara*. The landlords as a body represented the village community with the state government.

Originally, the village communities enjoyed a great deal of autonomy in their internal affairs and any kind of outside interference in this matter was strongly resisted by the landlords or zamindars. The ruling states also did not interfere in the internal affairs of the village as long as the ruling lineage did not try to abrogate its revenue or military obligation

Use of force and power was a key factor to hold dominance in a brotherhood zamindari. And it is seen that over time individual families and clans rose to prominence and even fell but one thing that remained constant was that the dominant classes kept their grip strong on land and even owned and distributed stock, tools and seed of the cultivator.<sup>20</sup> For instance the Raghuvanshi Rajput of Dhobi *taluka* in Jaunpur held a cluster of around hundreds of villages. They were called Thakurs and their ancestor had conquered this region in the mid seventeenth century<sup>21</sup>. This clearly shows that despite of the change in the regime in this region the village zamindars undisrupted continued in their possession as earlier.

The amount of *sir* land owned and cultivated by the brotherhood varied in size from one area to another and from *pargana* to *pargana*. They were majorly cultivated with the aid of village servant and landless labours and hence most of these villages had bodies of *raiyyats* who were not considered a part of the brotherhood. Other than the dominant zamindari class, the village community can be broadly classified into four major group of people that were equally important and integral part of the village. The various groups that made up the village community were mutually dependent on each other despite of the fact that they might be politically, economically or socially superior or inferior from each other.

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<sup>20</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-40.

<sup>21</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, 'Some Notes on Law and Change in North India', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 8, University of Chicago Press, 1959, pp- 79-80.

The first in the category of such *raiya*s were termed as the *khudkasht*, *maurusi* or *chhapparband* which meant they were Resident cultivators.<sup>22</sup> The fields they cultivated were known and marked they paid a fixed rent. They could not be removed from possession unless they fail to pay the revenue. Their caste varied from village to village. They belonged to the Rajputs, Bhumihaar and Brahmins caste but *khudkasht* tenants also belonged to the traditional cultivating and herding castes such as Koeri, Kurmi and Ahir, who in the past were brought as occupancy tenants to cultivate waste land. In some there were only one or two castes but not more than three. The zamindars and Resident cultivators often stood in solidarity against the external agents and in defense of their village. But internally things were not as they seemed, there were some kind of resistance between the two groups.

The next categories of tenants were *paikasht* or *pahi-kasht raiya*s. According to H.H. Wilson they were basically migratory or non-Resident tenants. They were completely in contrast to the *khudkasht*. Resident cultivators or the *chhapparband raiya*s paid their state revenue, cesses and zamindari dues at usual rates to the village managers while on the other hand *paikasht* were tenants who cultivated lands in a village to which they did not belong by birth or hereditary claims and held these lands either for a stipulated term or at the pleasure of some of the members of the superior proprietary body. The village zamindars in order to cultivate more and more land hired tenants from his village but when he failed to find peasant in his own village often leased out the land to the *raiya*s of the neighbouring villages. Non-Resident cultivators were ready available in the areas where the land was limited or the rate of revenue was comparatively higher thus they were forced to migrate to other villages in need of better opportunities. They were considered outsiders so they did not enjoy the same protection and stability of possession as the *raiya*s who were the members of the village community. *Paikasht* did not belong to the land owning castes like the Rajputs, Bhumihaars and Brahmins rather they were Koyaris and Kachis, the most valuable class among the non-proprietary cultivators and one of the most patient, honest, skilful, and industrious caste. They mainly grew cash crops like vegetables, poppy (opium) and were in constant search of better land so that they could yield a

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<sup>22</sup> B.S. Cohn, *Structural Change in the Indian Rural Society: 1596-1885*, Wisconsin University Press, 1969, p-105.

high produce and reap maximum profits.<sup>23</sup> In the Banaras province they were the great wealth-producers and even then paid rent of rupees 40,000 per annum in a single *pargana*.<sup>24</sup>

Landless labourers formed the third category of *raiyyats* in the village community of Banaras zamindari. The zamindars had complete control on these landless labours. And they were entirely dependent on the high caste cultivators and zamindars of the village. In the Banaras region the Chamar castes who were basically leather workers<sup>25</sup> also worked as farm servants of the higher proprietary classes. They tilled the soil and acted as labourers and village drudges. They served as ploughmen of the Brahmins and Rajput zamindars as these superior castes considered it derogatory to touch the plough.<sup>26</sup> This agricultural exclusiveness was strictly observed by the people of the rich Banaras province. These lower castes were ready to do any service suited to their capacity which the village proprietor required. They were hired to do all sorts of rough out-of-door work and received meager wages of two rupees a month, and about 4.5 kilograms weight of grain for each plough at the time of the spring and autumn harvest and sometime received gifts and clothes on special occasion like wedding etc.<sup>27</sup>

The landless labour or the semi-servile classes were bond to work under the same masters who had prior claims on their labours and were not allowed to change their overlords though they were permitted to work in the fields of other men and other activities in their spare time only. These classes of landless labours were lowest on the social scale and were economically weak and hence often became of agricultural slaves for the well off zamindars. Oldham while reviewing the grim state of oppression and slavery commented that on occasions Jonathan Duncan, the Resident of Banaras also recognized and enforced slavery.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Koeris and Kachis were principal growers of poppy and producers of opium in the Banaras region. M. A. Sherring., *Hindu Tribes and Castes, as Represented in Banaras*, Trubner and co., Calcutta, 1872, pp-324-327.

<sup>24</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepoor District*, Vol-2, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, p- 105.

<sup>25</sup> M. A. Sherring., *Hindu Tribes and Castes, as Represented in Banaras*, Trubner and co., Calcutta, 1872, p- 391.

<sup>26</sup> C. Raikes, *Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India*, London, p-137.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p-141.

<sup>28</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepoor District*, Vol-II, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, pp- 105-106.

On a still lower level than the cultivating classes and landless labours were village servants. They provided specialized goods and services to the village community. Their number varied from village to village. village servants belonged to the lower caste and some of them were Lohar (blacksmith), Kumhar (potter), Chamar (leather workers) and Gorait (watchmen), these castes were found in every village of the Banaras zamindari and there were some others like the Kahar (palanquin bearer), Mali (gardener), Dhobi (washer men) who were present in some of the villages but not in all of them. These castes often migrated from one village to another.

These servants were often employed in the fields of the higher caste zamindars and cultivators at the time of harvesting for which they received large handful of corn and about ten pounds weight of the grain for each plough in the village when housed.<sup>29</sup> Their claims were sometimes met in cash but more usually in produce and apart from the seasonal or the annual dues. Some of these village servants were allowed to cultivate small portions of the village land for their personal use and hence they were allowed to retain the entire produce from themselves.<sup>30</sup> And on special occasions like weddings and festivals they even received small gifts though it completely on the will and status of their employer.

## CASTE BIFURCATION OF THE LANDED ELITES

The kingdom of Banaras was formed with the amalgamation of the Mughal *sarkars* of Ghazipur, Banaras, Mirzapur and Jaunpur. On closely studying the revenue statistics in the *Ain-i-Akbari* of this region we get a picture of the zamindars that controlled the land in all of these four districts.

The Rajputs were the chief landholders in Jaunpur followed by the Brahmin-Rajputs. While in Banaras and Ghazipur they were outnumbered by Brahmins which also included Bhumihars, a sub-sect of Brahmins who had renounced their priestly duties and adopted agriculture as their main occupation.<sup>31</sup> Bhumihars were basically castes belonging to western Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh (modern name). The Rajas of Banaras belonged to the Gautam sub-caste of Bhumihars. But collectively in all the

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<sup>29</sup> C. Raikes, Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India, London, p-141.

<sup>30</sup> W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, Heffer and sons, Cambridge, 1929, p-160-161.

<sup>31</sup> W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of Northern Western Province and Oudh*, vol-2, Calcutta, 1896, pp-64-70.

districts, the Rajputs were the chief landholders. They controlled approximately forty seven percent of the total land and fifty percent of land revenue. And the Brahmins and Bhumihars held control over thirty percent of the total zamindari. While it must be noted that Muslims held only three percent of the total land that to in and around the district of Jaunpur which was the capital of Muslim Jaunpur kingdom, they were presumably absent in Banaras and Ghazipur.

The big zamindars in the eighteenth century maintained a standing army both cavalry and infantry. This was done so to control and safeguard their zamindari rights. But mostly the zamindars established their dominance on their subjects with the help of their clansmen and armed retainers that were called in the hour of need.

Revenue farming was the most common method of revenue collection in the eighteenth century. The revenue farmers or the *amils* were responsible for collecting the revenue of the contracted area and remitting it to the Raja who sent it the *Nawab* of Awadh and later to the British. By dissolving the old landed intermediaries Raja of Banaras brought their territories under his direct administration. There was no intermediary left between the cultivators and the state and the revenue was collected by the *amils* appointed by the Raja. Raja rented the territory to the *amils* on fixed yearly revenue.

Regarding the grant of revenue farms to the *amils*, Fisher and Hewett mention that, “it had been the custom for *amils* to make annual offers for each pargana; and the settlement of each pargana was thus regulated by competition”.<sup>32</sup> The revenue farms were granted to the *amils* through bidding annually and thus their continuation in the office in the subsequent years depended on the punctuality of their payment and their relationship with the Raja and his *diwan* or manager.

The implementation of *amildari* system in Banaras brought the *amils* to the centre stage of revenue administration whereas the role of the old intermediaries was curtailed. The *amils* who were appointed by the Raja appeared to have been leading men of their localities, relations and close associates or the descendants of some old

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<sup>32</sup> Fisher and Hewett, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of North Western Provinces of India*, Vol. XIV, Part 1-Banaras, p-72.

Muslim families.<sup>33</sup> In 1786-87 A.D., of the total number of *amils* responsible for collection of revenue, the number of *amils* of the clan members of Raja i.e. Bhumihar and the Rajputs was fifteen out of total twenty eight. Only six Muslims were mentioned as functioning as *amils* during the same period. Rajput- Bhumihars were responsible for the collection of As. 20, 76,000 i.e. fifty four percent of the total revenue demands of the Banaras Raj.<sup>34</sup>

The *amildari* system ensured higher returns to the Raja while minimizing the administrative responsibilities. Raja was able to meet his increasing revenue obligations towards the *Nawab* of Awadh. At the time of his death Balwant Singh was not only able to enhance the boundaries of his empire but also revenue collections. By 1770 A.D., the revenue he was paying to the *Nawab* had increased to As 19, 46,664 and his annual income was said to be about As.25, 00,000 over and above his revenue obligations.<sup>35</sup> This shows that his collections from the zamindari were something around As. 45, 00,000 per annum.

In the eighteenth century the word zamindar was used for vivid categories intermediaries with stark differences among them. On one hand there were the Rajas of Banaras who were termed as zamindars and even a petty village proprietary was also termed as zamindar but both of these categories had vast differences in their status. The Rajas of Banaras were considered the rulers of Banaras much above the stature of a zamindar while their counterparts were mere tenants with little or no power at their disposal.

Most village communities in north India consist of a number of caste groups which played a very crucial role in countryside. Village communities have been organized according to the traditional socio-economic system of Hindu society. Each caste group has performed its assigned function and lived a harmonious life with the others by maintaining an attitude of mutual respect and by observing accepted social distance between castes. During the eighteenth in a village, the dominant caste controlled all castes beneath it. The outside government did not generally interfere

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<sup>33</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in transition:1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-20.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p-21.

<sup>35</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepeer District*, Vol. II, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p-104.

with this relationship. Caste system was crucial factor in providing fixed labour reserve for agricultural production. The lower castes were provided with menial works and they could never aspire to rise above their status or have any sort of land holdings to their names. They were economically down trodden and often worked as bondage labours for the upper caste zamindars or the peasants. In the eighteenth century in the Banaras zamindari even the rate of interest varied in accordance to the caste hierarchy, the lower castes were charged with higher rate of interests.<sup>36</sup>

Thus we see that in Banaras all the four communities, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras of the village had their separate hierarchal status. The brotherhood or the zamindars stood on top of the hierarchy. The usually belonged to the upper caste of Hindus like Brahmins, Bhumihars and Rajput. These groups occupied the central position in the village and even their houses were conglomerated in the center of the village. Disputes among members of the dominant caste within the little kingdom, could ultimately be settled by a formally constituted council. Then were the *khudkasht raiyats* who were often of the same caste as the zamindars. They stood right next to the zamindars in economic as well as the social status. While the landless labours and the village servants generally belong to the menial castes like Chamars, Pasis, Ahirs, Kachis, Koyaris, and Kurmis and made up a large percentage of the population. They resided on small plots of land on the fringes of their village or in the scattered hamlets. In the Banaras region agricultural dependence sometimes amounted to slavery in some areas. The best example of serfdom can be seen in the 1780s, where a class of ploughmen and labourers from the Agoribahar and Bijaygarh district called the Laks served as bondsmen and slaves. Lakis were a kind of hereditary personal servants for the landowning families of that area.<sup>37</sup>

Kachis and Koyaris were found scattered in the entire Banaras region but were found in large numbers in the Ghazipur and Banaras district. Similarly Kumbhi castes were never seen ploughing the field but performed all sorts of field work and were population was concentrated in the Chunar.<sup>38</sup> Kurmis along with Koris were the chief

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<sup>36</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-407.

<sup>37</sup> G. N. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs: Selection from English Records, 1788-1810*, vol-1, Government Central Record Office, Allahabad, 1955, p-212.

<sup>38</sup> M. A. Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes, as Represented in Banaras*, Trubner and co., Calcutta, 1872, pp- 323-325.



cultivating castes in Mirzapur.<sup>39</sup> Ahirs were a tribe of herdsmen engaged in cattle rearing and in Banaras and its vicinities Ahirs belonging to Gwalbans and Dharor clan were in majority.<sup>40</sup>

While Muslim landowner and proprietors were less in numbers in the entire Banaras zamindari<sup>41</sup> they were mostly confined to the district of Jaunpur and Ghazipur. Muslim zamindars of Jaunpur were generally, Sheikhs and Pathans, who considered themselves as descendents of great antiquity. But they were considered inferior among the landowning tribes.<sup>42</sup> There is no mention of Muslims engaged in agriculture in the entire Banaras region. Therefore we can say the number would have been very small. Except for few the Muslim population in the Banaras zamindari was comparatively poor. And other than this there were inferior classes like the Julahas, Dhunias and Churihars. Dhunas or Dhunias were cotton-carders who mostly belonged to Jaunpur and Banaras.<sup>43</sup> Julahas were weavers by profession and were engaged in village handlooms. Jhulas comprised of approximately twenty five percent of the total Muslim population of Jaunpur.<sup>44</sup> After the decline of cotton industry of Banaras, majority of the Jhulas migrated to Calcutta and the rest who were left behind became agriculturalist.<sup>45</sup>

## STRUCTURE OF THE VILLAGE SOCIETY

Other than the above mentioned groups of the village community most of the villages in this region also had village officials who were responsible for the smooth working of the villages. The village often had a *muqaddam* or the village headman, a *patwari* or the accountant, a priest or Pandit and a village Banias or a merchant.

The village headmen often referred to as the *muqaddam* was the sole official other than the *patwari* in the village. They belonged to the affluent class of peasants and

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<sup>39</sup> H. R. Nevill, *District Gazetteer of United Province of Agra and Oudh: Mirzapur*, vol -29, Allahabad, 1909, p-148.

<sup>40</sup> M. A. Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes, as Represented in Banaras*, Trubner and co., Calcutta, 1872, p- 332.

<sup>41</sup> H.R. Nevill, *District Gazetteer of United Province of Agra and Oudh: Mirzapur*, vol -29, Allahabad, 1909, p-129.

<sup>42</sup> H.R. Nevill, *District Gazetteer of United Province of Agra and Oudh; Jaunpur*, Allahabad, p-86.

<sup>43</sup> H.R. Nevill, *District Gazetteer of United Province of Agra and Oudh : Mirzapur*, vol -29, Allahabad, 1909, p-345

<sup>44</sup> H.R. Nevill, *District Gazetteer of United Province of Agra and Oudh: Jaunpur*, Allahabad, p-85.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p-85.

zamindar and established dominance over the weaker sections of the village community. The position of the headman was not only hereditary but could also be sold and purchased. The *muqaddam* were typically not considered government servants but could be evicted from their office by the revenue authorities if they failed to fulfill his obligations. And his main duty was the collection of revenue share from peasants and payment of entire revenue that was assessed on the village for that particular time and for this service he was assigned a revenue free land or paid in cash by deducting his share from the revenue collected by him.<sup>46</sup>

It was seen that the *bhaichara* villages that had become weak or the villages were the brotherhoods did not exist in those villages they played a very significant role. Their position was not purely financial he was held accountable for robbery in the vicinity of his village. The village headmen had the authority to allot uncultivated and waste lands of the village to individuals but could not interfere with the lands that were already occupied.<sup>47</sup> The village headmen though were affluent peasants but they often rose to the status of a zamindar.

Unlike the *muqaddam*, the *patwaris* or the accountants were government officials. They were entrusted with the work of maintaining accounts of income and expenditure of the village. He was also responsible for maintaining records of land cultivated by each household in the village, the nature of crops grown and harvested and the amount of revenue that needs to be paid to the government.<sup>48</sup> He was entrusted with the duty to maintain village account and also verify them in the supervision of the *muqaddam* and then present it timely before the government. The office of the *patwari* is an old one and finds its mention in the administrative measures of Alauddin Khilji and even in Akbar's.<sup>49</sup> The nomenclature of the word *patwari* comes from the word "*patta*" which meant document stating the revenue demands assessed upon a village or individual cultivators. His office was to hereditary but was often held by one family and in the case of vacancy the fittest member of the

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<sup>46</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, vol-2, tr. H. S. Jarrett, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1891, p-45.

<sup>47</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India: 1556-1707*, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1963, p-131.

<sup>48</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain I Akbari*, vol-2, tr. H. S. Jarrett, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1891, pp-45-47.

<sup>49</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India: 1556-1707*, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1963, p-134.

family was employed to the office.<sup>50</sup> The accountants generally worked in collaboration of the village headman.

Mostly all the villages in the Banaras zamindari had a village moneylender. They were also known by different names like Mahajans, Banias, and Sahukars etc. The main function of the village Bania was to lend money on interest to the natives of the rural society. The village Banias were often petty shopkeepers and purchasers of rural products.<sup>51</sup> They sold goods on credit and lend money in small sums. There was a considerable gap in the status and wealth of the village Bania and his counterparts. Unlike the merchant of small towns and big *sahukars* of the cities, the Bania community in the village was not that well off<sup>52</sup> and their capital was comparatively small and not exceeding beyond few thousands. They generally belonged to the lower castes of Vaishyas like the Teli, Halwai, and Kalwar etc.<sup>53</sup>

Then the villages even had village Mahajans who were much prosperous than the Banias. Their business was on a much wider scale. They generally belonged to the upper Vaishyas classes like Rastogis and Agrawals and sometime even to lower castes such as the Telis and Chamars.<sup>54</sup> The business of both the Bania and Mahajans was entirely based in the countryside and their clients were the villagers. They both dealt in agricultural produce.

With the decline of Delhi and Agra in the eighteenth century agriculture also faced a widespread decline but from 1738 A.D. onwards Banaras and the adjoining region fared much better due to the security and stability provided by the Rajas of Banaras. This stability attracted various traders, merchants, peasants, artisan and labourers to the Banaras zamindari. And to top it all being one of the most fertile areas saw a great influx of migrant population in the seventeenth and eighteenth century which resulted in clearing of forest to sustain these people and expansion of more and more arable land. According to Sinha cultivated acreage in the Banaras zamindari had

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<sup>50</sup> K. P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-79.

<sup>51</sup> C. L. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, Macmillan and co, London, 1929, p-45.

<sup>52</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-32.

<sup>53</sup> *Report of the United Provinces Provisional Banking Enquiry Committee: 1929-30*, vol-1, Calcutta, 1930, p-47.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p-49.

increased to around five to sevenfold between the periods of 1589 to 1720 A.D.<sup>55</sup> Land had been the chief source of income for the government and the principal means of livelihood for the rural community. The interest of both, the state and peasant seems to be identical as both strived on increasing the agriculture. One derived its share of income from the surplus produce and other derived its livelihood.

## THE LANDED ELITE AND THE EMERGENCE OF BANARAS RAJ: CONSOLIDATION OF POWER

The need for money to meet massive expenditures on military and warfare by the government and its incapability to supervise the revenue collection led to the decline in revenue which further accelerated the growth of the zamindars who now turned into revenue farmers trying to extract as much as possible from the peasants, employing force if and when the need be. This revenue farming led to the growth of virtually independent and semi independent principalities under the provincial governors and local chiefs. One such example was the emergence the state of Awadh in the north India under Saadat Khan who was the *wazir* under the Mughal regime. He along with his successors became the de facto rulers of Awadh and turned the *suba* into his personal fief and employed various chiefs, zamindars and Rajas for the collection of the revenue. The Rajas of Banaras were such zamindars who were employed by the Awadh *Nawabs* to remit the revenue of Banaras and administer it and its adjoining areas on their behalf. Mansaram turned his zamindari rights in the Banaras region into a small kingdom which was later inherited by his son Balwant Singh and his successors. Though both the levels viz the *Nawab* and Rajas of Banaras ruled their region but still acknowledged the authority of the Mughal Emperor. They paid a lump sum amount of the revenue collected from the cultivator and primary zamindars.

Balwant Singh was granted zamindari of Banaras by the *Nawab* of Awadh in 1738 A.D. followed by his son Chait Singh in 1770 A.D. The main responsibility of the Rajas of Banaras was revenue collection and its remittance to the *Nawab* and later to the English East India Company. Both the Rajas tried to consolidate their powers and launched various campaigns against their neighbouring Rajas, zamindars and local

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<sup>55</sup> Surendra Nath Sinha, *Subah of Allahabad under the Mughal Mughals: 1580-1707*, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, 1974, pp- 145-149.

chiefs thus displacing the landed elites and replacing them with new class of land holders. The territories of the old Rajas, zamindars and *talukdars* were annexed to the territories of the Rajas of Banaras and revenue was collected by the trusted officials of the Rajas. They appointed their friends and relatives as *amils* and tax collector thus displacing the years old zamindars class. Hence, we see that the main feature of the revenue policy of the Rajas of Banaras was the removal of existing revenue intermediaries and zamindars and the establishment of direct contact with the cultivators through the *amils* appointed by them.

Mansaram gained the *Nawab* of Awadh's trust and dislodged his master, Rustam Ali and took control over the entire Banaras region thus becoming the de facto ruler of this region. After his death his son Balwant Singh inherited the seat of Banaras. In the initial years of his rule, Balwant Singh's main focus was to consolidate his internal strength and hence he peacefully administered his province and timely remitted the revenue to the *Nawab*. When Balwant Singh took over the control of the Banaras there were various Rajadom, *zamindaris*, *talukdaris* and *jagir* holders throughout the Banaras zamindari. Prior to the advent of Banaras Raj they used to pay a lump sum amount as land revenue either through the jagirdars and zamindars or directly to the *Nawab*. Mansaram and his son Balwant Singh realized that to establish them firmly in the region and to ensure regular revenue collections, they needed to curb the powers of these numerous intermediaries so that they would pay the revenue directly to the Banaras Raja instead to the *Nawab* of Awadh. In order to achieve this they first of all erected a fort in Gangapur and recruited a large number of retainers in their service. The absence of the Safdar Jung from Awadh provided Balwant Singh with a lucrative opportunity to dispose off his contemporaries from his jurisdiction as well as from the adjoining areas. Under the administration of the Rajas of Banaras, particularly Balwant Singh and Chait Singh, no effort had been spared to breakdown all the intermediary tenures and to reduce all those with any form of proprietary interests in the land to the position of cultivators.<sup>56</sup>

As we have seen in the earlier chapter there were many zamindaris lying in the frontiers of Banaras which were brought under the direct control of the Rajas of Banaras especially by Balwant Singh's sheer dint of cunningness. The Rajas of

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<sup>56</sup> Fisher and Hewett, Statistical, *Descriptive and Historical Account of North Western Provinces of India*; Vol. XIV, Part. 1-Banaras, p-71.

Banaras had pushed many intermediaries in the background and brought their territories under their direct control like the Monas Rajput chief of Bhadohi, Muslim zamindars of *parganas* Bhagwat and Ahraura, Chandel Rajput zamindars of *pargana* Bijaygarh, zamindar of *Pargana* Kera Mangraur and etc.

The Mona Rajputs of Bhadohi in the Allahabad district were the first ones to become the prey of the expansionist policy of Balwant Singh. The fortress of Bhadohi was under the control of Awadh *Nawab*'s officials, Balwant Singh waited for the apt time and captured the fortress when the *Nawab* Safdar Jung was absent from Awadh and was busy with the Rohilas of Bundelkhand and Farrukhabad.<sup>57</sup> He had bribed the officials thus weakening the Mona Rajput.<sup>58</sup> He further captured the *sarkar* of Ghazipur after expelling Fazl Ali, the *amil*, and annexed the twenty *parganas* of this *sarkar* into his territories. He dispossessed the existing zamindars and *taludars* of different *parganas* of Ghazipur chief among them were Raja Bhoabal Deo, the Hyobans, Rajput Raja of *pargana* Ballia, Baboo Durbijay Singh, Ujjaini Rajput chief and zamindar of *pargana* Chaunsah. Then Balwant Singh shifted his attention towards the zamindaris lying south of Banaras and Mirzapur, where the Kaimur hills, ravines and the son river formed the natural frontiers. He captured the Latifpur fort in 1752 A.D. and Bijaygarh in 1754 A.D. thus disposing of the Chandel Rajas.<sup>59</sup>

In the year 1755 A.D. Balwant Singh suppressed all the big zamindaris in the *sarkar* of Jaunpur. He further annexed the territories of Gaharwal Rajas of Kuntit in the Allahabad *suba*, the Muslim *faujdar* of Khera-mangror. Balwant Singh procured the possession of the forts of Patita and Ahrava.<sup>60</sup>

Thus it is evident that Balwant Singh followed a vigorous policy of expansion and consolidation of his empire by capturing the territories and dispossessing large number of Hindu and Muslim chiefs alike from their forts and zamindaris. These dispossessed intermediaries collected the stipulated amount from the cultivators and primary zamindars for the government. They had been a very crucial part of the

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<sup>57</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepoor District*, Vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1870, p-100.

<sup>58</sup> Khairuddin Muhammad Khan, *Tuhfa-i-Tazah alias Balwantnamah*, tr. F.Cruven, Allahabad, 1875, pp-22-23.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, pp-32-34.

<sup>60</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepoor District*, Vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, p- 101.

Mughal as *Nawabi* regime. By doing so Balwant Singh extended the boundaries of his kingdom and was able to establish himself firmly in the Banaras region by following such an aggressive expansionist policy. This policy was so ruthlessly employed by Balwant Singh and later by his son Chait Singh that half of the zamindars in possession of land and title in and around Banaras were disposed of and it was hard to find zamindars who managed to preserve their zamindari and proprietary rights. Wilton Oldham states that, “every one of the *pargana* zamindars and a large number of the village proprietors, were ejected by Balwant Singh from their estates”.<sup>61</sup>

The only classes of zamindars who could protect their zamindari rights and could stand strong in front of Balwant Singh’s plans were the Sengar Rajputs of Lukhnesar in Ballia and the Bisen and Bais Rajputs of Badlapur and Singaramau in Jaunpur. Despite of the past successes and efforts, Balwant Singh was unable to expel the most troublesome Sengar Rajput zamindars of Lukhnesar *pargana*. They refused to pay the revenue because of which the Raja marched against them. However he was not able to defeat them and came into an agreement. According to which their zamindari was left in their possession and the annual revenue was fixed at a very low rate.<sup>62</sup> This incident did not deter the Rajas of Banaras from their campaigns which continued effortlessly. Later in the year 1788 A.D., when John Neave was deputed as the Assistant to the Resident of Banaras, to make a settlement of Jaunpur reported to Jonathan Duncan that “there is not a single zamindar in the *pargana* who had proprietary rights”.<sup>63</sup>

In the eighteenth century, Banaras witnessed a power play between the Raja and the zamindars to obtain maximum benefit from the land. Balwant Singh was constantly striving hard to strike the opportunity. And the nature of his policy towards these intermediaries can easily be understood by the letter dated January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1790 A.D., of Raja Mahip Narayan to the Resident regarding the revenue administration and position of zamindars in Banaras and especially under Balwant Singh’s reign. He stated that,

“The plan of the settlement of the country was not in one way or mode. Whenever he knew it proper to receive the *malgoozaree* or revenue from the hands of the

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p-106.

<sup>62</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazee poor District*, Vol-1, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1876, p-103.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p-106.

zamindars, he did so, and whenever he knew the zamindars to be wicked desolators, and such men as the revenue would not be effected by, he then made the villages *kucha* (in revenue terminology *kacha* implied to a direct revenue assessment made with the *raiyat*)<sup>64</sup> and took the revenue”.<sup>65</sup>

## LAND CONTROL UNDER THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

Between the years 1738 A.D. and 1775 A.D., Balwant Singh and Chait Singh in his initial years had evicted a majority of zamindars and the landed elites and the zamindari rights and proprietary rights of others were severely curtailed. In doing so some of the zamindars were killed in the fight against the Rajas of Banaras, some of these zamindars were the Muslim zamindars of Latifpur, Raja Duswant Singh of Bhadohi etc.<sup>66</sup> D. B. Morrison, a British officer, commented in 1842 A.D. that,

‘Balwant Singh proceeded to great lengths in ousting the old zamindars and forcing them to give up tenures which they had from former government. So preserveringly this system was followed up, that it became dangerous for any one under his rule to be called a zamindar. The records of the offices of *qanungos* were destroyed and every means taken to render the substantiation of zamindars claims as difficult as possible’.<sup>67</sup>

This policy to wipe out intermediaries was so ruthlessly employed that it was hard to identify individuals who still held zamindari rights. During this period 2,531 out of total 5,735 zamindars were dispossessed from their zamindaris and only 3,204 zamindars were left in the possession of their zamindaris.<sup>68</sup> According to Duncan’s report, approximately one third of the landed elites were reduced to the position of a cultivator and some were forced to live a life in exile leaving behind their ancestral properties in other provinces.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> K. P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-50.

<sup>65</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazee poor District*, Vol. II, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, p-93.

<sup>66</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazee poor District*, Vol-I, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, pp- 99-102.

<sup>67</sup> B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist, Among the Historians and Other Essays*, p- 351.

<sup>68</sup> G.N. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs: Selection from English Records, 1788-1810*, vol-1, Government Central Record Office, Allahabad, p- 253.

<sup>69</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazee poor District*, Vol-I, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, p- 106.



When Jonathan Duncan was settling the affairs of Banaras and formulating new land revenue settlement in 1788 A.D., it was very difficult for him to trace any zamindars with whom settlements could be made. For instance in the *pargana* of Jalhoopoor he could find only two individuals who held zamindari rights.<sup>70</sup> However there were a numbers of these dispossessed zamindars and their descendants who came forward to claim for their zamindari rights but not all could be reinstated due to the company's policy. According to the English government, only those zamindars could be recognized as actual zamindars and their zamindari rights could be restored, who could show proofs such as a revenue receipt, a *patta* from previous tax officials, a sworn statement from a local leader of their area.<sup>71</sup> But, due to the lack of proper documentation only a few of these zamindars could be reinstated while others were granted money allowances or *jagirs*. While some of the zamindars rights were accepted by Hastings in lieu of their services provided to the East India Company during the expulsion of Chait Singh from the Banaras zamindari in 1781 A.D. One such zamindar who was restored was the Adil Shah, the descendent of Shambhu Shah of Agori- Bahar once ousted by Balwant Singh.

Prior to the period of Banaras Raj the land control simply involved individual or group of people responsible for payment of revenue to the ruler rather than the *jagir* holder. The zamindars could be replaced with other zamindars but their roles remained defined but the advent of Banaras zamindari in 1738 A.D., there were some structural changes that were brought about in the landed system of this zamindar. Mansaram was employed as amil or tax official by Rustam Ali and from there he and his successors rose to prominence first as superior zamindars or land controllers and then finally went on to become the Rajas of Banaras. The Banaras zamindari turned into a small kingdom popularly known as the Banaras Raj which in the later years engulfed majority of zamindaris lying in its vicinity, thus not remaining a small kingdom any more. Their Rajadom was recognized by the Mughal emperor, the *Nawab* of Awadh along with the East India Company. The Rajas of Banaras were not any ancient powerful Hindu overlords but were rather new chiefs who had risen to a

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<sup>70</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-52.

<sup>71</sup> B.S. Cohn, *Structural Change in the Indian Rural Society: 1596-1885*, Wisconsin University Press, 1969, p-63.

status of the largest revenue payers. From few hundred bighas of land in some village of Banaras they had erected a dynastic lineage for themselves.

However this could not last for a long time and with the signing of the treaty of Faizabad in 1775 A.D. between the Awadh *Nawab* and the East India Company, the state of Banaras was officially handed over to the English government. Chait Singh continued as the Raja of his kingdom though he had to pay two million rupees and the company with armed retainers when and where ever the need be. Though this arrangement came to stand still when Raja Chait Singh was expelled from the Banaras state by Warren Hastings. Mahip Narayan, a minor was deployed on the throne of Banaras and the zamindari rights were curtailed to a large extent.

The final blow came up with the appointment of Jonathan Duncan as the Resident of Banaras. He was given the task of running the revenue system of Banaras on behalf of the Raja of Banaras. Initially the Rajas sovereignty was not affected, but gradually the Resident curtailed the powers of the Raja of Banaras on the pretext of mismanagement. The East India Company encroached in political, administrative, fiscal, judicial aspects of the Banaras zamindari and with the permanent settlement of land revenue in 1795 A.D., the Rajas lost complete sovereignty over the region and was assigned a small tract to rule over called the 'Family dominion'. And Banaras became a part of Bengal presidency under the British control and later on became apart to north western province.

Balwant Singh was granted the zamindari of Banaras by the *Nawab* of Awadh in 1738 A.D. The main feature of the revenue policy of the Raja of Banaras was the removal of existing revenue intermediaries and zamindars and the establishment of direct contact with the cultivators through the *amils* appointed by him. This was a step taken by him to increase his revenue resources and to establish his sway over the countryside. In order to extend the cultivated land and increase the quality and quantity of produce, Balwant Singh laid down certain rules and regulations for the *amils* and revenue officials. The *amils* were required to collect revenue from the cultivators within the period of nine months from October to June and during the rainy seasons of three months the cultivators were not to be disturbed so that they

could completely focus on cultivation of their fields.<sup>72</sup> They were required to pay the revenue in nine monthly installments into the Rajas treasury. And the burden revenue payment of the cultivators was evenly divided between two harvests. They had to pay half of the revenue at the time of *rabi* or spring harvest and rest of the half at the time of *kharif* or autumn harvest. The enforcement of these laws by Balwant Singh ensured that the *amils* were dissuaded from exploiting his *raiyats* and this also kept a check on their interference.

While the revenue policy of Balwant Singh was less strictly followed under Chait Singh's rule and still the functioning was upright and in a flourishing state. But within few years of his expulsion in 1781 A.D. from the zamindari, the regulations were completely disregarded. And only within six years of his flight the state of Banaras was in complete mess and decay. Mahip Narayan could not manage the affairs of the zamindari and the condition was quite alarming. The English demand for increased revenue was one of the main factors that contributed towards the complete breakdown of revenue administration. The demand increased from two and a quarter million to four million rupees, which forced the Raja to press the *amils* for the revenue and they further exploited the cultivators and peasants.

Balances of revenue were allowed to run on from one year to another. The villagers, still busy ploughing or sowing their fields, were harassed by demands for last year's rent. In many cases the *amils* were changed at the beginning of the rainy season, and while the subordinates of the new *amils* were busy extorting the revenue demands of the previous years from the *raiyats*.<sup>73</sup> The *amil* in the Banaras zamindari found it very difficult to fulfill their revenue obligations due increased the revenue demand. Their profit margins were also seriously hampered which led to the irregularity of payments. The nine monthly installment system of Balwant Singh was thrown out of the window and the *amils* along with his agents were regularly pressing the villagers

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<sup>72</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazee poor District*, Vol-II, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, p-94.

<sup>73</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazee poor District*, Vol-II, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, pp-94-95.

for payment of dues. Other than this, there was an increase in number of cesses or *abwabs* levied by the revenue officials.<sup>74</sup>

The result of this change in the system of administration soon became apparent. Year after year the extent of fallow land increased and cultivation fell into disrepair. When Jonathan Duncan was appointed as the Resident of Banaras, he was shocked to see the state of decline of cultivation and revenue administration. The raiyats were in terrible state and there were large tracts of cultivated land lying fallow. He even noticed that there were many parganas like Ghazipur which were once in a flourishing state, lay in distress. The cultivator had abandoned their fields because of the forced revenue demands.

The state affairs of Banaras zamindari were in a sorry state after Chait Singh's exit from Banaras. There were even several instances of violence recorded that showed that the *amils* and his agents tortured and beat up cultivators who were defaulters. In September, 1790 A.D., a nephew of Thakur Oomrao Singh, father-in-law of Raja Chait Singh, tied a *ryot*, who owed him rent, head downwards from a camel saddle, and then urged the animal to full speed. The *ryot* was killed in a few moments by the kicks of the camel.<sup>75</sup>

The Resident asked the *qanungos* to furnish the details of land, different crops sown in the area, waste land, and revenue of the area, mode of payment and rates of revenue for the last ten years and the measurement prevalent in their area. On the basis of these records for the past ten years Duncan scrutinized the revenue management of the zamindari. And a new settlement was made. According to the new regulations the various kinds of *pattas* or documents which were issued by the *amils* to the *raiya*ts were to be stopped and a uniform *pattas* were to be issued throughout the zamindari. Duncan drafted this new *patta* and sent it to the Raja for forwarding it to *amils* for delivering it to the *raiya*ts. The said *patta* had to specify the measuring rod, its length, the length of the *bighaa*, mode of payment and rates of revenue. The system of *Agori Batai*, which refers to the actual division of harvested crop between the *amils* and the

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<sup>74</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-84.

<sup>75</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazee-poor District*, Vol-II, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, p-99.

cultivator on the threshing field, was abolished.<sup>76</sup> This system required a large body of officials to keep a watch on the crop so that the misappropriation could be prevented. In its place a new system was placed which required only a few officials. Accordingly the *batai* rent was to be “ascertained by *Kankoot* or computation was made in front of the *qanungos*”.<sup>77</sup> All the illegal exactions and cesses those were introduced after the expulsion of Chait Singh were to be abolished<sup>78</sup> and Duncan further ordered that all the *pattas* issued should be uniform for every cultivator and the rates of that year should be fixed on the basis for current settlement.<sup>79</sup>

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1788 Duncan took upon himself the responsibility of the collection of revenues and Mahip Narayan became virtually a non entity in the revenue administration of the zamindari.<sup>80</sup> Under the new system the *amils* were strictly ordered not to extract more than the stipulated rent as declared in the *patta*. To avoid the imposition of illegal exactions on the cultivators the Resident took engagements from the *amils* and *qanungos*, “Restraining them from extracting, collecting or accepting any sum of money, or other valuable considerations, over and above what is in the settlement”. Such *amils* who were found to be collecting or imposing such illegal taxes in any form were to be fined thrice the amount so collected.<sup>81</sup>

Thus the biggest change that the Banaras zamindari witnessed after the English Company’s control over Banaras was that the role of the Raja and Indian administrator was limited. And they were suppressed and their territorial boundaries shrank. The settlement of 1795 A.D. re-organized the administrative and political structure of the Banaras zamindari. These changes also affected all the spheres of the Banaras zamindari, whether it be the landed control, the society or the economy which we will study in the following chapters.

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<sup>76</sup> A. Shakespear, *Selection from Duncans records*, vol-1, Banaras, 1873, p-2.

<sup>77</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazeepoor District*, Vol-II, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, pp-98.

<sup>78</sup> A. Shakespear, *Selection from Duncans Records*, vol-1, Banaras, 1873, p-2.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p-1.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p-3.

**CHAPTER-5**  
**TRADE AND COMMERCE IN BANARAS**

## INTRODUCTION:

The study of trade and commerce in a region involves various commercial aspects like a well-developed credit and financing system, transportation, communication, weights and measures, coinage, merchant groups, production system, interregional trade, and foremost political stability which were well-developed in the Banaras region and these all contributed in making Banaras and its adjoining region into a great entre-port city in northern India. G. W. Forrest shows that Banaras had always been a great centre of religion and commerce throughout its history of innumerable centuries. The trade and commerce of Banaras were in a flourishing stage in the eighteenth century despite the turmoil and chaos that was prevalent in the northern plains due to the collapse of the Mughal Empire. The political situation did not have any negative impact on the growth of Banaras and the adjoining cities of Jaunpur, Ghazipur, and Mirzapur due to many reasons but the foremost and the most crucial factor may be the political stability provided by the ruling dynasty of Banaras and even the security provided by the *Nawabi* regime of Awadh. These cities witnessed heavy commercial activities. Whereas on the other hand their counterpart cities like Agra, Sirhind, Delhi, Mathura and Murshidabad had lost their glory and were striving to gain some momentum.

The geographical location of Banaras boosted its economy and it became an important commercial and urban centre. It had efficient trade networks with the cities like Lucknow, Agra, Allahabad, Patna, and Bengal. It also had a well-connected network of roads and riverine routes, which played a vital role in strengthening the economy of Banaras zamindari. The river Ganges was navigable throughout the year and transported tones of merchandise to the cities of Bengal and Allahabad from where it was further transported. On referring to Major James Rennell's work it indicates that great part of trade carried on between Bihar and Bengal in the east and the Deccan, western India and to the Mughal heartland of Agra and Delhi to the west passed through the Banaras region.<sup>1</sup> According to C.A. Bayly, Banaras was the one of the fastest growing cities during 1750-90 A.D. and it became the subcontinent's inland commercial capital and a banking hub after the decline of Murshidabad<sup>2</sup> and the

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<sup>1</sup> James Rennell, *Description of the roads in Bengal and Bahar*, London, 1778, pp- 8-10.

<sup>2</sup>C.A., Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p- 104.

decline of the house of Jagat Seths in Bengal in 1757 A.D. Banaras in the eighteenth century emerged as an important centre of trade, commerce, and banking. Being situated in a convenient position for regional trade, enjoying high agricultural productivity and stable polity, the cities in the region not only produced large quantities of exportable goods but also attracted volumes of merchandise from distant places either for consumption or for re-exportation. The growth can also be determined from the fact that because of its religious nature Banaras had developed into an economic centre and it attracted large numbers of pilgrims, merchants, and traders from all over India which strengthened the existing commercial networks. Though Banaras was a major agricultural region, self-sufficiency in food grains and the availability of raw material in abundance was crucial factor in the rise and growth of the manufacturing sector, thus attaining a greater degree of commercialization.

## TRADE ROUTES

The geographical focus of this study is on the present-day eastern Uttar Pradesh more specifically the Banaras region comprising the adjoining areas of Banaras, Mirzapur, Jaunpur, Chunar and Ghazipur since its political eminence could hardly rival the other more important regions in India, its survival and growth may largely be seen to be because of its trade and commerce. Thus, it would be perhaps better to view Banaras in the light of a commercial entre port and hence transportation and communication became a vital part of the economic growth.

Trade routes occupy an important place in the political, economic and social development of a country and it is a pre-requisite for the flourishing of the trade network of a region. From the earliest times, trade routes have determined the course of progress and prosperity and have broken the isolation of regional economies. And these trade routes have played a vital role in strengthening the economy. Well-maintained roads and river routes link various parts of the country with one another, which facilitates domestic trade and swift movement across the country. Subhash Parihar in his book *Land transportation in Mughal India* said that,

“Humans have been social animals who have travelled from place to place in search of food and pastures. And these tracks of migrations have developed into permanent



trade routes. Along these routes rulers and their armies travelled for campaigns while merchants and traders travelled to earn profits”.<sup>3</sup>

Being situated in the heart of the Gangetic plain, it was this land and river transport that transported the principal articles of merchandise to and fro from Banaras and different parts of the country and enabled it to attain prosperity during the eighteenth century. And also because of its religious nature Banaras had developed into an economic centre and had efficient trade networks with the cities like Delhi, Agra, Allahabad, Lucknow, Patna and also with the cities of Bengal like Murshidabad, Hugli, Calcutta, and many more. It had a well-connected network of roads and riverine routes, which played a vital role in uplifting the economy of Banaras. And due to their strategic position, these towns had a constant inflow of merchants and traders both by land and waterways, and hence their geographical location contributed to their growth and prosperity. The central position of Banaras was accentuated by its strategic situation between the eminent cities of the rich doab on the west and the bounteous Bengal which apart from other trading advantages possessed a convenient sea outlet. The immediate hinterland of Banaras too greatly supported its trade.

The Banaras region, with its three principal towns Ghazipur, Banaras and Mirzapur enjoyed excellent road communication. Especially during the dry season when it would be difficult to navigate rivers and even for transportation of heavy goods Banaras had developed a road system that linked it to other parts of the Indian subcontinent. The famous Grand Trunk road passed through Banaras thus connecting it to the old Afghan (Sasaram) and Mughal capitals (Delhi and Agra).<sup>4</sup> The *Chahar Gulshan* written in Persian by Rai Chatarman Kayath in 1759 A.D. mentions two other major roads to Banaras, one fanning out from Delhi to Patna via Muradabad and Banaras<sup>5</sup> and the other from Agra to Banaras via Allahabad.<sup>6</sup>

According to Oldham there were three main routes between Banaras and Calcutta in the late eighteenth century. The first was the grand trunk road from Banaras to Calcutta via Mughal Sarai, Sasaram, Barddhaman, and Hugli. The second was the

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<sup>3</sup> Subhash Parihar, *Land Transportation in Mughal India*, Aryan books international, New Delhi, 2008, p-3.

<sup>4</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-108

<sup>5</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *Khulasat and Chahar Gulshan: India of Aurangzeb*, 1901, p-108.

<sup>6</sup>Jadunath Sarkar, *Khulasat and Chahar Gulshan: India of Aurangzeb*, 1901, p-110.

Mughal route via Mughal Sarai, Sasaram, Patna, Munger, Rajmahal, Murshidabad, and Hugli. While the third was called 'the new military road', established around 1781 to facilitate the Company's military operations and to have a more direct line of communication with the mid-Ganga plain via Mughal Sarai, Sasaram, Aurangabad, Hazaribagh, Bankura. And it was used until 1830 A.D. and then abandoned.<sup>7</sup>

Until the mid-eighteenth century, the Grand Trunk Road remained the major axis of transit but with the decline of the Mughal Empire, the route between Delhi and Mughal Bengal was replicated with the new route between Lucknow and Calcutta via Banaras and Patna.<sup>8</sup> But the movement through the Grand Trunk Road was still followed by the troops of the company.<sup>9</sup> There were several reasons for the emergence of this new highway between Lucknow and Banaras. First of all, it was the security provided by the strong rulers of Awadh. Secondly, the traffic of trade had shifted to the cities of Awadh after the decline of Delhi and Agra. The road from Delhi via Bareilly, Lucknow, Jaunpur and Banaras to Patna, Murshidabad and Hugli was used for transportation of the treasury from Bengal to Agra and Delhi to avoid the Afghan infested Rohilkhand areas since 1730s.<sup>10</sup> Hence the road connecting Banaras and Lucknow was kept in good condition and was repaired from time to time and avenue of trees were planted on both sides of the roads to relieve the travelers and merchants from extreme heat and to provide them with shelter and even 'pucca' tanks were constructed by rich Hindus to provide drinking water to the travelers on frequent intervals.<sup>11</sup> Then there was this same road from Banaras to Lucknow which extended towards Agra in the west via Faizabad and Kannauj. According to Deloche road markers were installed on this route.<sup>12</sup>

Other than the land routes waterway formed an integral of the communication network of this region. In the view of Jean Deloche, the waterways on the Indian subcontinent had assumed and retained a position of uppermost importance until the

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<sup>7</sup> Jean Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion*, vol.-1, ed. James Walker, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-43-44.

<sup>8</sup> C.A., Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-67

<sup>9</sup> Jean Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion*, vol.-1, ed. James Walker, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-43.

<sup>10</sup> Alam, *The Crisis of the Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707- 48*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, p. 12- 14.

<sup>11</sup> A. L. Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-Daula: 1765-1775*, Lahore, 1945, Vol. II, p. 346.

<sup>12</sup> Jean Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion*, vol. I, ed. James Walker, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p-159

nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The Ganges and Jumna were recognized as the main highways for travel and trade. The rivers of the Gangetic plain like Ganga, Yamuna, Gomti, Ghaghara, Varna, and Asi, etc. linked Banaras with other Imperial capitals as well as provincial capitals, and commercial cities like Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Allahabad, Patna, and cities of Bengal, etc that were located on the banks of some or the other navigable rivers.

Delhi and Agra were situated on the bank of the river Yamuna, hence the river provided a constant network of transport. It connected Delhi and Agra to Allahabad and from here the river Ganges formed a link between Allahabad and Bengal via Banaras and Patna. River Ganges was navigable throughout the year and it linked up Banaras with cities like Murshidabad, Hugli, Calcutta, Decca, and Satgaon and transported tons of merchandise to and fro from these cities of Bengal. Whereas on the other hand Lucknow and Faizabad, which emerged as important cities in the eighteenth century were situated on the banks of river Gomati and river Ghaghara,<sup>14</sup> respectively. And both being tributaries of river Ganga, connected the capitals of Awadh with Banaras. River Gomati flowed into the Ganges near Banaras via Jaunpur, connecting the cities of Lucknow and Banaras. While Ghaghara connected Faizabad to Chapra and Chapra was connected to Banaras with the Gangetic network. According to Sheering, "Commerce had as many pilgrims as religion. All along the shores of the venerable stream lay great fleets of vessels laden with rich merchandize. From the looms of Banaras went forth the most delicate silks that adorned the balls of St. James's and of "Versailles and in the bazaars, the muslins of Bengal and the sabres of Oude were mingled with the jewels of Golconda and the shawls of Cashmere."<sup>15</sup> Whereas on the other hand, the Banaras region had four major towns viz Mirzapur, Ghazipur, Banaras and Jaunpur<sup>16</sup> among them Mirzapur, Ghazipur and Banaras stood on the bank of river Ganges and were navigable throughout the year, whereas Jaunpur was situated on the bank of Gomati, which flowed into the Ganges near Banaras. Hence we see that all the important cities of this region were well connected to each

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<sup>13</sup> Jean Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion*, vol. I, ed. James Walker, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-5.

<sup>14</sup> James Renell, *Memoirs of the Map of Hindostan or the Mogul's Empire*, London, p-6.

<sup>15</sup> M. A. Sheering, *The Sacred City of the Hindus: An Account of Banaras in Ancient and Modern Times*, Trubner and Co, London, 1868, p-10.

<sup>16</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-10.

other and even to other important cities outside the Banaras zamindari like Lucknow, Faizabad and etc.

However, land routes were not always safer and hence *faujdar* or *kotwal* were instructed to keep a constant vigil on the roads so that the caravans and other travelers might not be attacked by robbers and thieves.<sup>17</sup> Apart from robbers, Thevenot also talks about *fakirs* who molested travelers and caravans and emphasized that they are all over India. Sometimes, even the *banjaras*, moving in groups were so strong that they looted the people on these routes. Yet, despite such cases, land routes witnessed large-scale caravan traffic. However, the cost of communication on these land routes was much higher than on the waterways just as the distance travelled by water was also shorter. Therefore, riverine routes were preferred more over these land routes.

The land cum water ways were so important for the Banaras officials that they used to levy taxes on the entry and the exit points also called the '*rawani*'<sup>18</sup> of these routes and for this purpose they had set up customs house called '*chaukis*' or '*chabutras*', where merchants or travelers were checked with their goods for payments of the dues, unless they could show passport in favour of exemption. The outgoing trade of Banaras region was collected through *chaukis* or custom houses situated at the major four cities of Banaras, Ghazipur, Mirzapur and Jaunpur. Merchants travelling in northern India had to take a passport (*dastak*) from the place of departure and show it at the custom posts in order to be allowed to pass without paying customs. Thus, indeed we find that during the eighteenth century Banaras attained prosperity and became the commercial nexus due to its strategic location. G. H. Barlow in his report on *Trade and Coinage of Banaras* dated August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1787 A.D. has mentioned that, 'The greater part of trade between the Company's provinces and the internal part of India must pass through the district of Banaras'.<sup>19</sup>

## MARKET STRUCTURE

The study of the commercial aspect of a region is incomplete without giving due credit to the market structure of that particular area. An open or closed economy

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<sup>17</sup> *Duncan record*, vol. 5, Basta no. 1, appendix no.-6, pp-155-160.

<sup>18</sup> *Duncan record*, vol. 5, Basta no-1, appendix no.-6, pp-155-160.

<sup>19</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> August 1788, Barlow's Report on Trade and Coinage of Banaras, *Duncan Records*, Basta No.2, File No.7, August 1788, p- 67.

needs a certain place to exchange their goods and services by barter or cash and such places can be termed markets, which could vary in size from place to place. Most markets rely on sellers offering their goods or services in exchange for money or a commodity from the buyer. Markets facilitate trade and enable distribution and resource allocation in society. A market emerges more or less spontaneously or may be constructed deliberately by human interaction in order to enable the exchange of goods and services. One of the major aspects of the commercialization of the economy in the eighteenth century was the establishment of local marketing networks (*haats*, *bazaars*, and *ganjs*).<sup>20</sup> These *haats*, *bazaars*, and *ganjs* had become the specialized agencies for the circulations of grains and other agricultural products. These markets specialized in a variety of business and merchandise. *Haats* were periodic markets held on certain days of a week. They were mostly held once in a week or were bi-weekly.<sup>21</sup> Apart from these periodic markets, the numbers of fixed markets or *ganjs* also increased rapidly in the course of eighteenth century. The *Ganjs* were small regulated or fixed markets. It indicates a higher level of economic activity than the local peasant markets or *haats*. The foundation of a *ganj* requires some wholesale traders, a number of commission agents, permanent moneylenders and permanent buildings.<sup>22</sup>

The political stability provided by the Banaras rulers led to the high levels of commercial activity in the region which could be testified from the growth and flourishing of the cities of Banaras, Mirzapur, Jaunpur and Ghazipur. Banaras situated in the Gangetic plains was a region of high agricultural productivity and cultivation. The province of Banaras had within its territory some of the largest markets and manufacturing centers along with countryside *haats*, *ganjs*, and *bazaars*. At the top most levels of the market hierarchy in the Banaras region were entre-ports like Banaras, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, and Mirzapur with its banker merchant, wholesalers, and commodity brokers. These city markets engaged in the export of commodities at a wider scale having trading ties with the entire Indian subcontinent. The major commodities which were produced in Banaras and exported through these markets were textiles especially cotton piece goods, sugar, opium, saltpeter and even Indigo.

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<sup>20</sup> Datta, *Society, Economy and the Market: Commercialization of Rural Bengal, 1760-1800*, p-206.

<sup>21</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-99.

<sup>22</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-99.

Then at the next level were the markets at the *Kasbah* level often termed *bazaars* or *ganjs*. These *ganjs* and *bazaars* were found in the close vicinity of the countryside facilitating the local trade in grains and other agricultural products like sugar, vegetables, etc, they even dealt in the trade of cotton, cotton thread, coarse cloth, ornaments, toys, tobacco, salt, and utensils. *Ganjs* played an important role in extending the money economy and served as a crucial link between the rural and urban economies. The products of the countryside reached the big town markets through these *ganjs*. Thus an increase in commercialization and monetization of Banaras economy was further evident from the number of *haats*, *ganjs*, and *bazaars* that flourished during this period in the Banaras region. According to Mishra there were twenty-five such intermediate markets in and around Banaras which served as collection and distribution centers at primary level.<sup>23</sup> These fixed *bazaars* or *ganjs* were crowded with wholesale traders, commission agents, and moneylenders. These markets also needed infrastructures like permanent buildings where the peasants and merchants could easily store their products and commodities. These markets were often provided with *sarais* or inns for the traders and farmers to rest and store their produce. According to Bayly, these *ganjs* centralized trade and provided more ready access to credit for peasants. *Ganjs* played a key role in extending money economy to the countryside. They had also increased access and reach of the markets to the countryside. The peasants in the marginal areas could now bring their produce to the markets and have access to the commodities of the markets. The proximity of market where peasants and cultivators could sell their produce and monetization of revenue demand led to the increased commercialization of agriculture.

Then at the lowest level of the market hierarchy were *haats* or periodic peasant markets held in the vicinity of a large village or a group of villages. The *haats* were basically bi-weekly or even held once a week in some areas. These periodic markets were under the control of village headmen or dominant land magnates or influential zamindar families and no government was involved. *Haats* were the places where farmers and peasants could easily sell their small surplus commodities.

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<sup>23</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Situating Banaras in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: an era of transition in Banaras region (1795-1850)*, New Delhi, 2012, p-95.

In the Banaras region, the successors of Azam Khan and Azmat Khan, the rulers of Azamgarh established many *ganjs* and *bazaars* like Sufiganj, Husainganj, Kopaganj, Jahangirganj, Maharajganj, Jahanaganj and Shahgarh, etc.<sup>24</sup> Bhadohi another important town near Banaras came to prominence in the eighteenth century. Under the stable zamindari at least four major markets or *bazaars* were established here namely *bazaar* Salabat Khan, *bazaar* Rustam Khan, *bazaar* Ahmadganj and *Katra* Rusukhait Khan in the early eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Mirzapur showed tremendous growth during the late seventeenth century increased by tenfold during the next century and was regarded next to Banaras city. It catered to the demands of the regional as well as the long-distance trade. Mirzapur had grown into an important commercial town with various *katras* or *ganjs* within its vicinity and three important among them were Muzaffar ganj, Lal ganj and Munnuganj.<sup>26</sup>

## THE ROLE OF EAST INDIA COMPANY

The origin of East India Company was purely based on their desire to trade and earn profits for which they sailed to various parts of the world in order to explore new prospects for themselves. But with the rapidly receding splendor, glory and power of the Mughal court around the early decades of the eighteenth century. It was impossible for any European to overlook the changes and new opportunities to expand their trading Empire. Earlier the Company's motive was commercial but soon it turned to political. They combined their political strength and might to attain maximum profits and exploit the economic resources of a region. They started as a trading firm and became masters of the land. By 1760 A.D. the military conquest of Bengal was well underway and this is the same period when the East India Company ventured into the commercial realm of Banaras. But during the initial year, the Company's commercial activities in the Banaras region were limited and we lack substantial sources which could focus on the same. The English victory at the battle of Buxar in 1764 A.D. opened up new prospects for their commerce with the region of Banaras. With the signing of the treaty of Allahabad in 1765 A.D, a *farman* was

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<sup>24</sup> Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Punjab: 1707-1748*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, p-249.

<sup>25</sup> Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Punjab: 1707-1748*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, pp-249-250.

<sup>26</sup> Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Punjab: 1707-1748*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, pp-249-250.

granted to them by the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam in December 1764 A.D. by which the Company other than gaining political benefits also became entitled, to trade in Banaras as Banaras was now officially under the control of the English company.

On November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1764, A.D., the authorities at fort William decided to establish a factory at Banaras<sup>27</sup> which was set up in the early 1765 A.D. and appointed Randolph Marriott as the chief and William Bolt and Isaac Sage as his subordinates.<sup>28</sup> Their main function was the collection of revenue from the Raja and the indemnities from the *Nawab* of Awadh as arranged by the treaty of Allahabad. But in February 1766 A.D., the Bengal government decided to withdraw the Banaras factory<sup>29</sup> because the specific purpose for which the factory was set up, had ceased to operate. And the officials Randolph Marriott, William Bolt along with other Company's servants got engaged in private trade, other than performing their duty for which they were appointed. Marriott took over the farms of the Banaras mint from the *Nawab* and Bolt carried on his private trade in diamonds, opium, saltpeter, woolen and cotton piece goods. Along with the English, many traders and merchants who sold British or Bengali goods and bought saltpeter and cotton piece-goods entered in the markets of Banaras. Even the agents and middlemen, often called as *gomashtras* employed under the company moved into Banaras in large numbers. These middlemen were granted *parwanas* or *dustaks* and these permits exempted them from all duties. But they were illegal in Awadh and Banaras, as the Resident of the select committee had granted them permits only in the province of Bengal. And according to the clause of the Allahabad treaty, no English private traders on any account were permitted to carry on trade in the *Nawab's* dominion.<sup>30</sup> But the English private traders employed these *gomashtras* who could procure goods from Banaras and even sell off their produce in the markets of Banaras region. These *gomashtras* or agents were basically local Hindus and Muslims who were well versed with the local dialect, customs, measurements and currency and acted as a bridge between the petty producers, weavers, manufacturers, and European merchants or traders. The Europeans also hired a class of middlemen

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<sup>27</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1795*, World Press, Calcutta, 1979, P-174.

<sup>28</sup> N.L. Hallward, *William Bolt: a Dutch Adventurer under the John Company*, Cambridge University Press, 1920, p-19.

<sup>29</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1795*, World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-174.

<sup>30</sup> H. Verelst, *A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal*, London, 1772, p-4.



known as '*dustorias*' and '*dalals*' or brokers. Their main function was to assist traders, especially from a foreign land in their financial transactions. They acted as intermediaries and received a certain percentage of commission as their wage known as '*dalali*' or brokerage.<sup>31</sup> Despite having superior organizational skills and trading policies, the cultural differences, which the English Company confronted, created the need for mediation which at first required a trusted native to act as an agent. Also, the Company had to adapt its trading methods according to the local institution and customs of the people in commercial sectors. And it was an established fact that without the help of these brokers the European Companies would have hardly carried out any sort of profitable business in any part of the Indian subcontinent.

This illegal trade created tension between the English and the *Nawab* of Awadh. The Company assured Shuja-ud-Daula that they would give every possible help to stop such trade.<sup>32</sup> But these promises proved unfulfilled and the date on which the English private traders and their agents or *gomashtras* would have to leave Awadh and Banaras continued to extend since they pleaded that they needed time to settle their accounts.

While on the other hand William Bolt's trading activities were not only confined to Banaras but extended to far off regions like Bengal and Awadh. He employed various *gomashtras* who in order to gain maximum profit did not back off from carrying out illegal practices and even exploiting other traders or manufacturers. On the complaint of Shuja-ud-Daula, the *Nawab* and Balwant Singh, Bolt and Marriott were summoned by the Bengal government. William Bolt was sent back to Banaras to wind up his affairs but he engaged in other new trades and finally, he was suspended from the Company's service and deported to England two years later.<sup>33</sup>

But the orders restraining English traders and their agents in Banaras were never strictly enforced. And we even find that Chait Singh complained against their conduct to Warren Hastings when he visited Banaras in 1773 A.D. Hasting assured the Raja that except Joseph Fowke and Scott whose conduct was approved by the Raja, rest all others would be ordered to leave Banaras till December 1773 A.D. But again, the

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<sup>31</sup> *Duncan Records*, vol. 7, Basta No-2, August, 1787, appendix no-1, pp-29-30.

<sup>32</sup> H. Verelst, *A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal*, London, 1772, pp-4-6.

<sup>33</sup> H. Verelst, *A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal*, London, 1772, appendix no.-77, p-183.

complaint was in vain as no heed was paid to it. The Residents appointed by the Bengal council in Banaras like Francis Fowke, Thomas Graham (1777-1780 A.D.), William Markham (1781-1783 A.D.), James Grant(1786-87 A.D.) and their assistants all were engaged in the trade of most profitable commodities of this region like opium, saltpeter, and diamonds. It was only in 1787 A.D. that Lord Cornwallis put a complete strain on the private trade of the Resident along with his assistants and other private European traders in Banaras. On closely scrutinizing, this could have been done due to two possibilities. Firstly, Cornwallis had taken various measures to eradicate corruption from Banaras so he had introduced many political as well as economic measures. Secondly, to safeguard the Company's own interest as they had extended the system of monopoly in opium and saltpeter in Banaras on the lines of Bihar. Around 1788 A.D., they even tried to monopolize the cloth for which they had appointed a commercial Resident Mr. John Lloyd in Banaras.<sup>34</sup>

Thus we see that the growth and development of the English Company trade in Banaras was a slow, steady, and a gradual process. This development was based on several factors and policies of the Company. English East India Company's trade in Banaras was a regional manifestation of a worldwide phenomenon. At first they started from private trade and gradually from 1780's onwards began to take organized interest in the commerce of this region. East India Company was formed on a purely economic basis unlike its counterparts like the Portuguese whose main motive was the facilitation of spice trade and spread of Christianity. The English Company was determined to be traders first and territorial rulers next.<sup>35</sup>

## COMMODITIES FOR TRADE- EXPORTS AND IMPORTS

Banaras was the producer of a wide range of goods, both agricultural and manufactured and this made the Banaras region a favourite spot for the merchants. It undoubtedly attracted large quantities of goods and commodities from the surrounding areas as well as far-off places like Bengal, Nepal and Deccan, etc. The rural economy and the urban economy continued to exist side by side. The urban economy largely depended upon its hinterlands as self-sufficiency in agricultural

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<sup>34</sup> *Duncan Records*, vol. 11, Basta No-2, p-213.

<sup>35</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company*, Cambridge, 1978, p-115.

products was an important factor in any sort of commercial development. Like any other region of the subcontinent, the trade from Banaras can be broadly classified into two broad categories viz the imports and the exports. The imports from Banaras are further classified under two heads. The first was the imports for internal consumption for the region and the next were imports that were re-exported from the marts of Banaras.<sup>36</sup> Mirzapur in the Banaras region gained prosperity as a major distribution centre from where the bulk of imports were re-exported to other parts of India as well as abroad. The export and import of commodities provided occupational opportunities to merchants, traders, weavers, cultivator artisans, middlemen and service providers etc.

During the eighteenth century the principal commodities that were exported from the Banaras region were textiles followed by sugar, opium and saltpeter. While the export of indigo started much later on, approximately in the last decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Before the British intervention into the Banaras zamindari, textile especially cotton piece goods, formed the major portion of export from this area. Under the British control, textile retained its position as before but the annual export of commodities like opium, sugar, saltpeter and indigo saw a tremendous increase. Even the silk industry in Banaras gained momentum after the decline of the silk industry of Agra and Delhi.<sup>38</sup> This can be attested from the fact that Valentia, who visited Banaras states that no other place in India manufactured silk in large quantities than Banaras and they were not only used in the east for dresses of the ceremony but were also exported in considerable quantities to Europe.<sup>39</sup> The Banaras goods were exported in the name of the account of the Company to Bengal and then from here, they were further exported to Europe and China. They were even exported to other provinces of India like Bengal, Bihar, Deccan and the Western Provinces.

The major item of export from the Banaras region was textiles. This region was famous for its manufacture of cotton-piece goods from the Mughal period. It was the principal center of textile manufacture, which has been attested by many foreign

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<sup>36</sup> *Duncan Records*, vol. 7, Basta No-2, August, 1787, p- 67.

<sup>37</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p- 130.

<sup>38</sup> H.K. Naqvi, *Urban Centers and Industries in Upper India: 1556-1803*, Asia Publishing House, New Delhi, p- 112.

<sup>39</sup> George Viscount Valentia, *Voyages and Travels in India, Ceylon the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt*, London, 1809, Vol. I, p- 139

travelers who visited this region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. According to Ralph Fitch, an English traveler who visited Banaras in the late sixteenth century, “it was a great town where the store of cloth..... , and sashes (turban cloths) for the Moors was manufactured”.<sup>40</sup> Pelsaert states that turbans, girdles, cloths for Hindu women, Gangazil (a white cloth) were produced in Banaras and Jaunpur, the city in the vicinity of Banaras Raj produced and exported cotton goods such as turbans, girdles, white *chelas*, *zelal* and coarse carpets in large quantities.<sup>41</sup> Mrs. J. Kindersley, an English traveler, who visited Banaras in the eighteenth century found that the city of Banaras “is a great manufactory of gold and silver silks and gauzes”.<sup>42</sup> Thus these accounts tell us about the flourishing state of the textile industry of Banaras and the adjoining cities of Jaunpur, Mirzapur and Ghazipur that was maintained throughout the centuries.

Banaras was famous for its silk and cotton manufactures, primarily for superfine muslin, Kamkhwabs (a silk cloth variegated with gold, silver and various colored silk thread), gauzes (white and colored) either spotted, sprigged or stripped with silver or gold, cloths decorated with gold or silver threads and tinsels. According to Barlow, there were four varieties of cotton piece goods produced in the Banaras region namely Khasa, Garhas, Ambrati and Malmal or muslin. Khasa was a sort of muslin of good quality which was produced in Jaunpur, Ghazipur and Kasimabad. Garhas also known as Baftas were plain cotton of inferior quality manufactured in Ballia and parts of Jaunpur. Ambrati or Imartis was a white cloth of the finest quality which was manufactured at Muhammadabad in the sarkar of Ghazipur. Ambrati was in great demand in the European markets as it was mainly used in the lining of quilts. Malmal was a fine cotton fabric produced in the Ghazipur and Jaunpur districts.

Other varieties of cotton piece goods that were manufactured in Banaras were Chintz, white cloth, *gazi*, *dastar* and *kamarbands* or girdles.<sup>43</sup> Barlow mentioned in his report

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<sup>40</sup> William Foster (ed), *Early Travels in India; 1583-1619*, Oxford, 1921, p. 20

<sup>41</sup> Francisco Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, Tr. W. H. Moreland, W. Heffer & Sons Ltd, Cambridge, 1925, p-7.

<sup>42</sup> Jemima Kindersley, *Letters from the Island of Tenerife, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope and the East Indies*, London, 1777, letter no-57.

<sup>43</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-134.

that Banaras produced cotton piece goods worth seven lakhs rupees annually.<sup>44</sup> The major importers of Banaras textile were the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, Deccan and Western India. The textile was even exported to Nepal and European markets. By the last decade of the eighteenth century, a considerable amount of textile was also exported to places like North America, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Lisbon, Basra, Sumatra, Penang and Manila.

After textiles, sugar was the most important item that formed the bulk of export from the Banaras region. Towards the close of eighteenth century it showed a rapid increase in its export. The entire Gangetic plain was rich in sugarcane production but the main producing centers in the Banaras zamindari were the sarkar of Jaunpur, Ghazipur and parts of Banaras and Mirzapur. There were two main categories of sugar exported from this area; the first was the white sugar or the *cheeni* while the other variety was coarse sugar. Furthermore the coarse sugar was classified into three more varieties namely the brown sugar, *rab* or *tari*, and *bheli*, *khand* or jaggery.

But the refined sugar formed the bulk of export and around sixty five percent of white sugar was exported in span of five years while the export of brown sugar amounted to only five percent of the total volume. Between the year 1788 A.D. to 1792 A.D., the annual area under sugarcane cultivation increased by 3.6 percent which led to an increase in the production of sugar from this region.<sup>45</sup> The *suba* of Bengal and Bihar were the largest importers of Banaras sugar followed by Deccan and western provinces respectively. A total of 4, 79,363 maunds i.e.; approximately fifty percent of total of sugar from Banaras was sent to these two provinces. Later on, the Banaras sugar was further exported to Europe as well. And the increasing demand can be attested from the fact that in 1792 A.D., John Lloyd, the Commercial Resident at Ghazipur, was ordered to procure sugar from Banaras. He was given rupees fifteen hundred for procurement which increased to rupees one lakh in 1793 A.D. Like opium, the company did not monopolize the sugar trade of Banaras and it was open to all the merchants whether private or English or even to indigenous merchants.

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<sup>44</sup> 24th August 1788, Barlow's Report on Trade and Coinage of Banaras, *Duncan Records*, Basta No. 2, File No. 7, August 1788's report, p- 78.

<sup>45</sup> 20th April, 1793, Treves to G. G. in Council, *Duncan Records*, Basta No. 12, File No. 70, p- 84-87.

Opium was another major item of export from the Banaras region. Poppy was chiefly cultivated in Ghazipur, but it was not of good quality. The cultivation did not exceed beyond hundred maunds.<sup>46</sup> It was basically procured at a comparatively low price by the western merchants, who exported it by the route of Mirzapur into Marwar, where it was in demanded by the Rajputs.<sup>47</sup> In 1773 A.D., the opium contractors, Muhammad Munir and Ramchandra Pandit of Bihar were appointed by Warren Hastings to procure opium from Banaras region for the English East India Company.<sup>48</sup> And in February 1774 A.D., Chait Singh, the Raja of Banaras agreed to grant monopoly of opium to the agents of the English company.<sup>49</sup> This exempted other merchants from trading in opium and gave the monopoly in the hands of the English.<sup>50</sup>

According to the rates book of Banaras, opium that was procured from Ghazipur was valued at rupees seventy five per maund and a duty of five percent was levied on it. After the expulsion of Chait Singh in 1781 A.D., the Bengal Government imposed an additional duty of rupees forty per maund. Further more on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1784 A.D., the company passed an order to double the duty paid on opium. This excess tax adversely hampered the trade of opium. As a result on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1785 A.D., the government under Hastings revoked the extra duties levied on opium.

In 1786 A.D., Lord Cornwallis monopolized the trade and manufacture of opium in the Banaras region. This was done to increase the revenue of the company and to curb the influence of the Residents. As cited by K.P. Mishra, the British Residents at Banaras like Fowke, Graham, and Markham made all possible attempts to establish an unauthorized monopoly over the opium trade in Banaras for their personal fortunes and they even tried to expel other merchants, Europeans, and Indians from the lucrative trade.<sup>51</sup> In the first three years, the tender of procuring opium for the company was given to Ramchandra Pandit. In 1789 A.D. the contract was given to

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<sup>46</sup> A. Shakespear, *Selections from Duncan Records*, Vol. II, Banaras, p- 157.

<sup>47</sup> A. Shakespear, *Selections from Duncan Records*, Vol. II, Banaras, pp- 161-163

<sup>48</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, The World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-199.

<sup>49</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, vol. 4, letter no 826.

<sup>50</sup> 24th August 1788, Barlow's Report on Trade and Coinage of Banaras, *Duncan Records*, Basta No. 2, File No. 7, August 1788, p- 87

<sup>51</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-147.

J.L. William for the period of the next four years. All the opium produced in the Banaras region was now cultivated for the company.

In 1768-87 A.D., the total amount of opium produced in this region was nine hundred twenty maunds, which in the year 1790-91 A.D. increased to 1502 maunds that is, it showed an increase of sixty three percent. The total export of opium had shown an increase of 227 percent and the total production went up to 3012 maunds in the year 1794-95 A.D.<sup>52</sup> According to K.P. Mishra, three factors were responsible for the increase in the production and export of Banaras opium. Firstly, the peasants were provided with advance payment to cultivate a specific land and they had no choice but to cultivate it. Secondly, poppy was a profitable cash crop and lastly, under the land settlements of Duncan, the revenue rates were fixed and peasants were placed in a comparatively better position. But practically this all seems to be a bubble as the government safeguarded its own and the contractor's interest and made no provision to protect the cultivator interest. The peasants had to sell their produce to the same contractor who would exploit them to the fullest.

Saltpetre was another important item of export from the Banaras region. It was one of the most lucrative items of trade for the English. It was in great demand in the west as it was the main ingredient used in gunpowder. Though the kingdom of Awadh was rich in the manufacture of saltpeter, it was also manufactured at Barah near Chausa, Muhammadabad, Saidpur, and Reotipur in Ghazipur, Kaithi in Banaras, Machchlishahar, and Jaunpur in Jaunpur district. Two main variety of saltpeter was manufactured in Banaras; the first was the Kalmi or the refined one while the other was the crude one called the *kuccha* or the raw. The most refined saltpeter i.e.; Kalmi was sent to Bengal and from here it was further exported to Europe, where it was in high demand. According to the Barlow report, the Banaras region manufactured around 20 thousand maunds of both varieties of saltpeter.<sup>53</sup> In 1775 A.D. the English Company asked Chait Singh, the Raja of Banaras to supply twenty three thousand maunds of saltpeter at a rate of four rupees per maund,<sup>54</sup> but the Raja declined the

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<sup>52</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-149.

<sup>53</sup> 24th August 1788; Barlow's Report on Trade and Coinage of Banaras, *Duncan Records*, Basta No. 2, File No. 7, August 1788, p- 89.

<sup>54</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, vol. 4, letter no-1932.

demand as the total output from the Banaras zamindari was only four thousand maunds.<sup>55</sup>

After the deposition of Chait Singh, the trade of saltpeter was monopolized by Grant, the Resident at Banaras and basically, the profits were appropriated by him. The monopoly was given to Munnu Lal, a contractor of the Company. In the year 1787 A.D., Munnu Lal procured 6500 maunds of saltpeter for the English Company, which increased to 8500 maunds in the next year. But due to the shortage of saltpeter produced in this region, the company decided to give up the monopoly of this article. And as a result in 1789 A.D. the Company's trade in saltpeter from the Banaras zamindari came to an end.<sup>56</sup>

Indigo was largely used for colouring of cloth and the expansion of the European market for indigo stimulated the cultivation and trade of indigo in Banaras zamindari. Initially indigo was not an item of export from the Banaras region, but towards the close of the eighteenth century the export of indigo to Bengal showed an upward trend. Till 1789 A.D., the indigo that was cultivated in this area was done by a class of dyers called the Rangrez,<sup>57</sup> who produced it for their personal use of dyeing their cloths. And the surplus manufactured by them was sold to other merchants at the rate of rupees two to rupees three per *seer*.<sup>58</sup> Grant, the Resident at Banaras started the manufacture of indigo in the 162 *sarkar* of Ghazipur.<sup>59</sup> And later on, Gilchrist and Charters established their factories at Ghazipur. Within a time span of six years the indigo planter increased to forty. Unlike Bengal, in Banaras, the planting and manufacturing of indigo largely remained concentrated in the hands of the European merchants and the local peasants were employed for assisting them in the process of planting and extracting dyes from it. In 1790 A.D., one hundred and forty-seven maunds of indigo were sent to Bengal from Banaras, which showed a tremendous increase of six hundred forty percent in 1793 A.D.,<sup>60</sup> and a total of one thousand eighty six maunds were exported. The imports from this region were equally

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<sup>55</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, vol. 4, letter no-1993.

<sup>56</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, The World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-213.

<sup>57</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazipur District*, p-209.

<sup>58</sup> Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764-1794*, World Press, Calcutta, 1979, p-207.

<sup>59</sup> Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of Ghazipur District*, p-209.

<sup>60</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-154.



important as the exports from here. As mentioned earlier the Banaras imports were classified under two different categories. The first was the imports for consumption and usage in the Banaras region itself and the second was the commodities that were imported to Banaras for further re-exportation. According to Rennell's map, the bulk of trade between Bengal and Bihar in the east with Deccan, western India and northern plains comprising of cities of Delhi and Agra was carried out via Banaras region. Barlow has mentioned the town of Mirzapur as the 'Liverpool of east' as it was a major centre of distribution of commodities brought from various other parts of India.<sup>61</sup> The natives of Deccan, the Western provinces and Nepal came here in search of European commodities and rich manufactures of Bengal and merchants of Bengal came here for the purchase of cotton, shawl goods and other valuable articles from the inland Provinces of Hindustan.<sup>62</sup>

The imports to Banaras included cotton and silk piece-good, drugs, salt, metals especially copper, iron and tin. Most of these items were meant for re-exportation and small part of these was consumed in Banaras zamindari. These goods were brought mainly from Bengal, Bihar, Deccan, Western Provinces, Northern Provinces and Nepal. The major items which were imported into Banaras from Bengal and Bihar consisted of raw silk, silk piece goods, broad cloth, drugs and spices, salt, metals and other sundries like bamboo, mats, ropes, sticks and timber etc.<sup>63</sup> As per the Barlow's report the total imports from Bengal and Bihar amounted to 2,741,467 rupees.<sup>64</sup> And according to K. P. Mishra, seventy percent of the total value of the exports consisted of raw silk and silk goods which were further exported to the Deccan and the western provinces<sup>65</sup> which further increased when the company reduced the import duties on silk from five percent to two and a half percent. Silk being a luxury product would have been consumed by the courts and nobility of the states of Deccan like the Marathas or the royalty of Mysore. Even cities like Delhi, Agra and Lahore would

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<sup>61</sup> 24th August 1788, Barlow's Report on Trade and Coinage of Banaras, *Duncan Records*, Basta No. 2, File No. 7, August 1788's report, p-67.

<sup>62</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> August 1788, Barlow's Report on Trade and Coinage of Banaras, *Duncan Records*, Basta No. 2, File No. 7, August 1788's report, p-67.

<sup>63</sup> *Duncan Records*, vol-5, Basta No-1, pp-1-10.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p-69

<sup>65</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-157.

have been potential consumers, though these cities had declined still were administrative centers.

Banaras imported raw cotton, cotton piece goods, saltpeter, drugs and spices from the Western Provinces which amounted to rupees. 9, 72,275. Out of which eighty eight percent of the total imports from the west comprised of cotton and cotton piece goods which amounted to a worth of rupees. 80,412 and Rs. 17,478 respectively<sup>66</sup> and was re-exported to Bihar and Bengal and a small amount to the Northern provinces.<sup>67</sup> The western provinces and Deccan also exported raw cotton and cotton piece goods to the Banaras region which were re-exported to Bihar, Bengal and Northern provinces. It also imported wool and spices from the Deccan. From the total percentage of trade from Deccan, raw cotton formed seventy eight percent and cotton goods were seventeen percent while spices and woollens formed comprised only five percent of the total value.<sup>68</sup>

The Northern Provinces sent some special varieties of cotton piece goods, sugar, herbs and spices to the Banaras region. These imports were re-exported to Deccan, Bihar, Bengal and western provinces. The goods imported from Nepal included gold and silver bullion, cow tails, Musk, elephant and elephant's teeth, rhinoceros horns and gold dust, etc. The trade with Nepal was generally carried out by Sanyasi merchants who were Residents of Banaras. They carried Bengal piece goods to Nepal and in return imported gold and silver bullion from there.<sup>69</sup>

After the import items for re-exportation, we come to imports for internal consumption within the Banaras region. The major imports for the consumption comprised cotton, raw silk, cotton and silk piece goods, spices, drugs, salt, and metals. For the booming textile industry of Banaras, it needed large quantities of cotton which it imported from Nagpur, Jalone and Haidnagar as the cotton produced in Banaras and adjoining areas was insufficient to meet the needs of the textile industry. In the year

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<sup>66</sup> *Duncan Records*, vol-5, Basta No-1, p-3.

<sup>67</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> August 1788, Barlow's Report on Trade and Coinage of Banaras, *Duncan Records*, Basta No. 2, File No. 7, August 1788's report, p-69.

<sup>68</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, pp-159-160.

<sup>69</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-95.

1785-86 A.D., around 38,330 maunds of cotton worth rupees 343,687 were imported from various places in the Deccan province.<sup>70</sup>

While Bengal exported raw silk, silk piece goods, spices, betel nuts and metals to Banaras. Bulk of silk imported by Banaras came from Murshidabad and the rest was procured from Kasimbazar or Hugli. Woolen and shawls were brought in from Kashmir. Salt consumed in the provinces was imported from Lahore, Bengal, Jainagar, Sambhar, Jodhpur and the average price was about ten to eleven *annas* per maund. The consumption of this sort of exported salt was confined mainly to the rich that were mainly known as Lahori and Sambhar salt.<sup>71</sup> The salt consumed by poor was called Khari which was manufactured at Munger in Bihar and Gurrewarrah and Jafferabad in Jaunpur. The commerce at Banaras was thriving and increasing. Barlow provided a comparative account of imports and exports of Banaras which indicate the trade carried out through Banaras, despite monopolistic trade in opium and saltpetre, was always in favour of Banaras. The imports from the Banaras region were equally important but it seems like the East India Company's main focus was on the exports only.

## MERCHANT COMMUNITIES

According to the traditional view merchants were people who mostly indulged in profit making through direct investments. But certainly there were groups who without having any considerable investments tended to earn valuable profits from the ongoing process of business. The origin of these groups was varied, ranging from political to religious. They often used their power and influence to dictate the terms in order to earn valuable profits, thus combining political or religious activities with the mercantile role. It was not the correctness of the economic policies alone that determined the fate of these trading groups. The political structure, the interest, and allegiances of the ruling elites also directly affect these trading groups. Similar was the case in the Banaras region where there was a substantial increase in trade and commerce which resulted in the emergence of Banaras as a new commercial center and market in north India. Merchants and traders from different parts of India and neighbouring countries visited Banaras throughout the year for commercial purposes.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p-161.

<sup>71</sup> *Duncan Records*, vol-7, Basta No-2, August, 1787, appendix no-8, p-58.

M. A. Sherring has presented a complete account of the merchant communities in Banaras who often combined their political and religious activities with their mercantile roles to attain maximum profit. According to him, most of the merchants in Banaras came from places such as Gujarat, Marwar, Awadh, Delhi, and Bikaner and settled in Banaras region considering vast potentials of trade in this region. Other than the indigenous merchants and traders, merchants from far of countries like Nepal, Iran, Iraq, and even European and Armenian merchants resorted to the marts of Banaras region.<sup>72</sup>

Barlow's report also throws light on the merchants that were present in the marts of Banaras. Several merchants from Nagpur, Poona, Hyderabad and other parts of South India, along with Sanyasi merchants signed petitions to the Resident regarding the reduction of duties in 1788 A.D.<sup>73</sup> Some of Deccan merchants, who were primarily engaged in cotton trade, had made Mirzapur as their permanent place of residence and their locality was called '*Mohalla Engrezee*'.<sup>74</sup> Then there were several Silk manufacturers, *sowcars*, and others distressed families from Gujarat who had fled from Gujarat and settled down at Banaras where they practiced their former occupations.<sup>75</sup>

Sanyasis were initially a religious organization that turned into the principal mercantile community in eighteenth century in Banaras. The Sanyasis followed the Shaivite sect of the Hinduism and attributed their origin to Sankara Acharya. They were also called Gosain, Atisor Nagas.<sup>76</sup> The word Gosains has been derived from the Sanskrit word 'Goswamin'. In the eighteenth century with the gradual decline of their religious and social order, some of these Sanyasis took to agricultural practices, while some still remained as wandering mendicants and others living in monasteries in the town combined trade with religion. According to Kolff, Sanyasi merchants organized themselves as a religious-commercial sect, and were militarized to some degree, and

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<sup>72</sup> *Duncan Records*, vol-11, Basta No-2, p-175.

<sup>73</sup> *Duncan Records*, vol-5, Basta No-1, appendix no-6, pp-155-160.

<sup>74</sup> G.N. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs: Selection from English Records, 1788-1810*, vol-1, Government Central Record Office, Allahabad, p-147

<sup>75</sup> G.N. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs: Selection from English Records, 1788-1810*, vol-1, Government Central Record Office, Allahabad, p-142

<sup>76</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-97.

organized themselves according to the *guru-chela* principle, they even possessed a commercial edge over the other merchants.<sup>77</sup>

The Sanyasi merchant's success attributed to their strong network of the monasteries and the constant movement on pilgrimage between them. Their institutional framework and network was wider and stronger than other merchant communities in this region. The Sanyasi merchants of Banaras region mostly belonged to the Giri or Geeri section of the Gosains,<sup>78</sup> and they mainly settled in the town of Mirzapur and Banaras. Gayan Giri, Shiv Ram Giri and Kashwal Giri were the chief Gosains traders to conduct trade with Nepal. Whereas, Mihir Giri, Gulab Giri and Shamsheer Giri were the most noted dealer of silk from Murshidabad.<sup>79</sup>

The Sanyasis merchants of Banaras carried on their mercantile transaction on all India level. They roamed in every direction and especially visited places of presumed holiness. They used their *maths* as trading houses where they could store their goods and carry on their business transactions. Their *maths* became important nexus of trade and commerce in the eighteenth century. According to M. A. Sherring there were around 1400 *maths* in Banaras during the late eighteenth century.<sup>80</sup> The internal organization of the *math* was under a chief called *Mahant* and under every *Mahant* there were number of *gurus* or teachers and every *guru* had some *chelas* or disciples who were ranked according to their duties. The *Mahant* were responsible for discipline and general administration of the *maths*. And the *math* that was engaged in commercial activities, the chief had control over the *maths* property, and he also financed the *guru* in their mercantile activities.

The main source of income of the *math*, was land, which was usually given as grants by local dignitaries or rulers for religious purposes.<sup>81</sup> Other than this there was also an income from the gifts like money, jewels and other similar articles presented to the *Mahants* and the *gurus* on special occasions like Shiva Ratri and Kumbh Mela. The

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<sup>77</sup> D.H.A. Kolff, 'Sanyasi Trader-Soldiers' *I.E.S.H.R.*, 1971, p- 213-18

<sup>78</sup> B. S. Cohn, 'The Rule of the Gosains in the Economy of Eighteenth Nineteenth century upper India', *I.E.S.H.R.*, p-175

<sup>79</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-97

<sup>80</sup> M.A. Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes, as Represented in Banaras*, Trubner and co., Calcutta, 1872, p-258.

<sup>81</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-98.

alms were collected by the Sanyasis of higher ranks during the course of their visit to various villages and towns. The entire income from various sources was combined and after meeting the daily expenditure of maintaining the math, the rest of the share was used for commercial purposes.

The Sanyasis traveled in large groups and were generally armed to protect their merchandise. They were also accustomed to long journeys. They successively went on pilgrimage to Haridwar,

Paryag, Nasik and Ujjain. According to B.S. Cohn, the annual pilgrimage of the Sanyasis started with them attending the Kumbh Mela of Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain from the month of January. Then they would move to Janakpur in Nepal by the month of March, which is the birth place of Lord Ram's consort Sita. From here they would travel to Bengal for the bathing festival and would then move to the Sagar islands at the mouth of river Ganges by May. And before the onset of the rainy season at the end of June, they would try to head north-west through Bihar back to upper India or either would move towards Jagannath temple in Puri.<sup>82</sup> Some of these wandering devotees settled down in these places where they were engaged in money lending and trading activities.

Sanyasis or Gosains had a leading position in the commercial activities of Banaras. They carried out a brisk trade between Bengal, Deccan, Poona, Ahmadabad and Nepal etc. Barlow in his report mentions that:

'The principle merchants who trade from Bengal to the Deccan are called Sannasses, a religious sect remarkable for their wealth and their integrity in all commercial activities. There who reside in Banaras and in Company's dominions purchase the goods in Bengal and transport them to Mirzapur where they sell or decliner them to the merchants of their own sect, who resort annually for this purpose from Decca. The Sannasses carried a very considerable trade to Nipal in the piece goods of Bengal, in return for which they annually imported gold bullion to the amount of four and five lakhs of Rupees.'<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> B. S. Cohn, 'The Rule of the Gosains in the Economy of Eighteenth Nineteenth Century Upper India', *I.E.S.H.R.*, p-176.

<sup>83</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> August 1788, Barlow's Report on Trade and Coinage of Banaras, *Duncan Records*, Basta No. 2, File No. 7, August 1788, pp- 69-70.

These merchants purchased cotton and cotton piece goods from Poona, Ahmadabad, and Deccan, and exported these goods to Bengal and in return from Bengal they bought cargoes of raw silk, broad cloth, copper and spices. From Nepal, they brought gold dust, bullion and drugs in return for Bengal and Banaras piece goods, and from Kashmir they imported shawls, some of which were consumed in the city of Banaras, while some were exported to Bengal and other provinces.<sup>84</sup> The Gosains of Banaras and Mirzapur carried on brisk trade with Nepal, but they did not reside here rather they established their trading houses here.<sup>85</sup>

The total transaction of the Sanyasis (export and import) that passed through the custom house of the Raja of Banaras in 1784-85 A.D. amounted to rupees 9, 89,618, which in the year 1786-87 A.D., tremendously increased to rupees 16, 14,795.<sup>86</sup> Gosains become the largest property owners in Banaras and Mirzapur region during the second half of eighteenth century.<sup>87</sup> They were the largest owners of urban property in Banaras and Mirzapur.<sup>88</sup>

The Gosains throughout the northern India felt they were related as they followed same sets of rules and customs. They were also required to provide shelter and assistance to other Gosains from different regions. Their religious character gave them certain protection from interference of the local chiefs, landlords and robbers alike. And secondly they moved in large convoys and were mostly armed.

Then there were Banjaras merchants present in the mart of Banaras, Mirzapur, Jaunpur and Ghazipur. Banjaras were basically long-distance transporters who transported agricultural surplus and certain commodities from one place to another. The account of the price-control measures of Sultan Ala-ud-Din Khilji (1296-1316 A.D.) provides the first description of an agrarian mercantile community called the Karwanis or the Nayaks. They were similar to the carrier community of the Banjaras of the eighteenth century. The word Banjaras was apparently used for the first time in

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<sup>84</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> August 1788, Barlow's Report on Trade and Coinage of Banaras, *Duncan Records*, Basta No. 2, File No. 7, August 1788, pp- 652-662.

<sup>85</sup> G.N. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs: Selection from English Records, 1788-1810*, vol-1, Government Central Record Office, Allahabad, p- 170.

<sup>86</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p- 96.

<sup>87</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-126.

<sup>88</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-183.

the sixteenth century, when Kabir in one of his verse talks about “one Nayak, five Banjaras with twenty-five oxen laden with bauble”. The name, Banjaras was derived from Sanskrit called the ‘Vanij’, which is also the source of the name for the Indian mercantile caste of Banias.<sup>89</sup>

The hill-tribes like the Bhotiyas of the central Himalayas and the nomadic Nahmardi traders of Sind and Baluchistan supplied cattle to the agricultural communities and distributed the products of the plains in the hills. And similarly there were large communities in the plains that performed the same functions as the Nahmardis and Bhotiyas. They were known collectively as the Banjaras.

These tribes played a very important role in the trade and commerce of the northern plain of India. They combined pastoralism and the carrying trade. They possessed a large number of cattle. Goods were carried on boats and carts, and by camels and bullocks. They moved in large groups for safety purposes as Roads were not fit for travelling because of the insecurities like robbery and the danger of dacoits and the river traffic was seasonal hence merchants in this region employed these Banjaras for carrying their merchandise. The Banjaras had strong clan ties and they were under a headman or a Chief, who acted like a prince whom they had to follow.

Not all Banjaras were Hindus. Muslims also constituted an important segment of the Banjaras in northern India. According to Tavernier the Banjaras had four tribes, whom they called Manaris. The first of these tribes was engaged in transportation of corn only, the second with rice, the third with pulse, and the fourth with salt.<sup>90</sup> Irfan Habib has given a different classification of the tribes of the Banjaras. According to him the Labanas were associated with salt, the Multanis with grain, and the Mukeris with the transportation of wood and timber.<sup>91</sup> Naiks were also a class of Banjaras

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<sup>89</sup> Irfan Habib, ‘Merchant Communities in Pre-colonial India’, *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, (Ed. James D. Tracy), Cambridge University Press, pp- 373-374.

<sup>90</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels In India*, Vol.-1, (Trans V. Ball, Ed. William Crooke), pp-67-70.

<sup>91</sup> Irfan Habib, ‘Merchant Communities in Pre-colonial India’, *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, (Ed. James D. Tracy), Cambridge University Press, p-377.



merchants who settled in the Banaras region and were mainly engaged in agricultural activities.<sup>92</sup>

They carried their entire household along with them, also their wives and children<sup>93</sup>. In a “*Tanda*” there might have been six to seven hundreds, including men, women and children. They were sometimes hired by merchants but most commonly they were merchants themselves, buying grains from where it was cheap and carrying it to the places where it was expensive. The Banjaras even acted on behalf of large merchant-bankers. Thus we see that this mercantile community also played a very important role in the economy of Banaras.

Other than these merchants majority of the merchants belonged to the traditional mercantile caste of Khattris, Vaishyas, Jains, and Marwaris and so on. M. A. Sherring has given a detailed account regarding the original places from where they came to Banaras and their commercial activities. Khattris who came from Punjab were involved in some trades, certain castes were predominant as the Mehra Khattris dominated the cloth trade, and Purbiya Agrawals were strong in grain trade and Gujarati Bani as in silk and fine brocades.<sup>94</sup> Then were the Oswals, Sonis and Patels who were the original inhabitants of Gujarat and Marwar, Rastogis came in from Amethi and Maheswaris from Bikaner. The presence of merchants from different parts of India in Banaras shows the importance of the region as the hub of trading and commercial activities. Thus we find a trading arena of Banaras region there were a range of groups who played their roles accordingly and there were commercial elites who included the merchants operating in the region having considerable capital at their command and a whole team of agents under their control. But these are discussed elaborately in the next chapter under the heading of banking magnates. These merchants groups were so powerful that when any foreign commercial group tended to enter the region, it had to take the consent and aid of these existing groups.

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<sup>92</sup> M. A. Sheering, *Hindu Tribes and Castes as Represented in Banaras*, Trubner and Co, London, 1872, p-299

<sup>93</sup> M. A. Sheering, *Hindu Tribes and Castes as Represented in Banaras*, Trubner And Co, London, 1872, p-299.

<sup>94</sup> M.A. Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes as Represented in Banaras*, London, 1872, p. 279-295

As we have seen, Banaras being located in routes of intra and inter-regional trade witnessed accretion of commercial activities in the eighteenth century. This increase was visible in the form of enhancement of the volume of merchandise passing through Banaras. Bankers and traders of Banaras played a predominant role in these activities. The increased focus of English commerce towards the Northern provinces added to the existing commercial traffic of the zamindari. Networks of markets brought town and countryside in close proximity to each other. These linkages resulted in circulation of commodities and money at all levels of the economy. These markets played a key role in extending money economy to the countryside. They provided open access and integration of the market system resulting in high commercial transactions, monetization and urbanization, pointing towards brisk commercial activity and a responsive economy. And all of this was only possible because the mercantile communities received explicit recognition and support from the rulers of Banaras whether it was the Rajas of Banaras or the *Nawabs* of Awadh or even the East India Company.

## **CHAPTER-6**

# **BANKING AND MONEY LENDING IN THE BANARAS REGION**

## INTRODUCTION:

As trade and commerce develop, the economy grows at the same pace, and to support this growing economy a continuous circulation of money and a proper credit structure is needed. To facilitate and assist in the smooth functioning of the economy, this credit structure is comprised of various components or agents like moneylenders, money changers and bankers. Thus, a system of credit is a prerequisite for continuity in economic exchange where payments could be made or money could be transferred from one sector to another. Eighteenth century India was not a unified state but was rather a union of many small and large states and principalities. And therefore, it was a multi-regional economy with a diverse credit structure at various levels. And thus the role of moneylenders and bankers became prominent as they easily provided ready money to commoners, traders, and merchants as well as to rulers and the aristocracy despite the absence of a unified credit structure. Thus, they had become an indispensable limb of society. According to K. P. Mishra various micro studies reveal that in the eighteenth century the northern part of India seems to have had a well-developed credit structure.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the present chapter focuses on the study of this credit facilitation, money lending and, the banking system of the Banaras region under the Banaras zamindari. In this chapter, an attempt also has been made to scrutinize the existing banking and money lending practices in the region. It deals with the study of minuscule details about the banking system like the people involved, nature and modes of their transactions and activities like issuing of *hundis*, loans etc.

For any flourishing state the utmost requirement is money. Similarly without a proper credit system the Banaras zamindari could not function. The prosperity of this state entirely depended on the inflow of cash. The need for ready money by the regional rulers to meet their revenue obligations, military expenses or religious and other ceremonies placed the bankers and moneylenders of this region in a prominent position. The Banaras zamindari had a proper and a flourishing network of bankers, who maintained this credit flow which not only proved beneficial to the Rajas of Banaras but also to the *Nawabs* of Awadh and latter on to the East India Company. These bankers were instrumental in proper functioning of the Banaras state. These

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<sup>1</sup> K.P. Mishra, 'The Role of the Banaras bankers in the Economy of Eighteenth Century Upper India', Proceedings of the 34th Session, *Indian History Congress*, Chandigarh. (1973), pp-63-76.

bankers emerged as an integral part of social, economic and political aspect of the Banaras zamindari. They invested money where ever the need be. They financed trade, manufacture and agricultural production. They even played a crucial role in the collection and remittance of revenue in the Banaras zamindari. The progressive monetization of rent and revenue farming under the Rajas of Banaras brought merchants and bankers in close connection with the agrarian society. Like the aristocracy the zamindars, farmers and local traders and manufacturers highly depended on these banking firms and their agents.

And thus to have a better understanding of the banking structure in eighteenth century Banaras, first, it is essential to understand the meaning of indigenous banking. But in those days indigenous banking did not mean the operation of joint stock or cooperative banks like the modern-day banking system. In those days it was basically referred to as the functioning and operations of the indigenous bankers. These bankers were not required to register themselves as such under any law of the realm. There is, therefore, no legal definition of the term indigenous banker available. Nor does the census contain any information on them.<sup>2</sup> But the problem arises when we have to differentiate between these money lenders and bankers.

The situation becomes complex because in India people who were engaged only in lending out their own personal or family funds at interest were also called bankers. They engaged in no other activities. Hence, the most pertinent question that arises is, are these moneylenders entitled to be called bankers? And how are they distinguished from the other types of moneylenders? The difference between a banker and a moneylender is quite a debatable topic as there are no clear lines drawn between them and their functions are often seen overlapping each other. L. C. Jain, in his study, has defined the term banker as,

‘any individual or private firm which, in addition to making loans either receives deposits or deals in *hundis*, or both, each of which functions clearly belongs to the province of banking, while the term moneylender means any individual or private firm which makes loans, but usually does not receive deposits or deal in *hundis*.’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> L.C. Jain., *Indigenous Banking in India*, Macmillan and co, London, 1929, p-1.

<sup>3</sup> L.C. Jain., *Indigenous Banking in India*, Macmillan and co, London, 1929, p-3.

The origin and development of banking and credit in India can be traced from very early times. And the bankers have been an indispensable pillar of the Indian economy and society. There are plenty of evidences that prove to us that even before the advent of banking in Europe, India was familiar with the concept of banking and it was practiced well before the rest of the world was still in the process to evolve money as a medium of exchange. Loans and usury were well understood in those days. Since then, banking and usury were considered full-fledged businesses but were not organized on specific institutional patterns, though had essential elements of them.<sup>4</sup> During the medieval period, indigenous bankers played an important role in lending money and financing of trade and commerce. Town, big or small, had 'Seth' or 'Nagar Seth' who performed a number of banking functions. According to Cooke, 'the Empire had its banker, the *Subah* had its banker, the *zilla* had its banker and the village had its banker. Each in his sphere exercised an engrossing influence'.<sup>5</sup> These *seths*, besides lending money, were instrumental in transferring funds from place to place mainly through *hundis*.

During Mughal rule the issue of various kinds of metallic money in different parts of the country gave the indigenous bankers great opportunities for developing a profitable business of money changing and the most important among them were appointed mint officers, revenue collectors, bankers, and money changers to government in various parts of the Empire. A few of these indigenous bankers became quite famous and wielded political influence. Their role in the collection of taxes, and as financiers of rulers, for their military and commercial needs helped many of them to rise to high posts in the government, particularly in the tax administration. For example Lala Kashmiri Mal of Banaras acted as treasurer for *Nawab* as well as the East India Company.<sup>6</sup>

Similar was the case with Banaras, from the very beginning Banaras had been a large nexus of trade and commerce. Due to its religious nature, it has seen the flocking of pilgrims, traders and merchants from every part of the country. And along with trade and commerce, banking and money lending became an integral part of the economy

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<sup>4</sup> *The Indian Central Banking Enquiry Committee Report*, part 1, Calcutta, 1931, pp- 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> C.N. Cooke, *The Rise, Progress and Present Condition of Banking in India*, Calcutta, 1863, p-11-12

<sup>6</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 834, p-258.

of Banaras since ancient times.<sup>7</sup> Banking also played a vital role in the growth and development of trade and commerce in Banaras. The businessmen called *Shroffs*, *Seths*, *Sahukars*, *Mahajans* carried on the business of banking. These indigenous bankers included very small money lenders to *shroffs* with big businesses. During the eighteenth century, these indigenous bankers played a very vital role in lending money and financing trade and commerce. They were also engaged in the profitable business of money changing. The Banaras bankers played a very crucial role in revenue collection and its remittance on behalf of the *Nawab* of Awadh, the Raja of Banaras, and even later on for the East India Company. The bankers and moneylenders provided funds to these rulers to meet their revenue obligations, military expenses other miscellaneous expenses. And hence the Banaras bankers acquired a prominent position in this region.

### BANKING CASTES IN THE BANARAS RAJ

On closely studying and analyzing the Banaras bankers in the sources, we find that as far as money lending was concerned any individual or firm that had some extra money at its disposal lent it out at interest in order to boost its limited income. Money lending did not involve any specific caste or sect of the society, it was basically seen that people with spare money at their disposal often lent it out so that they could earn some profits and hence it was mostly seen that the money was lent to neighbours, relatives and acquaintances and were given money at interest. When in need, masters gave small loans to their domestic servants, women were advanced loans against the security of their gold and silver ornaments, etc.

But the scenario with banking was entirely different and was concentrated in the hands of fewer castes. Out of the four *varnas*, viz., the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Sudras, the principal *varna* that was engaged in banking were the Vaishyas.<sup>8</sup> Though in the Banaras region banking was not limited to the Vaishyas and we see that the Kshatriyas as well as Brahmins were also engaged in this lucrative

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<sup>7</sup> Moneylenders called seths or bankers existed in the fifth and sixth century Banaras. According to the Katakaha Jataka a slave of a banker forged a letter and obtained the daughter of another banker in marriage. L.C. Jain., *Indigenous Banking in India*, Macmillan and co, London, 1929, p-5.

<sup>8</sup> L.C. Jain., *Indigenous Banking in India*, Macmillan and co, London, 1929, p-28.

business.<sup>9</sup> This can be testified by two letters that were signed by the bankers of Banaras. The first was the letter signed in November, 1787 A.D. by about two hundred and ninety *mahajans* of Banaras and handed over to Jonathan Duncan, the Resident of Banaras.<sup>10</sup> It was a testimony of Governor-General, Warren Hastings's good conduct towards the inhabitants of Banaras so that it could be used in favour of him during his impeachment trial in England, that quoted, "we bankers and traders are Residents of Banaras city. We truly testify that Governor Warren Hastings has not robbed us nor has forcefully acquired any land or wealth".<sup>11</sup> And the second was a petition signed by various merchants, traders and bankers regarding the increase in duties on various articles of merchandise that was sent to the East India Company. According to this petition,

"The merchants being the ancient inhabitants of the Banaras city, the government should extract the duties on their goods according to the rate those of the sanyasi merchants. And the duties on their goods continuously imported on the boats from the east may be paid into the custom house at Banaras."<sup>12</sup>

These testimonies give us an insight into the numeric strength and caste of the Banaras bankers.

On scrutinizing the names in the above letters, it could easily be made out that in Banaras the majority of the bankers belonged to the Vaishyas *varna*, whose main occupation was primarily to engage in trading activities according to the caste system and also acted as money lenders. Their banking and money lending operations was pan India and hardly there was a town where they were not present. They were further classified into castes like *Banias* and sub castes like Agrawals, Oswals, Maheswaris, etc. The Banias had a keen interest in business and trading activities and had specialization in various branches of trade and commerce, like brokerage, money-changing, banking, and insurance. There were influential Banias whose business was widespread and elaborate and hence they conducted their business from their offices known as *kothis* with the help of their agents and correspondents. Often the Banias combined commodity trade with money-lending and banking.

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<sup>9</sup> M.A. Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes, as Represented in Banaras*, Trubner and co., Calcutta, 1872, pp- 277-299.

<sup>10</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, appendix-3, pp- 442-445.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> *Duncan Records*, basta no.-2, vol- 11, 1788, p-175.



The Bania community was a dominant class involved in the business and banking sector throughout medieval times. According to Banarasidas, a famous banker of Banaras and the author of *Ardhkathanak*, “learning was meant for a Brahman or Bhatt. The son of a Banikor merchant (Bania) should sit in the marketplace.”<sup>13</sup> Bania community’s success could be attributed to the fact that they learned and perfected their skills with vigour and intelligence from the very childhood and passed on these traits from one generation to another. Another major reason for their success was the training they received from early childhood in arithmetic, accountancy, and methods of business which was sharpened by constant competition with their peers. The Vaishyas were divided into various professional groups that competed with each other but on a larger perspective, they had a sense of kinship which often enabled them to join together in social intercourses and business enterprises. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, a French traveler of the seventeenth century has given a prolific account of the Banias in his travelogue. According to him,

“The third caste is that of the Banias, who attach themselves to trade, some being Shroffs, i. e. money-changers or bankers, and the others brokers, by whose agency the merchants buy and sell. The members of this caste are so subtle and skilful in trade that, as I have elsewhere said, they could give lessons to the most cunning Jews. They accustom their children at an early age to shun slothfulness, and instead of letting them go into the streets to lose their time at play, as we generally allow ours, teach them arithmetic, which they learn perfectly, using for it neither pen nor counters, but the memory alone, so that in a moment they will do a sum, however difficult it may be. They are always with their fathers, who instruct them in trade, and do nothing without at the same time explaining it to them.”<sup>14</sup>

The Marwaris were a major group of Bania sub castes that traced their origins to Marwar state in Rajputana (Rajasthan) and central India, and gradually spread over the entire northern region including Banaras. Then there were Jain bankers also. They were among one of the richest communities of India which belonged to the Rajputana (present-day Rajasthan) and from here they migrated and settled in various other parts of India. Some of the Maheswari and Oswal sub caste in Banaras also followed the

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<sup>13</sup> Banarasidas, *Ardhkathanak: a half story*, tr. Rohini Chowdhary, Penguin Books, 2009, pp- 148-150. Banarasidas was a famous banker of Banaras in the sixteenth century, who wrote his autobiography named *Ardhkathanak* in the seventeenth century.

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels In India*, Vol.-2, Tr. V. Ball, Ed. William Croke, London, 1925, p-94.

Jain religion. This community was found in all commercial marts of the north Indian plains. They were also found in important villages and small towns. They were fairly affluent. The Jains were engaged in trade at all levels, especially in the trade of jewels and precious stones in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. This community participated in inter-regional commerce and acted as both whole-sellers as well as retailers. The profits generated through trade enabled them to function as bankers and moneylenders. These profits were again ploughed back into commercial pursuits and contributed to their material prosperity.

Next we have the Khattri bankers of Banaras who belonged to the Kshatriya caste. The Khattris were equivalent to the Rajput tribe i.e., both were warriors and soldiers. According to Tavernier, “the caste does not exclusively consist of people who follow arms as a profession. It is only the Rajputs who go to war, and who are all cavaliers; but as for the Ketris (Khattris) they have degenerated from the bravery of their ancestors, having quitted arms for merchandise.”<sup>15</sup> The Khattris originally belonged to Punjab and from here they migrated to various cities of the Indian subcontinent. Nothing certain could be attested as to when they had migrated and settled in the Banaras zamindari. They were further divided into two categories the Purbiya Khattris or the eastern Khattris and the Pacchaina Khattri or the western Khattris.<sup>16</sup> The Pacchaina Khattris of the Banaras region were further classified into various clans like Arora, Sethi, Paliwall, etc.

On closely examining the list we find out that after the Vaishyas community, the majority of the bankers in the Banaras zamindari belonged to the Brahman and the Gosains caste respectively. The *Gosains* were basically Hindu devotees who were devoted to religious life. According to M.A. Sherring, the *Gosains* are commonly defined as,

“any devotee is called a Gosain, whether he lives a life of celibacy or not, whether he roams about the country collecting alms, or resides in a house like the rest of the people, whether he leads an idle existence, or employs himself in trade.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels In India*, Vol.-2, Tr. V. Ball, Ed. William Crooke, London, 1925, pp- 93-94.

<sup>16</sup> M.A. Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes, as Represented in Banaras*, Trubner and co., Calcutta, 1872, p-278.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p-255.

In the Banaras region the Gosains held a respectable position and carried out the banking and money lending business on a large scale. Their *maths* or monasteries acted as offices and *kothis* from where they transacted their business. One of the principal bankers of the city of Mirzapur was a *Mahant* (highest priest) of the Gosains

But on analyzing the list of Banaras bankers and various other references of Banaras banking system, there are no evidences of Muslims being involved in this occupation. Their absence has been explained by the fact that in Islam charging interest on loans is considered a sin, prohibited by Islamic law and therefore, Muslim according to this view kept them aloof from the usury business.<sup>18</sup> On closer examination of the sources, we find that though there were various Muslim communities like the Bohra merchants of Gujarat, the Pathans, etc, who carried on this lucrative trade of banking and money lending from different parts of the country, there is a possibility that these Muslim communities may have been present in the Banaras zamindari. But the numerical strength of Muslim bankers must have remained insignificant and for this reason, they do not find mention in any of the sources related to the Banaras zamindari.

Some of the prominent bankers like Lala Bachhraj were Jain, Kashmiri Mal was a Pacchaina Khattri, Gopal Das and Manohar Das were Agrawals. The majority of the bankers and their ancestors had migrated to Banaras from various other parts of the country like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab and western regions of United Province (present day Uttar Pradesh). For example, the ancestor's Kalyan Das and Chitamani Das of the leading banker of Banaras, Sahu Gopal Das had migrated to Banaras zamindari from Amroha (a city in western Uttar Pradesh) around the seventeenth century and settled in Chunar district.<sup>19</sup> Most of the bankers and moneylenders of the Banaras region were not natives of Banaras zamindari. Whether it be the Jains, Marwaris, Agrawals, Maheswaris, Khattris, etc all had migrated to the Banaras region in search of added security and better opportunities. During the eighteenth century the nodal points of the trade like Delhi, Agra, Hissar, etc were shrouded by political uncertainty, while Banaras region along with Patna, Murshidabad proved to be a safe haven for the firms hence we see that there was an increase in the branch firms or agencies (*kothis*) in the Banaras region during the eighteenth century.

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<sup>18</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publication, New Delhi, p-170.

<sup>19</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p-339.

## ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE BANKING SYSTEM

To have a proper understanding of the banking system in the Banaras Raj, it is necessary to analyze the structure, organization and working of the banking sector of Banaras in the eighteenth century, which is not an easy task because of the lack of organization. But on closely scrutinizing, we come across various levels at which this indigenous banking system worked and functioned and this could be divided into two levels.

At the lowest level we find the village money lenders advancing loans to the poor village inhabitants either in cash or kind. These money lenders can be further classified into two categories viz., the village Bania and the Mahajans.<sup>20</sup> The village Banias were basically petty traders who dealt in trade of grains or were general shop keepers. They generally sold goods on credit and gave money in small sums. Their capital investment was small. Most of their loans were called '*dastgarda*' or '*hathudhar*'<sup>21</sup> in which there was neither the need of any document nor witness and the loan was granted on simple promise or oath to it pay back on the fore said time. Secondly, there were the professional moneylenders termed as Mahajans whose prime business was to deal in loans. His business was on a large scale with large sum of investment than the village Bania and had numerous clients.

At the next level there was the urban credit agencies who were also divide into two categories similar to their village counterparts. The first were the small moneylenders or Sahukars whose business was confined to the local town and neighbouring suburbs. And the second were the moneylenders called *sarrafs* or *kothiwal*s who ran their firms on the names of their ancestors and had their branches and agents scattered in various other towns and cities in the country. The second type was very difficult to classify because their activities overlapped to that of a moneylender and a banker. Some of them were pure money lenders while others business resembled that of a banker. *Sarraff* was basically a bullion broker, whose main occupation was to execute orders for ornament and was to advance gold and silver to goldsmith and other citizens when they required like the Banaras *tarkash*. His business consisted of mainly discounting

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<sup>20</sup> *The Report of the United Provinces Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee*, 1930, Calcutta, p-47.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p-48.

and dealing of *hundis* and he also lent money on promissory notes or *sarkhats*, on mortgage of property and security of silver and gold ornaments.<sup>22</sup> And this type of financing was most common among the silk weavers and brassware manufacturers of Banaras. Then at last were the *kothiwals* who were big business magnates and handled large capitals and investments. Their offices and branches were spread all over the country in important centers where they had their firms or *kothis* and employed *gomashtas*, agents or *munims* who looked after their business.<sup>23</sup> They deployed their *munims* irrespective of their caste. C. A. Bayly cites that many banking firms in Banaras employed hereditary families of *munims* and *gomashtas*. For example, in 1780s, the house of Manohar Das employed Harak Ram Tiwari, a Brahmin, as their *gomashta* in Calcutta. The Azmatagarh Agrawal family of Azamgarh and Banaras had hereditary Gujarati *munims*. Khattris in Banaras often employed Brahmin and Punjabi Saraswat Brahmins as their agents.<sup>24</sup>

The bankers of Banaras had their own guilds and *panchayats*. They generally settled their disputes within their community through the *panchayat*. In the case of Kashmiri Mal vs. Gopal Das in 1786 A. D., the dispute was settled by the *panchayat* of bankers, which we come to know from the letter of Lala Kashmiri Mal that was written to the Governor General informing him that the dispute had been resolved by arbitration.<sup>25</sup> This was also the period when the mercantile groups cutting across caste boundaries were emerging in Banaras. Inter and intra-regional trade links necessitated the inclusion of people from outside the community and this inclusion was purely on the basis of trust. As mentioned by C. A. Bayly earlier, the large banking houses often employed Brahmins and members of other castes as their managers and agents. In 1750 A.D., when *Nawab* Shuja-ud-Daula demanded a huge loan from the bankers of Banaras, a group of them called *Naupati Sabha* was formed by the bankers themselves to meet the *Nawab*'s demands. The *Naupati Sabha* which also meant 'the Society of Nine Sharers' included two Gujarati Vaishya families, three Agrawals, two Brahmins and a Khattri. *Naupati Mahajans* regulated and controlled banking activities in Banaras. According to Bayly, the *Naupati Mahajans* controlled the rates of *hundi*, arbitrated many of the mercantile disputes within the city and maintained the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pp- 62-63.

<sup>23</sup> L.C. Jain., *Indigenous Banking in India*, Macmillan and co, London, 1929, p-36.

<sup>24</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Indian Merchants in the Traditional Setting- 1780-1830*, London, 1978, p-179.

<sup>25</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 914, p-275.

list of creditworthy individuals. These groups also, generated huge amounts of money when needed. They extended loans and other financial transactions through their *hundis* to other merchants also.<sup>26</sup> At the village level these big urban moneylenders had their agents who were generally village traders and shopkeepers also called *bakkals*, who provide loans to the cultivators as well as to village elites.<sup>27</sup> These big bankers or *kothiwals* even remitted the revenue for the Rajas of Banaras and even acted as bankers for the *Nawab* of Awadh and for the East India Company by the close of the eighteenth century.

After the organization of the indigenous banking of Banaras, we move forward to examine the functions of each. Considering the money lenders first, they gave money on loan for seeds, cattle and other miscellaneous items and at times they even lent seeds and cattle to the local farmers and agriculturists on the security of future harvest or against the mortgage of movable or immovable property. The loans were generally in both cash and kind. Whereas on the other hand the indigenous bankers or *kothiwals* performed all the operations of a money lender and in addition to these functions they were largely engaged in discounting *hundis*, money changing and insurance of goods. The bankers and moneylenders served as financiers to the traders and merchants. Other than this, all the indigenous bankers appear to have been traders and merchants before they tried their hands at the banking sector. It appears that the profit earned by them from their trade and the accumulation of wealth by their respective families encouraged them to kick-start their banking business. And hence we see that many banking magnates carried on their allied businesses also. They were engaged in almost every field of trade and commerce. They were grain dealers, merchants, jewelers, brokers, land owners and etc. They even advanced loans to artisans and craftsmen. They financed the agriculture industry of Banaras by lending out money and grains to cultivators and peasants. For instance, the house of Gopal Das and Manohar Das began as small-time trading house in the upcountry cotton trade and

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<sup>26</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Indian Merchants in the Traditional Setting- 1780-1830*, London, 1978, p-179.

<sup>27</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-167-168.

they eventually consolidated their position as specialist remitters of revenue for the local potentates and country powers.<sup>28</sup>

From some of the references and records in the English and Persian, we find that the bankers of Banaras were not only involved in advancement of loans to merchants, traders and common masses but were equally involved in advancing loans and assisting the Mughal princes, the *Nawab* of Awadh, the Rajas of Banaras and even the English East India Company. For instance, we see that when in the year 1712 A. D. the Mughal prince Farrukhsiyar marched to Delhi from Bengal at Banaras, he raised a loan of one crore rupees on the security of his empire from the *nagarseths* and other leading bankers of Banaras.<sup>29</sup> Then latter on we see another example of the eldest son of Jahandar Shah, Prince Mirza Shigufta Bakht who was indebted to a banker of Banaras and the amount reached up to a sum of thirty thousand rupees.<sup>30</sup> And so was the *Nawab* of Awadh, Asaf-ud-Daula drowned till neck in the debt to the bankers of Banaras.<sup>31</sup>

There are plenty of evidences that the Bankers here in Banaras were not only involved in the remittance of the revenue from the *amil* to the Raja and to his officials but they were also directly involved in the collection of the revenue and taking territory on lease from the Raja of Banaras for revenue collections. Balwant Singh after acquiring the *sarkar* of Ghazipur by ousting out the former zamindars appointed his trusted men for the collection and remittance of revenue of this territory which also included some of the prominent bankers and *Mahajans* of Banaras. For example, Nand Ram was granted the *parganas* of *Haveli* Ghazipur and Bhaiya Ram and Lala Nand Kishore were entrusted with the collection of Muhammadabad and Bhariabad respectively. There are also instances when bankers like Sheo Lal Dube took revenue farms in the *sarkar* of Jaunpur on lease from the Raja of Banaras and later from the Resident.<sup>32</sup> Apart from this, even the Rajas of Banaras took loans from bankers. A similar case is reported when in 1788 A. D. Raja Mahip Narayan took a loan of eighty five thousand

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<sup>28</sup> Lakshmi Subramanyam, 'Banias and the British: The Role of Indigenous Credit in the Process of Imperial Expansion in Western India in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 21, 1987, p- 495.

<sup>29</sup> J.H. Little, 'The House of Jagat Seth', *BPP*, vol-20, Calcutta, 1920, p-130.

<sup>30</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1792-93*, vol-10, Delhi, 1959, letter no- 440, pp-80-81.

<sup>31</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-195.

<sup>32</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-168.

rupees from the banking firm of Shiv Laal Dube to pay off his debits to the Company.<sup>33</sup>

Even the British depended extensively on indigenous bankers and money changers for transferring money and raising loans in the initial years of their presence. This dependence continued well into the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century to aid the expansion and consolidation of the British Empire. The big bankers of Banaras and the widespread branches of their *kothis* (firms) played a very important role in financial transactions of the Company throughout India and they emerged as chief remitters of Company's finances. In the eighteenth century, the British used this structure to support their political and military operations. For example, in 1789-90 A.D. when the company was in dire need of money due to the ongoing war in Mysore, the houses of Kashmiri Mal and Manohar Das of Banaras had advanced cash loans to the Company's government to assist its military operations in the south.<sup>34</sup> And even the Banaras bankers are said to have played a significant part in transferring funds from the Bengal Government across the country to assist Wellesley's wars against the Marathas. Bulk of Bombay Governments supplies were channeled through the Banaras bankers. According to Irfan Habib 'the Company's own commercial interests throughout northern and western India relied on the good offices of the Hindustani banking houses'.<sup>35</sup> During the 1780s the remittance from fort William for all political purposes seemed to be funneled exclusively through the house of Gopal Das Manohar Das and from Surat through their local agent.<sup>36</sup> The prominence of Banaras bankers in the dealings with the company and their stature in the financial dealings could be easily guessed by the reputation they had in front of the English authorities. In 1789 A.D. Duncan remarked that the House of the late Gopal Das stands too high in mercantile repute to admit even a doubt to its credit.<sup>37</sup> Other than the administrative and military needs of the East India Company, the Banaras bankers also fulfilled the commercial requirements of the company. They also advanced loans for their commercial purposes for instance

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<sup>33</sup> V.A. Narian, *Jonathan Duncan and Varanasi*, Calcutta, p-67.

<sup>34</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1790-91*, vol-9, Delhi, 1949, letter no- 1588, p-323.

<sup>35</sup> Irfan Habib, 'Usury in Medieval India', *CSSH*, Vol.6, 1964, pp- 401-05.

<sup>36</sup> Lakshmi Subramanyam, 'Banias and the British: The Role of Indigenous Credit in the Process of Imperial Expansion in Western India in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 21, 1987, p- 496.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p-497.



East India Company had withdrawn two thousand Banaras *sicca* from the house of Manohar Das for the purchase of cotton.<sup>38</sup>

Thus the bankers played a very crucial role in the collection and remittance of revenue of the Banaras zamindari. As a result, not only the *amils* but the Raja and even the Resident had to pay heed to the terms of bankers. According to C. A. Bayly, fifteen large banking houses in Lucknow and Banaras handled revenue of around forty lakhs of rupees of Banaras between the years 1760 to 1780 A. D. And on this they charged a service fee of two and a half percent or more.<sup>39</sup> And hence it is clear that this gave the bankers of Banaras considerable political power. Even Jonathan Duncan acknowledged that the bankers here could easily command the Raja as well as the government<sup>40</sup> as was in the case of Kulb Ali who was an *amil* and had failed to pay his revenue to the Raja. Then the bankers appropriated rupees 17,084 on the plea of repaying Kulb Ali's debts to them for the preceding year.<sup>41</sup> The Resident ordered the refunding of this amount to the public revenue. But this received a backlash from the bankers of Banaras as they were offended and hence, they combined together and refused to give notes called the *dakhillas* for the next installment of the revenue until the Resident agreed to deposit the amount in one of their houses.<sup>42</sup> And because of this Duncan found himself in a mess as according to the rule prevalent in those days, the *amil* could only collect the revenue at the time of harvest while he had to pay to the government every month which he did with the help of banker's *dakhilas* or credit notes.<sup>43</sup> This system made the *amils* the permanent debtor of the bankers, who extracted money at their own terms and condition. Thus the Banaras bankers were essential to the Raja as well as the government for the release and deposit of the revenue. We see that they emerged as a strong power group who not only forced the Resident to alter his decision by uniting against the Resident's order. Give an example. They could effectively force not only *amils* or the Raja but also the Resident for their benefits.

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<sup>38</sup> *Duncan Record*, basta no-3, vol- 15, June 1788, p-77.

<sup>39</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-169.

<sup>40</sup> A. Shakespeare, *Selections from the Duncan Records*, vol-1, Banaras, 1873, p-34.

<sup>41</sup> A. Shakespeare, *Selections from the Duncan Records*, vol-1, Banaras, 1873, p-33.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p-34.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, pp-33-34.

## MODUS OPERANDI OF INDIGENOUS BANKING

The banking system in those times was different from the modern banking system. The most essential part of the banking in the eighteenth century was the issuance of *hundis* or bankers draft and bills of exchange. *Hundis* were used as a form of payment to transfer money from place to place. *Hundis* were basically ‘a written order usually unconditional made by one person to another for the payment, on demand or after a specified time, of a certain sum of money to a person named therein’.<sup>44</sup> Principally the *hundis* issued in the eighteenth century by Banaras bankers were of two types: the first was called the *darshani* and the second was the *miyadi*. The *darshani* were the bills payable on demand or sight, while the *miyadi* were the bills payable after a fixed period of time mentioned in the hundi and reckoned from the date of drawing. The *miyadi hundis* were also known as *muddati*. In drawing and discounting of a *hundi*, generally three parties were involved: a drawer, a drawee, and a payee. *Hundis* were the safest and most convenient mode of transaction, especially where there were long distance transactions.

The use of *hundis* was not only confined to transacting business requirements or collection and remittance of revenue rather it was also used by pilgrims who visited Banaras. Banaras being a great center of religious repute saw the flocking of devotees and travelers from all over India. And these religious devotes and visitors often brought with them *hundis* issued by their local bankers to Banaras, as *hundis* were the safest means of transaction. *Hundis* eliminated the risk involved in carrying money like theft and robbery. Banaras bankers and *sarrafs* would easily discount their *hundis* and pay them the required cash which they needed for their stay and performance of ceremonious rites in the city of Banaras.<sup>45</sup>

Another important function of bankers other than issuing *hundis* was advancing loans to individuals or groups of people on a certain rate of interest. Advancing loans on interest is the most common task of the bankers and moneylenders of the eighteenth century. These bankers had income mainly from interest on loans and commission charges on *hundis*. The rate of interest charged by these bankers often varied from

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<sup>44</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-186.

<sup>45</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-193.

person to person. The rate of interest on these loans ranged from three percent to twelve percent depending upon the credit of the merchant in the market.<sup>46</sup> The Banaras bankers advanced various kinds of loans. The most common method of lending money was on a written promissory note. Promissory note was basically a note promising to pay back the principal amount along with the interest charged on it. These notes were signed between the money lender and the borrower after settling the rate of interest on the borrowed amount.<sup>47</sup> One other common method of lending money was on *rahan*, or on mortgage of landed property or houses.<sup>48</sup> This system of mortgaging property was prevalent almost everywhere in the country. Money could easily be obtained on the security of property, usually up to one-half of the market value, at a very advantageous rate of interest as compared with that of a simple loan on personal security. Another popular system of money-lending was pawning or the system of *girvin*. Accordingly in the pawning system the money was lent against the pledge of gold and silver ornaments. It was the most common type of loan in which the poor and needy men and women were often seen keeping their ornaments and household commodities as security against the loans they took from local moneylenders or village Banias.

The rate of interest between *shroffs* of Banaras who had their *kothis* or banking houses was from four *annas* percent to eight *annas* percent. While, the rate of interest that the bankers and *shroffs* charged on loans given to merchants, traders, jewelers etc was eight *annas* percent. On gold coin the rate of interest was four *annas* per month or three percent per annum. Other than this there are references of the bankers of Banaras even advancing loans to small or low level traders and service providers like tellis or oil-sellers, Kunjaras or Gram-Sellers, Inn-keepers, wood-seller, boatmen, washer-men, barbers, butchers and shoe-makers etc. They were also advancing money to the artisans like weavers, goldsmiths, smiths, and cotton cleaners. These loans were often termed *hoondi* or *Ugahi*, where the rate of interest was forty eight percent per annum.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> A. Shakespeare, *Selections from the Duncan Records*, vol-1, Banaras, 1873, p-266.

<sup>47</sup> L.C. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, Macmillan and co, London, 1929, p-55.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p-60.

<sup>49</sup> A. Shakespeare, *Selections from the Duncan Records*, vol-1, Banaras, 1873, pp- 266-270.

## BANKERS AND THEIR NETWORKS

Some of the prominent bankers of Banaras were Lala Bachhraj, Lala Kashmiri Mal, Gopal Das, Chaturbhuj Das, Braj Raman Das Chaman Das, Ballabh Das Dwarka Das, Arjuni Nathji and Kaitji Tralokji. These Banaras bankers had their banking houses in cities like Calcutta, Murshidabad, Patna, Gaya, Allahabad, Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Poona, Surat, Bombay, Masulipattam, Madras, Baroda, Jainagar, Hyderabad, Delhi and Agra. These bankers enjoyed a high social status and were very influential. Their power can be attested from the fact that Lala Bachhraj and Kashmiri Mal were conferred with the title of Raja by the Mughal Emperor.<sup>50</sup> The bankers had their guilds and panchayats and all the matters of arbitration and dispute were solved among themselves. But in certain cases if the matter was not resolved internally, they often relied for solicitation from the Raja of Banaras, the Governor General, the Resident or other local chiefs, as we find in the case of dispute between Kashmiri Mal and Lala Gopal Das.<sup>51</sup> The concentration of the houses or *kothis* of the bankers were in the area called Naw Patti within the city of Banaras. This locality was occupied by large business magnates of Banaras.

The famous Jain banker,<sup>52</sup> Lala Bachhraj was the banker to the Raja of Banaras as well as the *Nawab* of Awadh. At various times, the leading bankers of Banaras liquidated the arrears of the *Nawab* and the Raja to the Company by granting bills in advance of payment by them. For example, in 1784 A. D., Lala Bachhraj paid the sum of Rs. 10,384,420 due from *Nawab* Asaf-ud-Daula, being the balance of the year 1782-83 A. D. and subsidy for the use of Company's troops for 1783-84 A. D.<sup>53</sup> Bachhraj was appointed as the treasurer of Raja Mahip Narayan of Banaras in the year 1784-85 A. D. and the very next year he received a *khilat* or robe of honour from Governor General for his services. Later on, he also became the *khazanachi* or treasury officer at Lucknow in 1798 A. D.<sup>54</sup> Lala Bachhraj along with Kashmiri Mal was the principal receiver of *Nawab*'s revenue from the Raja, and after the transfer of Banaras

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<sup>50</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-171.

<sup>51</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 729, pp-238-239.

<sup>52</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-173.

<sup>53</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1781-85*, vol-6, Delhi, 1938, letter no- 967, p-328.

<sup>54</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 370, p-133.

to English became the chief remitter of the Company through *hundis* payable by his agents at Calcutta.

Similarly, Lala Kashmiri Mal, a Khattri,<sup>55</sup> was another prominent banker of Banaras. He started his career as a banker and financier to the *Nawab* of Awadh and later on became the treasurer of the Raja of Banaras and the English East India Company in 1780s. He had his business houses in cities like Bombay, Surat, Poona, Jainagar, Delhi, and other cities.<sup>56</sup> Moti Chandra in his book '*Kashi ka itihaas*' cites that, Kashmiri Mal had cordial relation with Lala Bachhraj<sup>57</sup> and they were business partners. He was also at good terms with Warren Hastings. And we come to know about their healthy relationship from the fact that Kashmiri Mal used to send gift to Hastings<sup>58</sup> and even he had full faith in him, whenever a Company's guest would visit Banaras, Kashmiri Mal was made the in charge to look after that guest. But after 1786 A. D., the house of Kashmiri Mal declined after some dispute with another banker Gopal Das over some *hundis*. Gopal Das wrote a letter to Manohar Das telling him that Kashmiri Mal has not paid four bills of total value of rupees 124460 *annas* five and six *pie*.<sup>59</sup>

Another prominent banking house of Banaras in the 1780s was the house of Bhaiyaram Gopal Das. Gopal Das belonged to the Agrawal community, who had settled in Banaras from Amroha in the seventeenth century.<sup>60</sup> Other than Banaras, the banking house of Gopal Das had its main branches at Ghazipur, Mirzapur, Calcutta, Murshidabad, Patna, Gaya, Allahabad, Tanda, Phulpur, Lucknow, Bareilly Jaipur, Nagpur, Poona, Surat, Bombay, Masulipattam, Madras, Ahmadabad, Baroda, Agra And Delhi.<sup>61</sup> After the decline of banking house of Kashmiri Mal, Gopal Das emerged as the chief banker of the *Nawab* of Awadh, the Raja Banaras and the Company. According to a letter by Gulam Pir, the *Nawab* of Farrukhabad, Muzaffar Jang, appointed Gopal Das as the treasurer and *tehsildar* of Farrukhabad.<sup>62</sup> The importance of banking house of Gopal Das can be attributed from the fact that when Gopal Das

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<sup>55</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p-232.

<sup>56</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 834, p-258.

<sup>57</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p-344.

<sup>58</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1776-80*, vol-5, Calcutta, 1930, letter no- 373, p-59.

<sup>59</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 729, p-238-239.

<sup>60</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p-339.

<sup>61</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 1182, p-326.

<sup>62</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1781-85*, vol-6, Delhi, 1938, letter no- 674, p-248.

died in 1787 A. D., the Governor General sent the Resident at Banaras to pay condolence to the brother of the deceased, Bhawani Das and instructed him to carry on patronizing the banking firm as before.<sup>63</sup> Similar letters were also sent to the Resident at Lucknow, Governor of Bombay and the chief of Surat factory directing them to keep patronizing the banking house as before.<sup>64</sup>

After the death of Gopal Das the banking firm got divided, Bhawani Das started his separate business while Manohar Das, the elder son of Gopal Das took over the charge of business in Calcutta and his brother took control of the firm in Banaras.<sup>65</sup> Manohar Das had written a letter to the Governor General reminding him to bestow the post of the treasurer of the city of Banaras in lieu to the help extended to the company during the campaign of Surat and Madras.<sup>66</sup> The firm of Gopal Das Manohar Das even came for the company's aid when the finance of the Company was under strain due to the long war in Mysore in 1789-90 A.D. To facilitate the payment of the money they opened a new branch at Hyderabad in 1790 A. D. and paid four and a half million rupees at Bombay within twelve months.<sup>67</sup> This brought the banking house of Gopal Das in the good books of the Governor General.

Thus there is no doubt that Banaras zamindari that was located in the heart of the Gangetic plain witnessed an accelerated traffic of trade and commerce in the eighteenth century. Banaras being a religious center of great repute and being located on the route of inter and intra-regional trade attracted various groups of merchants, traders, artisans, weavers, and even people of great repute like the rulers of various regions and members of royal family etc. which led to the increase in the status of Banaras zamindari as a commercial center. Bankers of Banaras played a predominant role in these activities. As seen above the Banaras bankers were an indispensable limb of the economy of Banaras. This increased volume of merchandise and commercial activity led to the flow of money at all levels thus making the role of bankers and moneylenders more prominent and significant.

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<sup>63</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 1181(i), p-326.

<sup>64</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 1181 (ii), p-326.

<sup>65</sup> Moti Chandra, *Kashi ka Itihaas*, Bombay, 1962, p-349.

<sup>66</sup> *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: 1785-87*, vol-7, Delhi, 1940, letter no- 1468, p-379.

<sup>67</sup> K.P. Mishra, *Banaras in Transition: 1738-1795*, Munshiram Manoharlal publication, New Delhi, p-173.

The bankers were involved at every level in the functioning of the society. At the highest level were the big bankers who remitted the revenue of the Raja and undertook long distance financial transactions of the East India Company and the merchants through their *hundis*. At the local level, money lenders in towns and villages were facilitating the production of merchandise for trade and consumption. At the village level the agents of bankers and moneylenders, who were generally village shopkeepers, were instrumental in providing loans to the zamindars and cultivators to meet their revenue obligations. The bankers played a predominant role in revenue administration and trading and commercial activities. This role placed them in a strong position in the contemporary socio-political and economic systems. Their financial transactions were vital for the *Nawab* of Awadh, the Raja of Banaras and later to the Company. Thus, credit control by the bankers had put them covertly in a position where they could influence the state.

# **CONCLUSION**



In the Indian history, the eighteenth century occupies a special position as it is literally positioned between two empires, the Mughal regime and the colonial empire. It is often seen as a period of transition from medieval history to modern history thus the focuses more around the argument of continuity versus change. The historical writing on the eighteenth century in India is dominated by three themes that changed the structure of power and initiated important social and economic reconfigurations. The first is the decline and dissolution of the Mughal political system. The second are the attempts made by some of the regional powers to expand their power into imperial and autonomous states like emergence of regional political orders like Awadh and Banaras Raj and the third is the success of the British in garnering power and becoming the heirs to the Mughal regime. These themes are played against a picture of anarchy, chaos, turmoil, corruption, warfare, feuds and tyranny but later studies scrutinize eighteenth century in a new light of hope and anticipation and paint a more vibrant picture. They have seen the regional states and powers as separate entities showing elements of dynamism and growth.

The unity and stability of the Mughal Empire was shaken during the long and strong reign of Emperor Aurangzeb. However, in spite of setbacks and adverse circumstances the Mughal administration was still quite efficient and the Mughal army strong at the time of his death in 1707 A.D. After the death of Aurangzeb the Mughal authority weakened, it was not in a position to militarily enforce its regulations in all parts of the empire. In 1707 A. D., when Aurangzeb died, serious threats from the peripheries had begun to accentuate the problems at the core of the Empire. The new Emperors like Bahadur Shah, Jahandar Shah, and Farrukh Siyar etc were weak and ineffective ruler. Their incompetence added fuel to the worse situation and to top it all the continuous invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali added the final nails to the coffers of the Mughal Empire. They failed in their efforts to enhance the revenue collection of the state and entirely depended upon local power magnates and their officials and had miserably failed to keep a check on their officials. As a result many provincial governors started to assert their authority. In due course of time they gained independent status. At the same time many kingdoms which were subjugated by the Mughals also claimed their independence. Some new regional groups also consolidated and emerged as political powers. They relied on support from kinsmen, peasants, and smaller zamindars of their own castes. Each

local group wanted to maximize its share of the prosperity at the expense of the others. Each of the contenders in the regions, in proportion to his strength, looked for and seized opportunities to establish his dominance over the others in the neighborhood. They all needed a kind of legitimacy, which was so conveniently available in the long accepted authority of the Mughal emperor. They had no fear in collectively accepting the symbolic hegemony of the Mughal centre, which had come to co-exist with their ambitions. The gradual weakening of the central authority set in motion new types of provincial kingdoms. Nobles with ability and strength sought to build a regional base for themselves. The Mughal court's chief concern at this stage was to ensure the flow of the necessary revenue from the provinces and the maintenance of at least the appearance of imperial unity. They were left with no choice but rather had to go with the flow as they were incapable of collecting the revenue or controlling and chastising their officials.

Taking advantage of this weakness of the central power in north India Awadh became one such power and Banaras followed its footsteps though not on the same level as that of Awadh. In Awadh Saadat Khan, the provincial governor under the Mughals had set up a self-governing state and he concentrated his energies in consolidating his power and expanding the territorial boundaries of Awadh and thus acquired the territory of Banaras from the appointee of the Mughal emperor and merged it into his dominion. But the collection of revenue from Banaras region was an onerous task because of the feeling of insecurity and discontentment among the inhabitants of Banaras due to the religious intolerance that Banaras had faced during the long and extensive Muslim rule. Rustam Ali who was entrusted with the collection of the revenue of Banaras had failed and in this background his *diwan* Mansaram rose to prominence and was the only one who successfully fulfilled the revenue obligations from Banaras. His success can be attributed from the fact that the majority population of Banaras was Hindu and the people of Banaras wanted a person from among themselves who could put an end to their miseries. It is quite interesting to see that Banaras in the eighteenth century saw the emergence of a Hindu dynasty in the midst of the Muslim regimes both at the centre as well as in Awadh. The *Nawabi* rule was aware of the fact that only a Hindu ruler would be acceptable to the masses of Banaras and only Mansaram and his successors could make regular collection of revenue from Banaras. This can be attested from the fact that first Mansaram then his son Balwant

Singh were successful in ruling over Banaras and were able to advance increased revenue to the *Nawabs* from Banaras region. And henceforth Mansaram and Balwant Singh became chief revenue intermediaries of the *Awadh Nawabs* and laid the foundation of a new kingdom popularly known as Banaras Raj thus in 1738 A.D. a new dynasty emerged in Banaras. They were conferred with the title of 'Raja bahadur'.

The Rajas continuously strived to gain autonomy from the *Awadh* government but succeeded only in making the kingdom of Banaras a semi-autonomous state under the *Nawabs* through administrative manipulations, diplomacy and use of muscle power against local zamindars, chieftains and petty Rajas. They not only expanded their territorial boundaries and became rulers of a vast tract of land but also enhanced and ensured a better revenue collection. Even the *Nawabs* of *Awadh* wanted to chastise the Rajas but could not take any stringent action against them, firstly due to their involvement in the politics of Delhi and their ongoing war with the afghans of Farrukhabad and then a due to a series of invasions by Ahmad Shah Abdali. Despite of all this, Raja Balwant Singh never directly confronted or challenged the authoritative power of the *Nawabs* but rather grabbed the opportunity whenever the *Nawabs* were engaged in some or the other affairs. In doing so they even joined hands with the English. Thus we see that the Balwant Singh with his sheer dint of hard work and diplomacy were able to expand their Rajadom over a vast territory, they had inherited just eighteen parganas from Rustam Ali, which increased to ninety six at the death of Balwant Singh.

The most important development of the eighteenth century was the emergence of the east India Company in the politics of north India and with this *Awadh* and Banaras entered a new phase. The mid-eighteenth century saw the transformation of the English East India Company from trading enterprises to a political power. The declining Mughal power provided a great opportunity for the British to expand its power in this region and offered them with a base to launch their pan India campaign. The second half of eighteenth century witnessed gradual expansion of the English East India Company in north India and this had a strong bearing on the economy and politics of Banaras.

The failure of the combined forces of the *Nawab* of Bengal, Shuja-ud-Daula and the Mughal Emperor before the English forces at Buxar certainly undermined the power

and prestige of the *Nawab* of Awadh but did not hamper the growth of the Rajas of Banaras as they readily hopped into the camps of the new lords. Awadh was forced to become an ally of the Company. Whereas Banaras was initially incorporated in the Company's dominion, but was later on handed over to the Awadh government, though not for a long period of time. The Rajas of Banaras managed to gain support and patronage of the English much against the *Nawabs* will. Their accession to the kingdom of Banaras was entirely on the pleasure of the Company. Banaras essentially acted as a buffer zone between the Company's dominion and the Awadh *Nawab*'s. Thus they tried to shield their newly possessed territory of Bengal and Bihar from any sorts of encroachment and especially from the Marathas. The Company got a tremendous opportunity to project its goals in the Awadh-Banaras region and once they got these footholds, there was no looking back.

It is interesting to see here, the role of Raja Balwant Singh in the battle of Buxar. There have always been allegations on him for parting ways from the *Nawab* and cheating on him and openly siding with the English. But on closely scrutinizing the events we could see that the situation of the Raja was similar to walking on a tight rope. He tried to remain neutral and his main objective was to save his zamindari from plunder and destruction that if he openly sided with the English, the *Nawab* would have plundered Banaras even before the battle of Buxar. In the same way if he joined the *Nawab* and entered into no agreement with the English, then his position after the battle of Buxar would have jeopardized and the wrath would surely have fallen on the people of Banaras. Thus Balwant Singh's situation was grave and he took a mid way, avoiding to get crushed between the *Nawab* and the English powers.

The English were conspicuous about the fact that Balwant Singh could not be trusted but at this juncture they had no other viable alternative of Balwant Singh. Disposing the Raja of Banaras would mean deployment of forces in Banaras for an indefinite time which meant additional expenditure. And the company was in no mood to risk its newly acquired territories.

Company's interference in the affairs of state became even more marked during the reign of Chait Singh and the demands rose to such heights that the Raja could not satisfy them. The council politics led to the eviction of Chait Singh. After the expulsion of Chait Singh from the zamindari of Banaras, his successor Mahip

Narayan was exposed to a much tighter control and as well as with an increased demand of revenue obligations. The appointment of Jonathan Duncan as Resident to the Banaras zamindari further crippled the position of the Raja. He introduced various changes in the name of reforms in the administration as well as judiciary of Banaras despite of the Raja's objection and the no interference policy of the English was just on paper, all the decision making power lied in the hands of the Resident. Mahip Narayan was reduced to the status of a mere zamindar and not more than that and was restricted to the area known as the family domain of the Raja occupying the region of Gangapur, Bhadohi and Kara Mungroor.

Banaras was an agriculture dominated region like any other part of India and agriculture was the main source of income for the Banaras region. In the eighteenth century it was in a flourishing state. The growing agricultural production and expanding cultivation were quite evident and could be clearly testified by the fact that the revenue figures showed an upward trend and the Rajas could easily pay the increased revenue obligations of the *Nawab* and to some extent even to the English Company. But the increase in cesses and double duties and monopolization of certain products by the Company's servant hampered the growth of Banaras in the long run. Another very important change that occurred with the growing influence of the Company in this region was a shift towards cash cropping. This shift led to extensive cultivation of cotton, opium, sugarcane and indigo, which resulted in the localization of production and brought about a major change and dislocation in the agrarian economy of Banaras.

Geographically Banaras was endowed with natural resources and strategically it was placed in a location where it bordered the *suba* of Awadh. It was placed on the bank of the Ganges and on the highway between Delhi and Bengal and was very well connected to both the land routes and the sea routes. Banaras's proximity to the centre and to the new political and economical magnate of north India added another feather in its cap. One of the most important developments of the eighteenth century was the emergence of a new trade route between Banaras and the capitals of Awadh viz Lucknow and Faizabad. Because of the decline of Delhi and Agra, the old imperial highway passing through the Mughal capital to Bengal was not safe enough for travelling as robbery and dacoity were common here. Maratha incursion, Bundela and

Rohilla menace further aggravated the situation. This trade route further strengthened the commercial ties of Banaras with other parts of India and provided a safe means of transportation and transit for commodities and merchants thus accelerating and booming the economy of Banaras.

Economically Banaras was wealthy in eighteenth century because of its high stage of trade and agricultural prosperity. The political stability provided by strong Awadh *Nawabs* and the Rajas of Banaras enabled the economy to flourish in the eighteenth century. There was a substantial increase in trade and commerce which resulted in emergence of Banaras and its adjoining cities as new commercial hubs. Banaras being a pilgrimage centre added to the prosperity of region. The imperial cities like Agra, Delhi and Lahore had declined considerably. People, merchants and artisan migrated to the provincial capitals and other regions, where they got security, patronage and ready market for their wares and services. And Banaras along with the cities of Ghazipur, Mirzapur and Jaunpur were one such region that gained importance in the eighteenth century and became the hub of commercial activities as well as great production centers for commodities of long distance trade and saw an influx of people and traders from every part of India as well as the merchants from Nepal also. Along with these cities, small towns and local markets like haats and ganjs, with their brisk commercial activities, also point towards the flourishing economy and ongoing commercialization of economy of Banaras. The system of banking became an indispensable part of Banaras and a vital instrument in all the financial transaction of the government to all the levels whether it be the company, a petty trader or at the village level

But the victory of English Company at the battle fields of Buxar in 1764 A.D. opened up new prospects of their commerce with the region of Banaras. The Company other than gaining political benefits also became entitled, to trade in Banaras. But this growing sway of the English Company had a considerable impact on the economy of the region and as well as on the banking system. Trade and commerce of this region was exposed to the unwanted interference of the Residents like Fowke, Graham, Markham and Grant which adversely affected the economy as they tried to monopolize the trade of certain commodity to make their personal fortunes. It is evident from the sources that in the reign of Balwant Singh and the initial years of

Chait Singh, the agriculture, trade and commerce showed an upward trend. But this increase was eclipsed during the last quarter of the eighteenth century due to the Company's increasing revenue demand and extraction of various cesses from the farmers, cultivators and merchants. The dislocation caused by the change of ruler at the end of the eighteenth century damaged the basic structure of the Banaras zamindari

Thus the emergence of Banaras Raj, its consolidation and final submission under the east India

Company presents a picture of typical eighteenth century state. It was not a period of political anarchy, economic decline and social decay in totality but instead it was a period of continuity, change and transition.

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