

# **POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NAWABI AWADH: 1722-1856**

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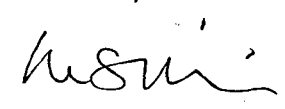
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This is to certify that the dissertation titled "Political and Cultural Developments in Nawabi Awadh: 1722-1856", which is being submitted by Kalim Masood Khan for the award of degree of Master of Philosophy, carried out by him, is his original work and has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### DECLINE OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE & THE RISE OF SUCCESSOR STATES: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The decline of the Mughal empire and the rise of Region oriented state in the eighteenth Century have generated a heated debate among the historians Concerned with this period. The early historians of Mughal India viewed the developments of the eighteenth century in terms of Mughal decline. For them the decline of the Mughals led to degeneration and deterioration of the whole society. William Irvine, in his later Mughals, assessed the Mughal decline in terms of moral decadence of the ruling elite: 'The deterioration in the character of the emperor must be held to be the primary cause of the decline in the character of the nobility and the downfall of the Empire.'<sup>1</sup> In the works of sir Jadunath Sarkar, the focus remained on Aurangzeb and his religious policy. Sarkar argued that the religious bigotry of Aurangzeb had invited widespread disturbances and rebellion ~~on~~ <sup>by</sup> the Hindu masses, this ultimately resulted in the destruction of the Mughal Political fabric.<sup>2</sup>

However, from 1960's the intervention of Aligarh School of history writing gave a new turn to the study of late medieval history of India. Prominent among the historians of this school were Satish Chandra, Irfan Habib and Athar Ali.

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<sup>1</sup> William Irvine, *Later Moghuals*, reprint Delhi, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> J. N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 4 Vols., reprint Bombay. 1971.

Rather than Subscribing to the framework of religion and moral decline of rulers, they have tried to search the reasons of Mughal decline in the working of some socio-economic forces, Satish chandra in his *Parties and Politics at the Mughal court*, studies the role of court politics between the death of Aurangzeb and the effective ending of the Mughal authority with the invasion of Nadir Shah, nevertheless he has also thrown some light on the financial problems, and institutional crisis of Aurangzeb's time. In his view the most important reason for Mughal decline was the crisis in the Jagirdari system which was structured in the working of the mansabdari system. The efficient functioning of these two institutions depended upon the availability of revenue and its collection and distribution. However when Aurangzeb involved himself in prolonged Deccan campaign then the available social surplus fell short to defray the cost of administration.<sup>3</sup> And the rise in the requirements of the ruling class with out a corresponding rise in agricultural production resulted directly or indirectly in the growth of economic pressure on the producing classes.<sup>4</sup> The Problem of shrinking fiscal base further aggravated when for the purpose of political expediency, large numbers of Deccani nobles had to be given mansabs and employment and due to the unsettled conditions in Deccan almost every noble desired a Jagir in Northern India or in the settled parts of the country and exerted his influence to that end.<sup>5</sup> The result of this unlimited demand for limited Jagirs was that of inordinate delays

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<sup>3</sup> Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, Delhi, 1954, p. xlvi.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. XVI.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. XLVIII.

in the grants of Jagirs. And when finally granted they yielded only a fraction of the sanctioned emoluments.<sup>6</sup>

This uncertainty of income from the Jagirs also demoralized the administration. Many nobles practically ceased maintaining contingents or kept a far smaller contingent than was required. And thus by the end of the Aurangzeb's reign, the Jagirdari system had reached the stage of an acute crisis, presaging a complete break down.<sup>7</sup> Satish Chandra also stresses the point that this crisis was unavoidable in the existing socio-Economic order, which was based on disordered agriculture and had no alternative options, such as industrialization, development of trade and technological knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

Irfan Habib goes a step further, from Satish Chandra, in his *Agrarian System of Mughal India* and considers the fall of Mughal empire as the consequence of the conflict between the Mughal state on the one hand and the oppressed peasantry on the other. In his view the larger part of the hundred and fifty years of Mughal empire covered a major part of the subcontinent, under a highly centralized administration and their real strength depended on cavalry, which, were maintained by the mansabdars. In lieu of these services the mansabdars were entitled to get the Jagirs or revenue assignment from the Mughal state. It was the assignment of Jagirs that made the mansabdars Completely

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<sup>6</sup> ibid., p. XLVIII.

<sup>7</sup> ibid. xlix

<sup>8</sup> ibid. XLVII

dependent upon the will of the emperor.<sup>9</sup> And in this way the Imperial government was able to assemble and dispatch them with their contingents to any place where the need arose.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, for most of the time the absolute power of the state rested with the Mughal emperor, And the Jagirdar as an individual member of the governing class had no rights or privileges apart from those received from the Emperor. He could not manage his Jagir just as he pleased and had to conform to Imperial regulations. The rate of the land revenue demand and the methods by which it was to be assessed and collected were all prescribed by the imperial administration. The same was true for the other taxes as well. The conduct of the Jagirdar and his agents was watched over and checked by such officials as Qanungo, Chaudhuris, Faujdars, and news writers.<sup>11</sup>

However as Irfan Habib puts it, with the passage of time there developed a tendency among Jagirdars to raise the land revenue demand from approximated surplus produce to still a higher magnitude. This tendency evolved from the very nature of the Jagirdari system. For, a Jagirdar, whose assignment was liable to be transferred at any moment and who never held the same Jagir for more than three or four years at the most , could never follow a farsighted policy of agricultural development. On the other hand, his personal interests would sanction any act of oppression even though if it ruined the peasantry. Under these conditions the

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<sup>9</sup> Irfan Habib, *Agrarian system of the Mughal India, 1556-1707*, Bombay, 1963, p.317.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* p.317.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* p. 319.



actual burden on the peasantry became so heavy that they were deprived of their means of survival.<sup>12</sup> Consequently peasants were compelled to rise in rebellion under the leadership of refractory Zamindars.

Zamindars had their own ulterior motives in opposing the Mughal ruling class and in adopting a conciliatory attitude towards peasants. The main point of conflict between the imperial authorities and the zamindars was the size of latter's share in the land revenue or in surplus produce. Due to this the struggle between the imperial administration and the zamindars, frequently broke out into armed conflict and that is why the Support of peasants would have been indispensable for them during defence as well as in fight.<sup>13</sup> However, some new features came to the forefront in the reign of Aurangzeb when the Zamindar's struggle against the Mughals is no longer remained merely defensive. Now it become possible for the zamindaris to organize the repressed peasantry into large bands, and even armies, and employ them in predatory warfare with the object of extending their own zamindaris.<sup>14</sup>

Prof. Habib has concluded his arguments by saying that the unablensness of peasantry to transform a new social order, after their rebellion against Mughal empire, opened the gate for anarchy and colonial conquest in the eighteenth century India.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> ibid, pp. 320-22.

<sup>13</sup> ibid, pp. 334-46.

<sup>14</sup> ibid. p. 338.

<sup>15</sup> I. Habib, *Agrarian System*, Rep. 1999, Delhi, p. 405.

In 1968, Athar Ali has published a book on Mughal nobility, which specifically concentrated on the Aurangzeb's rule. Athar Ali, although accepted Habib's arguments on Mughal centralization but attributed its decline more on shortage of Jagirs than peasant suppression and rebellion. Athar Ali thinks that the Mughal nobility constituted the essential part of the Mughal administration, and this was the class of persons who were officers of the king and at the same time formed the superior class in the political order.<sup>16</sup>

The Mughal nobility consisted of some divergent groups including Turanis, Iranis, Afghans, Shaikzadas (Indian Muslims) and Rajputs. All these groups were organised within the framework of the mansabdari system. The term mansab (office, position, rank) indicated under the Mughals the position of its holders (mansabdar) in the official hierarchy. A mansab by itself did not constitute any office; but apart from determining the status of its holders, it also fixed his pay while it laid upon him the obligation of maintaining a definite number of troopers with horses and equipment.<sup>17</sup> Each mansabdar was assigned a pair of numbers designated zat ('personal') and sawar ('cavalry') which ranked his place in the official hierarchy. Zat rank included the personal status of the officer and his personal pay; and the sawar rank determined the military contingent he was to maintain and indicated the payment to be made to him for maintaining this contingent. The nobles obtained their salary either in cash or through assignments

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<sup>16</sup> Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Bombay, 1966, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p. 38.

of the revenues of various territories, known as Jagirs.<sup>18</sup> Since the Mughal nobility consisted of diverse ethical and religious elements, there always existed fertile breeding ground for factions. The immense centralization of government the mansabdari system, the routine Jagirs transfers etc. were all designed to suppress such factionalism.<sup>19</sup>

Aurangzeb in his reign does not seem to have made any change worth noticing in the system of mansabdari regulations, or pay scales. He tried to follow them rigidly Just as they stood in the time of his father. His authority over the nobles had not suffered in any way and the Jagirdari system in its standard form continued to work till Aurngzeb involved himself in his Deccan campaign. His Deccan policy brought increasing strain in the financial resources of the Empire and the dislocation of administration owing to the absence of the Emperor from the Northern India. The complicated machinery under which Jagirs were assigned began<sup>n</sup> to loose its efficiency.<sup>20</sup> The long war which Aurangzeb fought in Deccan took a heavy toll of lives from the Mughal contingents, increased the weakness of the nobility, and diverted the Emperor's attention more and more towards the Deccan, while the administration of North India Continued to suffer.<sup>21</sup>

The Deccan involvement also led to a great influx of the Deccani nobles into the Mughal aristocracy. But while the Deccanis were recruited wholesale and

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>20</sup> Athar Ali, *The Mughal nobility*, p. 92.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p.173.

given extraordinarily high ranks, the recruitment and promotion of the other older sections suffered. In the meantime Aurangzeb and his ministers attempted to stop fresh recruitment, but their military and diplomatic needs led them to continue the grant of mansabs to newcomers, a stage arrived when though mansabs were awarded but Jagirs could not be given owing to the increase in the numbers of claimants and the financial strain on the treasury.<sup>22</sup>

Under these circumstances the Jagirdars who held their Jagirs in the areas where revenue could not be collected, decreased the numbers of contingents, which they were required to maintain and this new trend in turn weakened the military strength of the Empire and encouraged fresh rebellions and disturbances. Competition for good Jagirs also increased the factionalism between different power groups within the nobility and due to this the cohesion and unity in imperial policy and military enterprise naturally suffered.<sup>23</sup> Thus Athar Ali thinks that these disruptive developments of Aurangzeb's time led to the decline and disintegration of Mughal Empire after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707.

In a later published article Athar Ali has gone a step beyond his own earlier argument In '*The Passing of the empire: The Mughal case*' ATHAR Ali refers to a cultural failure for the downfall of the Mughal empire. He thinks that this failure was manifested in the stagnation in the field of science that had deprived the Mughal empire of the capacity to grapple with the Agrarian crisis and the military

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<sup>22</sup> ibid.

<sup>23</sup> ibid.

weakness that befell it.<sup>24</sup> Lack of new technological skills also caused irreparable harm to the military skill of the Mughals. Whereas artillery making by new technological devices attracted the ingenuity of the scientists and mathematicians in Europe from the 16th century onwards, India saw no conscious attempt to design new artillery weapons: making muskets and guns remained a mere craft with no touch of modern sciences and, accordingly, by 1700 these were almost outdated. The Mughals continued to rely upon sword wielding cavalry when its days were long over. This led to their major debacle at Karnal in 1739, when they had to face Nadir shah, who had better artillery imitated from the Europeans and the ottomans.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, clearly we can see that 'Aligarh school' of historical thought provided a fresh perspective to the studies of Mughal India, notwithstanding their mutual differences, they had developed a new approach in history writing. However, in 1975 with the publication of J.F. Richards' study of the Mughal administration in Deccan, there came a challenge to the views that shortage of Jagirs generated an administrative problem which in its turn led to a crisis in Mughal empire. Richards disputed the idea that there was a shortage of usable Jagirs in region, and put forward the argument that Aurangzeb clearly did not intend to invest heavily in duplicating the Agrarian structure of longer settled parts of the Mughal empire in the eastern Deccan.<sup>26</sup> Sighting an example of Hyderabad,

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<sup>24</sup> Athar Ali, 'The passing of the Empire: the Mughal Case', *M. A. S.*, Vol 9, London, 1975, pp. 390-91.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 390.

<sup>26</sup> J. F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, p. 25.

he draws our attention towards the fact that the province was really under – administered, and under financed. The surplus taken from it every year was largely artificial. The result of this policy was that Aurangzeb never made full use of the resources of Golconda and Bijapur, in theory, the emperor should have been able to offset the greatly increased cost of salaries for the numerous Deccani mansabdars recruited for political purposes by using the newly acquired districts of Golconda and Bijapur for the assignment of Jagirs, in practice, this was not the case. Richards sights example of a sizable percentage of the lands earmarked for salary assignments but were still unassigned as late as fifteen years after the conquest of Bijapur. And so the ‘Crisis of the Jagir’ during 1690’s was not caused by a physical shortage of land available for that purpose. Instead the excess of demand over supply was caused by the inability of the empire to assimilate and administer properly the large territories in the Deccan Annexed in 1686-7.<sup>27</sup>

Mughal decline has also been explained by some scholars in terms of participation in 18<sup>th</sup> century politics of groups conventionally regarded as non-political. Karen Leonard in her "Great firm theory" of Mughal decline argues that indigenous banking firms were indispensable allies of the Mughal state and that the great nobles and imperial officers were more than likely to be directly dependent upon these firms.

However, when these firms diverted the resources, both credit and trade, from the Mughals to other political powers and became more interested in regional

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<sup>27</sup> ibid

politics, this contributed to the downfall of the Mughal empire.<sup>28</sup> But J.F. Richards has contested this view of Mughal decline by saying that one simply can not find sufficient evidence to support the 'Great Firm' theory.<sup>29</sup> The so-called great firms rose with and contributed to the operation of new, regionally oriented politics and Economics during a period which was relatively decentralized by comparison with that which preceded it that of the great Mughals.

Notwithstanding the difference of opinion on the causes of Mughal decline, the above mentioned works, especially from Aligarh scholars maintained that the Mughal decline brought political chaos and economic decline in most of the India and opened the gate for colonial exploitation in the later half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the period between the Mughal decline and British intervention is seen as the 'Dark age' in Indian History. Richard Barnett, in his '*North India between the empires*' has challenged the conventional view of 18<sup>th</sup> century and provided a fresh understanding for this transitional period of Indian History; A period when new political entities were emerging, the Mughal central power was on the verge of collapse and the decentralization of power was taking its roots in Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad. He has taken a different position on the status of "Interregnum" and rather than succumbing to the traditional view, he questions the priori assumptions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by different historians by saying that the central development of the century as indeed during most of South Asia's history, was the

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<sup>28</sup> Karan Leonard. 'THE "Great firm" theory of Mughal Decline, CSSH, pp.151-9, vol.21, No. 2, 1979.

<sup>29</sup> J.F. Richards. 'Mughal state finance and the Premodern economy', CSSH, 1981. Pp286

growth and autonomy of <sup>distinct</sup> ~~distinct~~ cultural and historical traditions possessing unique forms of economic and political organization.<sup>30</sup> He also emphasises the fact that Awadh emerged from the ruins of the imperial power by the 1720's on the strength of its Economic, strategic, demographic, and cultural assets<sup>31</sup> and consequently attained great economic and military power, and began to develop its own cultural and historical identity. Barnett also describes the way in which the Nawabi regime discovered and organized its assets, developed dynastic legitimacy, and interacted with neighboring states and foreign invaders. In addition to this the capacity of its internal political structures to resist growing domination of English, and to enable the states to avoid even partial annexation between 1775 and 1801 is also been examined by the author. On the question of diversion of resources for states building, he said that the Awadh Nawab did not merely stem the flow of resources to imperial networks but reversed it, drain them of what ever remained. Saadat Khan's and Safdarjang's expropriations, annexations and usurpations show that the most effective tool they used in state building existed mainly in peoples mind as a mental habit.<sup>32</sup>

So clearly we can find that Barnett has provided an alternative explanation of 18<sup>th</sup> century India where rather than viewing the Mughal decline in terms of future chaos and anarchy he highlighted the brighter side of Decentralization and Regionalisation of power due to the rise of many successor states. Barnett's study

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<sup>30</sup> R. Barnett, North India between the Empires, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p.2.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* p. 242.



provided the base for other scholars to develop the broadly sketched points of Decentralization and growth, and with the publication of Muzaffar Alam's, '*Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*' this argument got the additional empirical support. Alam's study was based on the meticulous use of Persian documentation and he authoritatively explain how the Mughal system was reconstituted as well as strengthened in Awadh under the Nawabi, while it fell apart Completely in Punjab. He also draws attention towards the point that these developments violated the classical Mughal concept of imperial authority, as seen in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, undermined the prospects of its survival and reinforced the course of provincial autonomy.

Here, we should also mention the study of C.A. Bayly, who although more interested in later half of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, still gives an idea about the reasons of Mughal decline. He writes that the Mughal rule was a huge systems of household government reinforced by an overwhelming but unwieldy military power. ~~It was more than a mere unwieldy military power.~~ It was more than a mere umbrella raised over virtually autonomous local groups. The Mughal system depended upon the ability of the Mughal state to appropriate in cash as much as 40 percent of the value of the total agricultural product. The imperial supremacy also survived because it offered advantages to the soldiers and merchants who served it.<sup>33</sup> However, Bayly thinks that the problems had appeared in imperial system

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<sup>33</sup> C.A. Bayly, Rulers, townsman and Bazar, p.10.

long before they became critical in the early 1700's due to the parting away of Mughal magnates towards their own parochial ways of satisfying their urge to become kings or landed gentry. And under these circumstances when Mughal centre attempted to raise more revenue from tightly administered areas, or extend its area of control, it only compounded its problems, Thus if the Mughal empire failed, it was not so much because of any barbarous deficiencies in its nobility or administration. The problem was that in the longer term it did not secure the obligation of its subjects.<sup>34</sup>

Bayly also highlighted the point that between 1720 and 1740 Mughal magnates began to amalgamate provincial offices which had once been separate and to found new dynasties these regimes developed closer links with rural society and favoured the petty rulers of the country side by allowing generous perquisites and remissions. So in a way political decentralization encouraged the growing economic vitality of small places away from the imperial capitals. Thus Bayly also accepted 18<sup>th</sup> century as a time of economic vigour, even development, and rejects the conventional characterization of the time as one of chaos and economic decline, he denounces the fact that British rule in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century constitutes a fundamental break with prior developments.

So quite clearly the above mentioned studies provide us with a fresh perspective to view the decentralization and Regionalisation of early 18<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>34</sup> ibid. p.11.

as a sign of Growth and economic <sup>prosperity</sup> ~~propriety~~ rather than of decline and anarchy. In the next chapter we will look into the process through which Awadh re-emerged during imperial decline. How its administrative mechanisms was moulded to suit the regional elites. How it diverted the flow of resources from imperial centre to the Suba What kind of changes were made in the Political and economic functioning to control the provincial appointments and to nominate successors and how the province had succumbed to the pressure, tactics of the East India Company.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DECENTRALIZATION OF POWER AND THE RISE OF EAST INDIA COMPANY IN AWADH: 1722-1856

Awadh in eighteenth century cast off the yoke of Mughal subservience to become an independent and flourishing state. The ways in which the Nawabi regime adjusted and adapted to the challenges posed to it will be discussed in the following pages. The Nawabi political system, with some changes and adjustments, thrived on the institutions and administrative mechanism, given to it by Mughal empire. The success of Awadh in these administrative manoeuvring also confirms the presumptions that 'crisis' in Mughal empire gravitated because of ill handling of problems posed to it. So the rise of regional principalities on the debris of Mughal empire needs to be seen as a calculating major of regional elites to exploit the areas of growth, since the holes in Imperial system was more than obvious to this class, and they were also aware that reviving the imperial system was not possible in existing conditions so they decided to upgrade their own domains. The out come of this process was the development of not one but many region centred political systems. In other words we can also say that in the very beginning of the eighteenth century many leaders of the Mughal empire lost confidence in the central authority and as a result of this a process of decentralization§ began, which lasted for several years before the final and decisive intervention of British colonialism.

Saadat Khan, entitled Burhanul Mulk got appointed as subahdar of Awadh in 1722, his appointment was confirmed by the then Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah. In the beginning Saadat Khan maintained the imperial umbrella and continued to send annual payments to the Mughal treasury. The reason for this practice lies in the fact that the political legitimising power still remained with the imperial centre.

The first problem which Saadat Khan faced in Awadh was the wide spread disturbances, spread by numerous 'Rajas' and zamindars, the previous subahdars of Awadh had paid very little attention to this problem. But realising the gravity of the matter the New governor paid the required attention, and subdued first the famous shaikzadas of Lucknow and then Raja Mohan Singh Kanpuria of Tiloi and several lesser Local dominant groups. Along with this, in the first year of his rule, he also managed to increase the revenues by more than half, from Rs. 70,00,000 to more than Rs. 1,07,00,000.<sup>1</sup>

Saadat Khan's successful intervention into the revenue administration was possible because of the fact that he took over the function of diwani while ignoring the Mughal precedent of separate offices for Diwani and Subahdari. The amalgamation of offices further boosted the efforts of Saadat Khan to decentralize the power to control the region politically and militarily and to assert his independence so, in brief, we can say that the new governor in Awadh, in order to

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<sup>1</sup> Richard B Barnett, *North India between Empire: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British, 1720-1801*, Berkeley, 1980, Rep. Delhi, 1987, p.25.

consolidate his position, added some additional functions to his office and consequently combined office-holding became an administrative necessity for the proper functioning of the administration.

If we contemplate the manner in which the Mughal state was transformed in the very region that was considered to be integral to its survival, we can find that political elites were very quick to identify the rise of some powerful interest groups. These groups were not able to find a considerable position in the Mughal system, so the policy which Saadat Khan pursued was also meant to accommodate these groups in the regional system. Thus any study into the political developments of Awadh will be incomplete without carefully evaluating the structural adjustments and administrative mechanisms of the New governor along with this we should also look into the changes and shifts in the regional Polity.

### **REFORMS IN THE *JAGIR* ADMINISTRATION**

In Mughal India, a surplus was generated by agriculture over the minimum needs of the tiller of the land and considerable part of this surplus was extracted by the state for the use of political elites on war mechanism or on their Luxuries and so the jagirdari system was to accommodate the political elites in this process of surplus extraction and distribution. From the very beginning of the Mughal empire the imperial territory was divided in two broad categories of the Khalisa and the Jagir mahals. The mahals earmarked as Jagirs but yet not assigned constituted a sub-category and were known as mahal-i-Paibaqi.

Most of Jagirdari land was given to the Mughal servants known as mansabdars in lieu of salaries. However, by the early eighteenth century there appeared a 'crisis' in Jagirdari system, Satish Chandra points out that 'The crisis was rooted in the structure of medieval society and its working'.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to this J.F. Richards highlights that the 'crisis' of Jagirdari system was only of a managerial nature. There are some other historians who opines that 'by the close of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the smooth working of the system was seriously impaired and it had begun to show signs of becoming an institution which tended to be static and failed to adapt itself... The resources of the Empire were almost exhausted by providing Jagirs to the mansabdars who were newly recruited'.<sup>3</sup> Satish Chandra further illustrated his point of view on the 'Jagirdari crisis' when he said that 'central to the growth of the crisis of the jagirdari system was its increasing nonfunctionality, i.e., its inability to help in the maintenance of law and order and the collection of the central share of the land revenue over large parts of the Empire'.<sup>4</sup> He also highlights the point that by 18<sup>th</sup> century periodic transfers of Jagirs had declined and Jagirs tended to become hereditary and with all these 'crisis' in Jagirdari system, Zamindars were strengthening themselves as a class and because of this the ruination of land holders or riaya was certain.

Writing on the agrarian condition of Awadh SZH Jagri draw our attention towards the considerable transformation of jagir system in Awadh he says that

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<sup>2</sup> Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: Society, the Jagirdari Crisis and the villages*, Delhi, 1982, p.55.

<sup>3</sup> N.A. Siddiqi, *Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals, 1700-1750*, Bombay, 1970, p.115.

<sup>4</sup> Satish Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 55.

‘during the 18<sup>th</sup> century as Mughal authority declined, officials assigned jagirs in Awadh found it more and more difficult to collect revenue’.<sup>5</sup> So under these circumstances when Saadat Khan came to Awadh, first he tried to change the functioning of land revenue administration. He strengthened his alliance with the powerful zamindars in the region by increasing their mansabs and extending their zamindari lands. This effort of Saadat Khan provided him with an opportunity to incorporate and exploit the growing military strength of these powerful zamindars against the *zortalab* zamindars and jagirdars as well as in countering his other rivals in the province, in this way he got successful in giving importance to regional elements over imperial power holders. Reduction of larger Jagirdari holdings and assignment of numerous smaller jagirs to a greater number of candidates chosen from governors own military commanders can also be seen in this context.

Muzaffar Alam in his ‘*crisis of Empire*’ writes that the Amil, who occupied an important place in the maintenance and administration of jagir, in a number of cases practically became a revenue contractor who assure a jagirdar his due amount and kept a part of the revenue himself.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently the governor seems to have brought the Amils under his own control and he imposed a discount on the jagir amount of the jagirdars for the amils services in looking after the

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<sup>5</sup> S.Z.H. Jafri,, *Agrarian Conditions of Awadh under the Mughal and Nawab Wazirs; 1595-1856. Ph.D. Thesis*, Aligarh, 1985, p.224.

<sup>6</sup> M. Alam, *Crisis of the Empire in Mughal north India*, p.225.



management of the jagirs.<sup>7</sup> This arrangement not only guaranteed the payment of dues to jagirdars but also brought about stability and regularity in provincial administration. With this Saadat Khan also imposed a levy on the jagirs in lieu of the responsibility he undertook for the regular payment of the revenue to the jagirdar.<sup>8</sup> Thus we can say that, in Awadh Jagirdari administration was modified in a way that it had come under the full personal control of the governor and remained in the same condition for the remaining years of his rule.

### ACCOMODATION TO THE REGIONAL SOCIAL GROUPS

There were some very important social groups in Awadh, during our period of study, they consisted of zamindars, madad-i-ma'ash holders, traders and merchant bankers. The rural life in medieval India was controlled by zamindars and that's why the Mughal power relations were rested on a balance between the interest of zamindars on the one hand and the interest of Mughal nobility on the other. A universal element in the traditional accounts of the establishment of particular clan and caste zamindars was the employment of armed force, possession of armed power was in fact a necessary aspect of zamindar rights, "the troops of the zamindars (of the empire)" says the Ain "exceeded forty for lakhs".<sup>9</sup>

Some theories propounded for the decline of 18th century draws our attention towards universal economic decline due to the emerging strength of

<sup>7</sup> ibid., p.206

<sup>8</sup> ibid., p.210.

<sup>9</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian system of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, Bombay, 1963, p.202.



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zamindars at the cost of the imperial centre. But this theory seems to be based on some very simplistic notions of relationship between state power and social classes. What we find in Awadh is that zamindars, in the era of imperial decline and changing power relations aspired to have a greater share over the land revenue surplus. In the reign of Aurangzeb there are instances of zamindari disturbances from the Baiswara region of Awadh. M. Alam writes that, 'A number of villages and mahals in Baiswara such as Bijanaur, Ranbirpur, Harha, Unao, Deori, Mauza (village) Balimau, Sadauli, Mauza Parinda, Jhalotar and Dondia Khera were disturbed by zamindar revolts at the time of Aurangzeb'.<sup>10</sup> In most of the cases, zamindars who had a large clan strength in their zamindaris or at least readily available support from the neighbourhood on caste and kin ties, could afford to launch a sustained resistance against the imperial power, in the first two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it became clear that zamindars are successfully resisting the authority of Mughal centre. The nobles, who were placed in the Suba, began to see this as a threat to their fortune and sought more power to curb the strength of zamindars.

This development led to further deterioration in Mughal power, and also challenged the claim of centre for superior rights in land surplus. However, when Saadat Khan took charge of Awadh, he quickly realised that rising over their short sighted ambitions is almost impossible for the Awadh Zamindars. Therefore, Saadat Khan and his successor Safdarjang offered mansabs to many zamindars, at

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<sup>10</sup> M. Alam, *Crisis of the Empire*, p.94.

the same time they also made it sure that no zamindar accumulate that much Power which change the basic character of his holding, in their bid to subdue the ambitions of more powerful Rajput zamindars they also provided opportunity to non-Rajput elements. Although this attempt was not able to achieve its goal, but overall the New governors were successful in the realignment of interest with the local elements.

The second important social group in the regional politics of Awadh was that of madad-i-ma'ash holders. madad-I-ma'ash was a subsistence allowance in land, which was given to learned scholars, pious and poor people by the Mughal empire. These grants were generally rent free and the grantee was entitled to appropriate the produce of the soil or the revenue from the land and he was also entitled to lease out the land to the cultivators. In most of the cases the grant made as madad-i-ma'ash was subject to periodical assessment and confirmation by the office of the Sadr.<sup>11</sup> The grantee was having the responsibility to produce reliable witnesses in sadr's office, in order to prove that they were still alive, and that the land granted to them was not transferred to any other person. On the death of a grantee his successor had to apply in fresh for the renewal or confirmation of the grant. So in administrating the madad-i-ma'ash grants the office of Sadr played a very important role and any lethargy on their part was bound to spread corruption in these grants.

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<sup>11</sup> N.A. Siddiqi, *Land Revenue Administration under Mughals*, p.127.

As for as the ideology behind these grants are concerned, it seems that 'the Mughal state embarked upon a policy of creating small pockets of muslim population' in some parts of the Empire. And in that way when the grantees settled down in these parts then they served as the ideologue of Mughal state along with this the practice also helped the administration in curbing any local disturbance. However, the character of madad-i-ma'ash grants started changing in early 18<sup>th</sup> century, when grantees openly demonstrated their defiance for the imperial regulation. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century these grants could neither be sold, nor<sup>2</sup> transferred to others but for 18<sup>th</sup> century there are many instances where the madad-i-ma'ash holders sold their grants.

Nurul Hasan has pointed out that 'in due course the madad-i-ma'ash grants acquired characters of zamindari as appears from the sale deeds of the madad lands in the 18<sup>th</sup> century',<sup>12</sup> This point is further illustrated by Muzaffar Alam when he said that 'those who held large madad-i-ma'ash grants acquired enough wealth and power to pursue zamindaris. This is borne out by the acquisition of a number of villages in the parganas of Haveli, Bahraich and Husanpur in his zamindari and milkiyat by Mir saiyid Muhammad Arif, an eminent revenue grantee of Sarkar Bahraich.'<sup>13</sup>

From the very inception of madad-i-ma'ash grants the local groups considered them as a threat to their interest and when the difference between

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<sup>12</sup> Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian relation in-Mughal India*, Delhi, 1973, p.

<sup>13</sup> M. Alam, *Crisis of the Empire*, p.121.

madad-i-ma'ash and zamindari rights blurred in Awadh, due to changes in the nature of madad-i-ma'ash grants then clashes start erupting between local zamindars and madad holders. Saadat Khan, in order to pacify the disturbances, decided to put some check on the growing strength of madad holders. He started the policy of assessing the grants which brought in widespread protest and even resistance from the grantees, since the the grantees were deeply rooted in the region and were enjoying good relationship with many powerful groups both in Imperial centre and region, therefore, confronting them directly was bound to create problems for governor, in these circumstances Saadat Khan abandoned his former policy regarding the grants. However, intensive scrutiny was undertaken by state into the claims of grants, along with this from Safdarjangs reign madad-i-ma'ash grants began to be bracketed with the zamindari and the milkiyat in such a way as to suggest their being identical in character.<sup>14</sup> These examples makes us to believe that the position of madad holders gradually began to change in Nawabi establishment and finally accepted as a category of Zamindars. This policy also pacified the Zamindari resistance, since they were no more threatened by the priviledges of grantees. Thus, Saadat Khan and his successors tackled the problem of madad holders with flexibility and incorporated them in to the regional system in a way which convinced them that their interest lies in strengthening the regional system rather than in challenging it.

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p.223.

## RISE OF IJARADARI SYSTEM IN AWADH

Practice of Ijara system was not very new to Awadh. There are several instances of 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century, where jagirdars farmed out the revenue of their jagirs to a banker or any other person enjoying considerable local influence to collect the revenue easily. N.A. Siddiqi has observed that, 'the crisis in the Jagirdari system was accompanied with the wide spread practice of ijara which was instrumental in the ruination of the zamindari and the peasantry. The two classes which had an abiding interest in land'.<sup>15</sup> There are some other Historians, who lamented on the fact that the practice of ijara gave rise to a new class of intermediaries as the extractors of land revenue, without any traditional relationship with land, and so it adversely affected the interests of hereditary intermediaries.

It has also been argued that the ijaradar enjoyed the right to assess the land under cultivation and on the basis of it he was also authorised to prepare a new jama. This provided him with an opportunity to increase his net income. At the same time such a practice implied an assessment which was damaging for the small zamindars and cultivators and in practice this laid to the ruination of peasantry. However, this whole discussion gives a very simplistic notion of ijaradrai and the rising intermediary class, study of Awadh provides us with a fresh

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<sup>15</sup> N.A. Siddiqi, *Land Revenue Administration under Mughals*, p.39.

perspective, other than the conventional one to understand the practice of ijara as indices of regionalisation and readjustment.

In Awadh we find that the practice of ijara evolved in a manner, which suited the purpose of strengthening the regional government. Although ijara implied fiscal and administrative control over the revenues of men motivated by gains, with out any checks and supervision to which a government official was subjected.<sup>16</sup> However, contrary to this the governor in Awadh monitored the practice of ijara very closely by institutionalising it and by accepting the ijaradars as an official category of revenue collectors.<sup>17</sup> In this way the state in Awadh was well placed to meet the challenges of ijaradars. In brief, we can say that the functioning of the revenue administration was changed in a manner that it could accommodate the new emerging classes. And this accommodation in a way culminated in to the reduction of tension and conflict and benefited the suba to attain an independent identity of its own.

## **NADIR SHAH'S INVASION AND THE DISSOLUTION OF MUGHAL EMPIRE**

The invasion of Nadir shah in 1739 and the consequent destruction and defeat of Mughal Army had totally shaken the Imperial structure. After that any chance of Imperial revival was almost imposible and this further hastened the process of independent regional authority. In case of Awadh the second governor safdarjang,

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<sup>16</sup> M. Alam, *Crisis of the Empire*, p:41.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

who took charge after the death of Saadat Khan, successfully pursued the independent policies in the region while at the same time maintained strong links with the Mughal court by working in capacity of the wazir of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah, but amidst internal rivalries and feuds Safdarjang was at last forced to abandon his role as wazir and so he restricted his sphere of influence permanently to Awadh. This development also marked the visible departure of Awadh regime towards an independent foreign policy without being answerable to Delhi. Now the governor of erstwhile Mughal Subah took the title of Nawab and set the stage for his successors to govern the state with full fledged authority.

#### **ACCESSION OF SHUJAULLAH AND HIS FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH BRITISH**

The first experience of Shuja in Awadh was personally not very pleasant for him. His alleged relationship with an unmarried Khatri woman outraged many towns people but due to the timely intervention of Nawab's mother Sadr un-nisa begum, the matter was resolved in amicable manner. However, Shuja learned an important lesson during this face off, that is to respect the sensibilities of Hindu masses and to act within certain moral boundaries. This development also made it clear that, 'The survival of the ruler in 18<sup>th</sup> century India dependent on the mindfulness of the needs and sensibilities of his subjects, especially because these subjects were ethnically different from the ruling family'.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> R. Barnett, *North India between the Empires*, p.46.



After emerging from his personal problems Shuja started a campaign to frustrate the designs of his detractors, first he forced the Mughal wazir Imaddudaulah to confirm his appointment to Allahabad along with Awadh and then he marched against his tributary, Raja Balwant Singh of Benaras and had captured chunar and Banaras. After some negotiation Balwant Singh conceded to pay the tribute and accepted the vastly enhanced rent of Rs. 12,00,000 in exchange of being confirmed in possession of his expanded territories.<sup>19</sup> Shuja also denied the invasion of Awadh by Ahmad Shah Abdali through an urgent alliance with Marath chief Raghunath Rao.<sup>20</sup> All these developments show to us that the 18<sup>th</sup> century India was a scene of continuous confrontation and conflicts among different power groups, and only those groups succeeded in this battle who were able to form new strategies and were open to redefine it at any given moment.

Ahmad Shah Abdali approached India again in 1761, for eradicating the maratha threat to his territories in Punjab. At that time in absence of any imperial Authority Abdali was perceived by many to be the sole legitimizing force in North India, thus the encounter between shuja and Abdali was going to be very important for the future of Awadh and its adjoining territories. A.L. Srivastava writes that, when Abdali and maratha armies confronted each other, Shuja was also present at Panipat from the Afghan side, however, he eludes most of the real fighting.<sup>21</sup> The reason for Shuja's active non-participation seems to be lies in thee fact that, he

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p.47.

<sup>20</sup> A.L. Srivastava, *Shujaudaulah in two volumes*, (Lohore, 1945), vol. 1, Rep. Delhi, 1961., p.32.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, pp.92-93.

believed to gain no matter which party wins the battle; Since both were his potential enemies. Although before the war both marathas and Abdali tried to win the support of shuja. Abdali reminded him of his pious duty of eradicating the infedals and Marathas reminded him of their old friendship. But Shuja decided to take the side of Abdali, not due to any regard for religious bigotry but on some sound logic. He thought that at the most Abdali will ask for some tribute and a part of plunder and will return back to his home domain, which actually happened. But contrary to this Marathas were a constant threat to him, and helping them in any way was bound to invite the wrath of Abdali.

It is evident from the above mentioned discussion that Shuja formulated his policies to suit his purpose of practicing complete autonomy in his state, at the same time he tried to get a prestigious position among different power groups of his time. In his internal affairs also he behaved very magnanimously by conceding some very important administrative posts to highly skilled Hindus, which further widened the ideology of tolerance in Awadh.

### **SHUJAUDDAULAH AND THE BATTLE OF BUXAR**

After the small hiccups of 1761, due to Abdali's invasion Awadh emerged as a strong regional power with military and economic resources intact and geographical situation well defined. This peaceful condition at home front provided Shuja with an opportunity to confront the growing penetration of English company. Company also at the same time was aware of Nawab's increasing

interest into the company's territories. And the concern of company proved right when in 1764 Shuja in alliance with Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and Bengal Nawab Mir Kasim challenged the British force in the month of October. The confrontation reached its swift and final climax and a bitter battle was fought near Buxar in which the British emerged victorious. The reason for the British victory lies in 'their ability to make their Indian as well as their European-raised troops loyal to their unity and their calling as military men rather than to the particularistic values of kin, caste, and locality'.<sup>22</sup>

The clash also exposed the disadvantages of personal organization of Nawab vis-à-vis the impersonal organization of company. Whose energies were entirely subordinate to fixed, efficient, technical rules.<sup>23</sup> So it seems that shuja's defeat in Buxar was more the out come of a flawed organization, which totally get exposed when confronted a technically efficient army of the English company. why this battle was crucial for the future of Awadh is understandable by the fact that never again did Awadh's rulers challenge the Authority of company militarily. And now Awadh was open for the English manipulations.

### **AFTER MATH OF BUXAR DEBACLE**

After the win at Buxar, English company found itself in a very strong position. Now they became the owners of entire Nawabi territory up to Allahabad. At the

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<sup>22</sup> B.S. Cohn, *India: The Social Anthropology of a Civilization*, New Delhi, 2000, p.77.

<sup>23</sup> R. Barnett, *North India between the Empires*, p.65.

same time all their detractors were forced to retreat; shuja's power was reduced to a considerable extent, many of his troops deserted, and the whole Awadh submitted without any further attempt of resistance. Mir Qasim ceased to be a significant force and Mughal emperor Shah Alam asked for the protection of company. The British establishment in India, knowing well the ground realities and the gains they had made, wrote to the court of director in England, 'our view in requiring this cession of territory <sup>at</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>from</sup> Shujah Dowla is more to give a public testimony to all the powers of India of the success of our arms in the unjust war he (Shuja) commenced against us'<sup>24</sup> Along with this the company establishment in India was also aware of their commercial interest which they were about to pursue in Awadh by the means of their political gains, as they wrote it in a letter to court, 'we do not wish to extend our connections beyond what may appear necessary for securing the future tranquility of the country. That this is and ~~with~~ <sup>will</sup> always be the first object (of) our consideration and that whatever engagement we may enter into. They ~~shall~~ <sup>h</sup> be such only as tend to this point and the promotion of your commercial interests.'<sup>25</sup> As this letter also signifies, the company at this stage was not willing to directly involve in pursuing an independent goal in Awadh, at the most they were hoping for a alliance where their interest could be safeguarded. Keeping in mind this the commander-in-chief of company forces, major Munro, initiated a policy of placing the puppet, Mughal emperor Shah Alam II in possession of

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<sup>24</sup> *Fort Williams Correspondence*, letters to court, 26 Nov. 1764, p.263 (National Archives of India, Delhi)

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 6 February 1765, p.294.

Awadh and Allahabad. Knowing it very well that Shah Alam himself is interested in this proposition, Calcutta council also responded in a positive manner as evident from one of their letters to court of Directors, 'His Majesty (Shah Alam) having no resource of his immediate support, and judging it proper that he should receive every testimony of our respect and attachment we directed such sums to be advanced him for the expenses of his house hold as his exigencies might absolutely require till he was put in full possession of Shuja's country.'<sup>26</sup>

Again in another letter to court, which was written after Munro quit the command in Awadh to embark for Europe and Major Fletcher temporarily took the charge, calcutta council repeated its resolve to, 'pursue immediately the advantages we have gained over him (Shuja), and drive him entirely out of his country, putting the king in possession agreeable to our former resolution'.<sup>27</sup> However, the English very quickly realised the inability and lack of administrative skill of Emperor to govern a province which was under threat from many areas. And this had forced them to abandon their earlier policy of entrusting Awadh to Shah Alam.

This policy shift led the English to think in terms of usefulness of Shuja in their designs, as mentioned in one of letters to court, 'you will please to observe that this wars with Shuja Odowla has never been a matter of choice, but of absolute necessity and the same holds good respecting the treaty with the king. It

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p.295.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 11 March 1765, p.314

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>28</sup> Thus, it is obvious from this letter that English desire was to form a buffer state in the form of Awadh between their territories and other powerful regional groups. They were also aware of the Maratha threat and the problems it could pose to their territory in Bengal and to their future in India, so all their public rhetoric of placing Shah Alam in to the possession of Awadh was only meant to get some kind of legitimacy and to fit themselves in to the imperial network of allegiance. In pragmatic sense they were still open to form some kind of alliance with fugitive Nawab Shujauddaulah.

So when on 3 may 1765 clive assumed charge as Governor for the second time, fresh attempts were made to negotiate with Shuja, which led to a treaty between the two sides, this treaty was signed in 1765 at Allahabad. By this treaty Shuja was to retain Awadh, the province of Kora and Allahabad was assigned to the Emperor Shah Alam, to give him a proper income for maintaining his dignity and expences, company was allowed to keep garrisons in the fort of chunar and in Allahabad. This provision fulfilled the English desire to safeguard their interest in Awadh, this also reflects from one of the correspondences between the council and the directors: ‘To prevent revolutions or changes in future, we thought it safest for your affairs to let the defence of the provinces lay on us, and us only or in fact that

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 14 March 1765, p.324.

there should be <sup>no</sup> ~~no~~ military force but yours. This will put it out of the power of any one ever in future to disturb your affairs by commotions or other wise.<sup>29</sup>

In other provisions Balwant Singh was to retain Benaras and had to pay the prewar revenue to Shuja. Shuja also agreed to pay a <sup>2</sup>wa~~g~~ indemnity of Rs.50 Lakhs to company. Company also become entitled, by Allahabad treaty, to trade duty free in Awadh. Although later on this clause of treaty became the major hurdle for relations of company and Shuja. The importance of this treaty can be ascertained from the fact that it provided a platform for all the future development regarding the relationship of Awadh and the company.

Concluding this treaty was the most important effort of Clive in his second administration. Clive Justified his actions of bringing peace in Awadh more as a policy of not extending the company's territorial possession, than from the generous principle of conceding Awadh to its just rulers: 'I will, however, just remark that our restoring to Shuja Dowla the whole of his dominions proceeds more from the policy of not extending the company's territorial possessions, than the generous principal of attaching him for ever to our interest by gratitude, though this has been the apparent, and is by many thought to be the real motive' writes Clive to the directors.<sup>30</sup>

Along the political penetration sources also indicates towards the opening of Economic frontiers when many private traders started illegal business in

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<sup>29</sup> *Fort William Correspondence*, Letter to court, 11 March 1765, para 10.

<sup>30</sup> *Fort Williams Correspondence*, Letters to Court, 30 September 1765, para 8.

Awadh, giving very little heed to the views of court of Directors, who were maintaining that, 'the article in the treaty with Souja Dowla, stipulating a trade duty free through his dominions we direct to be confined solely to the company's trade'.<sup>31</sup> The illegal and rapacious trade of private traders was not an exception in Awadh but an expansion of what they were doing in Bengal and other British administered areas.

Knowing all kind of worst ramifications of Private trade in Bengal, Shuja protested to company about the extention of this trade into Awadh: 'The Nabob Sujah Dowlah having complained in his letter to the president of the misconduct of Gomastahs trading in his dominions under the sanction of the English name we did not hesitate to give him an easy proof of our regard to his representations.'<sup>32</sup> Writes the Calcutta council to court of Directors. In spite of this. How far the British establishment in India was able to curve the Private trade in Awadh is a matter of speculation and the impression which we get about the trading activities in Awadh was quite contrary from the British assertion of prohibiting private trade in Nawab' dominion. This fact certainly have persuaded Nawab to strengthen him militarily to counter any attempt of challenge to his authority. He started this effort in a month after the Allahabad treaty. He reorganised his army by recruiting the Awadhi populace mostly from his Rajput, Brahmin and Shaikzada subjects and with in a year he had assembled more than 30,000 troops, both cavalry and

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<sup>31</sup> *Fort Williams Correspondence*, Letters from Court, 17 May 1766, p.183.

<sup>32</sup> *Fort Williams Correspondence*, Letters to Court, 13 September 1768, p.413.



infantry. He also build factories for manufacturing war materials of high quality. These developments in Awadh was noted by the Calcutta council in a letter to court: 'His (Shuja's) increase of strength has kept pace with his increase of revenue he has near 11 Batalions of sepoy's of all sorts. A good body of horse and has made considerable additions to his Artillery and Magazines'.<sup>33</sup> However, the British establishment at this point of time was not feeling threatened with the increasing strength of Shuja; since they were maintaining a policy of using Awadh as a buffer state between their dominion of Bengal and marathas and due to this they strongly felt that Awadh should be capable enough to atleast counter the Maratha incursions in Awadh. 'In a word from a most careful review of his character and conduct he (Shuja) seems to be a much more proper instrument to accomplish the company's main point - the maintaing themselves as the umpires of Hindoostan than an enemy who from his strength or situation could give them any material uneasiness or trade'<sup>34</sup> writes Calcutta council to Directors. Although in very short span of time company's optimism gave place to uneasiness when they realised the upward increase in the numbers of Nawab's shouldered, they observed: 'When we considered the very rapid progress has lately made in his levies of his extraordinary vigilance in the discipline of his army.... The establishing of a foundary which already supplied him with a greate quality of cannon for field service and his amazing improvement in the making of small

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<sup>33</sup> Fort William Correspondence, Letter to court, 28<sup>th</sup> March 1768, p.400.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

Arms, which are by no means inferior in quality.... demand our most serious attention and compelled us to resolve upon losing as little time as possible at some degree of certainty with regard to his future.<sup>35</sup>

This increasing uneasiness of company and the growing power of Shuja can be seen as the consequence of strong determination of Shuja to regain as much control as possible under a subsidiary alliance. He knew it very well that the English does not have any option other than retaining him in Awadh; since at this Juncture they were not very sure and confident about their political designs outside Bengal. And that's why the efforts of Shuja to strengthen himself militarily was perhaps taken deliberately. In a short time Shuja was proven right in his conviction when the British establishment toned down its criticism: 'we flatter ourselves that matters will be amicably settled with the Nabob as it must evidently tend to your interest to preserve an alliance with a person of his high station and power in the Empire.'<sup>36</sup>

Thus, we can say that greater the power Shuja achieved, the more alarmed the British establishment became but at the same time they were also not willing to entirely break away with Nawab, so they sent a deputation to meet Shuja at Benaras in November 1768. A new treaty was drawn up, after much bitter negotiating and forceful protest by Nawab, limiting his total army to 35,000 men. The Calcutta council informed the directors about the motives of this treaty: 'By

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<sup>35</sup> *Fort William Correspondence*, Letter to court, 13 November 1768, p.414.

<sup>36</sup> *Fort William Correspondence*, Letter to court, 21 November 1768, p.482.

stipulated reduction of the Nawabs forces he is still permitted to retain a number which will ever render him respectable among the powers of Hindostan'.<sup>37</sup> Although in practical Shuja never abide by this treaty of restricting his army, but by accepting the treaty on paper Shuja had, at least given an opportunity to company to get satisfied for time being. However, they were still very cautious about their observations on Nawab: 'We may not rigidly demand the performance of articles as to a man; yet we shall watch the motions of this ambitious and volatile prince so as to prevent him in future from being dangerous to your possessions'.<sup>38</sup>

### **SHUJAUDDAULA'S CONFRONTATION WITH ENGLISH ECONOMIC INTEREST**

Shuja, from the very beginning of his relation with the British establishment feared the bad impact of company trade in Awadh that's why he always maintained that his treaty with British does not allow the open exploitation of Awadh by company and private traders. In 1767, he complained to the English Governor verelst about the abuses of English dastaks or duty free passess by the gomashtas or the Indian agents of English merchants. Even the Company officials were not unaware of the wrongdoings of gomashtas as well as the misuse of company parwanas or dastaks in Awadh; This borne out from a letter written by commander in chief of Awadh col. Richard smith:

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<sup>37</sup> *Fort William Correspondence*, Letter to court, 6 January 1769, p.489.

<sup>38</sup> *Fort William Correspondence*, Letter to court, 6 April 1769, para 6.

'I do therefore recommed to the committee that they will inter upon the most vigorous measures for entirely abolishing a system so fraught with pernicious consequences and which very system had so lately proved almost fatal to the company's welfare in Bengal.'<sup>39</sup> After receiving this letter the select committee in fort william discussed it and send back a reply to Richard smith, showing their surprise over these illegal practices of English agents: 'We are the more astonished at such an abuse as our president assures us that he has granted no parwannah or dusticks extending beyond the provinces but to officers who proceed theither for their .... we also desire you will give immediate orders to such Gomashtas using the name of English gentlemen to quit the country.'<sup>40</sup> The then English governor general verelst in Fort William also responded very positively to the complaints, made by Shuja against the English trade, in one of his letters to Nawab he promised to act on this illegal trade and also reminded him that he never granted any Dastak or pass for duty free trade beyond the territories of company: 'as the residence of the English gomastahs in your excellensiys territories.... I have determined to lay a restriction on such instances in future'.<sup>41</sup> However, disregarding all the claims of British establishment Private traders continued their business in Awadh which further enraged Shuja, and the relation between company and Nawab once again became sore. In these circumstances

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<sup>39</sup> Col. Richard Smith to the select committee, 3 January 1768: National Archives of India, Foreign Dept., Select Committee Proceedings, 27 January 1768, Document no.15.

<sup>40</sup> Select committee to commander in chief, 27 January 1768, N.A.I.

<sup>41</sup> Extract of a Letter from w. verelst to the Nabob Shujaudaulah dated 9<sup>th</sup> March 1767, quoted in the select Committee Proceeding 27 Jan 1768.

verelst has written another letter to Shuja in order to pacify and reassure him about the intention of company: 'I understand from Rajah Persad Roy that contrary to your inclination and the peace interest of your country...trade is still carried on by English gentlemen with in your territories. I have before given my excellency my opinion of such proceedings. I now again assure you that when ever the preservation of your independency the assertion of your honour and the security of your rights and interest require it I am ready with my whole influence and authority in their support accordingly you have my entire approbation of every measure you may think effectual in restricting this unlicensed trade.<sup>42</sup>

But all these promises of governor general were not easy in terms of implementation, since most of the gomastahs or English agents were not working independently in Awadh but were the represent<sup>e</sup>ators of the interests of their English masters. The English merchants on the other hand were enjoying the authority to influence the members in Calcutta council as well as the Board of Directors in England. So any Policy decision of banning the lucrative trade in Awadh for English merchants and their agents was bound to get contested by these merchants. This happened in Awadh also when Nawab persuaded the gomastahs to leave his territory then they complained to the select committee that they can not comply with the orders of Nawab since they need more time to get their investments back.

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<sup>42</sup> W. Verelst to the Nabob Shujauddaulah, dated 10 oct. 1767

Under these circumstances the Board of select committee extended the duration of recall and advised the governor, verselt towards, 'the need of being more sensible to the great disadvantages resulting from an immediate recall of all gomastahs of individuals at present trading in the countries of the Nawab Sujah ul Dowlah and Balwant singh under the sanction of the English.'<sup>43</sup> The select committee also reminded the Governor verelst, of the need, 'to facilitate the adjustment of their (gomastahs) affairs as well as to prevent the frauds and other abuses to which such a restriction might otherwise expose them.'<sup>44</sup> At the same time they conveyed a message through verelst to, 'inform the Nabab and Balwant Singh of these.... and to request they will grant them every reasonable assistance they may require for the speedy regulation of their concerns.'<sup>45</sup> This created a very peculiar condition where a person who was on the receiving end of the rapacious trade of English merchants was advised to help them in their affairs. Similarly, the eagerness shown by select committee to act in accordance with the demands of gomashtas raises some very obvious questions regarding the determination of company to ban the illegal trade in Awadh.

This lack of interest in banning the Awadh trade surfaced again when the new governor of fort william John Cartier, revoked the prohibition on trade in Nawabi territory in 17 April 1771. Basically governor in revoking the ban on trade

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<sup>43</sup> Letter of Mr. Rumbold to verelst dated 10 April, 1768, foreign Dept; select committee proceeding 27 April 1768, N.A.I.

<sup>44</sup> ibid

<sup>45</sup> ibid

in Awadh was acting on the advice of the directors who in<sup>a</sup> letter to council remarked that the 8th article of Allahabad treaty, 'had stipulated that the company should have a trade duty free through out the whole of his dominions. (and) Annulling that article by a general prohibition of any further trade to his country appears to have been equally unadvised and unnecessary.'<sup>46</sup> They also made it clear that the political alliance with Nawab should be used for pursuing the Economic interest and therefore, they directed the council, 'to revoke the prohibition which has been issued and to open and extend to the utmost of your power that commerce to which we were entitled.'<sup>47</sup>

The above mentioned description clearly show the extent to which the relations between company and Nawab had turned in to the dominance of the former. Shuja was not willing to keep quite on the open exploitation of Awadh, and so he again contested the resumption of trade in Awadh. 'It gave us some concern to find from a Letter addressed to us by General Barker that it had not met with the Nabab's<sup>s</sup> approbation. Various were the reasons urged against it but the principal one appeared to be the danger of a breach between him and us from the dispute that might arise between his people and Gomastahs or agents employed by the merchants in the disposal of their refusal to pay duties.'<sup>48</sup> Writes the Calcutta council to Director in England. The policy of company to escape the objection of Shuja and to facilitate the Economic interest of company and English merchants

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<sup>46</sup> Fort William correspondence. Letters from court, 10 April 1771, p.84, Para 33.

<sup>47</sup> ibid, Para 34.

<sup>48</sup> Fort William correspondence, Letters to court. 9 March 1772, p.366, Para 32

came to the forefront when they informed the court of Directors that, ' to consult with a person on a plan to which you are certain of his making objections, and which you are like wise determined before hand to carry into execution, could only be considered in the light of a mere complement, which indeed we would willingly have paid the Nabob. If, as we have already observed, there had been time sufficient for that purpose; but as that was not the case we immediately determined to your interest; and we informed the Nabob of having done what the treaty entitled us to, and a privilege which though it had for some time been suspended still remained in force.<sup>49</sup>

Overall, the effect of English economic penetration was disastrous for Awadh, and by late 1771 the English merchants had established a total monopoly over iron, lead, and salt peter. Their clout can be measured from fact that Nawab, himself found it impossible to obtain supplies of these goods at reasonable prices.<sup>50</sup> He was also not able to levy any duties on the trading goods of English merchants. These merchants now became so strong that they not only violated the orders of Nawab but even challenged it in many ways. Thus, we can see that the economic frontier of Britain was placed on very firm ground much before the political one and the gradual penetration of British commercial activities in Awadh never been strongly objected by the British establishment based in Calcutta. The council there, under the direction of court, was always very eager to facilitate the

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<sup>49</sup> .... 26 March 1772, p. 389

<sup>50</sup> R. Barnett. North India between Empires, p.86



free trade for safeguarding the British interest. Some of our sources support the argument that the Private trade in Awadh, after Buxar, had not shown any signs of decline and the prohibitions imposed by the company on this kind of trade always remained ineffective.<sup>51</sup> We can also find that economic activities of English traders; both private as well as of company officials in a way facilitated the company to impose its domination over Awadh by using the economic penetration for political goals.

### **EXPANSION OF NAWABI TERRITORY AND INCREASE IN FISCAL BURDEN**

Shuja had expanded the boundaries of Awadh in the last few years of his rule. First he acquired Etawah and then in June 1772 he obtained a treaty from the Rohillas, obliging them to pay Rs 40,00,000 for the assistance of Awadh and company army. To further fulfill his expansionist desires, Shuja met English Governor Hastings at Benares in Aug. 1773 and signed a treaty. By the treaty of Benares it was agreed that Kora and Allahabad should be given back to the Nawab on the condition of his paying 50 Lakhs rupees to the company. The English Governor also Agreed on giving assistance to Shuja for his any future expedition

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<sup>51</sup> Francis fowke to Hastings. 7 Mar. 1776: N.A.I foreign Dept., secret. 3 April 1776. in this secret correspondence francis fowke has written that 'the trade of the zamindari has for a length of time almost entirely centered at mirzapore which has become a market of common resort to the merchants of Bengal Behar and those of the deccan and the countries situated to the west and north. This most before a considerable one, became much more so after the battle of Baxar which opening on intercourse with the English products a traffic in Europe and china articles and a more intimate connection and commerce with the Honorable company's provinces. The trade of mirzapore showed no appearance of decline till the year 1773.'

against Rohilkhand on the condition of Nawab paying Rs. 2,10,000 a month for their troops instead of Rs.1,15,000.

In haste of getting the Rohilla territory. Shuja agreed to this demand of company. Which relieved the financial necessities of the company for stationing their force in Awadh. The Board of Directors in London also applauded this agreement by saying that, 'the keeping of a brigade in the service of the Subah of oude is a measure we entirely approve as it enable us to increase the real strength of our army without incurring additional charges there of, but the whole pay and contingent charges must borne by the subah.'<sup>52</sup> However, when Shuja annexed the Rohilla territory with the help of company army in April 1774, then the court of directors did not like it: 'the treaty of Allahabad compels us to assist the vizier (Shuja) in defending, but in regard to new conquests, or to any war like enterprises beyond his own territories, we absolutely prohibit you from employing our troops on such expeditions on any pretence what ever.'<sup>53</sup> This cautious approach, it seems was taken due to the growing anxiety in England on the Expansionist policy of Shuja. Basically they were not willing to allow any Indian Prince to become a parallel power to company and therefore they advised the Calcutta council, 'to take especial care that the additional power acquired by the vizier (Shuja) be prevented from operating to the detriment of the company.'<sup>54</sup> Directors disagreement with the governor Hastings on the issue of support to Shuja in

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<sup>52</sup> Fort William correspondence Letter's from court, 15 Dec. 1775. P.129

<sup>53</sup> .....3 March 1775, P.99

<sup>54</sup> For William correspondence, letter From court , 3 March 1775, P.99 Para 52

Rohilla expedition continued as they observed in a letter that, 'the agreement made with Shujah Dowah for the hire of a part of the company's troops for the reduction of the Rohillah country, and the subsequent steps taken for carrying on that war were found on the wrong policy.'<sup>55</sup>

But contrary to the objections of directors if we look into these developments closely, we find that the alliance between Shuja and company although in short run might have benefitted the Nawab but in long run all these developments basically helped the company to penetrate deeply in to the political establishment of Awadh; first and foremost they relieved from financial necessities of their army. Which helped them in stationing their troops on permanent footing in Awadh for fulfilling their own political goals in future. This provision also established the permanent indebtedness of Awadh to the company and transformed the relationship between Nawab and company in to the permanent supremacy of latter. The dominance of company over the immediate successors of Shuja and the annexation of large part of Awadh in 1801 by wellesly can also be seen in this context.

### **SUCCESSION OF ASAFUDDAULAH & THE DIMINUTION IN NAWABI AUTHORITY**

In January 1775 Shujauddalah died after a short illness. His premature death created a vacuum which was very difficult to be filled by any of his successors, in the volatile political conditions of Awadh. The day he died, 'a calamity over took

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<sup>55</sup> 15 Dec. 1775. p.129

the residents of Faizabad, and there was no one, European or native, small or great, who was not affected with grief.'<sup>56</sup> Writes a contemporary observer. He was the last in the line of first three Nawabs of Awadh who had met the challenges posed to him with utmost bravery. He was a man of undeniable ability and was even praised by his enemies: '(Shuja was ) extremely handsome in his person ... till of late, he gave little attention to business ... stung with the loss of reputation, his passions have taken another course. His activity is employed in disciplining his army and he now spends more time at the comptoir of his finances, than in dalliance with the ladies of his seraglio. His authority is therefore established, his revenue increased, and his army on a respectable footing.'<sup>57</sup> Other contemporary English writers also speak of him very highly, 'as an excellent magistrate, a lover of Justice, and anxiously desirous for the prosperity of his country.... wise and dignified in character, affable humane, and generous... sincerely beloved by his own subjects.'<sup>58</sup>

At the time of Shuja's death there were three possible successors to province. The first and eldest was Mirza Amani Asafuddaulah, born of the Nawab Begum<sup>59</sup> and had been declared heir apparent during his fathers life time. Second was Mirza Sa'adat Ali, who at the time of his father's death was surviving in the

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<sup>56</sup> Mirza Abutalib Khan, *Tafzih-ul-Ghafilin*, translated by William Hoey as *History of Asf-ud-Daulah. Allahabad*, 1885, reprinted, Lucknow, 1971, p.7. Abutalib was a revenue officer in Asafuddaulah's service.

<sup>57</sup> These are the lines of Mr. Dow, A contemporary of Shuja and was Considered to be a enemy of Nawab, As quoted in 'THE GARDEN OF INDIA By H.C. Irwin, England 1800, reprinted Lucknow, 1973. p. 74.

<sup>58</sup> This view is expressed by Franklin and Scott, quoted in 'garden of India' P.75

<sup>59</sup> She was the legitimate and most favorite wife of Nawab Shuja

province of Bareilly. The third son was Mirza Jangli. But on the principle of primogeniture and with support of Bahu Begam Asaf succeeded his father although his succession was even contested in the family by Shujaudaulah's mother Nawab Begum. She advised Babu Begam that, "Your son Asafuddulah is now twenty six years old, but up to this time he has devoted himself to amusements unbecoming and inconsistent with his position, and he has neither manners, presence, nor knowledge of business and he is absolutely incapable of supervising or comprehending administration: It is not unlikely that all the wealth your husband has acquired will in short time be dissipated. It is advisable to place nominally in the chair of state and to appoint Mirza Sa'adat Ali who is acute and intelligent as his ministers." On this Bahu Begam replied, "I have had but the one son in my whole life, bad or good, he is my sole treasure, in your eyes all sons of Shuja are equal" the old lady answered, "I have merely told you I felt to right and what seemed best in my opinion. You can do as you please. It is your affair and you are responsible."<sup>60</sup>

One thing is very clear from this discussion between Nawab Begum and Bahu Begum, that they enjoyed considerable influence in the affairs of state and Asaf succeeded his father not because of his personal qualities but due to Bahu Begum's active intervention in the matter. And even after his succession, he

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<sup>60</sup> Faiz Bakhsh, *Tarikh-i-Farh Bakhsh*, this work was completed in 1817. W. Hoey has translated this work as *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad* in two vol. AUD. 1889, Vol II, p.5, The Author of this work was the Accountant of Begums and very closely associated with them and the above mentioned discussion between Bahu Begam (wife of Shuja) and Nawab Begum (mother of Shuja) was recorded by him in his memoir.

invited criticism from many quarters, both Indian and European. A European who visited his court had this to say, 'Mirza Amani (Asafuddaulh's real name ) is one of those characters which dishonour human nature. His person extremely disagreeable, and his mind depraved beyond description. He is endowed with no capacity for business and abandoned to the most unnatural of passions.'<sup>61</sup>

However, even amidst these criticism Asaf has not faced any kind of real challenge at his accession, but he hurted many of the courtiers and common people of Faizabad by his haste to succeed his father. Just after his accession, 'he nominated Mir Murtaza khan,<sup>62</sup> his Naib<sup>a</sup> with full powers, and created him a haft-hazari and sahib-i-naubat and appointed Jhao lal, a native of Faizabad, a man of low extraction his house hold steward.'<sup>63</sup> He also honoured many of his friends, soldiers and his close associates and had given lavish gifts as well as titles of Raja and command of Nawabi troops. But his public exhibition of lavishness did not go well among the old loyalists and friends of Shuja, who were still mourning the death of late Nawab. The reason for this undue haste of Asaf seems to be lies in the warnings of his naib who advised Asafuddaulah that a quick declaration would prevent the army from thinking of other contenders and thus ensure continued tranquillity.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Comte de Modave, *Voyage, en Inde 1773-76, ed., Jean Deloche, peris 1971*, Quoted in 'A very Ingenious Man' Authored by Rossiee Llelyin Jones, Delhi, 1992.

<sup>62</sup> Murtaza khan was not liked by both shuja and his wife. Since his father had used some very disrespectful words for Shuja' mother, and that's why his appointment as naib was shocking for both Bahu and Nawab Begum.

<sup>63</sup> Mirza Abu Talib, *Tafzih-ul-Ghafilin*, tr. by W. hoey as *history of Asaf-ud-baulah*, Alahabad, 1885. reprinted Lucknow, 1971.

<sup>64</sup> R. Barnett, *North India between empires*, p.103

The other important events of his accession was his attempt to distance himself from his mother, under the influence of Murtaza Khan. A contemporary observer writes that, 'Murtaza Khan advised Asafuddaulah to march out and pitch his camp at Mahndi ghat and remain there for some days, so that all might be awed by his independence. His real object was that by removing him from Faizabad, he might do what he liked with him.'<sup>65</sup> Incidentally Nawab begum strongly condemned the appointment of Murtaza Khan as naib before the departure of Asaf from Faizabad: 'Asafuddaulah when he succeeded to the government conferred Murtaza Khan a magnificent robe, marking his appointment as naib.....the Nawab Begum, who had not yet left her place of mourning heard this from her eunuchs and was highly incased, she ordered Muharram Ali Khan, her steward, to go at once and take all these things from Murtaza Khan, and she sent for Asaf and blurted out violently all that she had in her heart.'<sup>66</sup>

Thus, it seems clear that Asaf's departure from <sup>F</sup>faizabad and consequent move to shift his residence and capital to Lucknow was taken due to the desire of Asaf to free himself from the meddlings and intervention of begam<sup>S</sup> in his personal and state affairs. This change also marked the desire of Asaf to assert his power quite independently from his blood relatives and favour which surrounded his predecessor's court and harem. In the Mughal and post Mughal dynasties we find

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<sup>65</sup> Faiz baksh, *Faizabad, Vol. II*, p.15.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid*, p.15

numerous examples of this kind, where the ruler tried to change the centre of power, and to develop an independent seat of authority in order to deny a bid for part of the patrimony by dead ruler wives and brothers. And that is why, essential for Asaf was a “place” - a darbar where he was completely dominant and where he could exercise his authority without the rival of the shades of the dead or the envious living.<sup>67</sup>

But in his bid to leave Faizabad and to develop Lucknow as the seat of power Asaf faced some immediate problems, the first was the dispute over the ownership of his father's accumulated treasure. Bahu Begum refused to consider Shuja's treasure as state property. On account of her personal help to Shuja which she rendered to him at the time of Allahabad treaty. She argued that Shuja's treasure is her personal property, as one of Begum's Accountant and contemporary writer observes: 'a demand for money was made through Nawab Mirza Ali Khan (By Asaf). The Bahu begum replied: "I have no money and that I have is the gift of Shujauddaulah."<sup>68</sup> But this Answer of Bahu Begum had angered Asaf 'and there were many unworthy passages between them. At last the Begum, on obtaining for her son, gave him 50 Lakhs of rupees.'<sup>69</sup> However, the amount released to the New Nawab was very small part of what she left at her death: 'she left three lakhs of rupees to build her tomb; one lak for pious observances in her

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<sup>67</sup> C.A. BAYLY – Rulers, *Townsmen and Bazars: North Indian society in the Age of British expansion*, Indian ed; Delhi, 1992, p.116.

<sup>68</sup> *Faizabad*, vol II. P.25

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p.25.



memory; ten thousand per annum for the maintenance of her tomb; Quran readers, sweepers, gardeners, watchman, drum beaters and others: nine hundred per month for the pay of guards to be maintained at her place: and ninety six lakhs of rupees and gold and silver plate and jewels and clothes, woolen fabrics, Kamkhwabs silks, and so on, of undetermined value.<sup>70</sup> It is evident from this account that in the very beginning of his rule, Asaf was deprived of the state treasure, which he should have got in normal conditions as the chief of state. The second problem which he faced was the ever increasing greed and subsidy to be paid for the use of British force; At the death of Shuja the British establishment considered the treaties with him as having lapsed although this view was not approved by the directors: 'the death of Shujah Dowlah may render it necessary to make new arrangements with his successors we can not agree with our council that our treaties with the state of oude expired with the death of that Nabob.'<sup>71</sup> Notwithstanding the differences with directors, the English establishment in India concluded a treaty with Nawab on terms which was more profitable to the company; the subsidy for the use of British troops was increased by Rs 50,000 per month, the tribute paid by the zamindars of Ghazipur and the sovereignty of Benaras passed to the company. The real motive, in signing this treaty with Nawab was to station their forces in Awadh with out being responsible to its fiscal need and British were aware of the fact that, they can persuade the new Nawab for this:

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* p.290-91, Bahu Begum left all the cash money for company. She infact made a will of this and had informed company about this before her death.

<sup>71</sup> Fort william correspondence. Letter from court, 15 Dec. 1775, p.129

'His (shuja's) successor can not but be sensible how much depends upon our support and therefore will, we persuade our selves, readily consent to defray the whole expense of brigade to be employed in the defence of his dominions.'<sup>72</sup>

Asaf, on the other hand, was well aware of the consequences of this kind of treaty and this is obvious from a correspondence sent to the directors: 'for some time he seemed resolved rather to dispense with the assistance of our army than submit to new terms.'<sup>73</sup> Thus in the very beginning of his rule Asaf was placed in a very difficult situation. Earlier in fact Shuja himself faced similar kind of problems after his alliance with the company. But the difference is that, if Shuja stood firm in facing the challenges, Asaf proved quite opposite to this and left the whole administration in the hands of his deputies. He has given the title of Mukhtar ud-daula to his naib Murtaza khan and allowed him to take full control of Awadh's administration while involving himself in to all kind of pleasure seeking adventures. However, the administrative practices of Mukhtaruddaula proved ruinous and further alienated the old nobility. It also created problems in Army and local administration: 'Mukhtaruddaulah was slowly and gradually achieving the ruin of the army, the transfer of the collectors of mahals and heads of government accordingly he first disbanded without fault the officers of these four regiments, who were with Almas Ali khan and Mahbub Ali khan two trusted and the sharpest officers, whom Shuja had himself placed in charge of sarkars.'<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, p. 129, Pare 16.

<sup>73</sup> FORT william correspondence, Vol. VII, P. 552-53 Appendices

<sup>74</sup> Faiz Baksh, Faizabad, Vol. II, p. 22.

Mukhtaruddaulah also used his influence on Asaf to concede the Jagir of Benaras to the English company. This he has done in order to secure his position in the region, without being concerned about the consequences of this arrangement for the future of Awadh. Abu Talib, a revenue officer in the Asaf's service writes that, 'with a view to secure his own position, which was dangerous and insecure on account of the caprices of his master and the nobles round him, considered it wise to comply with this request and induce Asaf by specious arguments to acquiesce.'<sup>75</sup>

In a short span of time the disruptions and dislocations in the administration and army become so evident that some of the old loyalist of late nawab have planned to eliminate Mukhtaruddaulah. For this, first they accused Mukhtar of treachery in giving Benaras and the control of Army divisions to the English and turned Asaf against him, then one of conspirators, whose name was Basant Ali, and who was a commandant in Asaf's Army negotiated a deal with some of the close associates of Nawab's brother Saadat Ali, it was settled that, 'Basant should put Asafuddaulah and Mukhtaruddaulah out of the way; that Saadat Ali should succeed his brother and Basant become his minister of war and finance'.<sup>76</sup> So one day when Nawab was complaining about Mukhtar and his activities, then finding a right moment Basant asked for the orders to kill Nawab's Naib. Although Basant's real intention was to drag Nawab into his treachures designs and to eliminate both

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<sup>75</sup> Abu Talib, *Tafzih-ul-Ghafilin*, p.11.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p.16.

the Nawab and his Naib, and therefore for executing his designs he prepared a banquet and invited both of them for the occasion. But Nawab, although unaware of the conspiracy made some excuse, Mukhtar agreed to come and was killed by one associate of Basant Ali in the Banquet. When this news reached to Asaf, he sent a message for Basant to come and meet him alone. <sup>A</sup>As he knew that wazir had no knowledge of his designs on him, and the murder of Mukhtaruddaullah had been committed with his approval, he did not hesitate to go in alone.<sup>77</sup> After reaching there he was killed by the orders of Nawab on the pretext that 'if Basant remained alive, his complicity in the murder of Mukhtaruddaulah would become known and give rise to inquiries by the English.'<sup>78</sup>

When Saadat Ali heard about the death of Basant and the failure of their designs on Asaf, he decided to leave the place and fled to Agra, Saadat Ali's departure had given an immediate respite to Nawab from the threats which he was facing, but this proved very short due to the widespread revolts in the army. Few regiments which were in the neighbourhood of Etawah and attached to the force cantoned at Farrukhabad mutinied, imprisoned their officers, extorted their pay from them, and went off with their muskets and guns. The immediate goal of the mutineers was to install Saadat in Asaf's place but when this news reached to the English establishment, they became restless due to the fact that Saadat Ali was not a person who would yield to all their demands.

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, pp.16-17.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p.17.

So in order to pacify the mutineers and to install a permanent peace, the British Resident at Nawabi court tried to reach at certain understanding with Saadat Ali. The matter was resolved <sup>amicably</sup> ~~amicably~~ and Saadat Ali got asylum in company' territory with an annual pension of Rs. 3,00,000 from the Nawabi treasury.

In brief we can say that the political condition of Awadh in Asaf's reign was not stable and the administration was vulnerable to coercion and influence of both English and the dissatisfied members of Awadh regime, and that is why Asaf was never able to exert full authority in state affairs and under the pressures from all corners either he tactically retired to his personal domain or allowed his deputies to control the administration. <sup>A</sup>and if he survived for a long period in this adverse scenario that was only because still the legitimizing force for any activity in Awadh remained with him and as a head of state he was in a position to legalise any deed inside his territory.

#### **EXPANSION OF BRITISH INFLUENCE AND THE ANNEXATION OF CEDED PROVINCES:-(1795-1801)**

The political and Economic dominance of English over Nawabi regime became quite clear in the reign of Asafuddaulah, This dominance led to the incorporation of half of the Nawabi territory in company's authority by 1801. if we look in to the process of this dominance then we will find some important factors, prime among them was the ever increasing burden of subsidies for keeping the troops of

company in the province. Along with this the trade conducted by both private and company traders contributed to gradual penetration of company in to the internal administration of Awadh. Appointment of resident to Awadh in 1773, for safeguarding the British interest also provided them with a person who could interfere in to the internal administration of province. Abu Talib, An eye witness of these developments writes that when Asaf's Naib Ilich Khan died, then 'Raja Jagannath diwan conducted the administration under the instructions of Mr. Bristow',<sup>79</sup> who was then the Resident of English Company in Lucknow court. Even in Ilich Khan's time we find some instances where the interference of English resident Bristow had annoyed the naib.

Bristow, who was very close to Mukhtaruddaulah contested the imprisonment and removal of relatives and protégés of Mukhtar on this Ilich Khan replied, 'according to the agreement which has been ratified between our two powers, you have no right to interfere in the affairs of this state. Drop this subject, If you don't you will have to furnish<sup>n</sup> an explanation to our agent through the council in Calcutta.'<sup>80</sup> When Bristow came to know about this reply he became silent for timebeing and suspended his designs to influence the internal administration. After the death of Ilich Khan he again started intervening into the inter<sup>n</sup>val administration of Awadh. As for as the related dispute in council over the appointment of resident is concerned, it seems that the council members and the

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<sup>79</sup> Abu Talib, *Tafzihul-Gafilin*, p.18.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, p.14.

Governor general were having different choices, the consequent appointment and recall of two residents, Bristow and Middleton could be seen in this context. When Warren Hastings was governor, he appointed Middleton in 1773 but after few years Middleton was replaced by Bristow. This process continued and they replaced each other many times. Basically these two residents belonged to different groups in Calcutta council, if one got appointed by the blessings of Governor then the other council members would try to replace him with their person. At the heart of this factionalism had been the high amount of Economic gains which the resident was able to make in Awadh and in that way the amount he could render to his patron in council. In some letters written to the directors we find this contradiction among council members on the conduct of resident : 'the majority of our members supported Mr. Bristows conduct, the Governor general condemned it.'<sup>81</sup> By 1782, the extortions of Resident reached to the extent where 'he was found guilty of misappropriation of very large sums of money, the extent of which can not be established.'<sup>82</sup> But even then he remained unpunished due to a 'powerful party of supporters in Calcutta, among whom were two future governors general, Sir John Macpherson and Sir John shore.'<sup>83</sup> Quite clearly we can see that there were many dimensions in the process of Exploitation of Awadh; overtly it was squeezing the resources through subsidy<sup>d</sup> for company troops and covertly the

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<sup>81</sup> Fort William Correspondence, letter to court, 13 Dec. 1783, p. 217.

<sup>82</sup> Rossice, Llewelyn Jones, *A very Ingenious men*, p.116.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Resident was extracting money through all kind of corrupt means by the support of one group or the other in the council.

Under the excessive burden of revenue demands from the Nawabi regime, which was itself facing the pressure from British to meet their subsidy claims, the dislocation and disruption of land owning classes became clear in early 1780's, a contemporary observer talks about the 'great falling off in the Jama'<sup>84</sup> in certain Sarkars and how the tenants started relying more 'on grazing and cattle-breeding for their maintenance and abandoned agriculture'.<sup>85</sup> This led to the drastic reduction in revenue surpluses 'a village, which a hundred years before paid a revenue of two thousand rupees, now paid only one hundred and that too, although there are five hundred tenants houses in the village.'<sup>86</sup> The writer also talks about the refractoriness of the rajas and weakness of collectors in front of them. The problem further ingraved when a famine struck Awadh in 1783.<sup>R</sup> Revenue declined to the extent that Nawab was even not able to pay the required subsidy amount to English troops, the council in Calcutta wrote to court that, 'your troops in oude fell several months in arrears, the claim upon the vizier (Asaf) independent of the current kists amounted to upward of 53 lacks of rupees: A famine had begun to prevail in his country, and Evils of the most alarming nature were to be apprehended.'<sup>87</sup> William Hodges, who came to Awadh at the time of famine, talks

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<sup>84</sup> Abu Talib-*Tafzihul*.....p.43

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p.43

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p.43

<sup>87</sup> Fortwillam correspondence, letter to the court, 31 Dec. 1783. p.217



about the miserable condition of the area. However his views are prejudiced against Nawab, which is understandable considering the fact that he was having elegance towards company. He writes that 'After leaving the flourishing districts of Benaras. I could not help viewing with a melancholy concern the miserable appearance of all the territories which were under the absolute direction of mussulman tyrants'<sup>88</sup>

Among these circumstances Warren Hastings decided to visit Awadh, for at least softening the burdens of company demands. When he reached Lucknow, he was informed about all the misdeeds and corruption committed by the Resident Bristow. With daily contact with Asaf and his minister Hastings assured them to address their grievances for this he agreed to reduce the financial obligations of Asaf, he also involved himself in remedying Bristow's misdeeds and the injustices.<sup>89</sup> He had reduced the batta on Awadh sikka which resulted in the lowering of the rate of exchange. And by reducing the debt he made it easier for Nawabi regime to pay the future subsidy amount. Hastings also agreed to debar the future resident from interfering in the revenue administration of Awadh, this had been a matter of concern for Nawabi officials before this agreement took place, since Bristow quite openly interfered in revenue administration by halting the functioning of revenue contractors. Hastings had also given his consent to remove the monopoly trade of company representatives.<sup>90</sup> However, this was easy

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<sup>88</sup> William Hodges, *Travels in India, 1780-83*, London, 1793, Republished from Delhi, p.106.

<sup>89</sup> R. Barnett, *North India between the empires*, p.225.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p.225

to say than to implement. Overall by these arrangements Nawabi regime got a fresh lease of life for the time being. In the late 90's again the Nawabi regime had to face the same corrupt practices. Which it was subject to before the treaty with Hastings in Lucknow.

If we look closely in these developments, we can find that even the Lucknow treaty was not completed due to any real regard for the interest of Asaf's territory but under some compulsions; since company at that Juncture was not confident about taking the full charge of Awadh and the Directors also maintained their pledge, not to cross Bengal due to their apprehensions that they would not be able to govern such a vast area and that is why they were happy in using the resources of region by allying with Nawabi regime. When Hastings, in early 1784, realized the fact that excessive demands and exploitation by company was shaking the foundations of Nawabi regime, then he had changed company's policy with immediate effect.

When Cornwallis took charge from Hastings he also pursued the same policies which were in effect during his predecessors time and on the appeal of Nawab fixed the subsidy at 50 lakhs, including the expenses of company's brigades stationed at Kanpur and Fatehpur. Cornwallis also agreed to prohibit the entry of any European into the Nawab's dominion, without the written permission of the Governor General.<sup>91</sup> The actions of company resident in Awadh was also

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<sup>91</sup> Fort William Correspondence, VOL. XVI. 1787-1791, letter to the court, p.115

subject to close scrutiny and the Calcutta council informed the directors about it: 'strict orders are to be sent to him neither to interfere himself nor suffer an interference for any public or private claims of British subjects or persons under our authority.'<sup>92</sup> So the period of non interference and calm continued until the death of Asafuddaulah. But when he died in September 1797, a fresh dispute arised between company and Nawabi regime over the succession; The late Nawab had chosen his adopted son, wazir ali as his successor, but when the company come to know about the anti British affiliation of new Nawab, then, it started insisting on the succession of late Nawab' brother Saadat Ali, who was living in company' asylum at Benaras. Thus, after four months in office, Wazir Ali was deposed and replaced by Saadat Ali, with whom company signed a treaty on 21 February 1798, which increased the subsidy by almost half to Rs. 76 lakhs yearly. So clearly the repressive order of company was again at work and with the arrival of lord Wellesly in 1798, this aggressive policy had taken a different dimension, where the governor general start thinking in terms of annexing the whole Awadh by late 1800, three regiments of cavalry seven infantry battalions, and another artillery unit had been sent into Awadh. Increasing the annual subsidy by Rs. 24,74,731, to its highest annual rate ever.<sup>93</sup> When Nawab, understandably, declared his inability to pay such a huge amount then wellesly, finding a right opportunity, annexed major portions of Nawabi territory, including Rohilkhand,

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<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, para 11.

<sup>93</sup> R. Barnett, *North India*, p.236.

Gorakhpur, and the Doab, which provided a gross revenue of Rs.1,35,23,475 to the company<sup>94</sup>

On the real intention of Wellesely in annexing the large parts of Awadh, we have two different views. The first one is propounded by P.J. Marshall who argues that 'European commercial activities in Oudh were developing at a very rapid pace indeed in the years from 1795-1801'<sup>95</sup> but 'a connection between commercial and political expansion is easier to suggest than to substantiate.'<sup>96</sup> He further illustrates his point by saying that 'there seems to be no case for, suggesting that increased trade had so undermined the wazir's authority that annexation had become inevitable.'<sup>97</sup> Or 'that traders engineered the annexations for their own purposes.'<sup>98</sup> And so Marshall concludes by saying that 'the annexations took place not so much because of developments in Oudh as because of developments in the mind of the Governor General.'<sup>99</sup> But it seems that this line of argument underplays the Economic impact of British rule and generalizes on the line that British Expansion in India had no pattern, but was possible due to some kind of sudden motivations to the Governor-General. The second line of argument on the intentions of Wellesely is developed by R. Mukherji, who quite contrary to Marshall believes that 'from the 1780's the political and Economic dimensions of colonialism in Awadh

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<sup>94</sup> P. Basu, *Oudh and the East India Company, 1785-1802*, Delhi, 1938, p.205.

<sup>95</sup> P.J. Marshall, 'Economic and Political Expansion: the case of Oudh', *M.A.S. 9 (1975)*, p.478.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p.479.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 482

tended to be closely interrelated.' And the acute financial bankruptcy and the marked deterioration in administration was caused by the 'subsidies, illegal extortions and commerce.'<sup>100</sup> and not by the alleged misgovernment of Nawab so the 'British Annexation of parts of Awadh in 1801 ..... is inseparably linked to the revenue and commercial demands of British imperialism.'<sup>101</sup>

### **END OF REGIONAL AUTONOMY AND THE FINAL ANNEXATION OF AWADH**

Nawabi Awadh after the Annexation of ceded provinces in 1801 is better known for its cultural affluence, although on political front Saadat Ali recovered from problems which confronted him by improving his administration and by imposing a reasonably uncorrupt central authority. He was successful in his endeavors because he got more space to organize and to control the administration according to his own understanding. As far as his relations with British establishment is concerned. It seems that he was always anxious to conciliate them through his noble gestures: 'When in the year 1803, an expedition was being fitted out, he supplied the East India company's cavalry with a considerable number of horses'<sup>102</sup>. This act of Nawab had pleased the Governor General Wellesely and he fully acknowledged the help of Nawab by writing a letter to him where he

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<sup>100</sup> Rudrangshu Mukherji, 'Trade and empire in Awadh, 1765-1804', *PAST and Present* 94 (1982), p.101.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.* p. 101.

<sup>102</sup> M. Mohammad Masihuddin Khan Bahadur, 'Oude: its princes and its Govt. vindicated'; printed by John Davy and Sons, London in 1857. Edited with an introduction by SAFI AMMED, THE Author was a hereditary native of Awadh, he had Access to relevant documents, many of them of a highly secret and confidential in nature, p.51.

observed 'the supply of cattle is an indelible mark of your courtesy and sincerity towards the honorable company.'<sup>103</sup> But even if the Nawab was always eager to comply, by the demands of English, the same can not be said about the resident of the company who quite contrary to the agreement between Nawab and the company continued with undue interference and meddling in the internal administration of Awadh.

On his death in 1714, Saadat Ali was succeeded by his son, Ghaziuddin Haydar, Although not his father's choice as successor, Ghaziuddin acceded to rule in Awadh over the claims of his more administratively experienced brother due to the support of the company.<sup>104</sup> Company also informed him about their desire to leave him 'free agent in the internal government of his own dominions'.<sup>105</sup> However, disregarding this assurance the Resident tried to direct the land revenue system through his control over the company-officered troops in Awadh. Certainly it will be naive to think that the company would have not been aware of the designs of resident and so what ever assurance company was giving to Nawab had little to do with its real intentions. A more striking instance of the dishonest conduct of company was the seizure of property which Bahu Begum left at her death. Company got more than one crore of rupees and only a few thousands were given to Ghazeuuddin Haydar, but even then Nawab was not able to resist this unjust conduct of company due to his subservient position in front of them. In

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<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>104</sup> M. Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British, and the Mughals*, Delhi, 1987, p.115.

<sup>105</sup> Minutes of the governor General. 3<sup>rd</sup> february: 1816, sec. 06 as quoted in *oude: its princely vindicatid'*

addition to this, company also demanded cash money, although as loan, from Nawab to meet its expense on Maratha and Nepal warfare. Nawab readily accepted these demands and observed in front of the company resident, that his Jan mal (life and Property) were at his lordship's command.<sup>106</sup>

This again prove the point that the relations of company and Nawab was transformed in a manner, where Nawab was eager to appease company in all the ways possible. How impressed the British governor was to the services rendered by the Nawab can be understandable from his letter to Nawab: 'your excellency has, in such an hour of extreme need and want, promised in such friendly and courteous terms, to lend a further sum of one crore of rupes to the honourable company. This liberal aid evidences that your Excellency's faithfulness and fidelity towards the British government are really true.'<sup>107</sup> Another important event of Ghaziuddin Hayder's reign was his elevation to the imperial status of 'Padshah', this was the first time that a Awadh ruler proclaimed the status of 'Padshah', Before him although most of the Awadh rulers had governed the country quite independently from the declining mughal centre but they never proclaimed themselves as 'Padshah', and had always given their allegiance to the Mughal emperor. Even all the contemporary rulers of Ghaziuddin Hydar's time recognised the sovereignty of the Mughal Emperor. However, rising to the status of 'Padshah' had little impact, in practice, out side Ghaziuddin's court in

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<sup>106</sup> 'oude: its princes vindicated, p.59

<sup>107</sup> ibid, p.64

Lucknow, as a contemporary traveller observes 'hardly any, even of his own people, call him king. And I must say his name seems to be treated very disrespectfully under all denominations.'<sup>108</sup> Thus apart from its symbolic meaning, Ghaziuddin's proclamation of kingship has not made any real change in his status.

Ghaziuddin died in 1827 and was succeeded by his son, Nasiruddin Haydar, his reign witnessed continuous interference of resident in the internal administration of Awadh, resident annually placed the crown on the Padshah's head, thus demonstrating the ruler's source of authority.<sup>109</sup> He was also involved in exercising a form of dyarchy or indirect rule in Awadh which laid to the inability of Nawab to rule his country effectively. In the meantime Nasiruddin further reduced his position by giving massive loans to the company and its supporters.<sup>110</sup> He died in 1837, on his death a controversy broke out on the issue of succession the English company was against the succession of his putative son and so they appointed Muhammad Ali Shah, son of late Nawab Saadat Ali and a person of old age. With New ruler they have signed a treaty, according to which, they reserved the right to assume the administration of Awadh, should it deem necessary.<sup>111</sup>

After this treaty the annexation of whole Awadh become a matter of choice and appropriate time for the company. And when in 1848, Dalhousie took the

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<sup>108</sup> Bishop Reginald Heber, Narrative of a Journey through the upper provinces of India from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824 to 1825, in two volumes, Rep India, p.45.

<sup>109</sup> Fisher, A Clash of Cultures, p.161.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid*, p.162

<sup>111</sup> *ibid*, p.168



charge in India, he started the process of fully incorporating Awadh in to the British control, although in the beginning he had written a letter to Wajid Ali Shah where he lamented on his unablensness to find a pretext for annexation and so in search of a 'pretext' and to implicate the Nawabi regime he sent W.H. Sleeman to Awadh as the Resident in 1849. After his arrival in Awadh 'the conduct of the Resident underwent an entire change: the air of deference and respect which he had first observed towards the sovereign was now exchanged for a deportment almost approaching to insolence.'<sup>112</sup>

Sleeman further encroached the authority of Awadh Nawab by making a tour through the provinces of Awadh. This tour was infact conducted with ulterior motives of proving that the ruler of Awadh is not able to govern the country properly and so it should be taken over from him. In his diary of tour in to Awadh Sleeman sights an example of how the rural landed class responded to the questions of whether they wished to come under the British rule: they told 'that they should like much to have the British rule introduced. Without worring them with its complicated laws'.<sup>113</sup> On the condition of rural administration. Sleeman observed in his diary that 'the Nazim of the Tundeeawan or Bauger district, met me on his border, and told me that, "he was too weak to enforce the king's orders, or to collect his revenues."<sup>114</sup> On the general condition of Agriculture Sleeman noticed that 'in the valley of Nerbudda, for instance, such sufferings would render

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<sup>112</sup> 'Oudh: Its Princes and its Govt. vindicated', p.79.

<sup>113</sup> W.H. Sleeman, A Journey through the kingdom of oude, Vol. II, p.10.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.* p.11.

a district desolate for ages.....I have seen extensive tracts of the richest soil and most picturesque scenery along the banks of the Nerbudda. Which had rendered desolate for ages by the misrule of only a few years'<sup>115</sup> However, there was nothing new in these allegations of Sleeman and before him also many company official had commented on the bad agricultural condition in Awadh But it seems that all these allegations were made due to the prejudices of company officials for Nawabi regime. And if we take in to account the observations of Bishop Heber about Awadh, we find an altogether different picture as he remarked: 'I was pleased, however, and surprised after all which I had heard of oude, to find the country so completely under the plough, since were the oppression so great as is some times stated, I cannot think that we should witness so considerable a population, or so much industry.'<sup>116</sup>

Based on the report of sleeman the Governor General welllesely annexed the hole of Awadh in early 1856 , and the era of Nawai<sup>b</sup> rule got over by giving way to British empire. Company's decision to annex Awadh it seems, resulted not from any significant event in Awadh but was the outcome of 'Dalhousie's desire to bring further territories under the British authority. As far as the people of Awadh are concerned. They never approved the violation of their ruler's sovereignty. And this disapproval came to the forefront when they actively opposed the British rule in 1857 revolt.

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<sup>115</sup> ibid, p.38

<sup>116</sup> Bishop Reginald Heber, Narrative of a Journey, p.49.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CULTURAL GROWTH IN AWADH

The Mughal Culture, as it evolved over the course of sixteenth and seventeenth century, was above all a courtly and imperial culture, one that focused on the person and charisma of the emperor.<sup>1</sup> However, by the eighteenth century, the center of cultural affluence transferred from the Mughal centre to the newly emerged states and there came a new vitality into the cultural practices of these newly emerged states. Awadh and its Nawabi regime were in fact the leading light of this cultural affluence and in that way they were also competing for the cultural authority, which was so long enjoyed by the imperial centre. The impetus provided by the Nawabi regime to the cultural growth in Awadh also furnished an opportunity to legitimize their rule, since for every ruler of that period the symbols of sovereignty had a great importance, they often invoked their legitimacy from cultural symbolism. Although the symbols which Nawabs employed were not fully derived from their Mughal rivals, and therefore a conglomeration of Mughal, Shiite and regional values received strong emphasis at Nawabi court. The fullest expression of these cultural practices can be seen in the Nawabi capital Lucknow and its 'Tahzib'.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal and the Bengal Frontier 1204-1760*, N. Delhi, 1994, p.159.

However, theories about moral and cultural decline in eighteenth century often focus on Awadh and its capital Lucknow as the epitome of decadence.<sup>2</sup> Herman Goetz argues that the Lucknow court, epitomized an overripe culture which had reached a peak of artistic refinement even as it had lost its moral and social purpose.<sup>3</sup> Sir Jadunath Sarkar discovered complete rottenness in the core of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century society: 'corruption, inefficiency and treachery disgraced all branches of the public service. In the midst of this decay and confusion, our literature, art and even true religion had perished.'<sup>4</sup> Tara Chand also criticised the intellectual level of eighteenth century India in these words: 'An indescribable malaise had settled upon the spirit of India, that a moral and intellectual canker was sapping its vitality'.<sup>5</sup> Annemarie Schimmel thinks that in the cultural field 'the dusty veil of stagnation seemed to cover everything not allowing of new enterprises for redirecting the spiritual energy of the Muslims.'<sup>6</sup>

There is also a tendency among some historians to counterpoise the moral, cultural and intellectual decline of eighteenth century with the glory of Europe that had gained her stand in world history and was just passing through the Age of reason, and the highest cultural activity in literature, philosophy and music, when the British confronted the declining Indian Empire than the later was not able to

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<sup>2</sup> Michael H Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British and the Mughals*, Delhi, 1987, p.7.

<sup>3</sup> Herman Goetz, *The Crisis of Indian Civilization in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: The Genesis of Indo-Muslim Civilization*, Calcutta, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, V.4, Bombay, pp.343-44.

<sup>5</sup> Tara Chand, *History of Freedom movement in India*, Vol.II, pp.217-18.

<sup>6</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Pain and grace: A Study of two mystical writers of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Muslim India*, Leiden, 1976, p.1.

meet the challenges of an intellectually and morally superior power. All these writings, seem to suggest that Indians lost political power because of cultural decadence and immorality. In other words political success was seen as guaranteed for a righteous course, while political failure as a reflection of loss of righteousness. George D. Bearce has rightly pointed out that most of the historians of National movement of India had in order to explain India's loss of independence perpetuated a general impression that India lost its freedom because of a general decline in political and cultural vigour in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but the utility of this conception does not necessarily validate it.<sup>7</sup> Thus this chapter will look into the evolution of Awadhi culture and its different facades, without being influenced by nationalist as well as colonial discourse which, in order to claim a higher status for western values, always maintained that whatever was 'oriental', whether politics, culture or society was inferior and decadent.

### **URDU IN 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY NORTH INDIA**

One of the cultural achievements of Nawabi rule was the development of Urdu in Awadh, considering the Iranian and Shiite background of Nawabi it seems very strange that Urdu instead of Persian got the overwhelming state support and patronage. However, if we closely look in to the political and social condition of 18<sup>th</sup> century North India, we can find that the Nawabi patronage to Urdu was given due to the popularity of the language in the region. During most of the Mughal

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<sup>7</sup> George D. Bearce, *The Culture of 18<sup>th</sup> Century India: A Reappraisal*, Indian History Congress, p.290.

rule the language of state administration and cultural elite was Persian. But due to its foreign origin this language never attracted the masses and when the central power declined in early 18<sup>th</sup> century, people got enough strength to resist their hostility towards Persian and to support the cause of Urdu.

Urdu, which literally means camp was in the beginning, quite popular and convenient mean of interaction in the Imperial army camp, since most of the Mughal soldiers were recruited from the regions where the local dialects were more popular than the Persian and so when they joined the Mughal army they found Urdu more familiar to their language and thus readily accepted it. If we trace the origin and evolution of Urdu, we can find that Urdu was present in India in its different forms for centuries. When people speaking many tongues came to India in the wake of Muslim invasion, they interspersed their language freely with words of Indian languages and so when Delhi turned out to be seat of Empire, the dialects spoken in and around Delhi became enriched, not only this, the intimate contact of foreign and indigenous people produced a new language, which for the next four centuries was known by various names such as Hindvai, Hindko, Hindi, etc.<sup>8</sup> In the beginning it was written in the devanagri script with the exceptions of some Muslims preferring the Persian script. One of the famous poets of this period Malik Muhammad Jayasi and his work *Padmavat* represented the best elements of

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<sup>8</sup> Ahmed Ali, *The Golden Tradition: An Anthology of Urdu Poetry*, USA, 1973, p.3.

Hindavi poetry. The growing popularity of Hindavi is also evident from the fact that it was recognized as a semi-official language by the Sur Sultans (1540-55).<sup>9</sup>

However, the gradual progress of Hindavi get thwarted in the Mughal period due to the rulers' support to Persian language. Mughals were *chaghtai* turks and their mother tongue was Turkish, but they actively supported the cause of Persian. In Akbar's time Persian was the language of Mughal administration and gradually 'learning knowledge and high Culture began to be associated with Persian at many levels in Mughal Indian society'<sup>10</sup>. Those who possessed a good knowledge of Persian also distinguished themselves from others by claiming a higher status for them. A parallel of this can also be found in colonial India where although English was the language of powerful ruling elite, it never became popular among the masses, we can say that a kind of hierarchy was created through the use of a language which was not very easy for the common person.

The Mughals in their heyday, failed to give patronage to any other language except Persian. However, the Political and social conditions of eighteenth century dramatically changed the scenario and the declining Mughal empire became helpless in supporting Persian any further due to their inability to control the existing situation. As far as the successor states of eighteenth century are concerned. They also came to know that for establishing any meaningful relation between the rulers and ruled they need to support the local dialects instead of

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<sup>9</sup> Muzaffar Alam, 'The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics', *M.A.S.*, 32, 2 (1998), p.319.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p.330.

Persian, which remained to be a language alien to the vast number of people. Under these circumstances eighteenth century proved to be a fertile ground for the growth of Urdu language. This transition from Persian to Urdu also got manifested in the literature of the period, when Urdu started competing with Persian for the role of literary and Poetic language of the cultural elite. It has been said that the coming of Wali Dakkani and his divan of from Deccan strengthened the hands of the advocates of Urdu. The Poetry of Wali revealed to the poets of Delhi about the possibilities of their mother tongue as a medium of Poetry.<sup>11</sup> So once introduced in the elite circles of Mughal capital, the stage was set for the ascendancy of Urdu. Consequently the growth of Urdu counterpoised the decline of Persian. This provided an opportunity to the native poets to challenge the contemptuous attitude of Persian scholars towards Urdu and other vernaculars.

Hence, the literary developments of 18<sup>th</sup> century negate the traditional view of decline in every sphere of life and it seems that the decline in the century is more noticable than the growth because of the historical attention it got. Infact, Poetry flourished more than at any time before and even if politics disrupted Poetic traditions at time, and the disturbed poet could write elegies about the fall of his native city: but the out put of Poetry in all languages remained unchecked. Delhi is an important example of this, where under all kind of Political vicissitude Urdu Poetry developed to its most beautiful expression. Shah Gulson and his disciple Muhammad Nasir Andalib, Mir Dard's father, were prominent members

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<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, (1964, Delhi), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1984, p.72.



of the group who encouraged the development of Urdu Poetry. In poetical meetings the forms and figures of Urdu Poetry were discussed, new words adopted, awkward expressions discarded, and so in a short span of time the language became polished and refined.<sup>12</sup> This led to the rise of second generation of Urdu Poets, who were much more polished than their predecessors; Mir Taqi Mir (1722-1810), the love-poet, touched every heart, his friend Mir Dard in his turn wrote the most perfect Urdu mystical verse, Besides them we find the overpowering personality of Sauda (1713-1780), who is mainly praised as the best satirist of his time. Apart from these three the contribution of Mir Hasan (d. 1784) as a masnavi poet is also very important in the history of Urdu literature. They all not only contributed in the development of Urdu with their poetry but also encouraged the generations to come for the composition of poetry in Urdu. They developed a habit to rethink the state of Urdu after each musha'ara (Poetic gathering), weed out words, expression, and grammatical constructions that were out of mode, and introduce into it beauties of thought and expression from other languages.<sup>13</sup>

## DIFFUSION OF CULTURAL CENTRE

The last few years of Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah's <sup>reign</sup> ~~reign~~ saw continuous invasion and plunder of Delhi first in 1739, Nadir Shah invaded Delhi and ransacked all the remaining wealth of Delhi, After this invasion two successive

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<sup>12</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Pain and grace*, p.14.

<sup>13</sup> M. Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p.44.

attacks by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1748 and 1761 had shaken all the inhabitants of the Mughal capital. The already weak central authority came near to the complete disintegration and the people of the capital found themselves vulnerable from all the corners. The feelings and helplessness of the people of Delhi got expressed in the Biography of Mir where he writes: 'I happened to take the road to the newly ruined city (Delhi). at every step I shed tears and learned the lesson of mortality. And the further I went the more bewildered I became. I could not recognize any neighbourhood or house. There were no buildings to be seen, nor any residents to speak to. (verse) Every one I asked for was said to be not there anymore; Everyone I inquired about was said to exist no more.'<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile when Delhi was facing atrocities and loot due to the fragile political condition, Awadh proved to be the saviours for most of the poets and intellectual who migrated from Delhi, to Faizabad and then to Lucknow, which offered warm welcome and security to the Various literary groups. The arrival of poets like Arzu, Sauda and Zahik and his son Mir Hasan gave a new cultural significance to the Nawabi capital. When Shujauddaulah died in 1775, his successor Asafuddaulah shifted the capital to Lucknow, which consequently became the epitome of Nawabi culture, one of the ambitions of Asafuddaulah was to surpass all the existing cultural practices and to build a distinctive 'Lucknow school of cultural expression'. How far he was

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<sup>14</sup> Zikr-i-Mir, The Autobiography of the 18 Century Mughal Poet: Mir Taqi Mir (1723-1810) Translated, Annotated and Introduced by C.M. Naim, Delhi, 1999, p.93.

successful in his ambitions can be judged from the popularity of 'Lucknawi Tahzib' till this date.

From the very beginning of his reign Asaf combined generosity and love with a taste of poetry, Among the most outstanding Poets who came to Lucknow in his reign were Mir, Soz, and Mushafi, Mir in his Autobiography has described the conditions under which he got an invitation from the Nawab Asafuddaulah: 'This humble man had taken to staying at home at all times and desired to leave the city for good, but having no means was helpless to do so. (God, However, wished) to protect my honour and so it occurred to Nawab vazir-ul-Mamalik Asaf-ud-daulah Bahadur Asaf-ul-Mulk that if Mir would come to him he would invite him.... [Salar Jang] then took some money from the treasury and sent me a letter, saying, "The exalted Nawab has asked for you. It would be appropriate for you to get here any way you could." I was sitting at home, disgusted with life, when I read the letter I immediately set out for Lucknow.<sup>15</sup> When Mir reached Lucknow, he noticed with surprise that he is already famous in the elite circles of Lucknow as he writes: 'He (Asaf) intuitively recognized me and said, "you must be Mir Muhammad Taqi". He then embraced me with utmost kindness, took me with him to where he was to sit and – addressing me, recited some of his own verses, I said, "Praise be to God, A King's verse is the king of verses". out of extreme kindness, he then pressed me to recite some verses too .... After a couple of days, he sent

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<sup>15</sup> ibid, pp.118-19.

for me, I went and presented myself and read the panegyric I had written in his praise. He listened to it and with, utmost graciousness accepted me into his service and he showers on me much kindness and consideration'.<sup>16</sup> Along with Mir, Sauda also got the patronage of Nawabi regime, from 1757 to about 1770, he lived at Farrukhabad, under the support of chief minister of the kingdom and from then to his death in 1781 at the Nawabi court in Awadh, Richard Johnson, the British assistant resident at the court of Awadh was among those whose acquaintance he made there.<sup>17</sup> such was the excellence of Sauda's poetry that some time it generated Jealousy among contemporaries. He is known primarily as a panegyrist (qasidah writer) but his versatile genius can not be measured by a single genre. He remains one of the most trenchant satirists, who attacked individual failings, social chaos and degeneration of values with equal vehemence.<sup>18</sup>

The Third person along with Mir and Sauda, who illuminated the cultural milieu of Lucknow was Mir Hasan, a scholar and well versed in many branches of learning. He wrote a great many ghazals and eleven *Masnavis*, but his *masnavi sehr-ul-Bayan* made him one of the most famous poet of his time. In his *masnavis* one can see the standardisation and flourishing of a poetic tradition. In *Sehr-ul-Bayaan* he has a good story to tell. His expression was simple and elegant and the use of words precise and dexterous. A master of narrative, he excels in the portryal

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<sup>16</sup> ibid., p.119.

<sup>17</sup> V. Oldenberg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-77*, Princeton, 1984, p.38.

<sup>18</sup> Ali Jawad Zaidi, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Delhi, 1993, p.89.

of human nature and the expression of the most delicate feeling.<sup>19</sup> Abdul Halim Sharar, who chronicled the history of Awadhi culture in 19<sup>th</sup> century has this to say about him: 'Mir Taqi Mir wrote many short *masnavis* ... but it seems inappropriate to include them in the category of *masnavis*. The <sup>first</sup> ~~first~~ poet to write *masnavis* in Urdu was Mir Ghulam Hasan, the son of Mir Zahik who came to Lucknow in his childhood with his eminent father. He grew up as one of the community in Lucknow, he was nurtured here and his poetry developed in the local atmosphere. The society which influenced the writing of his *masnavi* *Benazir-o-Badar-e-Munir* [*Masnavi Sehr-ul-Bayaan*] was of Lucknow pure and simple.<sup>20</sup> The only other *masnavi* after *Shehr-ul-Bayan*, which enjoys popularity, is *Gulzar-e-Nasim*, by Pandit Daya Shankar Nasim of Lucknow (1811-43); it does not, however, surpass Mir Hasan's *masnavi* in appeal.

Along with *Ghazal*' *satire*', *qasida*' and *masnavis* another genre which developed and reached to its height of glory in Lucknow is known as *marsiya*. The Shiite background of the Nawabs also played an important role in the development of this form. Since *marsiya* poetry was meant to mourn the deaths of Husain. The grandson of prophet Mohammad, in the battle of Karbala and considering the centrality of prophets family in Shiite faith, it does not sound unusual that Nawabi regime encouraged this form in Lucknow. The two most important poets who

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 117

<sup>20</sup> Abdul Halim Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, tr. and ed., by E.S. Hardcourt and Fakir Hussain, Britain, 1975, p.82, *Sharar's father Joined the exiled Awadh Ruler in Calcutta. After spending few years in Lucknow sharar also Joined his father in Matiya Burg in 1869.*

excelled in this elegiac form of Poetry are, Mir Anis and Dabir. Anis with the use of pathos and action, has given marsia a certain epic element, and by exploiting human emotions he gave the story a heroic touch.<sup>21</sup> In Dabir's Marsia we find good use of majestic words and a more literary diction. Sharar also take into account the poetic genius of Anis and Dabir when he writes. 'Both these great man composed marsiyas superior to any other form of poetry and made the innovations in Urdu literature that people had been seeking as a result of the influence of British education.'<sup>22</sup> Sharar also draw our attention towards a certain kind of rivalry between the supporters of Anis and Dabir: 'people of Lucknow praised these two great men to such an extent that the city was divided into two factions. Every literary man was the champion of either Anis or Dabir and the controversy between these two groups was unending.'<sup>23</sup>

Another noticeable feature of this period was the development of *Rekhti*; along with the Urdu ghazal, where the Poet invariably uses, the male gender for the loved one, *Rekhti* verses were written in the idiom of the woman folk with a subject matter of a woman speaking to another about her delusions and Anxities. Sharar also noticed the development of this form as he writes, 'The Art of rekhti, verse collected in woman's language, although vulgar, is interesting...'<sup>24</sup> Due to its Radical nature *Rekhti* never attained respectability still it is useful for a study of

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<sup>21</sup> Ahmed Ali, The Golden Tradition, p.270.

<sup>22</sup> Sharar, p.84.

<sup>23</sup> ibid., p.84.

<sup>24</sup> ibid., p.87.

the suppression and pain which women faced under a patriarchal order, linguistically also it provides a convenient collection of the idioms, which were popular among women of that time.

This form of poetry was first popularised by Saadat Yar Khan Rangin (1755-1835). Who was a warrior prince turned poet. Born inside the fort at Sirhind, he moved early to Delhi with his father. In the imperial capital, he enjoyed the company of delicate women, begums and courtesans. It was in their company that he noticed the rich idiom of the womenfolk. He collected them into a lexicon and even composed ghazals in their Parlance and termed the new genre as rekhti.<sup>25</sup> This genre of poetry came to Lucknow, when like many other poets of the time "Rangin" immigrated to Lucknow and became a close associate of the Mughal prince Sulayman Shukoh there in due course 'Rekhti became established as a form of Urdu poetry which, although created by Delhi poet, was used by him in Lucknow and achieved prominence here.'<sup>26</sup>

### **CULTURAL RIVALRY BETWEEN DELHI AND LUCKNOW**

Asafuddaulah gathered some of the most renowned Urdu Poets in his court by lavishly bestowing stipends and gifts on them in contrast to this the Mughal Court at Delhi, which was facing poverty and insecurity. Lost its glory due to continuous migration of its cultural elite to the newly formed regional states. Many poets who

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<sup>25</sup> Zaidi, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p.140.

<sup>26</sup> Sharar, p.87.

migrated from Delhi had come to Lucknow and found help and support, due to the relative prosperity of Nawabi capital. The difference between the values of the two places, caused by different Economic conditions also got manifested in the poetry of Mir, who, when invited to take part in a *Mushaira* was not recognized by his presence, and the gathering of the fashionable gentlemen of Lucknow smiled at one another as they noted the new comer's large turban, loose fitting old fashioned clothes. And when it was Mir's turn to recite he rose and recited this verse.

*Kiya bood obaas Pucho ho purab ke sakino  
Ham ko ghareeb jan ke hans hans pukar ke  
Dilli jo aik shahar tha aalam main in tekhab  
Rahte the Munthakab hi gaha rojgar ke  
isko falak ne loot ke wiran kar dia  
ham rahnevale hain usi ujde dayar ke  
Why do you mock at me and ask yourselves  
Where in the world I come from, easterners'  
There was a city, famed throughout the world,  
Where dwelt the chosen spirits of the age.  
Delhi its name, fairest among the fair  
Fate looted it and laid it desolate.  
And to that ravaged city I belonged.<sup>27</sup>*

After hearing this verse people gathered in the audience hall, discovered who he was and then they made their apologies to him. However, due to some personal grievances Mir remained critical of *Lucknowis*.

Thus the contrast between the poverty and insecurity of Delhi ransacked repeatedly and deprived of its revenue and Lucknow flowing with wealth and honour proved too much for some poets. Based on this contrast of two cultural

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<sup>27</sup> Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Saida, Mir Hasan*, First Pub., 1968, Rev., Ed., Delhi, p.260.



centres, some Urdu critics had constructed a theory of 'Two schools' where they distinguished the Lucknow poetry from what they call the 'traditional poetry' of Delhi. For them Lucknow's prosperity resulted directly in moral and aesthetic imbalance, in pleasure seeking and licentiousness and all this got reflected in the Lucknow school of Poetry. Therefore, the propounders of two schools theory conceptualise the *Lucknawi* school of literary practices as fundamentally distinct from the earlier developed literary tradition of Delhi. But this 'traditional' vs. 'non-traditional' differentiation of Delhi and Lucknow has been strongly contested by some modern writers. They say that the literary trends are too diffused and diversified to be compressed in to the water tight compartment of a specific school.<sup>28</sup> Infact in Lucknow poetry there was neither a break from the past nor divergence of movement in opposite directions. More importantly those who established the new literary centre at Lucknow were the giants of the old Delhi centre. It will be naïve to argue that until these poets lived in Delhi they were the preservers of 'tradition' but the moment they came to Lucknow they became 'non-traditional'. Thus we can say that the criticism of Lucknow Poetry on the line of 'two school theory' either borne out from an ignorant bias, or is inspired by a colonial discourse generated by the British in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to downgrade and vilify Lucknow culture.

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<sup>28</sup> Zaidi, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p.139.

## COURTESANS OF LUCKNOW

The courtesans or more eloquently *tawaif's* of Lucknow were the trend setters in the cultural extravaganza of Lucknow. They were known for their extreme finesse and mannered behaviour, which deeply influenced the Nawabi cultural practices. Contrary to the Aristocratic ladies, who most of the time were secluded behind the walls of their mahals, Tawaifs enjoyed a great degree of freedom and impunity in Lucknow's society. William Kington in his 'Private life of an eastern king' writes that Lucknow courtesans or 'nautch girls are celebrated for their sociability and Education generality of them possessing a colloquial knowledge of Persian. They pre eminently excel the nautch girls of Delhi by their exquisite singing as well as their beauty.'<sup>29</sup>

It was the strength of their Art that they survived the onslaught of Victorian morality, even after they preserved this culture which was under attack from all the corners. As for as the Nawabi Awadh is concerned, there, acquitance with courtesans was considered to be a matter of Pride and so, 'until a person had association with courtesans he was not a polished man'.<sup>30</sup> Their relationship was not limited to the nobility, but Nawab's themselves entertained the company of these ladies, Sharar writes that not only there were multitude of courtesans and dancers living in Faizabad during Shujaudaulah's reign but due to the Nawab's rewards and favours they were in such an easy circumstances and so wealthy that

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<sup>29</sup> William Kington, *The Private Life of an eastern king*, London, 1858, p.210.

<sup>30</sup> Sharar, p.192.

most of the courtesans had fixed abodes with two or three sumptuous tents attached to them.<sup>31</sup> When the Nawabi court shifted from Faizabad to Lucknow most of the courtesans also migrated to the new capital of Awadh, in Lucknow not only they contributed in the development of a delicate Lucknawi manners and etiquette but they also set fashions in dress and accessories, kotha (upper-storied apartment mostly entertainment hall where courtesans performed their skills) became the place where new music and dance forms developed and spoken language became much more sophisticated and delicate. It was not uncommon for the young sons of the nobility to be sent to best known Tawaifs for instruction in etiquette, the art of conversation, polite manners and the appreciation of Urdu literature. Sharar writes that the spoken language in Lucknow attained such a perfection that, 'people from other places are awed by this skill' and 'they become inhibited when talking to the people of Lucknow.'<sup>32</sup>

The part which courtesans played in popularising the North Indian music is of considerable importance. Many courtesans who were very good singers also experimented with different 'ragas' which led to the evolution of some new ones. This continuous process of evolution in north Indian music is also evident from the fact that when the Nawab or any of the nobles set out on a Journey then, 'the tents of the musicians and courtesans accompanied them'.<sup>33</sup> Besides music, courtesans had also played a very significant role in developing new dance forms,

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p.199.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p.134.

those who came<sup>m</sup> from Ayodhya and Benares regions popularised the 'Kathak' form of dance. Before coming to the Nawabi court 'Kathak' was performed on the basis of Hindu mythological stories, where the dances had to make appropriate body movements based on the story. However, when this dance form came to Lucknow with the arrival of courtesans, some kind of intermingling took place and the devotional mood of 'kathak' underwent changes. Along with 'kathak' another dance form which developed in Lucknow was known as 'Rahas' Sharar writes that the 'Art of rahas belongs to Mathura and Braj and the constant flow of dancers from these areas made it popular in Lucknow.'<sup>34</sup> 'Rahas' in mythology was a circular dance performed by<sup>y</sup> Lord Krishna with a flute in his hand, his love Radha in the centre and gopis worshipping them. The last ruler of Awadh Wajid Ali Shah had developed a particular liking for this form and he 'produced a new representation of Rahas according to his own taste and with a plot of his own imagination.'<sup>35</sup> In its new form 'Rahas' was performed more in a manner of 'Raslila' where the love affairs of Krishna, Radha and other Gopies was displayed, Wajid Ali Shah himself took the role of Krishna and many courtesans who were called 'Paris' (fairis) performed the role of gopis. These performances got so much attention that it became an annual feature to perform Raslila with Royal splendour.

Apart from the cultural role the life style of courtesans also provides an opportunity to study the gender relations in a patriarchal society. Veena Oldenburg

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p.146.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.146.

in her study of life style as resistance tried to establish that contrary to a 'chaste' or 'dignified' woman, courtesans enjoyed liberation from the rules of patriarchal order.<sup>36</sup> In addition to this they had forged distinctive modes of sexuality that mocked at the traditional constructions of gender identities. In Nawabi Awadh they were in a position where they could manipulate powerful patron but the latter did not have any authority over their (Courtesans) lives. An open defiance of patriarchal tradition is evident from an account of Sharar who writes that 'a cultivated man like Hakim mahdi, who later became Wazir; owed his initial success to a courtesan named Piyaro, who advanced her own money to enable him to make an offering to the ruler on his first appointment as governor of a province of Awadh'.<sup>37</sup>

A society which strictly observed 'Purdah' or seclusion for women was not able to force the same on courtesans, they openly mingled with their male counterparts in public gathering and even held social gatherings in their own houses, which well-bred people were not ashamed to attend.<sup>38</sup> In brief we can say that Lucknow courtesans, with their covert resistance of patriarchy, were able to fully control their lives and freedom.

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<sup>36</sup> Veena Olden berg Talwar in Douglas Haynes, Gyan Prakash, ed., *Contesting Power: Resistance and every day social relations in South Asia*, New work, 1991, p.23.

<sup>37</sup> Sharar, p.192.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p.196.

## NAWABI ARCHITECTURE OF LUCKNOW

Art and Architecture are 'creations of tender feelings. Sublime thought and subtle ideas.' The Mughal Architectural aestheticism manifested these aspects in its full glory through its buildings. If Akbar's personality determined the form and fabric of his buildings at Agra and Fatehpur Sikari, the use of colour and design marked the buildings of the reign of Jahangir. The golden age of Mughal Architecture came with the creation of buildings of eternal beauty and grace like Taj Mahal by Shahjahan. However, by the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, due to the imperial collapse and Economic deprivation of Delhi, the Growth of Indian Architecture manifested itself in the buildings of newly formed Regional states.

Although the Nawabi buildings were 'nothing like the Mughal Emperor's stone buildings, for in Lucknow large amounts of marble were not obtainable'<sup>39</sup> but still those buildings can be called attractive with out being awesome. The construction of Nawabi buildings started when the court moved from Faizabad to Lucknow. Before 1775 and Even at the time William Hodges came to Lucknow in 1783, the only building which attracted his favourable attention was Macchi Bhawan. He writes that, 'the palace of the Nabob is on a high bank, near to the river, and commanding an extensive view both of the Goomty and the country on the eastern side. A small part of it was raised by the late Nabob Sujah ul Doulah, the father of Asoph ul Doulah. It has, however, been greatly extended by the

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p.47.

present prince who has erected large courts with in the walls and a durbar, where he receives publicly all persons that are presented'.<sup>40</sup>

However, in 17<sup>8</sup>4 Asafuddaulah started an extensive building programme and by 1790, Bara Imambara,<sup>41</sup> Asafi Maszid and Roomi Darwaza were completed. Among all the buildings of Lucknow Bara Imambara remained the most imposing and supposedly at one time the largest vaulted hall in the world. Sharar writes that for construction of this building 'engineers and Architects were enlisted to draw up the plans. They all made every effort to ensure that their designs should be better than other proposed designs, but the design of the inimitable architect Kifayat Ullah was eventually approved and construction commence in accordance with it.<sup>42</sup> When Bishop Heber visited this place in 19<sup>th</sup> century he got astonished by the beauty and grandeur of Asaf's buildings. He writes that 'the Imambara consists of two courts, rising with a steep ascent one above the other. It contains besides a splendid mosque a college for instruction in Mussulman law... and when taken in conjunction with the Roumi Durwaza which adjoins it, I have never seen an Architectural view which pleased me more from its richness and variety, as well as the propositions and general good taste of its principal features.'<sup>43</sup> However, when Asaf started the construction of Bara

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<sup>40</sup> W. Hodges, *Travels in India, 1780-83, London, 1793.*, Rep. in Delhi, p.101.

<sup>41</sup> A Premise Where Tazias, or paper models of Imam Husain mausoleum situated in Karbala, Iraq, are kept throughout the year.

<sup>42</sup> Sharar, p.47.

<sup>43</sup> Bishol Heber, *Narrative of Journey through the Upper provinces of India from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824 to 1825, Vols.2, Philadelphia, 1828, Rep. Delhi, p.65.*

Imambara in 1784, lot many questions were raised on the timing of its construction, for Awadh was facing a disastures famine at that time and even the well off people of the towns were starving. But it seems that the critics of Nawab would have not been able to understand the real motive behind the construction of these buildings, Sharar highlights the fact that 'the work of building the Imambara was started in order to alleviate the sufferings of the population. As the better class people considered it beneath their dignity to work as labourers, the construction was carried on by night, as well as by day, and the impoverished and starving gentry of the town came in the darkness of the night to join the Labourers and work with the aid of torches.'<sup>44</sup>

Asafuddaulah's period also saw the emergence of buildings made in the Indo-European style. It has been said that Nawab was a keen collector of every thing European and perhaps that is why he took so much interest in European Architecture, Claude Martin a company surveyor, at the Lucknow court helped Nawab in developing his liking for European Architecture. Although Claude Martins' life changed due to this contact in a manner that he had become a 'French Nabob' for many of his European friends. Martin had designed and built some of the finest houses and buildings in Lucknow, the most famous among his buildings was named after his late wife Constantina. The building exhibits a confluence of French and Indian styles. Martin was unusual not only in the sense that he was called a French 'Nabob' but also unlike the majority of his contemporaries, he

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<sup>44</sup> Sharar, p.47.



eventually chose to remain in India. He died in 1800 and was buried in constantia which henceforth came to be known as La Martinere after the name of its Architect. The importance of this building can be realised from the fact that it remained 'single most important European building in Lucknow, one that was to influence Nawabi Architecture until Annexation.'<sup>45</sup> Qaisar bagh palace complex, which was built by wajid Ali Shah, Just before his deposition quite clearly echoes this European influence in the statues that adorned it Much of this building was demolished by the British after their recapture of Lucknow in 1858. But still we can get an idea of the magnificence of this complex from the pictures which were taken before the demolition of this palace.

Thus, a very disturbing question which confronts us, while studying Lucknow Architecture is the British attitude towards it, one can ask, why the British publicly demonstrated, so much dislike for the Nawabi buildings. The answer seems to lie in the fact that the British drew similarity between the alleged degeneration of Lucknow rulers and its 'decadent' Architecture to the extent that they were believed to resemble the very character of their builder.<sup>46</sup> this was done deliberately by the British establishment in order to escape the uncomfortable question of how Wajid Ali Shah, a man who had understood and appreciated the intricate rules of European Architecture could really be a gross and insensitive ruler.

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<sup>45</sup> Rossie Llelyn Jones in V. Grff, ed., *Lucknow: Memories of a city*, p.59.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p.63.

## ROLE OF *SHIISM* IN SHAPING THE AWADH CULTURE

The first Nawab of Awadh Saadat Khan came to India from an Iranian city of Nishapur in 1708. Like most of the Iranians of his time he also believed in Shiite branch of Islam, which was different from the wide spread Sunni belief of Indian Muslims. As for as the origin of these two rival branches are concerned, it has been said that it all started on the issue of succession, After prophet Muhammad died in 632. Since prophet had left no known successor, the Sunnis (Traditionals) who believed that the leader should be elected from within *Quraysh* (prophet's tribe) accepted the succession of first four 'rightly guided' deputies as a model and touch stone for Islamic society. But Shia regarded Ali as the sole legitimate successor of Muhammad on the ground that he had been chosen by the prophet by "designation". In their view, the leadership (Imama) belonged to which ever of Muhammads' direct biological descendants from Ali' son Husayn onwards, had been designated by his predecessors.<sup>47</sup>

Among the three great empires of Medieval period, Mughals and Ottomans had supported the sunni Islam while the Safavid dynasty in Iran Chose "Twelver" Shiism<sup>48</sup> as their state religion. With the appointment of Saadat Khan in Awadh, this sect also came along with him and in due course many people accepted Shiism

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<sup>47</sup> Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political thought, from Prophet to the Present*, Edinburgh. 2001, p.15.

<sup>48</sup> The Shia sect of the Muslim believes in a succession of twelve Imams from the family of Ali, Muhammad's Cousin and Son-in-law, who is him self regarded as the first Imam, followed by his two sons Hasan and Husain the last of the twelve Imams is supposed to be alive and will remain so until the day of Judgement.

under Nawabi encouragement. However, it should be very clear that the Nawabi patronage to fellow Shiite Muslims does not mean that they discriminated against the other religious traditions. For most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Awadh remained free from any religious strife on the Shia-sunni line. A French traveller Laureston who visited Bengal and north India in 1750s has written that, 'Muslims are enthusiastic about their religion, but here the sectarian followers of Umar and Ali never dispute among themselves for the purpose of establishing which was the true successor to the Caliphate.'<sup>49</sup>

Because of the absence of this rigidity in early Shia and Sunni encounter in North India, that many young believer had accepted the Shia faith. Subsequently accepting Shiism became a fashion of the time, however this development disturbed many orthodox Sunni theologians, who now strongly contested the Shiite claim of representing the true Islam. This growing unease among Sunni orthodoxy is also evident from a description of Mir, who writes that when he met a highly praised Sunni Alim in Akbarabad, then the Alim said: "Many young man these days have become Shiah and leave no false hood unsaid concerning the blessed elders. This rosary that you carry – made of the 'dust of the Imam' – causes a pure minded person like me to perturbed, for it strongly suggests that you might be so inclined too if that is indeed the case please leave me alone." On hearing this Mir writes that he replied: "I too had my doubts, thank God that you

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<sup>49</sup> Jean Law de Laureston, *Memoire Sur quelques Affaires del'empire mongol, 1756-1761* (Paris: 1913), quoted in Cole, *North Indian Shiism*, p.49.

turned out to be a Sunni. That ass of a man did not get the point, and became very happy. [Thinking] that I was like him. He went on spouting more rubbish I grew even more disgusted and got up and left.”<sup>50</sup>

Notwithstanding, the objections of Sunni orthodoxy, Shiism remained very popular in North India and continued to attract many persons of diverse religious affiliations. Another reason for the growing popularity of Shiism was its colorful cultural practices, which drew large number of Sunnis and Hindus in the mourning rites of martyred Imam Husayn. Construction of Great Imambara by Asafuddaulah in 1790 fulfilled the need for a physical site where the partisans of Imam Ali could publicly mourn his martyred son. In addition to this development of *Marsiya* poetry, as we have noted earlier, helped the Shiites to mourn the death of their Imam in a more emotional and intensive manner. In Ghaziuddin Haydar’s time some more innovative practices were added to Shia rituals ‘when queen arranged for *chatti*,<sup>51</sup> the sixth day after the birth ceremony, to be celebrated in honour of the present Imam....’<sup>52</sup> In addition to this the beautiful daughters of Saiyyids were taken and made the imaginary wives of the twelve Imams, quite clearly these practices were unique and distinct from Shia faith in the rest of the world. However, the growing strangeness and exclusivity of Shiism vis-à-vis Sunni and other religious traditions in Ghaziuddin’s time led to the religious feud. Mrs Mir Hasan Ali, a contemporary observer, provides an idea about this: ‘I

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<sup>50</sup> *Zikr-I-Mir*, p.96.

<sup>51</sup> A Hindu celebration of the Sixth day after the birth of a child.

<sup>52</sup> *Sharar*, p.55.

never witnessed the movements at Karbala, the season of the year, the confusion and the Anticipated feud between Shahs and Sunnis, ever deterred me from gratifying my curiosity. It was always expected that the bad feelings between the two sects, amongst the lower class of the people, may produce a real battle on the imitative ground of Kraaballah: and I have heard of many such terminations of the Muharram at Lucknow, where the enthusiastic Sheahs and Soonis having reserved their long hatred for a favourable opportunity.<sup>53</sup>

This situation continued for some time until Wajid Ali Shah again reinforced the eclectic and assimilative cultural tradition of Awadh. Here we should also make it clear that rift between the Shias and Sunnis was created more by orthodox *Mullas* of these two sects than any other person. As for as the Awadh rulers are concerned. Although they never Shied from practicing and celebrating different Shia rituals and ceremonies, but still kept themselves aloof from any religious bigotry.

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<sup>53</sup> Mrs. Meer Hasan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmans of India*, London, 1832, 2 vols., Rep., Delhi.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen in the preceding pages, that the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century tend to support the interpretations of decentralization and regionalisation of power. This process also raises some pertinent questions regarding the validity of the argument that 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of overall decline and degeneration, due to the collapse of centralised structure. Clearly we can not judge a period only interms of a declining empire, to make justice with this period we have to look into the areas which not only checked the pace of this decline but registered new vitality and creativity.

Thus our motive in studing the history of nawabi awadh is to prove that the political decentralization brought peace and stability as well as economic growth in the region. This process of decentralization started in Awadh from the time of Saadat Khan's appointment in this Mughal Subah, for achieving his independent goals he changed the position of the provincial governor. He combined the offices of subahdari and diwani by which he had the revenues of all the parganas (subdistriets) reassessed. At the same time he also assumed the right to appoint the amils, thereby making them accountable to himself rather than to the Jagirdars.

These changes later on culminated in to the increased control of governor over the land revenue as over the intermediaries groups and Jagirdars. These measures of Saadat Khan also transformed the character of revenue system and

helped him in smoothly running the administration of the provincial government. The peace and stability which the province experienced after these efforts helped the governor to incorporate the more enterprising regional elements within the spectrum of state.

In this way the decentralization of power helped this erstwhile Mughal subah to develop its own independent identity as well as it paved the path for future growth and development which lasted for many years until the final and decisive intervention of British colonialism. As we have seen, the British establishment on the one hand extracted large amounts of subsidies from Nawab, for stationing their troops in Awadh, on the other hand the rapacious private trade of English traders and their agents brought ruination for the whole Nawabi territory. This again proves the point that the disruption and degeneration in Awadh had not taken place due to the Mughal decline but was the outcome of British efforts to bring Awadh under the aegis of colonial exploitation.

In the sphere of culture the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was rather unique. This was the time when the great and mighty Mughal empire and its cultural centre was going through a repeated attack and destruction and the cultural world of the empire was at the brink of collapse. However this was also the time when Awadh emerged as a substitute to Mughal culture by using diffusion and migration of cultural elite of Delhi as well as by combining the Mughal, Shiite and regional values. We have seen in the preceding pages, the

most important literary development of Nawabi period was that Urdu replaced Persian as the language of 'Highculture'. Earlier it was convenient medium of communication between Persian and Hindi speakers but in later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, under the state patronage it was taken up by the poets and spread rapidly through poetry before being adopted by the prose writers.

We have also noticed the contribution of *Shiism* in shaping the Awadhi culture. This Shiite influence is evident, both in poetry and architecture of the time and the development of the *Imambara* and new poetic form called *Marsiya* can be seen in this context. Imambarsa served the religious purpose providing a crucial meeting place for Shias, the Shia Community previously disunited and restrained, could now come out in public to commemorate the death of its Imams. As far as *Marsiya* is concerned, basically it was meant to mourn the death of Husain, and due to the Nawabi patronage it developed and reached to its height of glory in Lucknow.

Any study of Awadh culture will be incomplete without emphasising the role of courtesans or *Tawaifs* in it. As mentioned earlier, they enjoyed a great degree of freedom and impunity in Lucknow's society. They nurtured the most sophisticated form of culture in Lucknow and it became a fashion among nobility to send their young sons to best known *Tawaifs* for instruction in etiquettes, manners and gestures,



In brief this study finds that the culture which evolved in Awadh, during Nawabi period was the last and most beautiful expression of Indo-Muslim cultural heritage and even the continuous British Presence after annexation was not able to erase the memory of a culture so dear to the people of Awadh. The 'power' and intensity of Awadh culture can be understandable from the fact that the memory of this culture still survives in the sensibilities of the Awadhi populace.



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