ENVIRONMENT, COMMERCE, AND SOCIETY IN COASTAL GUJARAT IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

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VIJAYANT KUMAR SINGH

CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067
INDIA
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Chairperson
Centre for Historical Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067, India

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Prof. Mridula Mukherjee.
(Chairperson)

CHAIRPERSON
Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

Dr. Yogesh Sharma
(Supervisor)

Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

CHS Office Phone : (011) 26704456, 26704457
Fax : 91-11-26717586 E-mail : chsjnu@yahoo.com

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ENVIRONMENT, COMMERCE, AND SOCIETY IN COASTAL GUJARAT IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

INTRODUCTION

Coastal Gujarat during the course of seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries had attained unprecedented levels of economic prosperity. The importance of maritime commerce in the overall economic strength of the province can be gauged by the famous saying of sultan Sikandar Lodhi, 'the pivot of padshahi of Delhi, is wheat and barley; and of padshahi of Gujarat is coral and pearl; because it has 84 ports under its control.'[1] The engagement of the European companies, such as of English and Dutch with the mercantile elements in society and with networks of commerce operating in the region during the period, was on a much larger scale than before, thus contributing to the economic prosperity of the region. Moreover the conquest of Gujarat in the year 1573 by the Mughals and its occupation as a province in the Mughal Empire resulted in establishment of peace and security in the region for a period of about a century and a half, thus providing further impetus to the commerce in the area. The Mughal administrative mechanisms with regard to revenue and taxation provided fuel for growth in agricultural as well as industrial sectors of the province. The ports of Gujarat during the period had begun to draw heavily on the resources from their immediate hinterland; what with cotton and Indigo producing areas, and abundance of dying and textile related workshops in the province. The Gujarat ports thus virtually got transformed into major confluence points for international as well as regional and coastal commerce.

The enduring prosperity of the region was one of the primary factors behind the interest shown by the Mughals who conquered the province in the year 1573. Similarly the prosperity of its towns and inhabitants attracted frequent Deccani and Maratha inroads during the later half of Seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The sea lanes of the region and the coastal waters saw the rivalry between the European companies being played out with an equal if not more vigour, for gaining a control over the prosperous maritime trade of the region, finally resulting in complete English domination by the middle and the later quarter of the eighteenth century. At another level the region also exhibited strong divisive tendencies with its powerful zamindars and local rajas attempting frequently to assert themselves vis-à-vis their more powerful overlord whenever any weakening in the central authority was sensed.

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[1] *Mirat-i Sikandari*, cited from M.N.Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers of Gujarat: The Response to the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century*, London, 1976, p 22.

The flourishing commerce of the region and the avenues of commercial engagements which the ports of the region offered, attracted merchants, traders, and artisans from all over the subcontinent and from various regions across the globe to settle in the province. The coming together of people belonging to different races, creeds and cultures gave rise to complex patterns of interaction and inter-dependences with-in and between different communities and inhabitants of the region. The inhabitant population included the nobles and state officials in army and those associated with administration; the Mercantile communities which included the famous Bania communities, the Gujarati Muslims, Jains and Parsis; the foreign residents such as the Persians, Arabs, Armenians, and the European Factors and traders of such nationalities as Portuguese, English, Dutch, and French, among others coming together to create a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic setting. Other than these were the artisans and workers employed in the famous handicraft and textile industries in the region, small-scale traders and brokers, the local tribals – Kolis and Kathis, engaged in agricultural and other labour oriented occupations, and communities engaged in fishing and professions related to shipping and overland transportation.

However any study and enquiry in the commerce of the region or into the social divisions and cultural interaction within the various inhabitant communities of the region cannot steer clear of the environmental concerns. The environmental factors played the most influential and determining role in the shaping the socio-cultural, political and economic formations in an area. The nature of political control, subsistence and habitation pattern, pattern of commerce and economic activities associated with industry and agriculture, and such aspects of daily life as food, clothing and shelter, were all dictated and influenced by such environmental determinants as climate, topography, nature of soil and associated fertility, and the local flora and fauna among others. Similarly, forces of nature and natural phenomenon have since long influenced human societies in their cultural and religious dimensions, in form of various rituals and practices being adopted and evolved with the purpose of pacifying the natural forces.

Again any historical analysis into the relationship should take into account the inherent reciprocity of it. Human activities have since ages been one of the most forceful determinant behind the changes which had come into effect in the immediate natural environment.

GUJARAT – A GEOGRAPHICAL SURVEY: -

Gujarat, during the course of seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries had emerged as a region possessing an environment unique in many aspects, when compared to other regions of the subcontinent. The long and rugged coast line, studded with numerous creeks, inlets, islands, and sand banks; a countryside comprising numerous mountains and plateaus, heavy forests, numerous rivers, sandy and marshy salt desert, and lush and green fertile plains, provided the environmental diversity which very few other areas or provinces in the subcontinent could boast of. Gujarat has often been praised in the contemporary literature as a province bountiful and prosperous in comparison to every other in the subcontinent.

Abu'l Fazl gave the following description of the geographical location, and setting of the province:

> It is situated in the second climate. Its length from Burhanpur to Jagat (Dwarka in Kathiawar) is 302 kos; its breadth from Jalor to the port of Daman is 260 kos and from Idar to Kambhayat (Cambay) is 70 kos. On the east lies Khandes; to the north Jalor and Idar; to the south the ports of Daman and Kambhayat and on the west Jagat which is on the sea shore. Mountains rise towards the south. It is watered by noble rivers. Besides the ocean, there are Sabarmatti (Savarnamatti), the Batrak, the Mahendri, the Narbaddah, the Tapti, the Saraswati, and the two springs of Ganga and Jamuna.[2]

The province of Gujarat consisted of two principal divisions – one continental and the other peninsular, projecting into the Arabian Sea. The Rann and the Gulf of Kutch formed the northern and the north-western boundary of the province respectively. Towards the northeast, from the base of the mount Abu is a sandy plain, which stretches through the central region and along the coastal areas of the continental Gujarat. Towards East are the mountain ranges, which connected the Vindhyas to the Aravalis, stretching northwards from the banks of Narmada. The Northern spurs of Western Ghats formed the southern boundary of the province.

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[2] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 3 Vols, transl, H. Blochmann, Delhi, 1977, Vol 2, p. 246.

Coastal Gujarat: -

The region of Coastal Gujarat comprises the coastal plains facing the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Kutch, and the Gulf of Cambay. A most peculiar feature of the coastline of Gujarat, and especially in the Gulf of Cambay, is the presence large number of small islands and sand banks formed especially at the mouth of the rivers, which emptied themselves in the Gulf of Cambay. Walter Hamilton described the coastline of peninsular Gujarat as one characterized by numerous creeks and inlets.[3] These provided natural harbours for the ships to retire. Of the salt water creeks in the peninsula the most important were Hansthal, connecting the outer and inner Gulf of Cutch; Bhaunnagar, forming the channel between the town and the Gulf of Cambay; the Sundrai, 8 miles North of Bhaunagar; the Baviliali, 2 miles north of the Sundrai creek; and the Dholera, leading from the Gulf of Cambay, 10 miles inland to the town of Dholera.[4] There were a large number of ports and docks in the area, which during the period of high tides were converted, into islands. The Mirat-i Ahmadi mentioned such docks or baras as Sultanpur (in Pargana Talaja, near Ghoga), and Qutubpur which were encompassed by tidal waves.[5]

Apart from Diu, which during the period was a well-fortified Portuguese settlement, Mirat mentions the islands of Piram Bisram, lying some miles from Ghoga, between Ghoga and Surat; and Shankhoddhar (in pargana Jagat or Dwarka), which were well fortified and populated during the period. Infact of Shankhoddhar, it is mentioned that 'the island has sweet water and abounds in fruit trees and other trees and fields, and is one of the great temples of the Hindus.'[6] The island received its name from a Hindoo demon named after his dwelling in a large conch shell.[7] The island was also recognized by the name of Bate, especially by the European mariners and travellers. William Milburn in his Oriental Commerce described the island as:

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[3] Walter Hamilton, *A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindustan*, 2 Vols, London, 1820, Vol 1, p. 605.

[4] Imperial Gazetteer of India, *Provincial Series: Bombay Presidency*, 2 Vols, Calcutta, 1909, Vol 2, p. 347.

[5] S.Nawab Ali and C.N. Seddon eds, *Mirat-i Ahmadi Supplement*, Baroda, 1928, p. 202.

[6] ibid, pp. 202-03.

[7] Walter Hamilton, *East India Gazetteer, containing particular description of Hindustan and the adjacent countries*, London, 1828, Vol 1, p. 149.

> The island is about 5 miles long from Northeast to Southwest, something in shape of an *S*, with the lower part of it cut off...bate produces cocoa nuts, bettle nuts and grains, but in small quantities, and some trade is carried on in dates, sugar and rice...[8]

Similarly Piram was an important island situated in the Gulf of Cambay, 4 ½ miles south of Gogha and 2 ½ miles from the nearest point of the Kathiawar shore. Ain-i Akbari described it as rocky island 9 Kos Square and situated in the midst of sea.[9] The island was separated from the mainland of the Kathiawar peninsula by a channel which about 3 miles wide and in centre, about 60 fathoms deep.[10] It is covered in part by the brown sand, its dimensions at high tide being one mile by about half a mile. A rocky reef, rising to the surface from a depth of about 60 to 70 feet, except in the south, surrounds the island.[11] Alexander Forbes gives a detailed description of the geographical setting of the island:

> The island is almost covered by a continuous range of sand hills, resting on a scanty bed of black soil. These hillocks form a barrier against the sea, along the whole of western face of the island, and are continually augmented by the drift occasioned in the fair season, by the prevalent winds; but the eastern side is comparatively free from sand, and its soil affords scanty subsistence to its few and temporary occupants.[12]

Barring the few mentioned above which were large enough to be well populated and fortified, and some times used to keep a tab on the maritime traffic in the vicinity, most of the islands were generally very small and provided little more than small pasture grounds and sweet water to local communities.[13] However some of these islands and ports were also homes to Kolis and Rajputs who operated in the Gulf of Cambay, mainly as pirates, attacking small ships,

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[8] William Milburn, *Oriental Commerce*, 2 Vols, London, 1813, Vol 2, p. 150.

[9] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p. 253.

[10] Alexander K. Forbes, *Rasmala: Hindu Annals of western India with particular reference of Gujarat*, London, 1878, p. 246.

[11] Imperial Gazetteer of India - *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 1, p. 265.

[12] Alexander Forbes, *Rasmala*, p. 246.

[13] S.Nawab Ali and C.N. Seddon eds, *Mirat-i Ahmadi Supplement*, Baroda, 1928, pp. 207-08.

which were involved in transporting goods and merchants from one port to another in the Gulf of Cambay.[14]

The Hinterland: -

- Rann of Kutch: -

The 'barren and sandy' country of Kutch formed the northern and Northwestern boundary of the province. The European surveyors noted the region of Kutch, as an area cut-off almost entirely from the continent of India, by the Great Rann in the north, and the little Rann in the East.[15] The Gulf of Kutch and the Arabian Sea marked the southern and the Western boundaries respectively. The region may be described as one, which was treeless, barren and rocky, varied by ranges of hills and isolated peaks. The banks of deeply cut and rugged river beds which get filled with flowing rivers only during rains; and a strip of land about 20 to 30 miles across towards the south, along the seacoast behind the high sandbanks, were the only areas which displayed any sign of vegetation and was much used as pasture land.[16] The region consisted of three hill ranges – those of Cutch Proper, of Vagad in the East, and the Rann islands in the North.[17]

Due to the action of the winds, primarily during the rainy season, and due to the low gradient of the country, the seawater from the Gulf of Kutch inundates a large area, which is known by the name of Rann. Ain-i Akbari described the area as:

'Between Jhalwara in the sarkar of Ahmadabad, and Pattan and Sorath is a low lying tract, 90 kos in length by 7 to 30 in breadth...before the rainy season the sea rises and covers this area and falls as rain ceases. A considerable part dries up and is covered with salt'.[18] The Imperial Gazetteer compiled towards the end of 19th century gives the area stats of the region as such: 'The northern or larger Rann, measuring from East to West about 160 miles and

[14] ibid, n 1, p. 201.

[15] Imperial Gazetteer of India- *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 2, p. 326

[16] ibid

[17] ibid

[18] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p. 255.

from North to South about 80 miles, had an area estimated at not less than 7000 sq. miles. The eastern or smaller Rann (about 70 miles from east to west), which is connected with the larger Rann by a narrow channel, covers an area estimated at nearly 2000 sq. miles.'[19]

English surveyors considered the Rann to be of recent geological formation, and believed it to be an arm of sea raised by some natural convulsion such as an earthquake or a series of them over a period of time, above the original level and cut-off from the ocean.[20] The whole area almost in its entirety gets inundated during the rainy season, by the brackish water brought down by such rivers as Bhadar, and by the local drainage. At the same time the strong southwest wind, which blows primarily during the Monsoons or otherwise also, brought water up such streams and rivers as Lakhpat from the Gulf of Kutch. Due to frequent inundation by seawater, the region was largely devoid of vegetation and only on some raised plots of rocky land where water could be found, does one come across some vegetation. Imperial gazetteer described the view of the country after the receding of waters:

> The water recedes with the season leaving behind sheets of salt and as the summer wears on, and the heat increases the ground baked and blistered by the sun, shines over large tracts of salt with dazzling whiteness, the distance dimmed and distorted by an increasing mirage.[21]

- The peninsula of Saurashtra: -

The peninsula of Gujarat, known variously by the names of Kathiawar[22], Saurashtra, or Sorath[23] is a land mass bounded towards the north by the Rann and the Gulf of

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[19] Imperial Gazetteer of India- *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 1, p. 185.

[20] Ibid, p. 185.

[21] Ibid, p. 185.

[22] Kathiawar was originally a name given to the tract situated in the northeast of the peninsula, which was inhabited by the Kathi tribesmen, who entered the peninsula during the course of 15th and the 16th centuries, from Kutch. The name was applied to the entire peninsula by the Marathas, who came into contact with the Kathis, in course of their forays in the region, Imperial Gazetteer of India- *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 2, p. 346.

[23] Is a tract situated in the southwest of the peninsula, however Mirat uses the name for the entire peninsula. Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, 2 Vols, transl, M.F.Lokhandwala, Baroda, 1965, Vol 1, p. 153.

Kutch, and towards west, south, and east by the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Cambay. Mirat-I Ahmadi described the region in following words:

> The border of this country on west and south join the sea...the region is divided into several districts, everyone is known by a name such as Halar, Kathiawar, Golwar, and Babariawar. It contains ports, small as well as big rivers, great new forts, Hindu temples such as Dwarka, Somnath, Shatrunja, etc. and many others...[24]

Detailing the inland division, the peninsula was divided into five divisions of Halar, Sorath, Babriawar, Goelwar, and Kathiawar. Halar formed the north-western part of the peninsula immediately bordering south of the Gulf of Kutch and Rann. Sorath lied in the Southwest, and the whole peninsula has often been named after the region by the Muslim observers and chroniclers.

Babariawar formed the southern end of the Peninsula, the region lying between the Arabian Sea and the southern chain of mountains, it comprehended that portion of Gujarat peninsula, which terminates in the island of Diu: 'To the north it is bounded by Kattywar; to the south by the Sea; to the west it has Soreth; and on the east the sea and the Gulf of Cambay. This is a very barren tract, containing few towns and producing barely sufficient food for its own consumption'[25]. The region was not much traversed and till the middle of the 19th century, much about the internal intricacies of the area was not known in detail. The area was so named after the Babree tribe of Coolies, which formerly possessed great parts of Cattywar and Goelwar, whence they were expelled by the Catties.[26]

Goelwar is the coastal region bordering the western coast of Gulf of Cambay, so named after the Goel tribe of Rajputs who resided there. The region is watered and fertilized by many rivers, and contains the valuable seaports of Bhownugger and Gogo.[27] Kathiawar is a space

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[24] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, p. 153.

[25] Walter Hamilton, *East India Gazetteer*, Vol 1, p. 97.

[26] ibid, p. 98.

[27] ibid, p. 584.

bordering the peninsula and the mainland towards the Northeast, originally inhabited by the Kathi tribesmen and so named after them.[28]

Interior of the peninsula contained an intricate mix of hills, plateau land and forests and as a region, was much less traversed. The interior of the peninsula is hilly and rocky, particularly towards the south, which was heavily forested. Although flat towards the North, the Southern end of the peninsula has Gir ranges runs nearly parallel with the coast, and at a distance of about 20 miles from it along the north of Babariawar and Sorath to the neighbourhood of Girnar. The Girnar Mountains principally constitutes of the Granite rocks and the highest peak rises to about 3500 ft. above sea level. [29] Opposite Girnar are the Osam Hills and moving further westwards is the Barda group between Halar and Barda.[30] The principal rivers in the region are Bhadar, Aji, Machhu, Bhogava, and Shetrunji, exhibiting a radial drainage pattern, rising from central mountains and plateau, and primarily rain fed in nature, emptying themselves in Gulf Of Cutch or the Arabian Sea, or the Gulf of Cambay. [31]

Many travellers to the region have written of Kathiawar as an island, cut off from the mainland by one of the larger channels of Indus. Alexander Hamilton wrote that one of the largest branches of Indus running intro the sea at Cambay makes Gujarat an Island[32]. However such a description may be attributed to the limited understanding of the regional geography and river systems by these early travellers. Infact they may have confused the channels formed during the seasonal inundation of the area during the monsoons with an arm of Indus. In this regard the statement of Captain MacMurdo is important: 'a tract similar to Rann and known partially by the name connects the Gulfs of Cambay and Cutch, forming an island of the peninsula of Gujarat for 6 months in the year'.[33] The Imperial Gazetteer stated that 'the peninsula is connected to mainland by a neck of low lying land, which until 1813 was flooded during the

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[28] Imperial Gazetteer of India- *Bombay Presidency*, vol 2, p. 346.

[29] ibid, pp. 345-46.

[30] ibid, p. 347.

[31] Edward Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the territories under the Government of the East India Company, and of the Native States on the Continent of India*, London, 1858, p. 487.

[32] Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies from the year 1688 – 1723*, 2 Vols, ed. W. Foster, 2nd Edition, London, 1939, Vol 1, p. 131.

[33] Cited in Imperial Gazetteer of India- *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 2, p. 346.

part of the year, and is still partly covered by a large lagoon, the Nal.'[34] It further elaborates and described the Nal as a large salt lake, which at one time was part of an arm of the sea which separated the Kathiawar from the mainland connecting the two Gulfs of Kutch and Cambay and still covered an area of 49 sq. miles.[35]

- Mainland Continental Gujarat: -

The central and southern portions of continental Gujarat comprises of rich alluvial and coastal plains watered by the river systems of Sabarmati[36], Mahi[37], Narmada[38] and Tapti[39]. The hilly tracts of the Vindhyas bound the eastern boundary of the province, and there is a gradual gradient from the eastern hills westward towards the Rann, and towards Southwest, and South towards Nal and coastal plains. The mountains which bound Goozerat on the north and the east, and which projects numerous branches into the nearest parts of the province are steep, craggy, and difficult to access. Nearly the whole of southwest portion of Goozerat, a tract of country 60 miles deep, extending from Rann of Kutch to the banks of Nerbudda, along the frontier of the peninsula and the northern and eastern shores of the Gulf of Cambay, is an open and alluvial plain.[40]The region of Baglan lying between Surat and Nandurbar was an area much

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[34] ibid, Vol 1, p. 2.

[35] ibid, p. 187.

[36] Flowing from the hills of Mewar southwards into the Gulf of Cambay, with a course of about 200 miles and a drainage area of about 9500 sq. miles. The name is given to the combined streams of Sabar, which runs through the Idar state, and of the Hathmati, which passes the town of Ahmadnagar (Mahi Kantha Agency). In the upper part both the rivers have high rocky banks, but below their confluence the bed of the Sabarmati becomes broad and sandy. The united river then flows past Sadra and Ahmadabad, and receives on the left banks...the waters of Vatrak, which during its course of 150 miles is fed by number of smaller streams that bring down the drainage of Mahi Kantha hills. The Sabarmati receives no notable tributary on the right bank, Imperial Gazetteer of India- *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 2, p. 172.

[37] The river has a course of 300 to 350 miles, with a drainage area of 15000 to 17000 sq. miles, the rivers flows in Gujarat through the Mahi Kantha and Rewa Kantha states... its bed lies so much below the level of the land on either side of its banks that its waters cannot readily be used for irrigation, Imperial Gazetteer of India- *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 1, pp. 172-73.

[38] Has a course of about 70 miles and falls into the sea near Broach – Walter Hamilton, *East India Gazetteer*, Vol 2, p. 317.

[39] Course of the river is about 460 miles and falls in the Gulf of Cambay near the city of Surat – ibid, p. 685.

[40] Alexander K. Forbes, *Rasmala*, p. 8.

discussed and detailed by the chronicler of the period. The Ain-i Akbari described the country as a mountainous and populous region between Surat and Nandurbar.[41]

Climatic Conditions and Rainfall Pattern: -

The climate of the region is temperate[42] and varies from hot and oppressive summers and short duration and cool winters. Gujarat received an annual rainfall of about 20 to 30 inches, with a brisk cold season, and oppressive heat in the summers. 'The temperature falls on the burst of Southwest monsoon, but the air remains hot and sultry till the approach of cold season in October'.[43]

However the most influencing element that determines the length of seasons, the temperature and humidity factors in the area, and perhaps all over the subcontinent is the annual rainfall, which falls during the months from July to October. The onset of Monsoon and the cessation of all activities during the period led many observers to confuse the rainy season as the beginning of winters, as is the case in Europe. Thus van Linschoten wrote,

> The (times and) seasons of the yeres are as followeth. Winter beginneth on the last of Aprill, throughout the whole coast, which is called India, from Cambaia to the Cape de Comorin, and commeth with a westerne wind, which bloweth out of sea upon the coast: beginning there of is with thunder and lightening; and by the reason of that continuall raine, it is called winter...but in warme weather when fruite time (commeth on): it is then right summer for the time, which in India is called summer because of the clearenes and drines of the weather, is the colder and the holsomer, and then there blowe the east windes, so that the nights are as then very coole and somewhat sharpe...[44]

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[41] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p. 193.

[42] ibid, p. 246.

[43] Imperial Gazetteer of India- *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 1, p. 12.

[44] John Huyghen van Linschoten, *The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies*, 2 Vols, eds, A.C.Burnel and P.A.Tiele, London, 1885, Vol 1, p. 232.

Bernier, interestingly made quite an accurate observation on the causes behind these rains and attributed them to the heating which took place over the sub continent, thus accurately establishing the correlation between the heat in the summers and the abundance of rainfall and the time of arrival of the Monsoon: 'I have also remarked one thing, about which, indeed there is perfect opinion in these parts – that according as the heat of the summer comes earlier or later, is more or less violent, or lasts a longer or shorter time, so the rains comes sooner or later, are more or less abundant, and continue a longer or shorter period'. He further writes:

> From these observations I have been led to believe that the heat of the earth and the rarefaction of the air are the principal cause of these rains, which they attract. The atmosphere of the circumjacent seas being colder, more condensed, and thicker, is filled with clouds drawn from the water by the great heat of the summer, and which driven and agitated by the winds discharge themselves naturally upon land, where the atmosphere is hotter, more rarefied, lighter and less resisting than on the sea; and thus this discharge is more or less tardy and plentiful, according to the heat comes early or late, and is more or less intense.[45]

However his observations regarding the causes behind the regularity of winds and ocean currents in the Indian Ocean and over the subcontinent reflects the limitation of geographical understanding from which most of the observers of the period suffered. He quite interestingly attributed this regular flow of winds and Ocean currents to the supposed depression and elevation of the earth's poles in conjunction to the movement of sun across the equator in the summers, resulting in a consequent displacement of water and air from the southern pole, which during the period gets elevated.[46]

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[45] Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire 1656 – 1668*, ed, Vincent Smith, 2nd revised edition, London, 1927, pp. 432-33.

[46] I have imagined in the first place, that the air by which our globe is surrounded ought to be considered one of its component parts, just as much as the waters of the seas or rivers; because both the one and other gravitating on this globe, and tending to the same common centre, are in this manner united to our sphere. The globe then is formed of three bodies – air, water, and earth. *Secondly* our globe being suspended and balanced in that free and unresisting space wherein it pleased the creator to place it, would be easily displaced if it comes in contact with some unknown body. *Thirdly*, the sun after having crossed the line, while moving towards one of the poles...produces sufficient impression to depress in some measure the Arctic pole, which is depressed more and

The above detailed geographic and climatic description of the province of Gujarat gives an adequate insight into the wide range of environmental determinants, which acted upon and shaped the social formation and material culture of the region during the course of two centuries under observation. The evident environmental disparities gave rise and shape to a range of subsistence and commercial patterns, social and cultural formations and the also determined the level of political control, which could be exercised in the areas within the province of Gujarat.

The sources for the present work includes the Mughal Official Histories such as Abu'l Fazl's Akbarnama and Ain-i Akbari, Badshahnama, and others; and the local Persian histories written on Gujarat during the period, such as Ali Muhammad Khan's Mirat-i Ahmadi. Though mainly compendium of Political events and the administrative measures taken by the government, they contain valuable information on the conditions existing the region, and on the difficulties faced by the local officials in forging an effective control over the local political potentates, such as the rajas and zamindars.

Then there is a wealth of information available regarding the environmental factors existing in the region, the society, the economic potentiality and the commercial prosperity of the area and its various urban centres in the records of the European companies, in particular the in English East India Companies official correspondences with the officials posted in the region. In similar strength the records and memoirs of the various foreigners who visited the region in varying capacities, as travellers, Company Officials, Mariners, and merchants are also to be used. Although written with a heavy bias, they provide an interesting outsiders perspective on the Political, Social and Economic life of the region.

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more in proportion as the sun advances towards the tropic; and in the same manner, the Sun permits it again to rise gradually in proportion as it returns towards equator; until the same effect is produced by the power of its rays on the side of the Antarctic pole.

Taking for granted the truth of these suppositions, and considering them conjointly with the diurnal motion of the earth, it is not without reason that the Indians affirm that the sun conducts and draws along with it both the sea and the wind; because if it be true that having passed the line on its way towards one of the poles, the sun causes a change in direction of the earth's axis and a depression of the pole, it follows as necessary consequence, that the other pole is elevated, and that the sea and air, which two fluid and heavy bodies, run in this declension. It is therefore correct to say, that the sun advancing towards one pole causes on that side two great and regular currents – the current of the sea and the current of the air, which latter constitutes the Monsoon winds; as the sun is the cause of two opposite currents when it returns towards the other pole – ibid, pp. 435-36.

The Gazetteers of the East India Company and those of the Bombay Presidency, compiled during the middle and later decades of 19th century provide wealth of information on the Geography of the region and its resource potentiality. The official surveys published under the aegis of the Selections of the Home, and other departments of the Bombay presidency may also be cited for the purpose. To this may be added the accounts of the officials who were posted in the area, such as of Walter Hamilton and Alexander Forbes.

The local bardic and folk literature also is an important source to gain an understanding into the social and cultural life of the inhabitants in the region and into the nature of their engagements with the natural forces.

Coming to the manner in which the aforesaid mentioned inquiry into the reciprocal relationship which existed between the socio-economic formations and the immediate natural environment is being sought, four main sections or Chapters have been categorized, which reads as follows: -

1. Economy and Environment

The section aims to analyse the nature of impact, which the forces of environment had on the economic conditions and institutions existing, and on the nature of commercial traffic in the region. Thus an analysis is sought into such aspects as the impact of inland and coastal topography, of rainfall and wind pattern in shaping of economic systems, and commercial practices prevalent in the area. The study of impact of such elements as the conditions of soil and the relative productivity and their role in determining the nature of agricultural activities and produce is also sought.

2. Gujarat: A Political Narrative

The sections attempts an analysis of the extent of influence which the dominant powers, i.e. the Mughals, Marathas and finally the English were able to exercise over the native populace and local entities, and the extent to which the nature of relationship between the various political groupings in the region was conditioned by the topography of the region and the resource base of these political entities.

3. Trade & Politics in Coastal Gujarat

The section aims at analysis of the interaction of the various political powers along the coast of Gujarat, and emphasises on the interaction which took place with in the various political players in the region at various planes, and the role of Coastal topography, control over strategic points, and knowledge of shipping routes in determining the extent of political mastery which the two main entities the European powers and the Mughal state were able to gain and exercise in the region.

4. Environment & Society

Concerned with the nature of social structure of the region the section while detailing the existing social conditions of the area and the various constituent elements, i.e. the divisions in the local population and their respective occupational and social engagements, attempts at an analysis of the extent of impact the environment had on the patterns of settlement and subsistence in the region. The focus thus throws light on the role of environmental factors in determining such livelihood concerns as the food, clothing and shelter, the diseases and pestilences, which occurred in the region. At another plane the enquiry is to be conducted for determining the extent of influence the natural determinants had in shaping of the cultural, and religious makeup of the area and bring out the environmental concerns of the local populace through an analysis into the religious practices, rituals, and folklore of the region.

CHAPTER ONE

ECONOMY & ENVIRONMENT

Gujarat during the period of our study emerges as a region bountiful and prosperous. Van Linschoten called the 'land of Cambaia', as the 'fruitfullest countrie in all of India.'[1] Mandelslo, who visited the region in about 1638, named it as the noblest and most powerful of all the Mogul's country: 'There is no province in all the Indies...more fertile than Gujarat, nor any that affords more fruits and provisions which grow in such abundance there that all the neighbouring provinces are thence supplied.'[2] Thevenot termed it as the pleasantest province of Indostan, though not the best, and says:'...the Narbada, Tapty, and many other rivers that water it render it fertile, and the fields of Gujarat look green in all the year, because of the corn and rice that covers them, and the various kinds of trees which continually bear fruits.'[3]

The region was famous for its cotton manufactures and other related textile industries, indigo, and such precious items as stuffs made of gold and silver and inlay works of precious stones. The principal agricultural produce of the province included: Jowar, Bajra, Rice, Wheat, Gram, Barley, Pulses, Sugarcane, Cotton, Indigo, and tobacco. Besides the province was also rich in mineral deposits of Agate, cornelian, saltpetre, gold, lead and silver, zinc, copper, iron and other such rock produces as limestone and lime. Ain-i Akbari described the manufactures and commerce of the province as follows:

> Painters, seal engravers, and other handicraftsmen are countless. They lay mother-o-pearl with great skill and make beautiful boxes and inkstands. Stuffs worked with gold thread and of the kinds Chirah (partli-coloured cloth used for turban), Fotah, Jamahwar (a kind of flowered woollen stuff), Khara (undulated silk cloth), and velvets and brocades are here skilfully manufactured. Imitation of stuff from Turkey, Europe, and Persia are also produced. They make likewise excellent swords and daggers of the kinds Jamdhar and Khapwah, and bows and

[1] John Huyghen van Linschoten, *The Voyage*, Vol 1, p. 59.

[2] M.S.Commissariate ed., *Mandelslo's Travels in Western India*, London, 1931, p. 6,

[3] S.N. Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot of Thevenot & Careri*, N. Delhi, 1949, p. 8.

arrows. There is a brisk trade in jewelry and silver is imported from Turkey and Iraq.[4]

Manufactures & Industries: -

- Cotton Products: -

The region of Gujarat was famous for its cotton products and cotton based weaving industries. Van Linschoten mentioned that:

> In the land of Cambaia...is made great store of cotton linen of divers sorts, which are called Cannequins(a low priced cloth), Boffetas(Bafta), Iorinns, Chautares and Cotonias, which are like canvas, thereof do make sayles and such things, and many other sorts which are good and cheap.[5]

Edward Terry had described the process of Cotton plantation and the method of extracting cotton from the plant:

> For cotton-wooll they plant seedes, which grow up into shrubs like unto our rose bushes. It blowes first into yellow blosome, which falling off, there remaynes a cod about the bignesse of a mans thumbe, in which the substance is moyst and yellow, but, as ot ripens, it swells bigger till it breake the covering, and so in short time becomes white as snow, and then the gather it.[6]

Cotton in the region was available both in the raw form, as well as in the finished products in such forms as Calicoes, Chites, Baftas, sailcloth, or carpets, among others. Such products as Surfas(tablecloth), Bedcovers, pillowcases, pocket-handkerchiefs, waistcoats much used in Persia, and a sort of veil called Ornis which the women throughout Asia use to put on their heads and wrap about their necks, were produced.[7]

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[4] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p. 247.

[5] J.H. van Linschoten, *The Voyage*, Vol 1, p. 60.

[6] William Foster ed., *Early Travels in India, 1583 – 1619*, London, 1927, p 301.

[7] Ibid

Some of the principal cotton manufacturing and procurement centres in the region were Broach, Baroda, Ahmadabad, Navasari, among other smaller centres. Tavernier listed Baroda, Broach and Renonsari (Navasari) as important centres for procuring white cotton cloth[8]. Gujarat also supplied unspun cotton, which was generally exported to Red Sea, Hormuz, Bassora, and sometimes to the island of Sonde (Sunda) and to the Philippines.[9] Further inland, Sironj, Burhanpur and Agra were the areas from where Cotton was procured and traded in the commercial centres of the region, and supplied to its industries. Sironj and Burhanpur were also important centres of Manufacture of Chites or Painted cotton cloths and of various associated manufactures.[10] Agra and Ahmadabad were also important centres for procurement of baftas, or cotton cloths requiring dyeing.[11]

Situated on the mouth of River Narbada, the town of Broach was an important place for the procurement of cotton goods, and had an important weaving and bleaching industry function in its vicinity. Pelsaert, wrote about the weaving industry: 'The town depends on the weaving industry, and produces the best known fine baftas; all other sorts of cloth, for Mocha, Mozambique, and the South [Java, etc.], are also woven there, as well as in Baroda and other neighbouring places.'[12] Tavernier also mentioned the industry: 'In this place, baftas or pieces of long and narrow calico are made in quality; they are very beautiful and closely woven cloths, the price of them ranging from 4 up to 100 rupees.'[13] P. Della Valle noted that the city was known for its great trade in fine cotton cloth, or calicoes, which were sent to all parts of Asia and also to Europe, the cloth being packed in great bales, 'as big as a Roman coach', for transport on board the English and Dutch vessels. The industry was a source of great wealth to the town and brought in great revenue from the custom duties.[14]

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[8] Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India, 1640 – 1667*, transl. Vincent Ball, 2nd edition revised by W.Crooke, 2 vols,,London, 1925, Vol 2, p. 4,

[9] ibid., pp. 6-7.

[10] Ibid., p. 4.

[11] ibid., p. 5.

[12] F.Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, transl. W.H.Moreland and P. Geyl as *Jahangir's India*, Cambridge, 1925, p. 43.

[13] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, vol 1, p. 54.

[14] Pietro della Valle, *The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India*, 2 Vols, London, 1892, Vol 1, p. 61.

Baroda was also known for its cotton manufactures and weaving and dying industry. Tavernier describes the place as a large town built on a good soil, where there is considerable trade in calicoes[15]. Francois Martin says of Baroda that the town is full of artisans who specialize in spinning thread, which is then used by weavers[16]. He listed Baroda along with Ahmadabad and Nadiad as major centres of cotton production in Gujarat.[17] The country round Ahmadabad, was known for its cotton manufactures, The towns of Nadiad and Mahmudabad, lying on road to Broach, near Sojitra, were important centres of cotton and indigo production. Mahmudabad was also known for its cotton thread industry.[18]Thevenot also identified the place with the cotton thread industry, and says that it supplies the greater part of Gujarat, and neighbouring countries with the produce.[19]

- Indigo: -

Indigo was another important produce of the region much in demand in the international market. Sarkhej was an important centre of Indigo production in the country, and almost all the indigo sold at Ahmadabad came from the place.[20] In quality the produce was considered only second to the Bayana indigo, produced near Agra. Mandelslo rated the indigo at the place to be the best in the country (Gujarat).[21] Indigo was also produced at 36 leagues from Burhanpur on road to Surat at a large village called Raout (Aravad in Chopra subdivision, east Khandesh district), and other small villages in its neighbourhood.[22] Indigo was also obtained from Bengal.[23] As noted earlier the best Indigo in the country was obtained from the region around Bayana, near Agra. Pelsaert list about 53 villages listed under the head of 5 principal places all within the vicinity of Bayana: Bayana, Ghanowa (10 kos West of Bayana), Bassouwer

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[15] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, p. 58.

[16] Lotika Varadarajan, *India in the Seventeenth Century: Memoirs of Francois Martin, 1676-77*, 2 Vols, Vol 2, part 1, p. 861.

[17] ibid., pp. 816-17.

[18] M.S.Commissariate, ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, p. 19.

[19] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 46.

[20] ibid., p. 16.

[21] M.S.Commissariate, ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, p. 29.

[22] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 7.

[23] ibid., p. 8.

(10 kos east of Bayana), Hindaun (10 kos), Tora (18 kos), the indigo of which place was brown, rather than violet and the balls were of much smaller size.[24]

Indigo was prepared from a plant which was sown every year after the rains, and cut depending on the amount of rainfall around September or early October. On the manner of cutting of crop, the principal authorities – Tavernier and Pelsaert differed on two main accounts, although agreeing that the crop was harvested thrice. Tavernier recorded that the plant was cut thrice a year.[25] However Pelsaert was of the view that the plant was cut thrice over a period of three years.[26] He named the three crops as Nauti (the first crop), Zairie (second crop), and Katel (third crop).[27] Considering that the crop attained full maturity in about 4 months, Tavernier's assertion regarding three harvestings in a year seemed off mark, and Pelsaert's more acceptable.

Again on the quality of the produce Tavernier was of the opinion that the first crop produced better quality indigo than the others:

> The first leaf is certainly better than those that follow, the second yielding less by 10 or 12 percent than the first, and third 20 percent less than the second. It is classified by colour, determined when a morsel of the paste is broken. The colour of the indigo made from the first crop is of a violet blue, which is more brilliant and more lively than the others, and that of the second is more lively than the third.[28]

However Pelsaert opined that the second crop produced the best quality: 'The *ziarie* indigo is superior in quality to the *nauti*, giving a violent infusion.'[29] He further compared

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[24] F.Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 14.

[25] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 8.

[26] F.Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 10

[27] ibid., p. 12

[28] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 8.

[29] F.Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 11.

the nauti crop with a young man yet to attain his prime and vigour, the ziarie with a man in his vigorous prime and katel with an old and decrepit man.[30]

The first cutting took place when the plant was about 2 or 3 feet high; and was then cut to within 6 inches of the ground. The second crop was cut in the similar manner around following August.[31] Pelsaert went on to give a complete description of the process of extraction of the dye from the leaves of the plant. Converted into hemp, called *put,* it was allowed to stand for about 16 hours in the water, after which the dye, which had mixed in, the water settled down. The dye was then taken out and spread on cotton cloths was left to dry, and then converted into balls. The balls were placed in earthen vessels, which were closed tightly to protect it from air and light, so as to prevent it from drying.[32]

- Silk manufacture: -

The region was also famous for the silk products and manufacturing industry. Ahmadabad was one of the principal manufacturing centre in the region. Pelsaert writing about the Dutch trade at Ahmadabad wrote of the silk manufacture at the place:

> Ahmadabad ... receives annually from Agra large quantities of goods, for examples, much Patna silk, is to be manufactured there into ormesines, satins, velvets, and various curious stuffs, so that there is here little trade in Chinese silk manufactures. Carpets are also woven there with an intermixture of silk and gold thread.[33]

Manufacture of velvets, embroidered with gold or silver, in the royal factories of Ahmadabad deserved mention for the beautiful pavilions made from the material adorned the imperial court on several occasions. In 1635, Sipahdar Khan, viceroy of Gujarat, sent a velvet pavilion, prepared in the government workshop by skilful artists of Gujarat in various artistic designs, at an expense of one lac of rupees and gold embroidered velvet canopies with gold and

[30] ibid., p. 12.

[31] ibid., pp. 10-11.

[32] ibid

[33] ibid., p. 19.

silver pillars to the royal presence.[34] Tavernier tells us that the silk in the region was primarily imported from Patna and Bengal, and was then woven into varieties of fabrics, such as carpets, embroidered with gold and silver threads, satins of different colours and other clothes of use:

> All these silks (from Kasimbazar) are brought to the kingdom of Gujarat, and the greater part come to Ahmadabad and Surat, where they are woven into fabrics. Firstly carpets of silk and gold, others of silk, gold and silver, and others all together of silk, are made in Surat. In the second place, satins with bands of gold and silver, and others of bands of different colours, and others all uniform are made there and it is the same with the taffetas. Thirdly, patoles, which are stuffs of silk, very soft, decorated all over with flowers of different colours, are manufactured at Ahmadabad.[35]

The town of Pattan was another important centre for silk manufacture, of which Thevenot mentioned: '...it is a great town, heretofore of much trade, and affords still abundance of silk stuffs that are made there.'[36]

- Precious Stones: -

The province of Gujarat was also famous for trade in precious stones and other items of rarities. Van Linschoten commented on the precious stones to be obtained from the region: 'They have divers sorts of precious stones as Espinelle, Rubies, Granadis, Iasnites, Amatistes, Chrysolites, Olhos de gato, which are cattes eyes, or Agats, much jasper stone, which is called bloud and milke stone, and other kinds.'[37]Thevenot also mentioned the trade which took place in precious stones at Surat: 'There are Diamonds, Rubies, Pearls and all other precious stones which are found in the east to be sold there also.'[38] Ovington also lists the commodities traded at the place:

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[34] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, p. 182.

[35] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 3.

[36] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 45.

[37] J.H. van Linschoten, *The Voyage*, Vol 1, p. 62.

[38] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 25

> the abundance of Pearls that are brought hither from Persian Gulph; but likewise for Diamonds, Rubies, Sapphires, Topazes, and other stones of splendour and esteem, which are vendable herein great qualities: and for Aggats, Cornelians, Nigganees, Desks, Sarutores, and boxes neatly polishet and embellisht, which may be purchased here at very reasonable rates.[39]

Ceasar Frederike during his stay at Cambay, noted that the place was residence of large number of Artficers that nade bracelets called Mammii, or bracelets of Elephant teeth, of divers colours.[40] Mandelslo remarked about the mining of Agates in the mountains located southeast of the town of Broach, and the industry of Agate carving, which flourished at Cambay:

> In the mountains to the Southeast of the town (Broach), which extended beyond Burhanpur, were found the agates from which were made the beautiful drinking cups, seals, handles for knives and daggers and other rareties which are commonly manufactured in and sold at Cambay.[41]

Della Valle also confirmed the above assertion, while describing the countryside around Broach: 'Some miles distant from this city were located the famous mines for Agate and Chalcedonies, white and green, but these stones were carried less to Broach than to Cambay because the latter was a sea port and there was a much larger concourse of foreign merchants there.'[42]

Thevenot informs that these agates were mined out at the quarries of a village called Nimodra (Limodra), which were about four leagues from Cambaye, upon the road to Broache; but the pieces that are got there were no bigger than ones fist.[43] Tavernier described the town and commerce of the place: 'Cambay is a large town at the end of the gulf, which bears its name. Here those beautiful agates, which come from India, are cut into cups, handles of knives,

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[39] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in Year 1689*, ed., H.G. Rawlinson, London, 1929, p. 131.

[40] Ceaser Frederike, extracts of *His Eighteene Yeeres of Indian Observations*, from Samuel Purchas, *Purchas, His Pilgrimes*, 20 Vols, Glasgow, 1905, Vol 10, p. 90.

[41] M.S.Commissariate, ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, p. 15.

[42] Pietro della Valle, *The Travels*, Vol 1, p. 64.

[43] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 18.

beads and other objects of workmanship. Indigo of the same kind as that of Sarkhej is made, also in the vicinity of the town...'[44]Thevenot described the market at the place as: '...the shops are full of Aromatick perfumes, spices, silken and other stuffs. There are vast numbers of ivory Bracelets, Agate cups, chaplets and rings made in this town.'[45]

- *Saltpetre: -*

Saltpetre was obtained from Chhala-Babra in Ahmadabad[46] and Malpur in Sabar Kantha[47]. The region around the towns of Dholera and Viramgam also had the soil conditions suitable for the saltpetre manufacture. The product was also obtained from near Ajmer and from area around Patna in Bihar. 'The chief trade of Azmer is in Saltpetre, and there are great quantities of it made there, by reason of the black fat earth that is about it, which is the properest of all other soils to afford saltpetre.'[48] Saltpetre was also obtained from the neighbourhood of Agra and of Patna. Thevenot detailed the process of saltpetre manufacture and extraction:

> The Indians fill a great hole with that (black) earth, and pound it in water with great pounders of very hard timber, when they have reduced it into a liquid mash, they lay it to rest, to the end the water may imbibe all the saltpetre out of earth: this mixture having continued for some time, they draw off what is clear, and put it into great pots, wherein they let it boil, and continually scum it; when it is well boiled, they again drain what is clear out of these pots, and that being congealed and dryed in sun, where they let it stand for certain time, it is in its perfection. [49]

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[44] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, p. 56.

[45] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, pp. 17-18.

[46] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p. 258.

[47] M.S.Commissariate, *History of Gujarat*, 2 Vols, pp. 306-07.

[48] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 74.

[49] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 10.

- Lac: -

The countryside around Baroda was also known for the trade in lac. Thevenot mentions the store of lacca to be found in the territory of one of its bourgs called Sindiguera. [50] Lac is described as being of red brown colour in its natural state. But when well-dried and beaten to powder, the people could give it any colour they liked – black, red, green, yellow, etc. Mandelslo informs us that he article was much in use during the period mainly as a sealing wax, or in works as adorning and beautifying household furniture such as chests, cabinets, tables, bed steads, etc, and that the village of Sankhed near Baroda produced around 25000 pounds of lac annually.[51] Lac is described as being of red brown colour in its natural state. But when well-dried and beaten to powder, the people could give it any colour they liked – black, red, green, yellow, etc.

- Salt Manufacture: -

The region also contains vast areas covered with salt, particularly in the area of Rann[52]. Salt was also obtained from along the coast of Gulf of Cambay, at Maqbulabad, in the sarkar of Broach[53].

- Mining Industry: -

The region of Kathiawar, near Porbandar and Dhrangadhra provided much building stone[54] and infact the province was famous for the sandstone quarries and other building materials. The region of Kathiawar and some areas near Surat[55] also contained iron mines. Iron ore was also worked at Ghoga.[56]

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[50] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 44.

[51] M.S.Commissariate ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, pp. 16-17

[52] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p. 255.

[53] ibid., p. 261.

[54] Imperial Gazetteer of India - *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 1, p. 66.

[55] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p 262, list Chikhli, in the Sarkar of Surat as a place on sea having an iron mine.

[56] Imperial Gazetteer of India - *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 1, p. 246.

Principal Ports and Towns: -

- Ports: -

Among important ports in the region may be listed Anjar, Mandavi, Porbandar, Diu, Ghoga, Cambay, Broach, and Surat among many others. Infact Mirat lists around 27 seaports (where big ships anchor) and 45 baras (meant for small boats) by the middle of the 18th century.

On the coast of Kathiawar, **Diu** was the most important port. The port during the period was under the control of Portuguese who obtained its possession in the year 1515, and later on built repaired a fort in about 1534. Ralph Fitch called it 'the strongest town that the Portugales have in the vicinity of Gujarat'. Barbosa described the town and the commerce at Diu, towards the closing years of 16th century:

> Along the coast there is a point where the land projects into the sea, on which there is a great town named by the Malabares Devixa, and by the Moors of the land it is called Dio. It is on a small island, hard by the main and has a light good harbour, a trading port used by many ships with exceeding great traffic and commerce with the Malabar, Baticala, Guoa, Chaul, and Dabul. Ships also sail hence to Meca, Aden, Zeila, Barbora, Magadaxo, Mehinde, Brava, Mombaca and Ormus with the kingdom thereof.[57]

Cambay was a flourishing port during the 16th century, however by the beginning of seventeenth century, the trade at the port was much diminished, and Pelsaert described the trade at the place about the year 1626 as nearly, or almost wholly at an end. He says, 'Formerly, three caravans, or kafilas, used to come every year...Now the trade is so much decayed that this year, 1626, only 40 merchants' fustas arrived, carrying goods of small value...'[58]

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[57] Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, p. 128.

[58] F.Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, pp. 19-20.

Due to the silting of the port at Cambay, the port of **Ghoga** functioned as an anchorage for the ships bound for Cambay, from where goods were transported to Cambay on small boats. The Mirat-i Ahmadi makes a particular note of the transportation of goods in these small boats between Cambay and the port of Ghoga, which during the period was serving as the harbour for Cambay: '...the port of Ghoga, is situated on open sea, where big ships which cannot enter the port of Cambay anchors, and the cargoes are landed by lighter.'[59]

In the course of seventeenth century, **Surat** had emerged as the most important port in the Mughal Empire. J. Tavernier who visited India during the reign of Shah Jahan wrote of Surat as the sole port in the Mughal Empire.[60] Mandelslo opined that '...no ship would consider its voyage complete until it had cast anchors at Surat.'[61] The gradual decline of Cambay as the chief mart in the area, from about the beginning years of the seventeenth century due to a multitude of factors, ranging from political, economic to environmental; aided in the growth of Surat. Father Manuel Godinho, who visited the city in 1663, wrote of the commerce of the place in the following manner:

> The commerce of the place is carried by the English and Dutch from Europe, by the ships of the Red sea from Africa, and by the natives from Asia and Asia Minor. The best of the goods come into Surat from inland by caravans of bullocks and camels, which enter its gates every hour... of the foreign ships that call at this port there is no count. There will be found at all times of the year in Surat, ships from China, Malaca, Macassar, Malucas, Jacatara, Maldives, Bengal, Tenacerin, Caxem, Mascut, Madagascar, Ormuz, Basra, Sind, England; infact from what ever part of the world one is after.[62]

- Major towns: -

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[59] S.Nawab Ali and C.N.Seddon eds, *Mirat-i Ahmadi Supplement*, p. 167.

[60] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, p. 5.

[61] M.S.Commissariate, eds, *Mandelslo's Travels*, p. 9.

[62] G.M.Moraes, 'Surat in 1663 as described by Fr. Manuel Godinho', published in Satish Chandra ed. *Essays in Medieval Indian Economic History*, p. 144.

The principal towns and commercial centres which were flourishing and famous during the period were **Pattan** or **Anhilwara**, which was the capital of the region from about 746 to 1194 A.D. **Champanir** was the capital of the sultunate of Gujarat from 1194 to 1560.

Ahmadabad became the chief administrative and commercial centre of the region with the Mughal occupation, and remained so till the end of the Mughal rule in Gujarat. Situated on the banks of river Sabarmati, in a country known for its cotton and indigo produce, Ahmadabad acted as a hub for the merchandise destined for the ports of Gujarat, both from neighbouring areas as well as from the regions around Agra and Delhi. The city was known for its cotton industry, manufacture of gold and silver brocades, varieties of silk, velvets, taffetas and carpets. That Ahmadabad was a great centre for inland trade can be assessed from the willingness of the factors of the English company at Surat, to shift base to the city. A letter addressed to the company at England by the President and council at Surat in April 1636, sheds important light on the motives and benefits perceived by these factors for shifting base to Ahmadabad.

> We advised the last yeare that, presupposing a peace with Portugall, Amadavad would be most properly the centre of your affaires...Amadavad holds weekly correspondence with Agra and Synda and (is) so much nearer to both as it is distant from this place. Amadavad is such a soile as to be fitt for travels in the winter season; from whence we might pass to Brodra and Cambaya upon everie occasion, where as here in Suratt we remain coopt up whilst the raines continue, not able to remove one half mile, if wee should be fired out of the cittie.[63]

Among other important towns in the province may be listed **Baroda**, which gained administrative and political ascendancy with the establishment of the Gaikwar rule in the province towards the later half of the eighteenth century. The city was famousfor its industries in cotton, and production of lac, as already noted.

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[63] William Foster ed., *English Factories in India*, 1634-1636, p. 217.

Famous for its trade in cotton products, **Broach** was another important commercial and political centre in the region. Mandelslo described the city of Broach as one 'standing on high mountains surrounded by walls of free stone, and so well built that it may be numbered amongst the strongest places of all of Indies.'[64] Thevenot wrote of Broach as flourishing towns and one of the chief strengths of the province, situated at 21 degrees 55 minutes North latitude, some 30 miles from the mouth and on the right bank of river Narbada:

> The town lies upon the side and at the foot of the hill, looking towards the river of Nerbada. It is environed with stonewalls of about three fathom high, which are flanked by the large round towers at thirty or thirty five pace distance from one another.[65]

Networks of Commerce & Modes of Transport: -

The major trade arteries, which linked these ports with the major trade and production centres situated in the interiors were the ones running from Surat via Ahmadabad through Ajmer to Agra, and the other one from Surat to Burhanpur in Khandesh, from where the route bifurcates into two, one leads northwards through Gwalior to Agra, and the other one through Aurangabad to Golconda in Deccan. The route via Ahmadabad ran through such important centres as Broach and Baroda. The list provided by Thevenot mentions such places in between Surat and Ahmadabad; as the town of Berio; the river Kim; town of Ouclisser; river Narbada; Broach; Sourban (Sarbhon); river Dader (Dhader); village Debca (Debka); Petnad (Petlad); river Mahi; Sousentra (Sojitra); Mader; Gitbag.[66]

Tavernier took the route going from Broach to Baroda, and moving onwards through Neriade (Nadiad) to Ahmadabad.[67] In order to take the way to Cambay, Tavernier says that the diversion had to be taken from Broach[68] where as Thevenot detailing the route to Sojitra says that a diversion had to be taken from the place to the village of Canara (Nagra), which was a

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[64] M.S.Commissariate, ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, p. 14.

[65] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 9.

[66] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, pp. 8-10.

[67] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, pp. 54-59.

[68] ibid., p. 56.

league and half from Cambay.[69] Infact Thevenot lists three ways of reaching Cambay from Surat, one through the route just detailed above, the other through sea, by taking a boat to Surat, and the third one 'by passing through the bottom of the gulf in a chariot, over against Cambaye, at low water; and one must go three leagues and a half in water', and 'once past it was only about eight and twenty leagues to Surat.'[70] Tavernier mentioned that one could also reach Ahmadabad from Cambay, by moving north through Chiidabad, which is at a distant of about 9 kos from Cambay and 5 kos from Ahmadabad.[71]

Situated on river Tapti, upstream towards east from Surat, Burhanpur was another important centre for trade in the neighbourhood of Gujarat. The city had emerged as an important administrative centre and military base for the Mughals, for launching strikes against the Deccan sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda. Commercially the city was at the confluence of three major routes, linking it with Surat, Agra, and the Deccan cities of Aurangabad and Golconda. Tavernier mentions that the travellers from South enroute to Agra, as those from Surat, Goa, Bijapur, Golkonda, Masulipatam, could not avoid traversing this path, for there was no other way except the one which ran through Ahmadabad.[72]

The route leading from Ahmadabad to Agra passed through some important centres of textile production in the region. For e.g., the town of Sidhpur (Tavernier's Chitpour and identified on the map of Bernier as Chitpur) was an important centre for trade in coloured cotton fabrics called chites.[73] The route from Burhanpur also passed through some of the important centres of commerce and administration of the period, such as Sironj and Gwalior. Sironj was an important centre for trade in coloured calicoes, called chites. Mundy says of produce at Sironj that, 'In this place are made great quantities of excellent pintadoes or Chints, much nominated and esteemed throughout India, and next in goodness to those of Masulipatnam.'[74] The city of Gwalior had been identified by the contemporary sources as a state

[69] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 17.

[70] ibid., pp. 17-18.

[71] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, p. 58. (Although, the translator was unable to locate the place on the map n3, p. 58.)

[72] ibid., p. 49.

[73] ibid., p. 65.

[74] Peter Mundy, *Travels*, Vol. 2, *Travels in Asia, 1630-34*, ed., Sir R.C.Temple, London, 1914, p 56

prison under the Mughals, where they send princes and great nobles for safe custody.[75] The province of Ajmer, in the north of Gujarat, was also an important area of resource procurement for the merchants of Gujarat. The vicinity about the town was famous for its Saltpetre manufacture, and its perfume industry.

Detailing the route to Golconda, Tavernier says that the route passes through Daulatabad, Aurangabad. On route one passes trough such places as Navapour, where he says that the best scented rice grew in the world[76], and the entire distance from Surat was about 324 kos.[77] Another route, which he says, one can take from Surat to go to Golconda, was along the coast to Goa and from there on to Bijapur to Golconda.[78]

- Modes of Transport: -

The principal modes of transportation in India were the oxen driven carts for the transport of goods and merchandise, and for travelling light carriages and Palkis were employed. Tavernier gives an interesting description of the modes of transport in the country. The oxen or the wagon comes as the principal instruments of carriage. Peter Mundy, described these carriages in the following words: 'The coaches in this countrie are generally drawne with Oxen, never above two to a coach, which haue but two wheeles, in all things resembling a little carte, the cover excepted, which is like that of a coach on England'.[79]Regarding the light carriages, used mainly for personal transportation, Tavernier says, 'they have also for travelling, small very light carriages, which can carry two persons; but usually you travel alone, in order to be more comfortable'.[80] The Palaki is described by Tavernier as a comfortable mode of travel, for those who can afford it. 'It is a kind of bed, 6 or 7 feet long and 3 feet wide, with a small rail all round. A sort of cane called bamboo, which they bend when young, in order to cause it to take the form of a bow in the middle supports the cover of the palankeen which is of satin or brocade...The

[75] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, p. 52.

[76] ibid., p. 116.

[77] ibid., p. 119.

[78] ibid., p. 121.

[79] Peter Mundy, *Travels*, p. 189.

[80] Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, p. 36.

ends of the bamboo are attached on the both sides to the body of the palankeen between the two poles, joined together in a saltier...and each of these poles is 5 or 6 feet long'.[81]

The caravans or caphilas, sometimes includes as many as 20,000 carts and oxen laded with variety of stuffs. Thomas Roe met on his journey from Surat to Khandesh as many as '10,000 bullocks in one troupe laden with corne, and most days, others, but lesse'.[82] Peter Mundy travelling from Surat towards Burhanpur, on his way to Agra, describes his caphila as 'consisting of such a multitude of carts and people, which drew to such a length, that hitherto wee could never see both ends from one place, and yet increasinge dayly'.[83] At another place on the same journey, he saw near Sironj, 'many thosand of Oxen laden with provision. It was att least 1 ½ miles in length, and as many more returninge emptie to bee reladen...'[84] Further in his travels through the country he once met a caravan of oxen, 'in number 14,000, all laden with graine as wheat, rice, etts.' Two days later he encountered another of oxen, numbering around 20,000 laden with Sugar.[85]

Environmental Impact & Commerce: -

However the commerce of the region and the prosperity was to a large extent due to the geographical setting of the province of Gujarat and due to favourable environmental determinants as the annual monsoon winds and the rains, favourable soil conditions for cotton and indigo production.

- **Geographical Setting & Commerce of the Region: -**

Situated on the extreme northern end of the western sea front of the Indian Subcontinent, the ports and the cities of Gujarat had a natural advantage over the ports located

[81] ibid., pp. 37-38.

[82] Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-19*, ed., W. Foster, London, 1926, p 67

[83] Peter Mundy, *Travels*, p. 45.

[84] ibid., p. 56.

[85] ibid., pp. 95-98.

down south along the Malabar and Konkan coast, in the sense that they had an unrestricted access to a large hinterland area of Northern India and the Deccan the routes to which ran across the northern plains of Gujarat and Rajputana, and along the river valleys of Narmada and Tapti. Presence of Western Ghats almost along the entire length of the western seaboard facing the Arabian Sea made Gujarat and its ports the natural gateways to the riches and wealth of North Indian Gangetic heartland, since the presence of steep mountains southward of the province made transportation across them extremely difficult and dangerous.

Again various relief features along the coastline, such as hills or a peak in the vicinity helped the navigators to identify the places along the coast, and the directions to be taken thence. The table mountain at the Cape of Good Hope on the Southern tip of Africa and the Girnar Mountains visible along the Gujarat coast, were two important relief features, which the sailors had identified to make a clear understanding of their location during their voyage to Asia from Europe.

- Problems in Navigation: -

Again, in times when the navigation on high seas was dependent solely on the location of the stars, the wind patterns and currents, and seafood for survival navigators preferred to sail as close to the land as possible. The log books of the navigators of the English ships which visited in the region during the period, lists number of places on the West and East African coast, on their way to India, and moves along the coastline of Persia, Sind, before reaching the ports of Gujarat. Infact, ships destined for any part of Asia, had to move along the coastline of Gujarat, and it was not before the discovery of trade winds that the ships could sail directly from the Cape of Good Hope to the ports in Southeast Asia. Moreover the journey, in spite of all the precautions was not free from troubles. The ships sometimes had to face the trouble from lack of winds, which forces them to stay at a point for days altogether with no movement altogether, or more dangerously had to face threatening storms and tempests during the course of their journey.

John Fryer on his way to India had to face both the extremes, and he details a interesting account of the troubles which one faces on their way to the Indies, from the elements

of nature as heat of Sun, wind and rain.[86] Detailing his experiences with the storms around the Cape of Good Hope:

> 'The wind that till now seemed to dally, proves in good earnest, and begins a frowning April, driving the trembling sea on heaps, and on them piling more, till the swelling surges menace the lowering skies, leaving a hollow where they borrowed their gigantine vastness, as if they were intended to exenterate the treasures of deep. At the top of which it was dreadful to behold the angry surface of the foaming bellows, descending down beneath no less uncomfortable, when the vans of the next ship (though grovelling with a neighbouring wave) cannot be discerned... but when a fret of wind rowled the waves athwart our quarters, it made our ship shake, proving the soundness of her sides, where had she given way never so little, we must have sunk without bail or mainprize. Still the tempest increases and brings with it gusts of rain and dismal darksome weather, whereby we were separated from the rest of our fleet...and were left alone to shift with the boisterous winds.[87]

- Tidal Waves along the Coast & Difficulties in navigation: -

Another peculiar feature of the coastline of Gujarat and especially in the Gulf of Cambay and Kutch is the furiosity of tidal waves (bores) and formation of sandbanks at river mouths. Thevenot wrote of the tidal waves to the north of the Gulf of Cambay as: 'the tides are so swift that a man on horse back cannot keep pace with the first waves'.[88] Pietro della Valle noted that the flux and reflux of sea near Cambay was more impetuous and violent, and with more rapid currents than perhaps in any other part of the world,[89]and writes of his experiences of witnessing a tidal bore at Cambay, during full moon night, when it was greater than usual:

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[86] John Fryer, *A New Account of East India & Persia being Nine Years Travels, 1672 – 1681*, 3 Vol., ed., W. Crooke, London, 1909, 1912, 1915, Vol 1, pp. 10-11.

[87] ibid., pp. 12-13.

[88] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 18.

[89] Pietro della Valle, *The Travels*, Vol 1, p. 63.

> We saw the sea coming roaring afar off like a most rapid river, and in a moment overflows a great space of land, rushing with such fury that nothing could have withstood its force; and I think it would have overtaken the swiftest race horse in the world. A thing very strangely since in other places with the rising and falling of sea in flux and reflux is done in full 6 hours, and with so little motion that it is scarcely perceived.[90]

Alexander Forbes wrote on the spring tide as seen in the channel, which separated the island of Peerum from the mainland of Kathiawar peninsula:

> The first rush of the spring tide is irresistible in its force, and affords a scene, which only the eyewitness can fully realize. A perpendicular wall of water, three or four feet high, and extending across the Gulf as far as eyes can reach, approaches at the rate of 12 miles an hour in speed and with an alarming noise, carrying certain destruction to the mariner whose ignorance or fool hardiness leads him to neglect its warning voice.[91]

- Sandbanks along the Coastline (Especially in Gulf of Cambay): -

With regard to the commercial traffic and the navigability along the Gujarat coastline we find that the various sandbanks particularly in the Gulf of Cambay also acted as serious deterrents. The decline of Cambay as a major port had been attributed in part to the silting of harbour at Cambay. Fredricke who visited the city in about 1563 noted that the harbour of Cambay can only be reached by small barkes since big ships were not able to reach because of the shallowness of the waters near the city; '...no great shippes come tither by the reason of the shouldness of water there abouts, and these shoulds are an hundred and fourscore miles about a straight Gulfe...'[92] Tavernier noted with regard to Cambay: '...formerly the sea came close to

[90] ibid., p. 103.

[91] Alexander K. Forbes, *Rasmala*, p. 246.

[92] Ceaser Frederike, *extracts of His Eighteene Yeeres of Indian Observations*, from Samuel Purchas, *Purchas, His Pilgrimes*, Vol 10, p. 90.

Cambay...but for some years past the sea has been receding day by day, so that vessels are now unable to come nearer than four or five leagues of the town'.[93]

Thevenot also gives a similar description of the sandbars at the mouth of Tapti:

> The bar at Surrat where ships come at present, is not its true port; at best it can be called a road; ... it is called the Bar, because of the sand which hinders ships from coming further in. the truth is, there is so little water there, that though the vessel be unloaded, the ordinary tides are not sufficient to bring them up, and they are obliged to wait for a spring tide; but then they come up to Surrat, especially when they want to be careened. Small banks come easily up to the town with least tides.[94]

However these sandbanks also provided the ports and harbours in the region protection from direct tidal action, and in cases safe roads for the ships to anchor, as was the case with Swally. Regarding Swally, Pelsaert noted that the place is desirable for loading and unloading of goods, because of the presence of a sand bank, which is exposed at low waters, and gives shelters at high tide.[95] Father Manuel Godinho wrote that deep hollows were dug in the bed of the river Tapti, for allowing heavy vessels to lie on the silt in low tides.[96]

- Soil Conditions & Agricultural Pattern: -

The fertility of the soil and its nature was also an important deciding factor in the nature of crops and agricultural techniques adopted. In terms of Agricultural production Ain considered the province to be rather backward in agriculture and this attributes this apparent backwardness as the primary reason behind the divergence of the energies of its inhabitants towards commerce and industry. However, foreign merchants and travellers who visited the region during the course of seventeenth century, expressed an opinion, which was quite in contrary to the above assertion.

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[93] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, pp. 56-57.

[94] ibid., p. 37.

[95] F.Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 9.

[96] Manuel Godinho, p 124

The contrast between the above assertions may stem from the fact that the foreign travellers have had a limited exposure to the conditions of the region. Moreover the contacts and the movement of travellers were generally in the coastal areas and in the fertile central plains of Gujarat. Again Abu'l Fazl wrote from the records available to him, towards the end of Akbar's reign, when the stability of Mughal systems have just started to make an impact, and long period of relative stability throughout the course of seventeenth century most certainly would have made a considerable impact on the general agrarian prosperity of the region.

The variance in the crop pattern with in the region and the reason behind the assertions regarding the relative backwardness may also be sought into the variance in soil conditions existing in the region. The sandy and barren plains of Kutch thus are generally devoid of any strong vegetation. Moreover the inundation of a considerable portion of the territory – Rann – makes the region particularly unfit for any type of crop to be sown on a seasonal basis: '... The region is sparsely inhabited and has very little or no vegetation...and except astray bird, a herd of wild asses, antelopes, or an occasional caravan, no sign of life breaks the desolate loneliness'.[97]

The case with the peninsular region was a bit different in the sense that the interiors of the region was rocky and hilly region, moreover the rivers in the region were primarily rain fed in nature, thus making the soil conditions primarily unfit for agriculture. Moreover the heavily forested region was primarily a source for fire wood and wood for the industry and as such was highly inaccessible. However, along the coastline the soil condition was extremely suitable for agriculture. Thus we find Mirat commenting on the fertility of soil in the region of Sorath, towards the southwest of the peninsula: Mirat also provides us with similar information regarding the region of Sorath:

> The soil is black. There are mountains and stony regions... it is with out fruit bearing and other trees. But some of the mountains and places have mango trees, rayan trees, tamarind trees, and forests of acacia trees. Spring

[97] Imperial Gazetteer of India: *Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 2, p 185

produce of cereals is more than autumn. Soil being strong needs no sweeping at the time of cultivation...it is a kingdom which is very fertile.[98]

One of the most fertile tracts in the province was the region between the ports of Surat and Broach, known for its cotton produce, and such crops as Barley, Corn, Rice, millet and Sugarcane. 'The country between these two towns abounds with corn, rice, millet, and sugarcanes'.[99]Discussing the soil condition around Surat, and in the region of central heartland of the province and the produce of the area, Thevenot found it to be 'off a very brown earth... 'And was so very rich that they never dunged it. After the rains they sow their corns i.e. after month of September, and they cut it down after February. They plant sugar canes there also. He further states that the soil about Surrat is good for rice also, and there is a great deal sown'.[100]

The soil conditions were suitable in the region for cultivation of cash crops such as Cotton, and indigo. Thus we find that many centres as Broach, Baroda, Ahmadabad during the period emerge as important centres of cotton procurement, due to the soil conditions in the region which were suitable for cotton cultivation and indigo plantation. Fryer, gives a description of the country in his memoirs:

> It is a land in all places very fruitful, and enjoys a temperater air...it produces 3 harvests in some places, but generally two'. Moving on, he adds 'the plain country is rich in all things necessary; pasturage by reason of long summer drought being the only lack; which in the rains and cold seasons they have time and store to provide against. Cocoes grow all along the seaside round India, with in the tropics and bettle nut is in great request...and these are peculiar to low countries as are watermelons. Other fruits are grapes, mangoes and likes are common in India. Rice thrives best in watery places, it swimming always there in till harvest, when the water is let out by drain. All other corns rejoice

[98] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, pp 153-154

[99] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, vol 1, p 54

[100] ibid., pp 36-37

better in drier grounds. Cotton is lower of the fame, from whence comes all the wealth to India, which are dug for in other places and laid up here.[101]

Monsoon Rains & Economic Dependence: -

Again shipping in western coast of India was restricted within particular months of the year, 'it being necessary to take the proper seasons, outside which no one ventures to put to sea' .[102] The months of November, December, January, February, and March, were the only months in the year when the shipping along the coast was considered to be safe. Mandelslo noted the decline in shipping on the coast during the months from May to September, owing to the high winds and tempest which accompanied the Monsoon clouds: '...from May to September, there is no staying on these coasts, by reason of wind and tempests, accompanied by extraordinary thunder and lightening which reigns there during all the time'.[103] The countryside also almost becomes impassable to the goods wagons due to deep fords and crevices, which open up, and gets filed with water during the period. English factors at Surat in year 1678, wrote back that due to late continuance of rains commercial traffic in the region has been seriously hindered and the regularity in the supply of good for ships home bound had been affected. Moreover the ships destined for Surat, with treasure for company's buying and expenditure in the area also did not reached on time thus increasing the rate of interest charged on borrowed money.[104]

The Monsoon rains also played an important determining influence on the commercial prosperity of the area, when the agriculture primarily was rain fed in nature. The sowing season in the area was and is still primarily decided by the onset of annual monsoon rains. Thus Thevenot notes that the corn was 'After the rains they sow their corns i.e. after month of September, and they cut it down after February'.[105] The Mirat-i Ahmadi also informs us of the similar pattern of sowing: 'Wheat grains are sown after monsoon'. Pelsaert while describing the

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[101] John Fryer, *A new Account of East India* ,Vol 2, pp. 186-87.

[102] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, p. 5.

[103] M.S.Commissariate ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, p. 9.

[104] Foster William ed., *English Factories in India, 1678-1684*, pp. 229-30.

[105] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, pp. 36-37.

mode of Indigo plantation also mentioned that the timing and the amount of rainfall were important factors for determining the quality of indigo obtained from the plants.[106]

Also most of the rivers in the region, especially those of the peninsular Gujarat were rain fed, and this made the annual rainfall even more determining a factor for the agricultural sustainability and commercial prosperity of the province. More over most of the important rivers in the region, particularly Mahi and Narmada were not fit for canal irrigation, since their banks were too high.[107] Thus agriculture was primarily rain dependent and water was obtained by harvesting rainwater in the numerous tanks and wells, which attracted special attention of the visitors to the region. The need for these tanks and cisterns have been explained by P Della Valle:

> They are made in divers places by Princes, Governours of Countries, or other wealthy persons, for the publick benefit and as works of charity, because the soil suitable to the climate is sufficiently hot, and aboundeth not in water: Rivers are not in all places; and other running waters and springs, there are scarce any, especially in the more inland parts remote from the sea.[108]

Of the famous tanks in the region, Gopi Talav at Surat was the most described and detailed by the foreign visitors to the region. Mandelslo described as being made of eight square of free stone and so spacious that it contained enough water to supply the whole city even in the hottest months of the year.[109] Similarly the city of Vadnagar has been described as having 3000 pagodas, with each having its own tank for collecting rainwater[110]. The region of Kutch presented a different challenge for the porous nature of soil in the area, storage of water in ponds and reservoirs is difficult, and thus brackish water, which was found in rocks at no great depth from the surface, was used, and wells of this kind are fairly numerous in the area.[111] Other than

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[106] F.Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 13.

[107] Imperial Gazetteer of India: *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 1, pp. 173 and 177.

[108] Pietro della Valle, *The Travels*, Vol 1, p. 32.

[109] M.S.Commissariate ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, p. 11.

[110] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p. 249.

[111] Imperial Gazetteer of India: *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 2, p. 327.

the rains, presence of numerous springs and falling of dews at some places in Kathiawar has been noted, as important source for much need water for crops: 'The corn land is never watered, because the dew that falls plentifully in the morning is sufficient for it'.[112] Mirat mentions that the soil gets moistened with the help of dew, which falls too much there.[113]

That the annual rains were the principle mean to bring down the temperature and provide relief from the oppressive heat of the India Summers, can be made out from the statement of Bernier: 'The sun is so strong and oppressive in the Indies during the whole year, particularly during eight months that the ground would be completely burnt, and rendered sterile and uninhabitable, if by providence did not kindly provide a remedy, and wisely ordain that in month of July, when that heat is most intense, rains began to fall, which continue three successive months. The temperature of the air thus becomes supportable, and the earth is rendered fruitful.'[114]

P. Della Valle describing the months of rainfall, made an assessment of the importance, which the annual rainfall holds for the inhabitants, and for their survival:

> Rain likewise very seldome during the whole year, saving in that season, called by them Pansecal (corruption of Barsa-kal) which signifies the time of rain, bring about three moneths, beginning about the middle of June, and during which time the rain is continual, and very great; whence some upon this account call these three months winter, although the weather be then hottest, as well in India as in all the rest of the northern hemisphere. And this no doubt proceeds from the providence of God; since were it not for these great rains, India would be in regard of the great heat and drought at this time uninhabitable.[115]

Again the time, duration and amount of rainfall is not predictable and they may vary from form one ear to the next. In words of Bernier:

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[112] S.N.Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, pp. 36-37.

[113] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, pp. 153-154.

[114] Francois Bernier, *Travels*, pp. 431-32.

[115] Pietro della Valle, *The Travels*, Vol 1, pp. 32-33.

> These rains are not however so exactly regular as to descend undeviatingly on the same day or week. According to the observations I have made in various places...they are never the same two years together. Sometimes they commence or terminate a fortnight or three weeks sooner or later, and one year they may be more abundant than another.[116]

Again heavy rains may cause floods in the rivers, causing considerable damage to the towns and human settlements located in the flood plains. The frequent mentions to floods in river Tapti, and those in Sabarmati, which caused considerable damage to the towns of Surat and Ahmadabad, are the case in point. Mirat notes an occurrence of flood in Tapti, and the plight of the inhabitants in about year 1733-34:

> The river Tapti rose in flood and entered the city. Boats were piled in lanes and bazaars. Many persons sought refuge through fear of life on terraces of lofty buildings and trees. Wealth and lives of many persons became as if the were of the drowned. This continued for full three days...after two days water rose but to a lesser height and remained for a day.[117]

Any change or break in the regularity of the rainfall could also cause havoc in the region, as it did many times leading to severe famine conditions. Just to take an insight into the extent of damage, which the rainfall failure can cause, one needs to take a look at the description provided in our sources regarding one of the worst famines to hit Gujarat that of 1630-31, also known as 'sattasiyah' or 87th in Gujarat. Abdul Hamid Lahori, in his Badshahnama, gave an account of the famine conditions in the region:

> During the past year no rain had fallen in the territories of the Balaghat, and the draught had been a deficiency in the bordering countries, and a total want in the Dakhin and Gujarat. The inhabitants of these two countries were to the direst extremity. Life was offered for a loaf, but none would buy; rank was sold for a cake, but none cared for it; the ever bounteous hand was now stretched

[116] Francois Bernier, *Travels*, p. 432.

[117] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 2, p. 458.

out to buy beg for food; and the feet which had always trodden the way of containment walked about only in search of sustenance. For a long time dog's flesh was sold for goat's flesh, and the pounded bones of the dead were mixed with flour and sold. When this was discovered, the sellers were brought to justice...The number of the dying caused obstructions in the roads, and everymen who dire sufferings did not terminate in death and who retained the power to move wandered off to towns and villages of other countries. Those lands, which had been famous for their fertility and plenty, now retain no trace of productiveness.[118]

Peter Mundy who visited the region during the period gave a graphic account of the suffering of the people in the country suffering from Famine conditions:

> Noe less lamentable was it to see the poore people scrapeinge on the dunghills for food, yea in the very excreament of beasts, as horses and oxens, etts, belonginge to travellers, for graine that perchaunce might come undigested from them, and that with great greedinesse and strife among themselves, generallie lookinge like anatomies, with life, but scarce strength enough to room themselves from under mens feete, many of them expiringe, others newe dead. This was theire state in every streete and corner; and from Suratt to this place...all the highway was strowed with dead people, our noses never free of the stinck of them, especially about townes; for they drag them out by the heeles starke naked, of all ages and sexes, till they are out of the gates, and there the are lefte, soe that they way is half barred upp. Thus it was for the most part hitherto.[119]

That the famine conditions had adversely affected the commerce of the region, can be made out from the statements of the Dutch and English factors stationed at Surat, and at other places in Gujarat, who in their letters to the home company and regional councils expressed their inability to send more goods and cargoes and constantly complained of the deplorable

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[118] Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Badshahnama*, extract from Elliot and Dowson eds, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol VII, p. 24.

[119] Peter Mundy, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 43.

conditions in the countryside and at the centres of procurement, and of the depopulation of the countryside on account of deaths and migration of the population. Peter Mundy noted that due to famine and want of food many families in the area in search of better opportunities were leaving the region and moving towards Malwa and other areas which were free from famine, and that such was the extent of migration that his cafila which started with a total strength of about 150 persons and 15 to 20 carts had before reaching Burhanpur had swelled by upto 17 or 1800 people and about 250 to 300 carts, and that the Cafila drewe to such a length, that 'hitherto wee could never see both ends from one place, and yet increasinge dayly'.[120]

Dutch factors at Surat wrote to the council members at Batavia that the destruction on account of famine had been almost total, and it will take not less than 3 years for the conditions in the area to get back to their normal state and the region had almost been totally depopulated: '...going to a village called Swally we saw there many people that perished of hunger; and whereas heretofore there were in that town 260 families, there was not remaining alive above 10 or 11 families.'[121] The also made note of the lying ofbodies in the countr, with no one to cremate them and that due to the stench of the deads that 'the sound people that came into the town were with the smell infected' and that at the corners of he streets 'the dead lay 20 together, one upon other, nobody burying them'.[122] As a result of thecalamity thecommerce of the region suffered adversely, so much so that the factors were forced to comment that 'in these parts there may not be any trade expected this three years'.[123]English factors also had an almost a similar story to tell to their superiors in England; and noted that the workers have fled the area and the prices of food grains and scarcity of manufactures have risen to the extent that it was becoming exceedingly difficult for them to meet the demands from Europe and other markets of Asia:

> Indian goods provided for bantam before the arrival of the fleet; amongst them 1000 corges of calicoes, which are not half bleaked (bleached) and couldnot be finished for want of workmen. Money lost through the recipients

[120] ibid., p. 45.

[121] William Foster ed., *English Factories in India, 1630-33*, pp. 180-81

[122] ibid

[123] ibid.

having died or run away. The country is in a miserable state through famine and mortality...a mortality unspeakable: Swally and the places near adjoining wholly dispeopled. No carriage for our goods; 2 ¾ rupees per small maund between Amadavas and Surat. Our own mariners employed at Surat instead of poters. A great mortality in our house. We recalled all our people to Surat from other factories...No workmen left, insomuch that one half for reaping and making the crop of Sarkhej indigo was offered for that labour. The only indigo they can hope to obtain is that of Agra.[124]

At another place the factors again complained that they cannot promise what all goods and quantity they could provide for the company's trade and that their own house and people have suffered because of the famine:

> You cannot be imprivy to the universal calamity this country, by reason of dearth and famine, now grown to such an extreme that we ourselves are become beholding for corne even to supply our household provisions. How destitute therefore we ourselves are of all means and hopes to furnish you with either bread or rice from hence let this just complaint of ours inform you, and make you sensible of misery... What we shall be able to provide in your absence we cannot promise, the distillers being all of them (or the most part) with their families departed into the parts of more hoped plenty as are many thousands besides, as well weavers, washers, dyers, etc; that put us almost into dispair of a competent lading for the succeeding years home return; and yet these are but the beginnings of great woe yet to come'.[125]

Similar conditions of famine occurred in the region in the subsequent years such as in 1650, 1686, 1718, 1745, and 1790-91

Other than the above factors there were some very peculiar aspects of environment of the region such as the quality of water in Narmada, and the availability of quality

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[124] ibid., p. 193.

[125] ibid., p. 97.

wood and timber which could be brought down by its navigable rivers, which also played important role in the functioning of certain industries in the region.

The bleaching property of Narmada, near Broach, enabled it to emerge as the leading centre for bleaching of cotton clothes and bales, which were brought there from for of places and production centres in North India. Thus Tavernier wrote, that, 'The town has been widely renowned from all times on account of its river, which possess a peculiar property of bleaching calicoes, which for this reason are brought from all quarters of the empire of the Great Mogul where there is not so great an abundance of water.'[126] Another reason he gives the functioning of bleaching industry in the neighbourhood of Broach was growth of large quantities of lemons in the area, for the juice was important for bleaching: '...They (cotton fabrics) come in crude condition to Renonsari and Broach, where they have the means of bleaching them in large fields, on account of the quantity of lemons growing in the neighbourhood, for cotton cloths can never be bleached if they are not steeped in lemon juice'. [127]

The ready availability of wood such as teak in the forests of the region which was suitable for activities such as ship building, along with the navigability of the rivers, to a considerable distance inland, aided in the growth of ship building industries in the region. Mandelslo notes the large quantity of timber being brought to Broach for building ships, which were mostly employed at the trade at Surat.[128] P. Della Valle also confirms the existence of ship building industry in the town.[129]

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[126] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2,

[127] ibid., p5

[128] M.S.Commissariate, ed., Mandelslo's *Travels*, p. 37.

[129] Pietro della Valle, *The Travels*, Vol 1, p. 61.

CHAPTER TWO

GUJARAT: A POLITICAL NARRATIVE

The economic prosperity of the region of Gujarat had always been the main incentive for the major political entities in the subcontinent to exert control over it – for its flourishing commerce had been a major source of revenue and income which the political entities and classes couldn't fail to overlook. Thus the beginning of our period saw the region under the control of the Mughal state, which had during the course of about a half a century, prior to the beginning of seventeenth century had acquired control over most of the north India, and was now gradually trying to move its sphere of political control into the Deccan. The region also had its share of local power potentates with limited interest and primarily involved themselves in piratical activities along the shipping lanes crisscrossing the region, or in marauding activities along the major trade highways, which connected coastal Gujarat and its ports with the manufacturing and resource procurement centres in the hinterland. The Govt. records, official histories and the European Factory correspondences and records of the period terms them mainly as marauders and robbers who infest almost every corner of Hindustan, however at their level they were mainly the local groups of rajas who had accepted the suzerainty of the more powerful Mughal overlords and who never lost an opportunity to attempt to overthrow the imperial yolk, at the slightest sign of weakness in the Mughal administrative and military control. The Kolis, Kathis, Garsias, were few of the communities who have been designated to the category along with certain many local rajas and zamindars by the official Mughal chroniclers and the European travellers and officials in the region.

The Mughals and the Suba of Gujarat: -

- **The First Contact: Humayun's Gujarat Campaign (1535): -**

The initial intervention by the Mughals in Gujarat came during the early years of reign of Humayun (1530-1540 & 1555-1556), when the first attempt was made to gain an effective control over the region. In the year 1535, Humayun made a march on Gujarat, at the time when the Gujarat Sultan, Bahadur Shah was attempting to gain control over the fortress of

Chittor. After reducing the fortress (8th March, 1535[1]) and confidant of his artillery under Rumi Khan and that his army, flushed with success at Chittor would be able to match Humayun, Bahadur marched on and met Humayun at Mandsor, 80 miles North of Ujjain.[2] However relying heavily on his artillery[3] proved disastrous for him as it proved ineffective against the rapid moving Mughal cavalry, which effected a complete blockade of Bahadur's camp, thus cutting off essential supplies and this resulted in famine like situation in the camp of Bahadur.[4].

In distress Bahadur destroyed some of his most powerful guns and in secret left for Mandu. Hotly pursued by Humayun, Bahadur Shah, moved from Mandu to Champanir, and then to Cambay, and from Cambay went to Diu. Humayun bypassing Champanir pursued Bahadur so vigorously that he reached Cambay the same day Bahadur left the place for Diu: 'On the same day that he [Bahadur] left for Diu, his Majesty Jahanbani reached Cambay and encamped by the sea side. From thence he dispatched a force in pursuit of Sultan Bahadur'.[5] Bahadur, escaped to Diu, and destroyed the warships (Gharab), which he had built to be used against the Portuguese, so that the Mughals may not be able to follow him.[6]

Humayun returned to Champanir to complete the siege, after burning the city of Cambay, incensed by the attack on his camp during the night by Bahadur's officials at Cambay backed by the Kolis and Kathi tribesmen of the region. The coquest over the Gujarat garrison and the fort of Champanir (August, 1535) and the scaling of wall of the fort by Humayun, who

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[1] Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 3 Vols, H. Beveridge, London, 1902, repnt Delhi, 1989, Vol 1, p. 301.

[2] ibid p. 301.

[3] Rumi Khan, confident of his guns gave following advice to Bahadur regarding the use of artillery against the Mughals: "*We have a grand park of artillery; when we have such a force of fire arms, what sense is there in sword play? The proper course is to make a bulwark of gun carriages and then having put a moat round this, let us first use those arms of long range so that the enemy may be diminished day by day, and be dispersed. Fighting with arrows and swords has its own proper place'*. - Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol 1, p. 302.

[4] Humayun's ewe bearer details the tactics adopted by the Mughals and the distressful conditions existing in the opposition camp: *'...At length the King issued orders that his troops should surround the army of the Sultan, and cut off all their supplies; in consequence of this determination several of the Mughal chieftains were detached, and ordered to act as Cossacs, by preventing any grains from entering the enemy's camp: this mode of warfare continued for three months, when provisions became so scarce that the enemy were obliged to live on horse flesh, and suffered great distress; during this time skirmishes took place daily between the advanced parties'* - Juhar, *Tazkereh al Vakiyat* or Private Memoirs of the Mughal Emperor Humayun, transl, Major Charles Stewart, Delhi, 1972, p. 4.

[5] Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol 1, p. 307.

[6] ibid.

himself was the 41st person to scale and enter the fort has been described in vivid details by the chroniclers of the period. Abu'l Fazl informs us that Bairam Khan and Humayun were the 40th and 41st men to scale the walls of the fortress of Champanir, by a secret passage through the woods surrounding the fort[7].

With the fall of Cambay and Champanir, southern Gujarat fell completely into the hands of the Mughals however northern part of the region and the city of Ahmadabad was still in hands of the confidents of Bahadur. Thus after resting for few months at Champanir, Humayun marched towards Ahmadabad, and after a bloody battle captured the city in October 1535. However, Humayun hardly had the time to settle the affairs of Gujarat, and with news coming in of rebellions in various regions of Empire, he decided to move to Mandu to reside there and bring Malwa under total subjugation. Thus leaving the affairs of Gujarat in hands of Mirza Askari, Humayun through Baroda, Broach, Surat, Asir and Burhanpur proceeded towards Mandu.[8] However, with the withdrawal of Humayun, the fortunes of Bahadur saw a reversal. He entered into an alliance with the Portuguese and soon recovered Surat, Broach and Baroda and marched onto Ahmadabad. Askari in confusion left the city and moved towards Champanir, however the commander of the fort Tardi Beg refused to cooperate, not being sure of the intention of Askari. Thus Askari marched back to Agra leaving behind most of the Mughal forces in Gujarat. Humayun fearing a rebellion on part of Askari hastened after him and met him at Chittor, where the two were reconciled. However in this atmosphere of confusion and mistrust, Mughals lost both Gujarat and Malwa.

- **The Final Conquest of Gujarat – Akbar's Gujarat Campaign (1572-73): -**

The death of Bahadur Shah at the hands of Portuguese, near Diu, led to a situation of anarchy and confusion in Gujarat. The infighting and corruption within the Gujarat nobility led to a situation where complete anarchy reigned in the region and the Sultan had no power or authority left in his person to reign in on these seditious elements. The amirs had divided the kingdom among themselves, with I'timad Khan holding on a large part of territory around Ahmadabad and Cambay; Musa Khan Fauladi and Sher Khan took the Sarkar of Pattan. Chingiz

[7] ibid p. 311.

[8] ibid p. 318.

Khan, occupied Surat, Broach, Baroda, and Champaner. Dhandhuka, Dholka went to the share of Syed Hamid...Amin Khan Ghori possessed Junagarh and Sorath.[9]

The situation attracted Akbar's attention, who at the time was contemplating the conquest of the region in order to gain direct access to the sea ports and commercial centres of the region and to provide security to the highways in his dominions from the ambitious designs of the Gujarati nobles. However the situation was accentuated by the moving of Mirzas into Gujarat. Ibrahim Husain Mirza, Muhammed Husain Mirza, Ma'sud Husain Mirza and Qabil Husain Mirza, who had rebelled against Akbar, and hotly pursued by the Imperial Army, had entered Gujarat. They were assigned the jagir of Broach by Chingiz Khan who regarded their arrival as a boon in his struggle against I'timad Khan, who at the time was the Prime Minister of Sultan Muzaffar and was looking after the affairs of the Government. However soon after Chingiz Khan was killed by Jhujar Khan Habashi, and Mirzas seizing the opportunity occupied the forts of Surat, Champaner and Broach. About the same time, at the instigation of Sher Khan Fauladi, Sultan Muzaffar fled from Ahmadabad to Pattan and Sher Khan attacked I'timad Khan at Ahmadabad. Garrisoning himself inside the fort, he petitioned Akbar to come to his rescue, thus providing him with a pretext to invade and conquer Gujarat and settle the affairs of the region.[10]

Akbar marched on to Gujarat towards the end of 1572, and helped by the Habshi and Gujarati nobles had no problems in capturing Ahmadabad. However he had to take strong action against the Mirzas, and on one such occassion he attacked Ibrahim Husain Mirza at Sarnal with merely 40 men.[11] He captured Surat early in 1573. Appointing Khan-i Azam Mirza Aziz Koka, as overall in charge of Gujarat and giving over the sarkars of Pattan, Dholka, Broach and Baroda to the Gujarati nobles who had aligned with him, he marched back to Agra.[12] However his return saw the Gujaratis and other seditious elements joining hands to expel the Mughal forces and they made advance towards Ahmadabad. Mirza Aziz Koka entrenched himself at

[9] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, p. 92.

[10] For a detailed description of the movement of Mirzas and on the political conditions existing in the province, see Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol 2, p. and Ali Muhammad Khan *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, pp. 91-93.

[11] Abu'l Fazl gives a detailed description of the engagement at Sarnal, and of the personal valour displayed by Akbar during the fight – Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol 3, pp. 17-23.

[12] Ali Muhammad Khan *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, p. 102.

Ahmadabad, and sent for help. Akbar through a lightening expedition with about 3000 horsemen reached Ahmadabad from Fathepur Sikri in about 11 days, and broke the back of rebellion in Gujarat.[13] After this in spite of sporadic attempts at rebellion, Mughal rule in the province was firmly established, however their rule continued to face challenges, some of them of very serious in nature from among the local rajas and zamindars who never lost an opportunity to rebel on noticing the slightest sign of weakening in the administration and political authority in the province.

- **Gujarat under Akbar (1573-1605): -**
    - Revolt of Muzaffar III (1583): -

Of the first major incidence which shook the newly laid imperial foundations in Gujarat was the uprising of Sultan Muzaffar III, the ousted ruler of Gujarat, who after escaping from the confinement of the Mughals made an attempt at reconquering his kingdom and captured Ahmadabad in 1583. Muzaffar had escaped from the confinement of the Mughals in 1578 and had taken refuge with the ruler of Rajpipla and later with the Loma Khuman, a Kathi chief in the village of Kherdi near Rajkot in Kathiawar.[14] In the year 1583 Akbar entrusted the subadari of Gujarat to I'timad Khan, who had earlier invited Akbar to Gujarat in 1572. One of his first actions was to dismiss a body of about 7000 Mughal troopers who had earlier had been in the service of Gujarat Sultans, at the explicit orders of the Imperial court, since earlier viceroy had difficulty in keeping them under control. On being dismissed they rallied behind Muzaffar III, who during the time was in hiding in Kathiawar, and instigated him on to make an attempt at the recovery of his kingdom. Muzaffar was also supported by the powerful zamindars of Nawanagar and Junagarh.

Muzaffar marched on to Ahmadabad with nearly 1500 horsemen from Kathiawar[15] and the city without any established defences fell easily in hands of Muzaffar, who had the khutba read in his name and struck his coins. Akbar, who was busy at Kara, near Allahabad, had to dispatch Abdur Rahim Khan, son of Bairam at the head of a strong force to

[13] See Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol 3, pp. 59-89. and Ali Muhammad Khan *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, pp. 104-112.

[14] M.S.Commissariate, History of Gujarat, Vol II, p. 17.

[15] Ibid.

recapture Ahmadabad and crush the rebellion. The arrival of Abdur Rahim turned the tide in favour of the Mughal forces and Muzaffar was defeated near Sarkhej. In recognition of his victory Abdur Rahim was given the title of Khan-i Khanan. Muzaffar fled to Cambay and looted the town and its treasury, and with the help of that money again collected an army around him:

> He took money from merchants and residents. Nearly ten, twelve thousand war-seeking vagabonds gathered around him on account of distribution of money, subjects also displayed fidelity towards him considering him to be a hereditary prince. There was a big crowd again.[16]

On receiving the news of Muzaffar again collecting an army at Cambay, the Mughal reinforcement for Malwa, which had earlier been dispatched to reinforce Abdur Rahim, and had been camping in the vicinity of Baroda, moved towards Cambay and forced Muzaffar to flee towards Kathiawar.[17] However he continued to create trouble for the Mughals till about 1591, when the Mughals under Mirza Aziz Koka defeated him at Bhuchar Mori, near the town of Dhrol, in the territory controlled by the Jam of Navanagar. Muzaffar fled towards Dwarka, and finally by sea to Kutch where he was given refuge by Rao Bharmal, who ultimately betrayed him to the Mughal forces in the year 1592. Muzaffar committed suicide soon after, thus ending his chequered career as the last sultan of Gujarat.[18]

- **Gujarat during the reign of Jahangir (1605-1627): -**

During the reign of Jahangir (1605-1627), the impact of the Mughal systems of revenue and administration began to have its effect and the period was of relative stability. The reign saw only sporadic incidences of revolts and insurrection, such as by Bahadur, the elder son of Muzaffar III, is of note. The raids of Malik Ambar, the general of the king of Bijapur also attracted attention of Mughal officials in the region. The visits of Jahangir to Ahmadabad and Cambay in 1617-18 have attracted attention of the chroniclers of the period. However it was the

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[16] Ali Muhammad Khan *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, pp. 131-32.

[17] ibid p. 133.

[18] ibid p. 154.

Shah Jahan's rebellion in the later years of his reign, which created serious trouble for the Mughal establishment in Gujarat.

Jahangir's reign began in Gujarat with the insurrection of Bahadur, son of Muzaffar who attacked and plundered the environs of Ahmadabad, and killed several of the Mughal officials. Jahangir dispatched Raja Vikramajit and other mansabdars to bring the situation under control.[19] That this was not an isolated incident can be made out from references to Bahadur and his activities as early as 1596: 'Bahadur, son of Muzaffer rose in revolt and suffered a defeat...he came out from an ambush of opportunity and raised banners of disturbance and revolt. He collected a party of war-seeking vagabonds and began to attack and pillage towns and villages'.[20]

William Finch, an English merchant who landed at Surat in 1608, along with Captain Hawkins, noted about the scare which the residents and officials of Surat were experiencing at the moment due to presence of Bahadur in the vicinity in the year 1609: 'In December (1609), we stood much in fear of Badur his coming upon Surat, he laying within two days' journey with 600 horse and many foot; for which cause the governor cessed all men with the entertainment of soldiers, setting upon my head 10 men. I went and told him that I had twenty English at his command; for which he thanked me and freed me of further charge. During this time the Banians were forced to labour to barricade all streets of the city, great watches were appointed at the gates, certain pieces drawn from the castle, and from the Karod garrison fifty horse; which had not sufficed had not the governor of Ahmadavar sent one thousand horse and two thousand foot to our succor; upon news of which Badur withdrew his holds'.[21] Finch also noted that Bahadur had two years earlier sacked Cambay, with an army of 100,000 which had been got together in hope of plunder, and remained there for 14 days.[22] Again in 1611, on his

[19] Commissariat, History of Gujarat, Vol 2, p. 35.

[20] Ali Muhammad Khan *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, vol 1, p. 158.

[21] W.Foster ed. *Early Travels*, p. 133.

[22] *ibid* p. 133.

visit to Ahmadabad, he notes the preparation and precautions being undertaken to defend the city against Bahadur who was reported to be in the vicinity of the town.[23]

The year 1609 saw Malik Amber of Bijapur making plundering inroads in the province: 'Malek 'Amber, the major domo of Nizam Shah, Ruler of Daulatabad roamed around in the sarkar of Surat and Baroda with a cavalry of fifty thousand horse. He went away after plunder and pillage of towns and villages. A royal order, therefore was issued to the nazim of the subah and the best rajahs appointed in the Subah that the Nazim, amirs, royal fief holders of the Subah should obstruct his path at Ramnagar in the mahal of Surat with a cavalry of twenty-five thousand horse...'[24] The raids of Malik Amber, continued to create trouble for the Mughal authority in the region, for most of the years of Jahangir's reign.

- The Rebellion of Prince Khurram (1622-23): -

The rebellion of Prince Khurram[25] in about year 1622, kept the province of Gujarat in a state of disturbance through out the period of Civil war. Shah Jahan instigated by the mechanisms of Nur Jahan, who had been espousing the cause of Jahangir's youngest son Shahriyar, who had been married to her daughter from previous marriage; saw in the directive to move to Qandahar in March 1622, the plan to remove him from his supporter and a plot against him rebelled.

That at the start of the civil war, the suba of Gujarat was under the governorship of Shah Jahan, it was but natural for him to hold on to the province, since its riches and prosperous ports were important source of treasure for funding his wars. After his defeat against the Imperial armies near Agra, Shah Jahan repaired to Mandu and ordered his officers to covey

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[23] ibid p 173

[24] *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, p. 164.

[25] Jahangir gave vent to his frustration at the rebellion of the prince in his autobiography: 'from the kindness and favours bestowed upon him, I can say that until the present time no king has conferred such on his son. What my reverend father did for my brothers I have done for his servants, giving them titles, standards, and drums...when, with a father like me, who in his own life time have raised him to the great dignity of Sultanship, and denied him nothing, he acts in this manner, I appeal to the justice of Allah that he may never regard him with favour. By successive marches I proceed to punish that one of the dark fortune, and gave an order that henceforth they should call him Bi-daulat (the disloyal wretch)'. - Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, Vol 1, transl. A. Rodgers, ed. H.Beveridge, 1909, repnt. Delhi, 1989, pp. 248 and 256.

all royal treasure from Ahmadabad and other important cities such as Broach and Surat to be transferred to Mandu. In Jan 1623, the English Factors at Ahmadabad reported the scarcity of money on account of Shah Jahan's orders to transfer the treasure.[26] The attempts by Shah Jahan's supporters however to gain control over Ahmadabad however were thwarted by the loyalty of some of the officials of the region, principal amongst them was Safi Khan, the then Diwan of the province, who refused to accede to prince's request to hand over Ahmadabad to his officials, and defeated the army sent by Shah Jahan to capture Ahmadabad under the command of Abdullah Khan, in 1623.[27]

The death of Jahangir towards the end of 1627, gave an opportunity to Shah Jahan to stake his claim more forcefully and authoritatively, which he did by having all the male heir to the throne, including his brother Shahriyar, Bulaqi the son of his elder brother Khusrau, and other possible claimants to the throne, murdered. Moving slowly from Deccan, Shah Jahan reached the environs of Ahmadabad and encamped at Mahmudabad. He collected a sum of around 20 lakhs from the residents of the place, and according to the English factors at Ahmadabad, spared none rich nor poor and we are further told that even after he had left, the newly appointed officials continued the extortion and the panic was so great that there was a general exodus from the capital, 'the wealthy being unwilling to pay and the poor not able to do so'.[28]

- **Gujarat under Shah Jahan (1628-1658): -**

Shah Jahan's reign saw a relative stability introduced in the Suba, mainly due to efforts of officers of the calibre of Azam Khan, who were mainly responsible for suppressing the Kolis and Kathi tribesmen and bringing almost every inch of the province under imperial rule; and due to long period of the viceroyalty of princes such as of Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb, Murad Baksh,

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[26] William Foster ed, *English Factories, 1622-23*, p. 181.

[27] Ali Muhammad Khan *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, pp. 171-73.

[28] William Foster ed., *English Factories, 1624-29*, p. 189.

- The War of Succession and the Suba of Gujarat: -

However towards the end of his reign the empire was thrown into a civil war among his four sons. Shah Jahan fell ill towards the end of year 1657, and the civil war between the brothers all of whom had the subadari of some of the most powerful and resourceful provinces of the empire became almost inevitable. This had a direct bearing on the political situation in Gujarat, of which Prince Murad Baksh was the Viceroy at the time. In order to prepare for the war, Murad needed money, for which he ordered his general Shahbaz Khan to capture the royal treasure stored in the castle of Surat; Shahbaz Khan captured the city and the fort by December 1657. Murad also obtained loan from the chief merchants of the city – Haji Muhammad Zahid beg and Virji Vora of about 5 lakh rupees. A bond stamped with Murad's seal was delivered to them as pledge for repayment. Murad corronated himself at Ahmadabad on 5 Dec 1657, and before leaving the capital for Agra along with Aurangzeb who had joined him by this time exacted an amount of about fifty lakhs of rupee from the residents of the city, of which about 5 ½ lakh were borrowed from Manekchand and his brothers, sons of the great Jain merchant Shantidas. The Mirat-i Ahmadi gives a copy of the mandate for loan issued with seal of Murad Baksh, in which he says: 'An order is issued by way of favours to him (Shanti Das) that I borrowed a sum from his son Manek Chand and his brothers in the abode of accession, Ahmedabad by way of a loan.'[29]

The war ended in captivity of Shah Jahan, and the accession of Aurangzeb. Murad Baksh was arrested and executed on charge of murdering Ali Naqi, the diwan of Ahmadabad in a fit of drunken rage, in the year 1661. Dara Shikoh and Shah Shuja were forced to run and in this commotion Dara Shikoh reached Ahmadabad and acquired the splendid treasure of Murad Baksh and with its help raised an army of about 22000 horsemen, along with an excellent arsenal of canons, and after a stay of about a month and seven days at Ahmadabad, started the March towards Ajmer, with an intention of offering challenge to Aurangzeb.[30] Dara however was defeated near Ajmer, in the last of the major battles of war of succession, after a hard fought struggle, which lasted for about 4 days, after which, he made a dash towards Ahmadabad.

[29] Ali Muhammad Khan *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, p. 211.

[30] ibid p. 215.

However the officials there had already declared for Aurangzeb and refused him admission, and he fled to Bhakkar.[31]

- **Gujarat during the Reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707): -**
  - Maratha incursions in the region: -

The initial years after the accession of Aurangzeb saw relative peace and stability. However his constant involvement in the Deccan and the reversal of the policies followed by earlier Emperors towards the Deccan sultanates, with the aim of an out right annexation, precipitated warfare in the region. With the aim of annexing the state of Bijapur, Aurangzeb attempted to play the Maratha forces against the Bijapuri state, and this provided the Maratha sardar Shivaji, to gain in power and influence, to the extent that he began to challenge the Mughal authority in the provinces bordering the Deccan sultanate of Bijapur. Gujarat being one of the most prosperous was an obvious attraction for Shivaji to try his fortunes and gain wealth by raiding the province. One of his most daring raids was the one made in year 1663 on the royal port of Surat, which was a direct assault on the prestige and reputation of Aurangzeb.

The contemporary official records of the period, however don't give much importance to the event, and refers to the raid in a very casual way. The Mirat-i Ahmadi records the raid in the following manner:

> Shivaji Maratha who raised head of disturbance in the Dekhan excited dust and disorder, and came this time to Surat port. The city in those days had no fortifications; he caused much ruin and great loss to its merchants and residents. He returned after carrying plunder ands pillage to distant and nearby places. This became a cause of great consternation and panic.[32]

The raid however has been discussed with much interest by the English factors and the European travellers who visited the region during the course of seventeenth century. On hearing the news of the arrival of the troops of Shivali, there occurred a general panic in the

[31] ibid p. 216.

[32] ibid p. 228.

town, and not equipped with adequate force to defend the town against the raiders, the Governor along with the principal merchants of the town hid in the castle. The English factors thus noted:

> ...being the 6th January... was brought us a hott allarum that Sevagy the grand rebel of Decan was within 10 or 15 miles of the towne. This suddaine surprise strucke such a terrour into all, both men, women and children, that this governor and the rest of the Kings ministers and eminent merchants betooke themselves to the castle; which the townes folks perceiving, left their houses and whatever belonged to them and fled with their wives and children, some upon the river in vessails and boats some to the out villages, that in few howers the whole towne was dispeopled, excepting that parte of the towne about us in hopes of our protection.[33]

Shivaji, on reaching near Surat, sent letters to the governor and the principal merchants, demanding personal attendance and money from the governor and the eminent merchants of the town, otherwise he threatened to burn the town down.[34]

The English factors at Surat defended stoutly against the men of Shivaji, who did not ventured near the factory due to the guns which the English had planted there, and Shivaji, moving light was without any artillery of his own. 'None but the English and Dutch saved their quarters from the pillage, by the vigorous defence they made, and by means of cannons they planted, which Sivagy would not venture upon, having none of his own.'[35] The English factors posted at Surat under the President ship of George Oxinden, sent particularly graphic account of the defence of English factory from Shivaji's men:

> ...by the time hee had broken Hodgy Saed Beague's house open,and had one nightes plunder out of it, which being soe neare us, as one wall to part both houses, wee feared they would strengthen that place and afterwards annoy us, and by their multitude force their way or undermine and blow us up and

[33] George W. Forrest ed., *Selections from the letters, dispatches and other state papers preserved in the Bombay Secretariat*, Home Series, Vol. 1, Surat Letters (1630-1700), pp. 24-26.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Thevenot, p 41

seeing that they did begin with their horse and foote to surround us, some then standing under our ewe for noe good, we caused a party of foote to sally forth the house and fight them; in which scufell we had 3 men slightly wounded, ours slew a horse and a man, some say two or three, but wee routed them. This good success annimated us further to cleaqre our quarters of them, and hearing they had taken their randavous in a Muskeett or Moore church joining close to our house, and also in Hodgy Saeds house warehouses, having out of feare of us not done him the quarter of the mischief they intended him. Whilst our men were clearing the Muskeett thay in the house and warehouses opened the doores and fled, soe wee shutt up the doores and barracadoed them, and made a passage from ours into his house, and kept a garrison in the balcony that cleared all the streat and garded the other house of this Hodgies.'[36]

The defence of the factory at Surat resulted in tax exemptions being granted to the English factors as reward for their bravery.[37] The Dutch were also able to save their factory, although Shivaji had burnt that section of the town to the ground, so that the Dutch factory looked like standing alone in the rubble of stone and ashes.[38]

Shivaji caused great destruction and damage to the property of the town, and looted many eminent Merchants of their wealth, of which the loot at Haji Zahid Beg's house deserve mention. English factors had noted that he took one night's plunder out of his house.[39]Thevenot wrote that it is believed at Surrat that this raja carried away in jewels, gold, and silver, to the value of above 30 French millions; for in the house of one banian he found 22 pound weight of strung pearl, besides a great quantity of other that were not yet priced.[40]

Shivaji returned to Surat again in 1667, and by the end of Aurangzeb's reign the Maratha menace in Gujarat and in its hinterland region had become severe with Maratha forces

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[36] George W. Forrest ed., *Selections from the Letters*, Vol 1, p 26

[37] ibid

[38] ibid

[39] ibid

[40] Thevenot, p 41

under Shivaji's son Sambhaji, and after also later on continued to attack the merchant caravans in the area and also important trade centres in the region. By 1690 it became amply clear hat the Marathas were a force to reckon with. Commenting on the spread of Maratha activities, the Amber agent at the court in 1695 wrote:

> 'the royal servants are worried day and night how to deal with the Marathas in the Deccan. Large territories have been brought under control of royal officials, but due to lack of means, they do not have strength (to control them). For in place of 7000 (sawars) they keep only 700. Royal princes and their sons are roaming around in every quarter like faujdars, but to no avail. From every quarter, news of the activities of the Marathas reaches the ears of Emperor, but he is unable to find a proper remedy for dealing with them. He is further confounded by hearing the news of disturbances in Hindustan.'[41]

- The Rajput Rebellion and disturbances in Gujarat: -

Among other important event in Gujarat during the reign of Aurangzeb was the disturbance caused in the region due to entry of Durgadas Rathor, who led the Rajput revolt against Aurangzeb 1668. The genesis of revolt lay in the refusal of Aurangzeb to grant tikka and gaddi to any of the sons of Maharaja Jaswant Singh, following his death at Jamrud. Aurangzeb's decision to annex the Kingdom of Marwar, led to the revolt of the Rajputs, and the guerrilla war against the Mughal establishment in the region of Rajputana and Gujarat continued until the restoration of the kingdom and acceptance of Ajit Singh as the ruler of Marwar. Durgadas Rathor continued to create trouble for the authorities in Deccan until the signing of truce, in 1697, when he handed over the daughter and son of Prince Akbar to the royal court.[42] The year 1701 again saw the peace being disturbed when Durgadas fearing an attempt on his life, when invited to attend upon Prince Azam, the new Subadar of the province, he fled from Gujarat, with the royal army chasing him.[43] The peace was finally brought about in 1707 on accession of Muazzam as

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[41] cited by Satish Chandra, 'Deccan Policy of Mughals (II) – Under Aurangzeb', in *Essays in Medieval Indian History*, N.Delhi, 2002, pp. 474-75.

[42] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, pp. 295-96.

[43] ibid pp. 309-11.

Bahadur Shah (1707-1712), who handed over the state of Marwar to Ajit Singh and granted the tikka and gaddi to him.

- **Gujarat under Later Mughals (1707-1758): -**

The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 was followed by a civil war, which saw his surviving sons – Muazzam, Azam, and Kam Baksh battle it out for the throne. The war ended with the accession of Muazzam, with the title of Bahadur Shah. His rule saw peace being established on the Rajput front. However his release of Shahu, saw the beginning of a bitter civil war between the various factions in the Marathas, with the generals siding with Shahu, or with Tara Bai, the widow of Raja Ram, who till now was leading resistance against the Mughal occupation and her generals had been creating problems for the Mughal administration in the subas adjoining Deccan. The political situation in the Deccan had a direct bearing on the peace and tranquillity of Gujarat, with Maratha generals in search for treasure and cash to fund their campaigns made numerous forays into the province, and created disturbance for Mughal officials to the extent that the administration of the province collapsed completely by the middle decades of 18th century, with the last Nazim of the suba, Momin Khan II handing over the charge of the capital city of Ahmadabad to the combined assault of the deccani forces sent by the orders of the Peshwa, after a siege of the city for about 14 months.

Khafi Khan noted the activities of Maratha generals under the command of Tara Bai, in the early years of 18th century, and notes that the energies and resources spend by the Mughals in order to bring the Maratha under control now seemed wasted:

> She (Tara Bai) took vigorous measures for ravaging the imperial territories and sent armies to plunder the six subas of Dakhin as far as Sironj, Mandisor, and the suba of Malwa...and so all the struggles and schemes, the campaigns and sieges of Aurangzeb up to the end of his reign, the power of the Marathas increased day by day. By hard fighting, by the expenditure of vast treasures accumulated by Shah Jahan, and by sacrifices of many thousands of men, he had penetrated into their wretched country, had subdued their lofty forts, and had driven them from their houses and homes; still the daring of Mahrattas

increased, and they penetrated into old territories of the imperial throne, plundering and destroying wherever they went...and plunder it...And the rahdars of these evil doers takes small parties of Merchants, who are anxious to obtain security from plunder, a toll upon every cart and bullock, 3 or 4 times greater than the amount imposed by the faujdars of the government.[44]

The first Maratha invasion of Gujarat was undertaken under the command of Dhanaji Jadhav in 1706. The march of Prince Azam to Burhanpur in 1706 coupled with the absence of a powerful force in the province; capable of repelling a large scale Maratha army was the primary reasons, which led Dhanaji Jadhav to attack Gujarat. The Marathas at Ratanpur on the banks of river Narbada defeated the imperial forces. Khwaja Abdul Hamid Khan, who was the diwan of the suba was captured in the engagement and was executed.

The defeat of the imperial forces was mainly due to the lack of coherence in the command structure, indecisiveness on the part of the commanders and the lack of experience in dealing and fighting with the Marathas. The Mirat-i Ahmadi notes the condition of the Mughal camp a night before the battle: 'Every commander planted his tent according to his desire and habit as well as pleased his temperament. They did not observe caution and care of camping at one place. Scattered like tresses of moon-faced beauties, they encamped with their companions.'[45] The immediate after effect of the defeat of the imperial army was the large-scale looting and depredation activities undertaken by the Marathas as well as the Kolis and Kathis who saw in the defeat the signs of weakness of the Mughal administration:

> They [Marathas] then plundered towns and villages and exacted Khandani [tribute]. A great commotion and vast relaxation spread in the subah. There was disorder and anarchy. Rebellious Kolis who had retired to a corner of obscurity and oblivion due to chastisement and punishment of faujdars and

[44] Khafi Khan, *Muntakahb-ul Lubab*, pp. 373-74.

[45] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol I, p. 319.

thanadars, emerged from every corner and side, reverted to their inborn nature and raised disturbances.[46]

The years between 1706 and 1716 saw several Maratha raids being conducted in the region, especially into South Gujarat, by Khanderao Dabhade, one of the most famous of Raja Shahu's officers. The raids were conducted to primarily control the trade route from Surat to Burhanpur, and constructed blockhouses to extract payment from all caravans.[47] In year 1716, he defeated the Mughal force under Zulfiqar Khan, at Baglan, sent against him by Saiyid Hussain Ali, who was on his way to take charge of the government of the Deccan. The officers of Khanderao, continued to make raids in the years after 1716, an almost annual incursions into the province and established Maratha claims to chauth in the Surat district.

From the year 1719 onwards, Pilaji Gaekwad, who until his death in 1732 remained the most powerful of Maratha leaders in Gujarat and established the supremacy of Gaekwad family in the province, made almost annual incursion in the environs of Surat, and created disturbance for the Mughal officials there: 'During these days the Maratha Pilaji Rao Gaekwad raised disturbances in the vicinity of Surat port, he plundered and pillaged villages...'[48] His plundering activities proved a major source of fear and tension among the residents and officials at Surat.

The crisis in the provincial administration of the suba, became grave, when in the year 1722, Haider Quli Khan the viceroy of Gujarat, rebelled against the imperial authority. 'Puffed up' by the role he played in the imperial affairs with regard to the downfall of the Saiyid brothers, and having been refused the office of Vizarate, which was granted to Nizam-ul Mulk, he began to aspire for establishing an independent kingdom of Gujarat. Incensed and angered by his high handed actions and deference and disrespect shown to the imperial authority he was recalled in October 1722, and subadari was granted to Nizam-ul Mulk.[49]

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[46] ibid p. 323.

[47] Commissariat, History of Gujarat, Vol 2, p 400

[48] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 2, p. 391.

[49] Commissariat, *History*, Vol II, pp. 406-07.

Sarbuland Khan was appointed the Viceroy of Gujarat after the withdrawal of Nizam-ul Mulk in 1724 to the Deccan, and was ordered to proceed in person with a large army to check on the Maratha activities. However by the year 1730, his resources were exhausted and several bands of Marathas ravaged the countryside to ruins. The Marathas reduced the city of Vadnagar to rubble in the year 1726. Unable to receive resources and back up from the imperial court, he entered into the treaty with Peshwa Baji Rao I, on 23rd March 1730, and agreed to cede to Baji Rao 'the sardeshmukhi, or 10% of the whole revenue, both from the land and the customs, excepting that from the port of Surat and the district attached to it, together with the chauth from the same sources, and 5% of the revenues of the city of Ahmadabad. It was further stipulated that the Peshwa was to maintain 2500 horse to keep peace in the province and that as few a men as possible should be kept in the district to collect the tribute, and no extra demand were to be made on the ryots. The Peshwa on behalf of Shahu Raja, to help uphold imperial authority, and to prevent Raja's subjects from supporting disaffected desais and zamindars and other disturbers of public peace.[50]

The year following the treaty saw the Dhabde's who till now were the Maratha senapatis in the province revolting against the authority of the Peshwa. The year 1731 saw the culmination of the rivalry between the two factions and the issue was decided in favour of Baji Rao in the battlefield of Dabhoi. The year 1732 saw the assassination of Pilaji Gaekwad on orders of Maharaja Abhay Singh, the subadar of Gujarat. However, the subsequent years did not witness any revival of Mughal power in the province and the Marathas under the leadership of Dhamaji Gaekwad II (1732-68), created further troubles resulting in loss of Mughal control over almost whole of the province, with cities like Baroda (1734), Viramgam (1735) falling in Maratha hands. Dhamaji laid the foundations of Gaekwad rule in the province on a more strong footing. The Marathas made various attempts to take Ahmadabad - first in the year 1733 under the leadership of Umabai – widow of Khanderao Senapati, along with Kanthaji Kadam and Gaekwad; the 9-month siege by Momin Khan and Ranghoji from end of August 1736 to end of May 1737; the capture of Ahmadabad by Raghunath Rao and Dhamaji in 1753[51], and the final

[50] ibid pp. 427-28.

[51] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol II, pp. 734-42.

siege in the year 1757-58, for about 14 months and the final surrender of the city by Momin Khan II.

The years 1758 to 1816 saw the dual government of Peshwa and Gaekwads functioning in the province, moreover there were fairly large tracts within the province where Mughal officials continued to hold sway, as independent princes. Among these ma be listed the Nawabs of Radhanpur, Balasinor, Cambay, Surat and Broach. Similarly Sher Khan Babi, the Mughal governor at Junagarh, established his independent sway over the area.[52]

- **Mughal Administration in Gujarat: -**

The systematisation in administrative sphere under the Mughals was most clearly reflected in the development of the Mansab system[53], and in the evolution of the Jagir assignment. They also formed the instrument through which newer, localized and powerful elements could be assimilated within the Empire. The division of empire into Subas (Provinces), Mahals, sarkars and parganas, made the administration at the grass root level more effective and functional, and gave a uniform identity to the administration irrespective of the region. Various other features, such as creation of a standing army, application of written rules and procedures in all parts of the empire.

For administrative convenience the province of Gujarat was divided into 9 Sarkars and 138 Mahals towards the end of Akbar's reign in about 1594. These were listed as Ahmadabad, with 28 mahals; Pattan (16 mahals); Nandod (12 mahals); baroda (4 mahals); Broach (14 mahals); Champanir (9 mahals); Surat (31 mahals); Godra (12 mahals); and Sorath or Kathiawar (12 mahals). However by the year 1720, the no of sarkars increased to 10, with Islamnagar, conquered in 1661 added to the list. Moreover with gradual expansion of Mughal rile and expansion of cultivable and taxable lands the number of Mahals also saw an increase to about 256. Jadunath Sarkar in his 'India of Aurangzeb' gave a comparative list of number of Sarkars and Mahals in the province over a period of two centuries on the basis of a comparitive

[52] ibid p. 560.

[53] For an understanding of the evolution of Mansab system under Mughals see Irfan Habib's 'Mansab System 1595-1637', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1967 and his 'Mansab Salary scales under Jahangir and Shah Jahan', *Islamic Culture*, 1965

study of the information provided in Ain-I Akbari (1595), Khulasat-ut Tawarikh (1695) and Chahar Gulshan (1720) as follows[54]:

- 1594 – 9 sarkars, 138 mahals
- 1665 – 9 sarkars, 190 parganas
- 1695 – 9 sarkars, 188 mahals
- 1700 – 10 sarkars, 216 mahals
- 1720 – 10 sarkars, 256 mahals

The principal officers of the province were the Subadar and the Diwan. The Subadar was the principal administrative officer of the province and acted as the viceroy to the Mughal Emperor in the province. He was appointed directly by the emperor. If the subadar himself was in attendance at the court or is unable to come to the suba he governs the province through a naib subadar or deputy governor. The subadar had a diwan who was the de-facto revenue authority in the province and looked after the revenue collection in the region. The emperor again directly appointed him. The principal reason behind this was to keep a check on the power of the subadar, who at times acquired considerable influence. The faujdar was responsible for the security and administration in a sarkar. Certain areas had their own special arrangements, thus the port of Surat was governed by a mutasaddi, who was independent of the governor of the suba, and was directly appointed by the emperor. In judicial matters the principal officers were Sadr, Qazi, Muhtasibs, and others appointed b the diwan, with the approval of Sadr-us Sudur or head of the judicial department at the centre.

The rajas & the zamindars under the Mughal Rule: -

The Mughal Empire as it consolidated itself over most of the sub-continent, in the course of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, came into conflict and in contact with a wide range of political formations and regional power groupings. The most prominent among them were the Rajputs, who were assimilated within the Mughal political set-up in the course of 16th century. Similarly the Deccanis and the Marathas, who came into contact and conflict with the Mughals, became an important power group in the 17th century, primarily as a result of the

[54] Jadunath Sarkar, *India of Aurangzeb*, p lxiv

Mughal endeavours to expand into the Deccan and the peninsula. In addition there were other local groupings such as Jats and Sikhs, who came into conflict with the Mughals in the course of 17th century.

The success of the Mughals in creating a strong centralized edifice depended primarily on their success in carefully balancing the ambitions of Mughal nobles and other Mansabdars on one hand, and the interests of various regional and local magnates on the other. Thus extreme systematisation in administrative sphere, a new theoretical base for sovereignty, and the creation of a balanced and heterogeneous ruling class, were the new elements on which a large stable political structure was created.

The two centuries of Mughal rule in the region was witness to a constant struggle between the Mughal officials and local rajas and zamindars such as those belonging to the region of Junagarh in Saurath and Nawanagar, for control over their areas and resources. An Imperial farman to Mirza Aziz Koka the subadari of Gujarat notes:

> Habits of rebelliousness, brigandage theft and riot are kneaded in the malignant nature of these classes (Rajputs, Kolis, and Muslims), they created disturbances always when they noticed a slight weakness in the control of a Nazim. Most of the Nazims therefore have built strong forts in ancient times in most of the places and established parties of sepoys befitting every place known as thanas.[55]

Ovington made an interesting observation regarding the frequent revolts in India and their impact on the countryside and the local inhabitants. The inhabitants according to him suffered from the dual exaction of the Mughals and of the local rajas and zamindars, who in order to raise money to oppose the Mughals in hope of retrieving their lost kingdom and privileges often resort to looting and illegal exactions:

> The frequent revolts in India render those parts very miserable and reduce the inhabitants to a very distressed state for hoping to retrieve their liberty

[55] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, p.150.

and regain the kingdom they have lost, they often declare for a rajah, which is native Indian prince, and stand by him till the Mogul overpowers their forces, defeats their rebellion, stints their progress, and reduce them to tame obedience again. So that one while the Mogul comes upon a city, and demands the contribution of so many thousand moors (mohur) or else he threatens raising its foundations, pillaging the houses, and converting them into smoke and flames. When he is retreated, the rajah's army flies upon them with fury and hunger, and storm their towns, and threaten them with fire and sword as their inevitable fate, if they offer to delay the payment of so many thousand gold ropies more. Or if these formidable threats were not listened to, they take that by Rapine, which was civilly demanded, ravage the country and load them with plunder and spoil.[56]

Such ravaging activities by the Mughal armies, officials and those of the local rajas often resulted in fear, distress, poverty and famine like conditions among the population of the region. In similar vein, Francois martin records that 'many rajas and minor Hindu potentates descend from the security of their home bases to scorge the countryside'.[57]

That the zamindars of the region were powerful and resourceful enough can be made out from their respective strength which Ain gives, while detailing the suba of Gujarat. Thus Abu'l Fazl while describing the sarkar of Sorath mentions that it was an independent territory, having a force of 50,000 cavalry and 100,000 infantry, and ruled by Ghelot tribe of Rajputs[58], and at the time of compiling of Ain, their influence was in the district of New Sorath and Pattan, with their force consisting of 1000 horse and 2000 foot in New Sorath and 2000 horse and 3000 foot in that of Pattan[59]. Similarly in the region around Palitana, to the south east of the peninsula, the zamindar was of Gohel tribe and possesses 2000 horse and 4000 foot[60]. Similarly the Badhel tribesmen who inhabit the area around Jagat (Dwarka) were able to muster

[56] J.Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 114.

[57] Lotika Varadarajan, *India in Seventeenth Century*, vol 2, part 1, p. 863.

[58] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p. 250.

[59] ibid p. 253.

[60] ibid p 254

1000 horse and 2000 foot[61]. Again the military force in the district of Baghelahs was about 6000 cavalry and 6000 infantry.[62] The Mirat-i Ahmadi also makes a note of the habitation of the region of Sorath by various tribes of Rajputs and Kolis and says that they are armed horsemen with lances who 'seize opportunities on their lightening movement horses and run away. Brigandage is inborn in them. They do not pay land revenue with out lading an army'.[63]

Many of the zamindars in the region had acquired zamindari rights during the rule of the Sultans of Gujarat, and thus many of these such as Jam of Nawanagar, although had never been under their direct control, did backed the Sultans and their descendants against the Mughal occupation forces till the starting years of 17th century. Abu'l Fazl makes constant reference to the support received by Muzaffar III, the last Sultan of Gujarat during his years of rebellions, against the Mughal occupation, by the zamindars of Saurath, Nawanagar and Cutch: 'Jam, the best zamindars of Saurath always waited for an opportunity in an ambush of revolt and war. He brought out Muzaffar, this time also, from a corner of oblivion and devoted himself to collection of war-seeking vagabonds and care for him. Daulat Khan, son of Amin Khan Ghori, ruler of Saurath and Raja Khingar, zamindars of Kutch also accorded with him'.[64]

Of the principal zamindars and Raja of Gujarat may be listed the zamindars of Junagarh, Navanagar, Idar and Baglana. Of these the imperial forces conquered Junagarh in 1592. The zamindar of Nawanagar, also called Jam, made submission to the Mughal emperor Jahangir during the latter's visit to the province in 1617, near Dohad.[65] However, the zamindars of the region continued to defy the imperial standards at the slightest pretext, and engaged in such activities as issuing coinage from his mint in the name of Gujarat sultans, and creating trouble for Mughal officials in the region[66]. The zamindari of Nawanagar was finally conquered during the reign of Aurangzeb, who named the city of Nawanagar as Islamnagar in 1661, and

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[61] ibid

[62] ibid

[63] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, p. 153.

[64] ibid p. 151.

[65] ibid p. 167.

[66] Mirat-i Ahmadi refers to the destruction of the mint run by Jam of Nawanagar, and exaction of peshkash from him by the Mughal governor Azam Khan. - Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, pp. 188-89.

attached it to the crown territory.[67] The raja of Baglana (a mountainous tract between Surat and Nandurbar) was said to possess a cavalry of 3000 and an infantry of 10,000 and in possession of seven remarkable fortresses of them principal being Mulher and Salher.[68]

The Kathis, Kolis & other localised groups under the Mughal Rule: -

The region of Gujarat was also home to a large tribal population engaged primarily in activities related with cultivation and fishing, and sea faring. They have been various styled as Bhils, Kathis, Kolis, and Garsias in the contemporary sources. They owed their allegiance primarily to the local zamindars and rajas or had their own chiefs to supervise them. The Mughal chronicles however reflects that the officials of the region were normally apprehensive of their activities and regarded them as thieves and trouble makers for the administration as well as the local people engaged n trade and other related activities. Their involvement in highway thefts and robbery had been noted in details in the chronicles of the European companies, the travellers in the region, and also in the Mughal official correspondences. Thevenot in his travels calls them the turbulent people of hills, committing robbery. Regarding their profession and caste he says that the were: 'a people of a caste or tribe of gentiles, who have no fixed habitation, but wander from village to village, and carry all they have about them. Their chief business is to pick and clean cotton and when they have no more to do in one village, they go to another...'[69]

The oppression of the Mughal officials and the growing revenue demand of the administration on the peasantry often result in large scale migration among the peasantry; or result more often then not in a revolt or rebellion against the Mughal officials...a tyranny often so excessive as to deprive the peasantry and artisans of the necessaries of life and leave them to die of mercy and exhaustion.[70]

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[67] Ibid. p. 236.

[68] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol II, p. 257.

[69] S.N. Sen ed., *Indian Travels*, p. 10.

[70] Bernier, *Travels*, p. 226.

The European sources with regard to the local population of the region were of the opinion that most of them employed themselves in looting on the highways and were for the most part robbers. Martin puts forward the opinion that most of the peasants inhabiting the region engaged themselves in the looting on the highways. Describing the country between Baroda and Surat he opines that 'the inhabitants were inveterate thieves, who in absence of any other victim would fall on each other for sake of booty...It is said that peasants right up to Agra have the same characteristics.'[71] Thevenot details an encounter with a robber, who he says belonged to the caste of Gratiates, who lived in the village of Bilpar (Bilpad), while on his way back to Surat from Cambay. He describes the members of the tribe as 'for most part robbers', and details the robber he encountered as 'a fellow in very bad clothes, and carrying a sword upon his shoulders who did not gave way unless satisfied wit a pecha'.[72] On modus operandi of these robbers he commented that 'they move about in whole groups, and one of them being satisfied, others come after upon the same roads, who must also be contended with, and in case of violence being done on any one of them others come over to assist'.[73]

Martin records the deeds of the tribe of people called grasias, who had been identified with Kolis by Lotika Varadarajan: 'the grasias, a tribe centred around Diu, came right up to the gates of Ahmadabad, forcing contribution from all the territories, through which they passed. If they encountered refusal, they brought back the leading members of village as prisoners'.[74] He records his experience with them and says that these robbers operated in numbers, 'even at a distance of a league from Ahmadabad, and were armed with lances and sabres. Right through the night they moved about the house and the garden but did not attack us fearing guns with which we were well armed. They withdrew at dawn'.[75]

At another place in his memoirs Martin notes the pillage of merchant goods and destruction of countryside between Suwali and Surat by the people called Grasias:

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[71] Lotika Varadarajan, *India in Seventeenth* Century, Vol 2, Part 1, p. 861.

[72] S.N. Sen ed., *Indian Travels*, p. 10.

[73] Ibid p. 10.

[74] Lotika Varadarajan, *India in Seventeenth* Century, Vol 2, Part 1, p. 863.

[75] ibid pp. 863-64.

> The passage between Surat and Suvali had become unsafe because of the incursion of the grasias around the region of Suvali...since a long time, villages and settlements in the region had agreed to pay them contributions. When mukkadams wished to stop paying this contribution, the grasias swept down in droves. Some of the mukkadams were captured and taken away, while others who tried to resist were killed. Villages were looted and the inhabitants to protect themselves were forced to resume payments of these contributions.[76]

Hamilton, almost about a century and a half later notes that the grasias were the numerous class of landlords claiming and possessing a certain degree of feudal authority over the portions of villages and in countryside. However he also states that the basis of the claim could not be traced and it was only during the reign of Farrukhsiyar (1713-1719), that the Nawab of Surat, troubled by their activities entered into agreements with them and ceded certain portion of land in each village to them.[77]

Most of the zamindars of the region relied on their numbers and strength and the allegiance of these locals and tribals to their cause, in their struggle and fight against the Mughal occupation and we come numerous references to the clashes between the Mughals and these tribals, some times with violent effect. One of the earliest experience which the Mughal forces had of the strength of the tribals was during the Humayun's Gujarat campaign, when during his stay at Cambay, his camp was attacked and destroyed by the Gujarati officials of the region, backed by the Kathi tribesmen of the region:

> When his majesty Jahanbani was encamped at Cambay with a small force Malik Ahmad Lad and Rukn Daud who were officers of sultan Bahadur, and leading men in Koliwara, arranged with the Kolis and gawars of that country as there were few men with his Majesty Jahanbani there was a

[76] ibid p. 907.

[77] Walter Hamilton, *A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description*, Vol 1,p. 607.

suitable opportunity of making a night attack...Near dawn 5 Or 6000 Bhils and Gawars fell upon the royal enclosures.[78]

Humayun incensed with the attack, ordered the destruction and burning down of the town of Cambay and returned to complete the siege of Champanir.

The Kathi tribesmen of Kathiawar also continued to support the actions of Sultan Muzaffar III against the Mughal occupation, and his capture of Ahmadabad in the year 1583, was backed by Loma Khuman, a Kathi chief in village of Kherdi near Rajkot in Kathiawar.[79] Mughal governors to the province spent considerable amount of resources and time on the chastisement of these tribal people, and laxity in part of the administration gave opportunity for the tribesmen led by the local zamindars and chieftains to create disturbance in the region. Shihabuddin Ahmad Khan (1578-83) unhappy with the terms of his removal from the office, recalled his men from as many as 80 thanas and garhis which he had erected, giving space for the turbulent Kathis and others to engage in marauding activities and capture these establishment: '...the moment his men left the thanas the Kolis and Girasias laid most of the forts waste and raised heads in revolt.'[80]

That these tribals were powerful enough and were steadfast in loyalty towards their local chiefs and zamindars is evident from an incidence noted in Mirat, when in order to avenge the defeat of their zamindars by the royal forces, the Kathis defeated the royal army near Baroda.[81] Similarly Azam Khan, one of the most famous viceroys of the province spent considerable time of his viceroy-ship in chastisement of these troublesome elements. The Mirat-i Ahmadi notes:

...that at the beginning of his subadari, as the suba of Gujarat is a mine of mischievous persons of distracted heads and an adobe of disturbing rebels, Azam Khan devoted himself without entering Ahmadabad, to destroy the

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[78] Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol I, p. 309.

[79] M.S.Commissariate, *History*, Vol II, p. 17.

[80] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Vol 1, p. 124.

[81] ibid p. 163.

malevolent Kathis and Kolis, who through misguidance and stupidity caused harm to the ryots always by robbery and theft and made efforts to ruin and lay waste the province as well as to chastise other refractory elements of the region especially in the parganas of Bhil near Mandu inhabited mostly by Kolis.[82]

The Mughal officials took several steps to encounter the marauding activities of these local tribals, and to protect the highways in the region, such as constructing thanas and garhis at places, and keeping them with armed guards to protect the travellers and locals of the areas against these marauders. An English record of the year 1647, notes the measures taken by Mughal officials in safe guarding the route near Broach;

> As soon as he (governor) hears of the approach of a caravan from Ahmadabad, he will send soldiers to meet it on this side of Baroda, because the ways are very dangerous there being caphila some three days since being robbed about a mile from hence. Last night the governor's soldiers went to the rouges town, but they all fled, and left only there cattles which were this day sold in bazaar...The faujdars has now promised to order some of his soldiers at Sambod thana to go and meet the caravan and these with a few peons Walwyn is about to send from this place, will secure it from danger.[83]

The activities of these tribes and people makes it imperative for the travellers and merchants to hire armed escorts or make their way under the care of a local official or noble. These attacks on the caravans destined for ports or coming from them, had an adverse impact on the commerce of the region, often resulting in loss of goods and precious commodities, sometimes in loss of life also. The hiring of armed escorts resulted in increase in the already high cost of transportation. Most of the travellers noted of the necessity of travelling with proper guards and safety. Thevenot gave an interesting description of the people called Charans who acted as guards to the travellers and of their manner of protecting the travellers.[84] 'They belonged to a caste which was highly esteemed among the Hindu population of the region. Thus killing

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[82] ibid p. 184.

[83] W. Foster ed., *English Factories, 1646-50*, p. 129.

[84] S.N. Sen ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 153.

them or causing an injury to them was considered as an act beyond any redemption. Making use if this status in the society, they provided security to the travellers, by threatening to harm themselves in cases of emergency, and for which the entire blame would be on the robber.[85] However he also indicates compliance or an association, which had developed between the members of the aforesaid tribe and the robbers in the region:

> Heretofore some Tcherons, both men and women have killed themselves upon such occasions, but that has not been seen for a long time, and at present they say, they compound with the robber for certain sum, which the traveller give them, and that many times the divide it with them. The Banians make use of these people and I was told that if I would employ them, I would be served for 2 rupees a day.[86]

However, even when travelling under the security of a Mughal official the travellers and their goods at times faced the danger of being looted. Thus Peter Mundy, while travelling from Surat to Burhanpur, notes his encounters with the roaming bands of the Rajputs who were on look out for opportunity to loot the caphilas passing the region. Mandelslo on his way back to Surat had a fierce engagement with a band of Rajputs who attempted to loot the caravan.[87]Although the conditions during the time when Mundy undertook the journey was more acute, than normal, on account of the severe famine ravaging the country of Gujarat, still his experiences does illustrates the experiences which travellers in the region had to undergo from time to time, even while travelling under the protection of an officer:

> By the way hither (Nouapora – Narayanpur), wee made accompt to have mett Rashpootes whoe are here rife, but wee mist them, although between this place and Kirka, wee found ourselves alone by the side of a little brooke being near the highwaye, there past 11 or 12 of them on horse back, all well armed and provided with the guns, swords, lances, bows and arrows, where espinge us alone, made a stand, but seeing wee were not those theie looked for,

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[85] ibid

[86] ibid

[87] M.S. Commissariate ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, pp. 51-52

left us going on their way, givinge out they came to meet and conduct Mirza. But after our companie came upp, wee understood they were rovers and watched for the caphila, whoe by the reason of a hilly and stonie way was gone somewhat the further about in the valley, and soe met them not. However it was settupon a great company of footemen whoe att length were faine to betake themselves to flight. Hard by us lay the skulls and bones of sundrie men, said to be killed by thee fellows.[88]

The caphilas in which Mundy was travelling lost about three carts further on in journey: 'cutt from the caphilas by theeves in the reare, and carried cleane away, the people escaping but not without wounds'.[89]

By the later half of the seventeenth century, the effectiveness of administrative institutions began to be undermined by the local zamindars and the Mughal officials posted in the region. Thus we come across numerous instances of the nobles and officers in the province acting contrary to the orders and advice of the imperial centre. The phenomenon gained strength towards the end of 17th century. With the power of the Emperor veining after the death of Aurangzeb, and the ascendancy of various nobles and beginning of factional infighting, the control of the Emperor over the subadars decreased. The nobles in charge of the provinces used the strength of their respective subadaris to gain ascendancy over their rival factions in the court.

An example of this can be discerned in the attempts of Haider Quli Khan to break away from the centre by appointing his own nominees as diwan and faujdars and other officers in the province, in 1722. Although the rebellion was crushed immediately, the incidence does bring to the fore front the growing ambitions of the nobles, their disenchantment with the Imperial Court and the growing attempts on their part to carve out their own spheres of influences – a tendency which marked the political current in almost all the powerful Mughal Subas.

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[88] Peter Mundy, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 45.

[89] Ibid.

The ascendancy of Marathas and their growing influence in the region especially over the Kathis and Kolis of the region, presented a problem with which the Mughal officials in the region were not able to cope with. Unable to gain backing from the centre, and left alone to grapple with the problem of keeping peace within the province, these officials entered into agreements with their Maratha tormentors and other localized elements within the region, recognizing their claims, such as of chauth and sardeshmukhi.

CHAPTER THREE

POLITICS OF TRADE: EUROPEAN COMPANIES & INDIAN STATE IN COASTAL GUJARAT

The economic prosperity of the region of Gujarat had always been the major reason for the sub continental land based powers to attempt to exercise control over it, for its flourishing commerce had been a major source of revenue and income which the political entities and classes couldn't fail to overlook. Thus the beginning of our period saw the region under the control of the Mughal state, which had during the course of about a half a century, prior to the beginning of seventeenth century had acquired control over most of the north India, and was now gradually trying to move its sphere of political control into the Deccan. Other than the Mughals there were other multitude of forces operating in the area, primary being the European companies, some of whom had also acquired spheres of influence and control over some of the major ports of the region, such as the Portuguese control over Diu, Daman and Goa, and were now trying to use their superior military strength to gain control over the shipping lanes and the maritime traffic of the region. The shores of Gujarat were thus witness to some of the fiercest naval battles fought between the European powers in Asia, during the course of seventeenth century. The region was also witness to the conflicts between the European powers and the Mughals who though were no match for the European companies in terms of naval prowess, used their effective control over land based recourses to challenge the companies by attempting to stifle their commerce

The Rise of European powers, the English and the Dutch: -

The pattern of European commerce in the area can be understood to have gone through various phases, with each phase bringing about a distinct change in the pattern of their activities and engagements. The first half of the Seventeenth century can be seen as a phase of struggle between the companies to muster control over the trading rights and privileges in the Asian waters, at the expense of each other. The first to suffer in this struggle for supremacy over Asian waters were the Portuguese, who from being

the virtual masters of the Asian seas were almost reduced to the position where they ceased to count in the politics and commerce of the region. The Portuguese maritime power came to be seriously challenged by the other European companies as the English and the Dutch.

- **The English East India Company: -**

Early records of the English East India company and the chronicles of their embassies to the Indian powers for seeking permission to trade on their ports testifies to the struggle and the extent of mistrust created by one company for the other in the minds of local officials and rulers.

Thus, Thomas Best in his report acknowledges to the fact that the Indian merchants and officials at the ports such as Surat were operating in the awe and fear of the Portuguese. In aletter addressed to the East India Company, Roe wrote about the 'feare they have of the Portugall; for they incurring the same danger in sending to the Redd Sea which they sought to avoyd by givinge us trade'.[1] Sir Thomas Roe had acknowledged in his memoirs that the Mughal officials were in general partisan to the cause of the Portuguese who had succeeded in creating a negative impression of the English in the minds of the Mughal nobles and officials hence creating conditions detrimental to the cause of the English. Roe also highlighted the confusion in the mind if the Mughal officials and wrote that, 'they are very giddy in theyr resolutios whom they shall entertayne'[2] and says that they would favour in general the stronger side.

The extent of mistrust between the two companies has been brought out most aptly in the letter written by Roe to the Portuguese governor at Goa, in which he accusses the Portuguese of making attacks on the English and reminds him of the English naval power, which had the capacity to defeat them:

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[1] Thomas Roe, *The Embassy*, p 101

[2] ibid

> The injuryes yor Excellence or your predecessors have offered to the subjects of the high and mighty prince, the King of England...by assalting them in their peacable course of trade, contrary to the amytye and league of both our soveraynes, although by the assistance of God yow have received shame and confusion in your unchristian attempts, yet I have commandement to admonish yow, like the subject of a prince at peace with his master, to desist from undertaking that which can bring foorth no other effect but warr and revenge and shedding of Christian blood.[3]

The decline of the Portuguese hegemony over the waters of Western Indian Ocean had both the positive and negative effect on the commercial prosperity of the region. It must be remembered that the coast of Gujarat was probably the only region in the Asian trading network where the Portuguese system of control based on Cartazes and military superiority had an impact on the way the commerce was being conducted.[4] The defeat of Portuguese by the hands of English captain Thomas Best, off the coast of Gujarat, gave a major dent to the aura of superiority so carefully nurtured by the Portuguese.[5] However, in-spite of the decline in their power, they continued to hold important ports on the western coast of India, such as Diu, Daman, Bassien, Goa among others within their jurisdiction.

The English were able to impress upon the Mughal officials to enter into trade agreements with them. Best concluded a treaty[6] with, the diwan of Gujarat, who at the time was also acting as the viceroy of the province, which allowed them to settle factories at Surat and other parts of the Mughal domain. A custom of 3 ½ percent was fixed on the English good, with an assurance of safety against the Portuguese.

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[3] Thomas Roe, *The Embassy*, p. 57.

[4] For a comprehensive insight into the working of the Portuguese system on the Indian Coast and their influence in India see, F.C. Danver, *Portuguese in India,* 2 Vols, London, 1894; C.R. Boxer, *Portuguese Sea Borne Empire*

[5] Thomas Best, *The Voyage of Thomas Best to the East Indies, 1612-1614*, ed, W. Foster, London, 1934, pp. 135-37.

[6] Details of the treaty given in Thomas Best, *The Voyage*, pp. 31-33.

The embassy of Thomas Roe to the Mughal court further strengthened the English position in the country. His affairs at the court provided us with information regarding the mechanizations, which the Portuguese resorted to prevent Roe from acquiring farman regarding the English trade in the Empire and also the internal mechanizations of the various power groups during the reign of Jahangir. However, the activities of various Mughal officials and governors continued to create problems for the English commerce, and it was not before 1624 that an agreement[7] was signed between

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[7] According to the agreement: as mentioned in William Foster ed, *English Factories in India, 1624-29*, pp. 27-30.

1. It is agreed that English shall freely trade at their pleasure in the ports of Surat, Cambay, Broach, Goga, Beryal, Scyda, and other cities of kings' domain; and that they shall have liberty to import and export all types of goods, except coral for one year. We promising not to question them, either touching the quantity or time, be it silver or gold; or any other good what ever they shall export from Hindustan to their own countries.

2. It shall not be lawful for either the governor, the officers or daroga of the customhouse, to take anything for himself from what was intended for the king.

3. The house belonging to Goga Hussain Ali, where they formerly lived, paying rent shall be continued into them.

4. What ever carts shall be needed by the English, for the transportation of their goods from Swally to Surat, shall be provided to them without any harassment on the part of the governor of Orpar, under whose jurisdiction Swally was.

5. If any Christian offends any of the King's officials at the port or in town, they are not answerable for it, however if any Englishman does the same, they are answerable to the authorities.

6. No land customs at Broach, Baroda, Ankleshwar, and other places belonging to the King shall be demanded from them, nor any molestation for the matter of jagat (road-cess) offered. However customs at port are payable.

7. No body shall enter the English house forcibly, but if their occurs any accident then the captain shall repair to governor and accommodate the difference.

8. That their cafilas shall pass freely through the country without molestation, and if any man have any just exceptions to make against them, he has to appear before the governor of Surat and English captain.

9. Neither the governor of Surat, nor the darogha of the custom house shall detain any goods brought by the English, or endeavor to put a price on them at any place of their own, but at that very instance, shall caused them to be delivered to the addressee

10. English may have free exercise of their own religion, and in case of quarrel, between two Englishmen it is to be decided by their captain, and in case of differences with a Musalman, if fault proved to be of Englishman, then he is to be referred to the captain, and if of Musalman then to Governor.

11. If chief or any other person belonging to the English chance to decease in any part of the Empire than his belonging shall be handed to any other Englishman present, and no body else would have any thing to do with those goods.

12. In all times in case of necessity, you shall administer to the king's ships all friendly assistance to your power. And as the English are to pretend no rights over any ship appertaining to the king's ports; so if the English in their own revenge do assault any ship belonging to Portuguese, Deccan, or any of their enemies, the king's people shall lay no claim to them

the English and the Surat authorities, which established their position in clear terms. It allowed the English to have a free access to trade at the centres as the ports of Surat, Cambay, Broach, Goga, Beryal, Scyda, and other cities of kings' domain. More over it allowed them to import and export all types of items except corals, on which there was to be an embargo of about a year. However its clauses were not always followed in words by any of the party. Through out the 17th century such fluctuations in the relations continued, however by the second half of the period English commerce in India was established on a firm basis.

The English made Surat their headquarters for commerce with the East, and had established several subordinate factories in the inland centres such as Broach, Baroda, Ahmadabad, Agra and even the factories located in Persia, such as the one at Ispahan, was under the presidency of Surat. Dr. John Fryer, who visited the city in the year 1675, gives a list of factories subject to the English presidency at Surat, which during the time was esteemed superior to all of India:

> ...the inland factories subject to it are Amdavad, whence is provided silks, as Atlases wrought with Gold; Agra where they fetch indigo, Chuperly, Course Cloath, String Chints; Broach baftas broad and narrow; Dimities and other fine Calicuts: Along the Coasts are Bombaim, Rajapore for Salloos; Carnear for Dungarees, and the weightiest Pepper: Calicut for Spice, Ambergreez, Granats, Opiun, with Salt Peter, and no cloath, though it give the name of Calicut to all in India, it being the first port from whence they were known to be brought into Europe: All which, after the Europe ships have unladen at Surat, they go down to fetch; and

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13. Whenever, the captain or any other English shall have occasion to go on board their ship as an acknowledgement of the governor, he shall desire his license and not go without it.

14. That from whomsoever English have just demands within the province of Gujarat, satisfaction shall be made them justly.

Agreement signed on 7 Sep 1624. Signatories: Saif Khan (Governor); Qazi Mahmud Qasim; Jam Quli Beg (captain of the castle); Ishaq Beg; Ali Hasan; Nazmuddin; Ali Quli Sadr; Ali Quli Mahmud; Muhamad Ali Isphani; Ali Mashadi; Saadat Yar; Mutawalli Mahmud; Mahmud Ibrahim; Haji Abdul Nabi; Hari Vaisya; Virji Vora

bring up time enough before Caphalas out of the country come with their wares.[8]

Infact the clout of the Surat factory was so much that the factory at Bantam although not under Surat, still the president of bantam factor, observes a certain deference towards the latter, and so did the captains of all the English ships coming top the east, for no ship would consider its voyage complete, until it had cast anchors at Surat.[9]

John Fryer mentions the four offices, which functioned in the English Factory: Accountant, Ware House keeper, Purser Marine, Secretary. 'Though none of these without Presidents approbation can act or do any thing'.[10] The whole mass of company's servants has been divided into these classes, Merchants, Factors, and Writers. These in their several seigniories behave themselves after the fundamentals of Surat, whose presidency is considered superior to all in India.[11] Albert de Mandelslo also remarked on the order of the English house at Surat in 1638 and says that the authority of the president was supreme in the house, with everyone following a strict decorum.[12] Ovington also lists the Accountant, storekeeper and the Purser marine in order of seniority after the President.[13] He further lists the Chaplain, who was the third in seniority, along with the senior and junior factors and apprentices as others who constitute the rest of the residents at the Factory.[14]

Towards the end of the century the English company faced crisis of its existence with the establishment of New East India Company and the interloping activities of the deserters and the members of the old company, creating problem for the English trade, through piratical as well as involving themselves in competitive buying

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[8] John Fryer, *A new Account of East India*, pp

[9] Commissariat ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, p. 10.

[10] John Fryer, *A new Account of East India*, p. 215.

[11] ibid, pp. 215-17.

[12] Commissariat ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, pp. 4-5.

[13] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 227.

[14] ibid, p. 228.

and trading activities. By the first quarter of 18th century the loci of English trade in the region shifted from Surat to Bombay. This shift resulted was a result of decline in trade and commerce of the port of Surat, as well as marked the beginning of the end of the commercial prosperity of the suba of Gujarat which during the period was a region much disturbed and troubled due to the internecine warfare among various nobles and factions to gain control over the province.

- **The Dutch East India Company: -**

The growth of Dutch commerce in the region almost paralleled the developments in relation to the English, however by the middle decades of seventeenth century, they had outpaced the English in the level of sophistication attained in their commercial enterprises. The Dutch however were more interested in the initial years of their involvement in Asian trade to gain control over the spice trade and spice marts of South East Asia.[15] However after realizing the importance of Gujarati Cotton textile products in the markets of South East Asia and after the fall of Malacca, in 1641 which gave to them an almost exclusive access to the spice markets of South East Asia, that they were seriously involved in the textile trade at Gujarat, and in the Indian trade.

With in the sub continent also their commerce rivalled that of the English. Infact English records and official correspondences reflect upon the nature of Dutch trading in the region and the impact of their commerce on a market, which the English were trying get hold off. Thus there had been numerous instances of both the parties engaged in competitive buying of such commodities as indigo, and cotton goods, so as to get hold of the largest share of produce, and thus emerge as major player in the European markets. Thus, a letter addressed to the Factors at Broach, asks them to make an enquiry into the nature of Dutch trade at the place.[16] The mistrust between the various companies was on many occasions the reason behind their losses for they were not able to present a unified front against the Mughal officials and their exactions. Abbe Carre on his visit to

[15] For an insight into the nature of Dutch involvement in the Intra Asian trade, See C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Sea Borne Empire*, London, 1965.

[16] W. Foster ed, *English Factories in India*, 1634-36, p. 264.

Surat wrote about the humiliation of the French residents and traders at the city by the officials and the merchants of the town, due to the intrigues of the Dutch who this time had spread rumours regarding the humiliation of the French by the Dutch in wars in Europe. The humiliation had reached such climax that the French were about to be thrown out of the city by the Mughal Custom officer who was a friend of the Dutch:

> For 7 or 8 months they had been subject to strange insults and actions, at which our enemies, the Dutch were working underhand, and which had reached such a climax that the were on point of being driven from Surat by the powerful Moor Custom officer, a friend of Dutch.[17]

On the other hand, there have also been instances when these companies worked together, in order to deal with the problems created by the local mercantile communities, or by the Mughal government. We have already mentioned the factors of the various companies coming together, in order to look into and analyse the situation created by the increase in custom duties on European goods. Martin informs us about a joint effort on part of the chiefs of the factories of the three nations – the Dutch, the English and the French to obtain a redress against the general increase in the custom duties in about year 1681.[18] The companies sometimes in response to the Mughal exactions and monopolistic practices took a similar united stand. Thus we find the English and the Dutch abstaining completely from buying of Indigo, after Mughal emperor Shah Jahan imposed the royal monopoly over its trade, in the year 1633.[19]

- **European Influence on Commerce of the Region: -**

Although it is a difficult task to discern the extent of the share of European commerce in the overall commercial exchanges in the Indian commerce, it is nevertheless safe to speak that by the middle decades of seventeenth century, Europeans had emerged

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[17] Abbe' Carre', *The Travels of Abbe' Carre' in India and the near East, 1672-74*, 3 Vols, ed, C.Fawcett and R.C.Burns, London, 1967, Vol 2, p. 768.

[18] Lotika Varadarjan, *India in the Seventeenth century,* Vol 2, Part 1, pp 828-29

[19] W. Foster ed., *English Factories in India, 1630-1633*, p. 25.

as one of the key players in the Indian markets, with the power to influence it to an extent hitherto not possible by these companies. Their system of factories and dealing directly with the producers opened up the possibilities for the indigenous traders and manufacturers who were now assimilated in and come in contact with the international markets on a scale, which had not been achieved as yet.

The European companies also had an influence over the manner in which the indigenous merchants were conducting their business. The system of Cartazes introduced by the Portuguese was taken over and adopted by the English. Thus they came to impound ships travelling without their passes and by the middle decades of seventeenth century had themselves came to participate majorly in the carrying trade of the Gujarat ports with the markets of west Asia. The extent of European dominance was to such an extent that that even the ships belonging to the Emperors trading with the west Asian marts on the red sea and Persian Gulf also had to rely on the European Cartazes and passes during the course of the century.[20] The Dutch dominance in the Eastern seas and over the markets of Southeast Asia had already resulted in almost total decline of Gujarati shipping with the ports of the area.

The European companies also recognized this factor, and they utilized it to the fullest extent to gain leverage against the Indian merchants and officials. The act of Henry Middleton to trouble the ships of Gujarat is a case in point. 'Surat lived by its sea borne trade, and especially by its pilgrim traffic to the Red sea; and its merchants were painfully aware of the fact that their ships were at mercy of any well armed aggressor. They were anxious therefore to keep on good terms with new comers. Evidently too, several of chief merchants were well disposed towards the English and desirous of establishing commerce with them as far as possible'.[21]

Also, we have evidences that, English thought of using this as a possible leverage against the state officials when in distress. Consultations held in prison at Surat,

[20] M.N.Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers*, p 56, narrates an interesting incident of a struggle between the Portuguese and the Mughal noble Muhammad Quilij Khan over the question of the latter's refusal to seek Cartazes from the Portuguese for his ships sailing to Red Sea.

[21] Thomas Best, *The voyage*, p. xxiv.

between various factors of the company who were put under arrest, reflects that they thought about sending ships on high seas to trouble the Surat commerce, and thus force their way out. A letter to the company dated 14 Feb. 1625, reads:

> It would be necessary to break off trade and maintain hostilities for 3 or 4 years, until Indians were so humbled as to make them sue for peace, for at present they believe that the English cannot do without trade, and till to their lost, made sensible on the contrary, will not withstanding all oaths and writings, make break again on the first occasion of advantage.

The Dutch also resorted to similar threats to gain leverage against the Mughal officials and the mercantile communities in the region. Martin records one such instance when the Dutch commander at Surat retired to their house at Suwali and waited for the Dutch fleet engaged in the blockade of Bandar Abbas to reach there and enact a similar blockade of the port. However the fleet got delayed due to the stubbornness of Persians, and ultimately a compromise had to be reached.[22] Similarly he also records the panic among the residents of the port of Surat, on the arrival of French fleet at Surat, under de la Haye.[23] Abbe Carre reported on the rumours regarding the French fleet and accused the Dutch of spreading the rumours.[24]

Mughal Control along Coastal Gujarat & its Influence on Commerce: -

The attitude of the state, towards the commerce of the region and the various participants in it, had a determining role in the way the commerce of the period was being carried out. Ashin Das Gupta's[25] qualification regarding medieval states playing crucial role in the growth of important commercial centres, as Surat is not out of place with the facts, which presents them to us. Arasratnam in his works defined the role

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[22] Lotika Varadarajan, *India in the seventeenth century*, Vol 2, Part 1, pp. 934-36.

[23] ibid, Vol 1, Part 2, p. 35.

[24] Abbe' Carre', The *Travels*, Vol 2, pp. 389-91.

[25] Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, 1700 – 1750,* New Delhi, 1994, pp. 3-4.

of the state vis-à-vis commerce as: 'in the Indian sub-continent, commerce was looked upon as an area of activity intricately linked with states' concern. Just as the rulers were conscious of the need to protect, and where possible expand the boundaries of the state, they were alive to prosecution of commerce in their domains'.[26]

Although not having a direct control over agencies of commerce, the state emerges from the sources at our disposal, as an entity capable of affecting the performance of networks of trade in operation in seventeenth century, by its policies. Thus infra-structural development, protection of ports, duties and levies in form of custom, or on transit of goods, and imposing of monopolies were just the few of the ways in which medieval state was able to impinge upon and benefit from commercial transactions. Moreover participation of rulers and officials in trading activities must also be seen as a major factor, for bringing the commercial matters to forefront of state policy in a way previously unknown. This was highlighted in various attempts made by medieval states to utilize their control over resources, desired by the Europeans, to force them to keep the trading routes open and free of piracy.

Although, it is well evident from the sources placed before us that the medieval state had an important impact on the way commerce was conducted within their realms and by their subjects, the impact as such had both the positive as well as negative sides to it. Thus, on one hand we find the state involving itself in such activities as the development of infra structural facilities, making provisions of food and safety available to the merchants trading within their realms, regulating the tolls and duties levied on the goods and merchandise, introducing uniform system of currency and taxation, among other such beneficial measures; on the other hand we find the officials and nobles which constitutes the state as such and their dependents, involving themselves in such activities as over exaction and exploitation of the mercantile communities in their jurisdiction. Involvement of Mughal rulers and officials in the trading activities also had similar double-edged effect on commerce. On one hand it personally involved them into the complex world of commerce, and enabled them to get first hand views of the things, thus

[26] S. Arasratnam, *Maritime India in Seventeenth century*, N. Delhi, 1994, p. 175.

enabling them to formulate policies beneficial for the trading communities as whole; on the other hand the nature of such involvement, such as their exercising of political power for commercial gains, as was the case with the various monopolies introduced during our period, brought them into conflict with both the local mercantile communities as well as with the European companies operating in the area.

- **Port Administration under the Mughals – A study of Surat: -**

European sources have given in detail analysis of the working of various Mughal administrative and political institutions at Surat. Surat was administered directly by the imperial centre and was often given as maintenance gifts to royal princes and princesses. The officials directly appointed by the imperial centre governed the port. The main officials at the port were the chief governor of the port – the mutasaddi (The office was farmed out by the highest bidder till about mid 17th century, when Shah Jahan discontinued the practice), governor of the fort, who worked in independent capacity to that of the governor and the port.

Of the powers of the governor, it has been mentioned that none of the ships could enter or leave the harbour, load or unload cargoes unless he issued permit. Those foreigners who wished to land and carry on the trade had to approach him for permission. The supervision of customhouse and collection of custom was part of his main duties, but he usually left it to the shahbandar or customer. It was his responsibility to see that whatever was imported or exported did not evade payment of custom dues. He also appears in the sources as the chief buyer from the side of the government. Thus one find Mughal port governors such as Muqarrab Khan, Saif Khan, and others interacting with the merchants and conducting trade on behalf of their royal patrons, and some times even conducting negotiations and concluding treaties with foreign agencies. They also supervised the arrangements for annual pilgrimage to Mecca. It was through the Mutasaddi that all government mercantile policy was executed. He made all-important announcements and decisions public and helped to fix the market rates by setting the values of goods at customhouse.

Next to governor was the shahbandar whose main concern was the collection of customs at the port, and was the chief of customhouse. The Europeans called him by various titles, the darogha (of custom house), shahbandar, and customer.

- The Custom House: -

The customhouse at Surat was the perfect reflection of the extent to which the Mughal involvement in the commerce of the region, and the importance of the custom duties had in the overall revenue of the province. Almost all the European travellers who came to the region had noted the exactness and severity of the search at the customhouse. The tension between the governor of the port and Sir Thomas Roe over the search of his baggage had been noted in his memoirs in details. Thevenot detailed the search at custom house in detail: 'presently the write down in register, the name of him that enters, and then he is searched. He must take off his cup or turban, his gridle, shoes, stockins and all the rest of his cloaths if the searcher thinks fit. The feel his body all over, and handles every the least inch of stuff about him with all exactness, if the perceive anything hard in t, they immediately rip it up, and all that can be done is to suffer patiently. That search s long and takes up above a quarter of an hour for every person severally'.[27]

- **Mughal State and Commerce in the Region: -**

From the scattered references in the English records, it appears that at the beginning of 17th century, Jahangir, Nur Jahan, Prince Khurram, and even the queen mother owned ships, which piled between Surat and Red sea. While Khurram was the viceroy of Gujarat, his ships carried on an extensive trade with Mocha, carrying mostly broad cloth and textiles. His ships also went to Masulipatam, and carried textiles and gum lac to the Persian ports.[28] During the same period Jahangir's junks piled between Mocha and Goga.[29] Official pressure as also sometimes used to procure cargo for these ships

[27] S.N.Sen ed, *Indian Travels*, p. 3.

[28]Satish Chandra, 'Commercial activities of the Mughal Emperors during 17th century', published in Satish Chandra ed, *Essays in Medieval Indian Economic History*, New Delhi, 2002, p. 164, from EFI, 1618-21, and 1622-23

[29] ibid

from the merchants. Thus in 1643, the governor of Swally Marine prohibited merchants, under great penalties of lading any ship, 'until both the great junks belonging to this King are full'.[30] Another method adopted by Shahjahan for augmenting his income was to create monopolies.

Thus we hear of establishment of Indigo monopoly in 1633, according to which Munnodas Dunda was granted sole right of buying all indigo in the kingdom, and the return after 3 years was to be 11 lakh of rupee. The English responded by abstaining from Indigo trade altogether, and with the revenues of various ports dwindling, and on petition of various high officials the monopoly was ultimately dissolved in 1635. Tavernier mentions the royal monopoly on lime:

> All the wagons which come to surat from Agra or other places in the Empire and return to Agra and Jahanabad are compelled to carry lime which come from Broach, and which as soon as it is used, becomes as hard as marble. It is a great source of profit to the Emperor who sends it wherever he pleases.[31]

Even the local Mughal governors engaged themselves in monopoly practices. An English letter written to factory at Surat from Broach, mentions the monopoly practices of the Mughal governor Yakub Khan:

> The governor of this town Yakub Khan had sent for all our lead, and his people had carried it to his house, who as I understand will keep it until such time as he shall see, whether he shall have occasion to use it or not. If not, he intends to return it back. When they fetch it away, they promised current payment of it, however there is no trust of his words, only dilasas.[32]

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[30] ibid, p. 165

[31] J.B.Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, p. 35.

[32] W.Foster ed, *English Factories in India, 1624-29*, pp. 190-91.

Infact the general delay and difficulties which Merchants had to face in order to obtain concessions, and privileges, in matters relating to commerce, does reinforce the fact that official involvement in affairs of commerce had certain negative effects. We come across references of Company moving out of a place or failing to establish factory at a place, due to the hostilities of Local officials. For e.g. we here of company's business being obstructed at Dharangaon due to the hostilities of local officials and improper exactions, which were reported in the year, 1679, 1682, and 1683; however these did not prevent the transit of goods to Surat.[33] We also have evidences of officials treating important Indian merchants indifferently and without concern. Thus one hears of the whole scale migration of large sections of a particular business community from Surat. Infact persecution of local Banya community, and of the Eurpeans by the Mugha officials at Surat and at the subordinate factories was sighted as one of the chief reasons for shifting the council at Surat to Bombay, in last quarter of the century.[34]

However, one does come across differences in response by the state officials towards European companies and Indian Merchants, primarily because of the realization of European naval power, by the Officials, and of the trouble they cause to the shipping of their respective ports. However, this was not always a one-way scenario. Infact many Mughal port officials tried to utilize the hostility between various European powers, to protect the shipping of their own port. Khwaja Murad Beg, governor of the port of Dabhol, wrote to the President and council at Surat, inviting them to trade at his port.[35] Infact at Surat itself, one of the primary reasons behind the support given by mercantile community to the English and Dutch was due to their strength vis-à-vis the Portuguese, who at the time were a major threat to their shipping, and commerce.

That the Mughal state was not oblivious and ignorant of the developments taking place in the commercial word, and that it was prepared to go to extreme extent to safe guard the interest of its merchants and of course of its own, can be discerned from the ways and manner in which the Mughal officials and nobles acted and responded on

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[33] Charles Fawcett ed, *English Factories in India*, 1678-84, Vol 3, pp. 273, 306-09.

[34] ibid, p. xxxv

[35] W.Foster ed, *English Factories in India, 1624-29*, p. 116.

various occasion to safe guard the trade of the realm, weather against the piracy or the hostile attitudes of the European companies against the Indian traders and their commerce.

One of the most interesting case in point was the conflict between the local Mughal officials and the Dutch company about the year 1648-49, when following the conquest of Malacca in 1641, the Dutch faced heavy losses in their trade in tin and pepper, because of the operations of the Indian merchants in the region. Thus in order to stem their losses it was decided to restrict the Indian shipping to the Southeast Asian ports of Acheh and Malacca. The Mughal authorities in response banned the lading of Dutch ships at the port. Moreover on 20th April 1648, the Dutch house at Surat was attacked and robbed, by upward of 100 men, who for the space of 3 hours ransacked almost all rooms therein without opposition. The governor was seen as having a hand behind the attack, as nobody was convinced that so many men could otherwise have moved undiscovered.[36]

> The Dutch being so surprised that it became their whole care to secure their persons, yet were 5 of them, a black and a porter wounded, where of one of the Dutch died the next day and the porter yet lives but irrecoverable. Their loss is said to be about 22,000 rupees, where of 14,000 rupees in money belonging to the company and the rest in jewels appertaining to particular person.[37]

Another incident involving the English reflects the extent to which the Mughal officials were able to impress upon the European companies to meet their demands. The incident occurred in the year 1661, and was primarily the result of differences between the English President Andrews and the Mughal governor Mustafa Khan, over certain moneys claimed by the later. However the seizure of a Malabar vessel by the English also seemed to have played a role in accentuating the crisis. The capture of

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[36] ibid, p. 217.

[37] W.Foster ed, *English Factories in India, 1646-50*, p. 216.

Malabar vessel by the English seemed to be in retaliation of the acts of piracy conducted by the Malabar pirates.[38]

Thus we find orders being issued to the commanders of Surat frigate, that all ships belonging to the Malabar ports were to be seized and destroyed, unless they carry an English passport.

> ...In the prementioned last letter we aquainted your worships with the takeing of a Mallabar laden with rice; and upon the ladeing of the Eagle all freight goods were hindered and ourselves detained in Soorutt, unlesse that were returned; it being forct out of our hands, at that time we proceeded to act in your affaires.[39]

Also, some years before there had been altercation between the Surat authorities and the English, over the capture of Malabar vessels trading to that port by the latter.[40]However the dispute involving the Surat governor was of more serious nature, and had severe ramifications on the functioning of the English factory.

> ...The monzoone no sooner done another quarrel was picked. Moneys were owing upon accompt of customes; which the governour were at the begineing of the raines earnestly called for, when that the constant practiced custome is to cleare the accompt in August. But though we (to live quietly) sent him the custome moneys, yet it would not content him, unlesse we would alsoe pay the money that had been received by Mr. Revington etc. upon guns being bought of him by a former governour, Mirza Ameena (Mirza Arab), in the time of wars betwixt Morad-bux and Dora Shaw, sonns to Shaw Jehann.[41]

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[38] A letter from Rajapur dated 16 Feb 1661, reports that the Malabars had taken a vessel under English colours and carried it into Danda Rajpuri. The writer suggests that this was probably a junk belonging to President Andrew or his Indian Partners, W.Foster ed, *English Factories in India, 1661-1664*, n 1, p. 12.

[39] ibid, p. 14.

[40] W.Foster ed, *English Factories in India*, 1642-45, p. 3.

[41] Ibid., p. 14.

The English refused to pay for the gun, claiming that the ex-president acted in his personal capacity, and the transaction had nothing to do with the company. After waiting for 3 or 4 days the governor had the English arrested in their own house in order to force them to pay:

> That the 17th of July he shut up our dores, set a watch about the house, and would not suffer water or provisions for four dayes to come into house, we being in all (with servants) 40 persons... And soe continued for fifteen dayes until he was weary that way, and then opened our dores, endeavouring to surprize us by subtility and faire words to get us out of the house and keep us in prison in his owne; but we, feareing his falseness, kept ourselves safe.[42]

The matter according to the English records was resolved upon the intervention of the major merchants of the city who intervened on behalf of the English and finally made the governor see the reason.[43] However the notes of Dutch factors stationed at Surat, informs us that the conclusion was not as favourable to the English as has been made out in the above letter. The Dutch according to a version given in Batavia Dagh register of 1661 (p411), says that an agreement was made between the two parties to refer the matter to the discretion of the emperor. Mustafa Khan, thereupon wrote to the court, where as Andrews neglected to put in his side of the case. The Emperor, Aurangzeb, concluded the matter in favour of the governor, accepted that the price agreed upon for the cannons (21 ½ rials of eight the double maund) was too high and that only 16 rials should be allowed, and ordered that if the English wouldn't agree to the reduction, they must take back the guns. This decision was very unpalatable to the president, who was at the same time being pressed by company's creditors; and he resolved to withdraw secretly from Surat, with two or three of his chief associates, and continue negotiations from onboard ship. For these purpose two small vessels were prepared and it was intended that the party would go abroad disguised as Mohammedans to avoid discovery. The design was however betrayed by one of the factory servants to

[42] Ibid.
[43] ibid,

the governor, who there upon ordered the kotwal to place a guard upon the factory and allow no one to leave. After a time president sent up an order to the vessels, which had dropped down the river, to come up again and watch for him, should he manage to escape. This note fell in hands of the governor, who doubled the guard, resolving to starve the English into surrender. Andrews maintained a defiant attitude for some time, but at last on 23rd of July was forced to make overtures to the governor for reconciliation. Mustafa Khan insisted that, as a preliminary, the two English boats should be hauled on land and dismantled. Then the Shahbandar and certain chief merchants, including Virji Vora negotiated an agreement, by which (1) the English were allowed four months in which to pay the amount owing, the price of guns being reckoned at the reduced rate; (2) the president was always to obtain governor's permission before leaving the city; (3) the two vessels were to remain where they were until the next English ship arrived; (4) goods brought to Swally were to remain there under a guard of soldiers, to prevent their illicit disposal.[44]

The tension between the two parties rose to the extent of being detrimental to the commerce of the region towards the end of seventeenth century, when the European piracy became a pertinent problem on the high seas for the Indian ships, and the Indians held the European companies responsible for such action. Although the incidents of piracy had increased significantly towards the later half of our period, it was certainly not a phenomenon restricted to the second half of the period only. Infact many a times English had to suffer for the deeds of the interlopers, and pirates, as an incident in 1635 reflects, in connection with the Surat bound ship Taufiqi, which was attacked by the English pirates/interlopers. The English were forced to pay claims up to 107,000 rupees.[45]

Towards the end of the century, the problem of piracy on high seas had brought the English and the Mughals on the verge of war. Khafi Khan says:

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[44] The extract from the Batavia Dagh register, dated to year 1661, p 411, has been taken from the *English Factories in India, 1661-64*, p. 15.

[45] Ibid, p. 15.

> The balance of money required for the maintenance of the English settlements is obtained by plundering the ships voyaging to the house of God, of which they take one or two every year. When the ships are proceeding to the ports of Mocha and Jedda, laden with goods of Hindustan they do not interfere with them; but when they return bringing gold and silver and Ibrahimi and rial, their spies have found out which ships bears the richest burden, and they attack it.[46]

The incident involved the royal ship Ganj-I Sawai, which was attacked by the pirates on its return journey from Mecca, in the year 1694. It was laden with about 52 lacs of rupees in gold and silver obtained from the sale of goods at Mocha and Jiddah. The Mughals claimed that the English, who ill-treated with the men and women of the ship, and offloaded the goods on to their own, attacked the ship. In addition was the accusation levied on the English that they were minting coins at Bombay. The English maintained that the English pirates over whom the company had no command committed the act of piracy, and hence it was not responsible for their actions. Regarding the minting of coins the English maintained that the coins of Hindustan goes at a loss in England, and hence in order to overcome the problem they mint their own before sending them to England.[47]

- **Impact of Topography on the Pattern of political control: -**

Topography of the region played a very determining role in the way the commerce in the region was conducted. In similar fashion, the extent of influence, which was exercised by the land based powers such as the Mughals and that exerted by the Europeans was to a large extent determined by the topography along the coastline.

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[46] Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul Lubab*, extract from Elliot and Dowson ed, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol 7, p. 355.

[47] Ibid, p. 355

The Portuguese during the course of the 16th century attempted to gain control over the shipping lanes in Asia through their system based on the Cartazes and construction of fortresses at strategic points to gain control over the shipping lanes in the various regions. However, nowhere but in the Gulf of Cambay, and along the coastal Gujarat, was their system to an extent was successful. Though unable to fully curb the Gujarati Shipping, the Portuguese control over the two strategically located ports – Daman and Diu, located on the Eastern and Western end of the coast of Gulf of Cambay, gave them a strategic advantage to gain control over the pattern of shipping in the region. The influence of their control was to the extent that even the ships owned by the Mughal officials, and even those owned by the Mughal Emperors and the royal princes and other members of the Imperial family took Cartazes from the Portuguese, as a safe guard against any sort of depredating activity on their voyages to the ports of west Asia.

However, it was the coastal topography, which gave advantage to their rivals, the English when they entered the Asian trade in the beginning of the Seventeenth century. The location of sand banks along the coastline, gave protection against the direct action of the Portuguese brigantines, on their ships. This is most evident along the roadstead of Swally, where some of the most serious engagements between the English and the Portuguese took place, and protected by the sandbanks along the harbour the English ships were able to do considerable damage to the Portuguese brigantines, when they were attacked.

Other than the Europeans, Shipping in the gulf also faced the threats of piracy by the hands of Kolis inhabiting the islands in the region, and by the Malabar pirates, whose activities became major source of disruption for maritime commerce in the region. Pelsaert reports the activities of Malabar pirates in the region. While detailing the various ways by which goods can be transported from Swally to Surat, he forwards the opinion that although the transportation of goods by boats is cheaper than sending them by land, the course is exceedingly dangerous, because the Malabar pirates can keep their small crafts lying off the rivers mouth without being observed, and capture whatever

there is.[48] Thevenot also mentions about the similar threat on the route from Cambay to Surat, in Portuguese Alamadies used for coast-to-coast transport in the gulf. He mentions that such vessels do not venture out, but in the night time, so that the Malabars might not discover them. Explaining the modus operandi of these pirates, he says that they sulk behind the rocks, and then falling upon them (in this case Portuguese Alamadies used for such transportation) in its passage.[49]

[48] Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 39.

[49] S.N. Sen ed., Indian *Travels*, pp. 18-19.

CHAPTER FOUR

ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

Coastal Gujarat during the period of our study was home to some of the most enterprising and commercially influential mercantile communities of the Asian trading world. The commercial prosperity of the area and the availability of immense avenues of trade and commerce, made the cities and ports of Gujarat, the hub of economic and trading activities along the west coast. Besides the mercantile communities, the region was also home to numerous tribal and localised communities engaged in supporting activities of trade, such as the mariners, artisans, ship builders, fishermen, among many others. Then there were also those engaged in menial jobs in the cities and their environs. Also, due to favourable geographical setting, favourable commercial environment, the European companies established their factories in the region, thus enriching the already complex population pool of the region.

The European observers have tended to divide and sub divide the population and communities in the region on the basis of religion and caste, for religion to them was one of the primary criterion to distinguish the native inhabitants from themselves. This was especially true of the early Portuguese visitors to the area, for whom their Christian identity was the one, which makes them more civilized than the Muslims and the Hindus who inhabited the region and had barbaric customs and were gross idolaters unlike them. Again caste divisions amongst the Hindus and the association of the various castes with certain occupation makes it easy for the writers and observers to classify and divide the native population, for their audience back home. The prejudices of the European observers in clearly reflected in the following description of the local population given by Van Linschoten, in which he clearly divides the population on lines of religion and highlights the fact that they believe in superstitions in their religious practices: 'the residents are mainly Heathens, Moores, Iewes, and all strange nations, bordering there about, with everie one of them using severall custmes and superstitions in religion.'[1] Petre Della Valle describes the inhabitant population at Surat in following words: 'the inhabitants are partly

[1] John Huyghen van Linschoten, *The Voyage*, Vol 1, p. 222.

Gentiles and partly mahometans; and if I am not deceived the former are greater in number'.[2] An English officer around year 1672, writing from Surat (probably Streynsham Master) wrote that: '...India is inhabited with soe many several nations of people, all exercising their own way of worship, that it is noe strange thing to them to hear of people of a different religion for themselves; for the esteem none the worse for that reason...'[3] John Fryer divides the inhabitants of the country into five sects of Gentiles, Moguls, Portugals, Dutch, English and others, and the Parsis.[4]

- **The Muslims: -**

The Muslim population in the region was a heterogeneous one with the constituent elements ranging from the Mughal officials, and nobles who were posted in the region and entrusted with the administration and security of the province of Gujarat and its various ports and commercial centres. Then there were the merchants, a category that within itself encompasses the local Gujarati Muslim merchants, and the foreigners such as the Arabs, Turks, Persians and the Armenians who had settled on Gujarat coast in pursuit of commercial ventures. Thevenot enlists all the Mahometans, Mogols, Persians, Arabians or Turks that are in the Indies among the moors who were residents at Surat.[5] Other than these were the artisans and workers employed in the various crafts and industries in the province.

Duarte Barbosa, commenting on the constitution of the Muslim population in the region says, 'more part of them are foreigners from many lands, Scilicet, Trks, Mamalukes, Arabs, Persians, Coracones and Targimoes; others come from the great kingdom of Dely and others of the land itself...'[6] Foreign visitors have generally tended to identify the religion with the rulers of the country and in the process have ignored the other lower rugs and strata of the

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[2] P. della Valle, *The Travels*, Vol 1, p 30

[3] 'A letter from Suratt in India, in the handwriting of Streynsham Master', in William Hedges, *Diary of William Hedges*, Vol 2, ed. Col Henry Yule, pp. cccviii.

[4] John Fryer, *A New Account*, Vol 1, p. 189.

[5] S.N. Sen ed., *Indian Travels*, p. 21.

[6] Barbosa, *The Book*, pp. 119-20.

population: 'the Moores or Mahumetans are those generally have the rule and government of the countrey...'[7] Ovington remarked:

> Moors get precedence over all other sections in the society, and are appointed to the most eminent stations of honour and trust, are appointed governours of the provinces, and are intrusted with the principal military, as well as civil appointments...for religion, which puts a biass upon the mind, intitles them to court favours, when it carriers a conformity to that of their prince.[8]

General population of the region followed the Sunni sect, within Islam, which was also followed by the Emperor and the nobility. However the Bohra community among the Muslims, who converted to Islam very early at the time of introduction of Islam into the sub-continent were Shias. According to the Mirat-i Ahmadi, Bohras who were the early converts to Islam in the province were Shias, were in majority at Pattan. However when Sultan Muzaffar took possession of the Gujarat, his Sunni followers who had come with him from Delhi, converted the Shia Bohras of the town, but the Bohras of the neighbouring district and villages remained Shias.[9] It further noted that the Bohras were divided into Seven sects: Daudia, Sulaimania, Alia, zaidia, Hajumia, Ismailia, and nazaria.[10] Fryer informs us that there were four prominent law schools prevalent amongst the Muslims of the country: Hanoffi, Shoffi, Hamaleech, and Maluche.[11]

- **The Hindu sects and caste divisions: -**

The Hindu population of the region had been variously commented upon by the European observers of the 16th and the 17th century, for to them the culture, and practices of the Hindus was an attraction which deserved to be noticed and written upon, for the customs and manners of the people were far removed from their own scheme of things and cultural and

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[7] Cited in William Hedges, *Diary*, Vol 2, p. cccix.

[8] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 140.

[9] S.Nawab Ali & C.N.Seddon eds, *Mirat-i Ahmadi Supplement*, p. 109.

[10] Ibid.

[11] John Fryer, *A New Account*, Vol 1, p. 232.

civilizational background. Thus almost every aspect of life associated with the Hindus has been commented upon, ranging from their belief in idol worship, and in sanctity of life, to the various sub sects and castes, which resided in the region, to their eating habits, clothing, and even the marriage ceremonies have been detailed.

According to Peter Della Valle, the entire Gentile population of the region may be divided into many sects or parties of men known and distinguished by the descent or pedigrees, and reckons that they are in total around 84 in number.[12] John Fryer divided the Gentiles or the Hindu population in the region into the categories of Brahmins, Rajputs, Merchants, and labourers, peasants and other menial classes.[13] Mirat gives a more detailed description of the Hindu population in the region. It divides the Hindus into such sects and classes as 'Brahmans, Shevras, Kshatriyas, Rajputs, Banias, Kayasths, Kunbis (farmers) and Kolis; goldsmiths, fuller, oil makers, carpenters, weavers, tailors, dyers, tanners, and deeds.'[14] At another place the division is into Rashboots – ancient princes, gentlemen and souldyers of the naturall Indians, Brahmans – Priests to all the severall sect of Indians, Banians – merchants, tradesmen and brokers, Gentooes – handicraftsmen, as carpenters, smiths, Taylors, Shoemakers, seamen, among others, and Coolies – poore country peasant.[15]

Although the division details of a mix between the traditional four-fold classification of Hindu society and the division of the society based on occupation, the division does bring into light the whole range of caste and sub-castes within the Hindu population inhabiting the region, and the close association between the caste and the occupational groupings within the social structure of the region. Peter Della Valle commented on this inter-relation and says:

> Every one of these (Hindu sects and sub sects) hath a particular name, and also a special office and employment in the commonwealth, from which none of the descendents of that race ever swerve; they never rise or fall, nor

[12] P. Della Valle, *The Travels*, Vol 1, p. 77.

[13] John Fryer, *A New Account*, Vol 1, p. 190.

[14] S.Nawab Ali & C.N. Seddon eds, *Mirat-i Ahmadi Supplement*, p. 110.

[15] Cited in William Hedges, *Diary*, Vol 2, p. cccix

change condition: whence some are husbandmen, other mechanicks, as taylers, shoemakers and like; other factors and merchants such as they whom we call Banians; but they in their language correctly Vania; other shoulders as the Ragiaputi; and thus every one attends and is employed in the proper trade of his family, without any mutation ever happening amongst them, or alliance of one race contracted with another.[16]

However the differentiation of employment in accordance with the caste was not followed in its entirety and strictness as Streynsham Master noted after detailing the caste divisions and the principal occupations traditionally assigned to them:

> These are principall tribes, or as (we) call them castes of the Indians that inhabit Guzzuratt, and these are generally their professions, but that severall of them are of one anothers and many of other professions then I have named, as there are bramans that are shouldyers and merchants soe as well as priests, and there are Banians that are labourers, handicraftsmen (and soe well as merchants) and curer of herbes, and there are weavers of all sects Moores, Hindooes and Parsees.[17]

- **Hindu beliefs and Practices: -**
  - The Beliefs and Rituals: -

Tavernier observes the numerous beliefs current among the Hindus, and says that it was the primary reason behind any lack of unit among the various sects of the Hindus, when faced with a common enemy: '...the idolaters have no union amongst themselves, and that superstitions has introduced so strange a diversity of opinions and customs that they never agree with one another.'[18] For the general European observer, the religious ceremonies of the Hindus

[16] P. Della Valle, *The* Travels, Vol 1, p. 77.

[17] Extract from *Diary of William Hedges*, Vol 2, p. cccx.

[18] J.B. Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol II, pp. 141-42.

and the representation of the gods and goddesses in form of various symbols and objects, was nothing less than gross idolatry. Streynsham Master notes in the year 1672, at Surat, that the Hindus were gross idolaters, and worship many inferior deities and representations of many things, which may be heavenly, or found on Earth, in water, and even those which may only be found under earth or water, for such monsters have never been seen on earth.[19]

Tavernier, in his description of the various forms of idol worship rampant in various regions of the Subcontinent, says that the idolaters of India yields to creatures like cow, the ape, and different monsters and honours which are only due to the true deity.[20] At another place he says that in their gross and Pitiable ignorance the idolaters, like the ancient pagans, regard their gods as men, and even bestow wives upon them, thinking that the love the same things as those in which men take pleasure.[21] Petre Della Valle gives an interesting account of one such instance of idol worship, and representations of gods and goddess with such natural symbols as trees and other material representations, as brought forth in the following account. He records:

> The gentiles of the country hold it (Pipal Tree) in great veneration, for its greatness and age, sitting and honouring it often with their superstitious ceremonies, as dear and dedicated to the goddess of theirs called Parvete, whom they hold to be the wife of Mahadeo, one of their greatest deities. On the trunk of this tree, a little above the ground, they have rudely engraven a round circle, which really hath not any feature of Human countenance, but according to their gross application represents that of their idol. This face they keep painted with a bright flesh colour, and this by a sacred rite of religion...round about it are fastened flowers and abundance of a plant, whose leaves resembles a heart, called here pan...those flowers and leaves about the carved face in the tree, are frequently changed and constantly supplied; and those which at times are taken

[19] Extract from *Diary of William Hedges*, Vol 2, p. cccx.

[20] Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 149.

[21] ibid, p. 150.

away are given as a sacred thing to the people, who came from all parts to visit it.[22]

The modes of worship and the beliefs of the Hindus has often been centre for much debate among the Europeans and the Hindus in the region. Tavernier was of the opinion that although the Hindus show their reverence towards the various idols of different shapes and forms, it is almost certain that they acknowledge one infinite god, all powerful and all wise, creator of heaven and earth, who is omnipresent. They call him in some places Permesser, in others Peremael, as for example towards the coast of Malabar; and Vvistnou in the language of the Brahmans who inhabit the coast of Coromandel.[23] One such instance when the religious beliefs and the rationale behind the idol worship was presented to the Europeans comes out in the discussion between the English factors at Surat and the famous Bania merchant and broker of Surat Bhimjee Pareekh

> We have often times discoursed with these persons and severall others of the Banians that come to our house about matters of religion; when we tell them the grossness of their idolatry, and the great errours in their religion, and shew them the excellency of the Christian religion, to which they answeorus that their Bramans doe allsoe teach them all those virtue which we say our religion doth...and for their idolatry they say they doe not worship those images and idolls which wee see, as we thinke they doe, for they know and believe they are noe gods, but only representations and remembrances, for God they say is a more excellent being tan to abide in a temple or a tree, but those images are there placed that they may the better direct the worship to their deity.[24]

However the European records seldom reflected any change in attitude towards the Hindu modes of worship and beliefs and often ends with a brief on moral upper hand, which

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[22] P della Valle, *The* Travels, Vol 1, p. 35.

[23] J.B. Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 149.

[24] Extract from *Diary of William Hedges*, Vol 2, p. cccxiii.

the Europeans claim to acquire. For example in the above-mentioned discussion itself the brief ends in the following manner:

> In such discourses as this sometimes we drive them soe farr that they deny not but are almost perswaded to be Christians, but for the shame of turning and difficult of bringing all their family over, or leaving them; which indeed are great difficultys, when the applause of men is more sought for then the praise of God.[25]

Of other things the reverence of a Hindu for a Cow, and his strict belief in non-violence, also attracted the attention of the Europeans who some times gave grossly exaggerated accounts of the rituals attached with the cow, and the extent of belief in non-violence towards animals. Duarte Barbosa in his description of the Bania inhabitants at Cambay notes that the Banias buy live insects and birds from the Moors, who threatens to kill them in their presence[26]; or they shrink back while walking on seeing a swarm of ants crossing their way, so as not to harm the ants[27]; or they refuse to light the lamps in their houses during night so as to avoid the death of insects who swarm around the lamp[28]. The extreme case cited by Barbosa was of the hermits who let lice to breed on their body, so that the heathens may be freed of the guilt of being forced to kill them:

> If these men breed many lice they kill them not, but when they trouble them too much they send for certain men, also heathens, who live among them and whom they hold to be men of holy life; they are like hermits living with great abstinence though devotion to their gods. These men louse them, and as many lice they may catch, the place on their heads and breed them on their own flesh, by which they say they do great service to their idol.[29]

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[25] Ibid, p. cccxiii.

[26] ibid, p. 23.

[27] ibid, p. 112.

[28] Ibid, p. 112.

[29] Barbosa, *The Book*, p. 112.

The principal reason behind such staunch a belief in non-violence towards animals or any life form has been sighted by the Europeans in their adherence to the belief in transmigration of soul:

> They imagine or believe that, if they have lived well in this world, the soul, directly the breath has left the body, flies to another man or child of equal or higher rank, and is born again; but if a man has not lived well, the soul passes to a beast – bird, worm, fish, evil or good animal – according to the appointed punishment. This is the reason why they kill no animals, so as not to trouble or disturb the soul within, which would have to journey to some other animal, for they say: Who knows but the soul of my father, mother, sister, or children who may have died, may for their sins be in that animal?[30]

The belief in transmigration of soul from the bodies of the humans to those of the animals depending on the deeds committed during the lifetime was also explained by Tavernier, who also cited this as the reason behind the abstinence of the Hindus from the slaughter of the animals.[31]

- Cremation of the Dead & the Practice of Sati: -

Tavernier records the custom of burning of dead among the Hindus, and says that the cremation generally took place along the banks of the rivers where they wash the bodies of the deceased, so as to complete the cleansing of those sins from which the have not been purified during the life.[32] He records that when an idolater is dead all those of his caste or tribe who are in the place assemble at the house of the deceased, and the body having being placed on a litter covered by some fine cloth, according to the station of the deceased and the property which he

[30] F. Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 79.

[31] Tavernier, Travels,Vol 2, p. 158.

[32] ibid, p. 161.

has left, the accompany it to the place where it is to be burnt, following the litter which is carried on the shoulders of those appointed for that duty.[33]

Another aspect much commented upon and decried by the Europeans in their accounts is that of the practice of Sati, prevalent among upper caste Hindus of the time. Pelsaert notes the practice to be common amongst the Rajputs, and also aped by the Banias and the Khatris in the vicinity of Agra, and as such the regularity was as much as two or three times a week.[34] He accounts one such incident to which he was witness to, and says that the wife of a Rajput who had died decided to commit sati, on her own free will and embraced death very elegantly and gracefully, reflecting her true love for her dead husband.[35]

However other accounts of the practice suggest that that it was committed either due to the social stigma which a widow had to face at times after her husbands death or was forced upon by the relatives, who force the widow to sit on the pyre by intoxicating her, with such drinks as bhang. Tavernier records the miserable condition of the women after the death of the Husband, and says that she is reduced to the position worse than a slave, in the place where previously she was a mistress,[36] and adds that this miserable condition cases her to detest life, and prefer to ascend the funeral pile to be consumed alive with the body of her deceased husband, rather than regarded by all the world for the remainder of her days with opprobrium and infamy.[37]

The official Mughal stand on the subject was one in which the officials try to dissuade the widow from taking such an extreme step, however they were not supposed to say no to any one, if she persisted with the resolve with steely determination: 'a women cannot burn herself with the body of her husband without having received the permission from the governor

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[33] ibid, pp. 161-62.

[34] F. Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 78.

[35] ibid, pp. 78-80.

[36] Tavernier, *Travels*,Vol 2, p. 162.

[37] ibid, pp. 162-63.

of the place, where she dwells, and those governors who are Musalmans, hold this dreadful custom of self destruction in horror, and do not readily give permission'.[38]

In the case of sati, witnessed by Pelsaert, the widow when went to obtain governors permission, the governor used many sound arguments to show that what she proposed to do was a sin, and merely the inspiration of the devil to secure her voluntary death; and because she was a handsome young women of about 18 years of age, he pressed her strongly to dissuade her if possible from her undertaking, and even offered her 500 rupees yearly as long as she should live. He could however produce no effect.[39]

- **The Parsis: -**

The Parsis came to the country from Persia, from whence those that now inhabit here fled at such time as the Mahometan religion was by violence planted in that country...'[40] The first settlement of the Parsis in the country was in the town of Navsari, from where they spread t other places along the coast of Gujarat. The Parsis have been noted to follow all occupations except that of seamen, for they have hitherto held it unlawfull for them to goe to sea because they must then pollute the element of water which they esteem holy, as they doe fire.[41] The community has been identified in our sources as fire worshippers or Sun Worshippers: 'they keep among themselves the practice of fire worship'.[42] Streynsham Master provides us with a more detailed description of the religious affinities of the Parsi community: 'they have a great reverence for fire and many of them will not put it out, but let it extinguish for want of matter; they worship and acknowledge one God almighty and noe image or representations. But only the Sun they doe adore.'[43]

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[38] ibid, p. 163.

[39] F. Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 79.

[40] Extract from *Diary of William Hedges*, Vol 2, p. cccxv.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Jadunath Sarkar, *India of Aurangzeb*, p. 63.

[43] Extract from *Diary of William Hedges*, Vol 2, p. cccxv.

Among the various customs and practices followed by the Parsis the most noted by the observers was the practice of disposing off of their dead. Ovington in particular wrote a graphic and detailed account of the last rites and the ceremonies and manners to be followed by the Parsis during the occasion. He records that the noblest sepulture which they fancy they can bestow upon their desceased friends, is exposing them to be devoured by the fowls of the air, and bestowing their carcasses on the birds of prey.'[44] He further detailed the ceremonies to be followed prior to the burials, and informs us of such practices as making a dog eat a piece of bread from the mouth of the dead person so as to determine the state in which he died, for the assumed that if the dog takes a bite of the bread than the person who died was in a happy state, and if not, then his state of death was very sorrowful.[45]

THE RULING ARISTOCRACY: -

The Mughal nobility in the region enjoyed considerable influence and power over the other social classes, they being the principal aristocratic elements in the society, and also due to their interest and hold over the commerce in the region. They led a lavish life, treating themselves and their retainers with the all possible comforts and rarities, which their power influence and money could get for them. Thus European travellers have almost always remarked on the extent of their power and the misuse to which it is put to by them, in order to coarse merchants and travellers with all the rarities when ever an opportunity presents itself to them. Thus the corruption of the Governors at port cities of Cambay and Surat was the constant complaint of the merchant communities of the region and of the European visitors to the region. Mandelslo commenting on the governor of Surat says that it was a practice for the governor of the city to make passengers or merchants coming from foreign ports part with any commodity for which he took fancy at the price which he thought fit to put upon it[46], and Mandelslo had to part with a bracelet of yellow Amber to which the governor took fancy. At another place he records that the Governor of Gujarat at the time of his visit, Azam Khan was worth in money and

[44] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 220.

[45] Ibid

[46] M.S. Commissariate, ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, pp. 2-3.

household stuffs ten crore of rupees or fifty million crowns.[47] Martin described the wealth in possession of the Governor of Gujarat Muhammad Amin Khan at the time of his death in July 1682: 'Muhammad Amin Khan had left several millions of cash in silve, furniture, valuables, carpets, anfd incredible though this may sound, his hoards of diamonds and other polished and unpolished precious stones weighed as much as 51 livers. His stable housed 800 horses sand 100 elephants...'[48]

- **The Native Ruling class – Rajputs: -**

The aristocratic elements within the Hindu population of the region primarily composed of the Rajput rajas and zamindars, who attained such rights over a period of time, emerging as important counter balance against the ambitious Muslim nobility under the Gujarat Sultans and then under the Mughals. Pelsaert refers to them as the inhabitants of hills and who were excellent soldiers, and says that they are bold and courageous people, determined and loyal.[49] Tavernier counts the Rajputs along with the Khatris, as the second caste among the Hindus, and only one among the idolaters who are brave and distinguish themselves in the profession of arms.[50]

The Rajput rajas in the region, of which much details have been discussed in the Ain-i Akbari, and other Persian chronicles of the period such as Mirat-i Ahmadi, were subjugated by the Mughals in the course of their campaigns in Gujarat during the course of 16th and early years of 17th century. However at the grass root level of administration they proved to be indispensable, for the local peasantry and population was attached to them and their cause by the ties of clan and land, they being the hereditary zamindars. It was primarily for this reason that they were incorporated within the Mughal administrative set-up and in nobility at various levels, from ordinary soldiers attached to the contingent of their rajas and zamindars to the prominent nobles entrusted with the administration of important provinces. Tavernier records that all the Rajas of whom he had spoken of belonged to this caste, and were like so many petty kings whose

[47] ibid, p. 31.

[48] Lotika Varadarajan, *India in the Seventeenth century*, Vol 2, part 1, p. 844.

[49] F. Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 78.

[50] J.B. Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 148.

disunion had made them subject to the Great Mogul however they were highly recompensed for their services and receive large and honourable salaries.[51] Streynsham Master says that the

> Rashboots are the antient princes, Gentlemen, and Souldyers of the naturall Indians, of which there are many considerable Rajas and Princes at this day, who have large dominions of their owne not subject to the Mogull, though most or all the rajas themselves are alsoe servant of the Mogull and take his Pay, and soe are put into great governments, as Raja Jeswien Sing was the Governour of Ahmadavad.[52]

Pelsaert commenting on the appearance of the Rajputs says that the men are, 'short in stature and ugly. Mounted or on foot, the have no weapon other than a short spear, with shield, sword and dagger...'[53] Peter Mundy describes the appearance of the Rajputs whom he encountered on the way to Burhanpur from Surat in following manner: '...on horseback all well armed and provided with guns, swords, lances, bowes, and arrows...'[54]

THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES: -

- **The Brahmans: -**

Regarding the religious beliefs and ceremonies of the Hindus, the general impressions of the foreigners was that they were engrossed in idol worship, and have blind faith in the sayings and deeds of their priest or Brahmans, who perform various rites and ceremonies on their behalf. Tavernier called Brahmans, the successor of the ancient Brachmanes or philosophers of India, and says that the caste is the most noble of all among the Hindus, because amongst them the priests and the ministers of laws were selected.[55] Mirat-I Ahmadi lists 84 classes of Brahmans, and says that they were the best known of more than 100 classes.[56]

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[51] ibid

[52] Cited in William Hedges, *Diary*, Vol 2, pp. cccx-cccxi.

[53] F. Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 78.

[54] Peter Mundy, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 41.

[55] J.B. Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol. 2, p. 142.

[56] S.Nawab Ali and C.N. Seddon eds, *Mirat-i Ahmadi Supplement*, p. 113.

Streynsham Master notes that although most of the Brahmans, irrespective of sects and opinions, were descendent from the Brahmans of the ancient times, there were many who were of other tribes, but have been dedicated or made an offering to this office by their parents, and some out of their own voluntary will.[57]

The principal occupation of these was to make offering to the deities on temples for the public in general, and pray, bless and preach their doctrines of morality, as given in ancient scriptures to the general public.[58] Tavernier notes that, they were well versed in the ancient law books, to the reading of which they generally apply themselves to and skilled in observation of stars, and never miss in their prediction about a celestial event such as a Solar eclipse.[59] Pelsaert also notes that the Brahmans were generally good astronomers, familiar with the course of the stars, and usually reckoned to foretell weather and also the timing of the eclipses.[60]

Other than being the priests and the spiritual guides to the other ranks in the Hindu social set-up, they also acted as astronomers, and astrologers, applying their knowledge of stars, planetary motions and of the ancient scriptures for making predictions regarding individuals. Some of the Brahmans engaged in this activity were able to carve fortune out of making predictions. They were so famous that even the Mughal emperors and nobles of the realm employed their services to determine auspicious hours for undertaking any venture of importance. Pelsaert while detailing the various facets of Hindu religion, informs us that there are one or two such men (fortune tellers) with a great reputation in the city; indeed the present king (Jahangir) kept one at court, whose prophesies, or most of them, proved quite accurate.[61] The following statement of Pelsaert can gauge the importance of their prediction in the every day life:

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[57] Cited in William Hedges, *Diary*, Vol 2 , p. cccx.

[58] ibid, p. cccxii.

[59] J.B. Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol. II, p. 142.

[60] F. Pelsaert, *Remonstrante*, p. 77.

[61] Ibid

> The Brahmans have...secured a great reputation, and they have now acquired such influence over great men, and then over all Moslems, that they wile not undertake any journey until they have enquired what day or hour is auspicious for the start; and when they return from a journey, or come to take up an appointment, they will not enter the city until the suitable day or moment has arrived.[62]

Pelsaert further noted that as a result of the faith shown in these fortune-tellers, even the poor people of the city have begun to show blind faith in their predictions:

> Many of this rabble now frequent the streets book in hand, to tell men their fortune, and, though their predictions have little value, the are believed by the poor, for they always get excellent measure, and their questions are met with ambiguous replies.[63]

Among them were to be found many doctors, who due to their knowledge of medicines and texts related to these, were held to be in great respect and their advice sought by almost every one in case of diseases or injuries. Ovington notes 'though theology is the proper profession of the Brahmins yet some of them are skilled in Arithmetick, Astrology and Physick; and make pretensions to the prediction of events, the calculation of nativities, and cure of Diseases'.[64] Other than them were the mendicants or Fakirs, who roamed in the countryside as recluse, and claiming to possess extraordinary powers. Europeans inform us that hey were held in great reverence by the Indians, due to their performing extraordinary magical feats, which the Indians thought to be the result of divine powers being bestowed upon them. However these were nothing but simple and cheap magic tricks being performed expertly to fool the eyes of the onlookers.

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[62] Ibid

[63] Ibid

[64] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 205.

- **Fakirs or Mendicants: -**

The fakirs or mendicants were the wandering ascetics who were much revered by the local Hindu and Muslim population of the region. They were identified by Tavernier as the Musalman Dervishes, who move together I groups under the head of their leaders visiting various shrines and places of worship much revered by the people of the country, and performing acts of extreme penance and self mortification. European travellers to the region have identified them as performers of acts of self-mortification quite unnatural in behaviour. Thus Tavernier mention of fakirs retiring into graves for more than 10 days and sometimes even a month without any food or after and with only a small hole on the ceiling for the light to come in. 'Curiosity led me to go to see this penitent in company...he remained seated like our tailors without changing his position either by day or night.'[65] Another of the acts noted by him was of person who had spent many years without having lying down either by day or night; or of a mendicant who never took his hand down, always keeping them raised towards sky, and in many other positions contrary to the natural attitudes of Human body.

Although it is difficult to believe in all the acts explained and detailed by the travellers in their account, since these written with a view on the audience back home were treated with obvious exaggeration so as to present a defined and negative picture of the 'barbaric' East in comparison to a more civilized West. However these mendicants were without doubt much revered and treated by the native inhabitants who believe them to be in possession of supernatural powers, and thus sought their blessings by offering them food and clothing.

MERCANTILE COMMUNITIES: -

- **Muslim Merchants: -**

The Muslim merchants also constitute an important and powerful section within the coastal social set-up, principally due to their engagement in the overseas commerce, for the Muslims it has been remarked that while inland trade was mostly in the hands of banias, Muslim merchants dominated the overseas trade. The Muslim community within itself was not a

[65] J.B. Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 2, p. 156.

homogenous group and consists of the local Bohras, and the foreigners such as One of the most prominent communities among the Muslims were the Bohras, who according to Martin were converted to Islam. 'There is a community in the Mughal Empire called the Bohras. It is said that they are of Hindu origin. There are many good merchants among these'.[66] The most notable merchant among the Muslim community, during early 17th century was Mir Jaffar – a leading merchant of Surat around early seventeenth century. One of the greatest of the leading Muslim merchants of the time was Haji Zahid Beg who also occupied the post of shahbandar of Surat in 1629. The raid in his house and the immense wealth looted by the Marathas during the raid of 1664 by Shivaji has been noted in detail by the English factors. Abdul Gafur came into prominence in the commercial life of Surat in the later half of seventeenth century. He is extensively talked about in the European records of late seventeenth century in relation to the damage caused to his ships by the European pirates operating in the region.[67]

- **The Banyas: -**

The section within the mercantile population of the coastal Gujarat, which caught the eyes of almost all the European observers were the 'Banya merchants' – a group which was not a homogenous one but encompassed the whole range of mercantile operators from small merchants, to Bankers and Brokers for the big merchants, officials, nobles, princes, and European companies to the so called Merchant princes of the time. Europeans tended to classify this whole range under one category, primarily on account of their assessment of their religious practices, and were of the view that they were one of the most cunning Mercantile classes ever encountered by them, and not even the Jews who were infamous for their commercial practices, were able to come to the terms with the Banyans.

Tavernier talks of banians as the people, 'who attach themselves to trade, some being shroffs, i.e. money changers or bankers, by whose agency the merchants buy and sell. The members of this caste are so subtle and skillful in trade that... they could give lessons to the

[66] Lotika Varadarajan, *India in Seventeenth Century*, Vol 2, part 1, p. 951.

[67] Ashin Das Gupta in his work 'Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat 1700-1750' talks in length on the influence of Abdul Gafur on the commercial life of the region and his dealings with the European companies on the issue of piracy, pp. 94-133.

most cunning Jews.'[68] Mandelslo described the Banyas as a hard working class, attached to trade and merchandise with an extraordinary devotion towards religious matters.[69] However the most interesting observations were those of John Fryer, who equated them with fleas, 'who like horse leaches, hang besides you till they have sucked both sanguinem and succum (money)'.[70] Describing them he writes:

> As soon as you have set your foot on shore, they crowd in the service, interposing between you and all civil respects, as if you had no other business but to be guild; so that unless you have some, to make your way through them, they will interrupt your going and never leave till they have drawn out something for their advantage.[71]

Various other authorities have described the community in its various aspects. Geleynssen de Jongh, the Dutch Factor to Gujarat, has written an interesting account of the social life, rituals, and religious practices of the Merchant communities of Gujarat. Banian community from his account appeared as a well organized and a well knit community engaged in money exchange business, and lending capital to merchants on usury. Writing on the city of Ahmadabad, de Jongh noticed:

> Money exchangers who are all banyas live mostly in city than the other places. They deal in exchange and fix rates of exchange against the bills of exchange. The discount will be more at one place than at other. The bills of exchange are greatly in vogue owing to lack of safety on routes.[72]

The community within itself was divided into numerous sects and sub sects. He informs us that banians are divided into 60 or 70 sects, but of these points out that only four were important: - **1**.Saravaks; **2**.Samvats; **3**.Yogis; **4**.Bishnu (Vaishnav?). The Mirat-i Ahmadi refers

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[68] Tavernier, *Travels,* Vol 2, pp. 143-44.

[69] M.S. Commissariate ed., *Mandelslo's Travels*, p. 9.

[70] John Fryer, *New Account*, Vol 1, p. 83.

[71] ibid, p. 84.

[72] Jawaid Akhtar, 'Merchant communities of Gujarat during the 17th century, as described by Geleynssen de Jongh', paper presented in Indian history Congress, 53rd session, 1992-93, Warangal

to the presence of 84 sub castes of Banians in Gujarat.[73] J Ovington says: 'Among the banians are reckoned 24 castes, or sects, who both refrain from an indiscriminate mixture in marriage and from eating together in common'.[74]

Banyas covered a variety of mercantile functions. Many as already said acted as moneylenders or shroffs and bankers. However the most conspicuous of all the activities in which Banias engaged themselves in, was that of their role as 'brokers' in the Indian commercial scenario. John Fryer has commented on their role as broker, and on the general manner of their trade in following words:

> 'At the time of shipping they present themselves to the governor of Surat and obtain license to open a mart here (Swally port), which they make the Europeans pay dearly for. Yet such is their policy that without these, neither you nor natives themselves shall do any business. Though they were worse brokers than Jew, if they be not spawn of them, the rechabites that would drink no wine. They generally are the poorer sort, and set on by richer to trade with the seamen for the meanest thing they bring; and not withstanding they take them at their own rates, gets well enough in exchange of goods with them. They are the absolute map of sordidness, faring hardly, and professing fairly, to entrap the unwary; enduring severely fowl words, affronts and injuries, for the future hope of gain. Expert in all the studied art of thriving and insinuation, so that lying, dissembling, cheating, are their masterpieces. Their whole desire is to have money pass through their fingers, to which a great part is sure to stick. For they well understand the constant turning of cash amounts, both to the credit and profit to him that is so occupied, which these banians are sensible of, otherwise they would not be so industrious to enslave themselves'.[75]

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[73] S.Nawab Ali and C.N.Seddon eds, *Mirat-i Ahmadi Supplement*, pp. 117-18

[74] J. Ovington, *A voyage to Surat*, p. 168.

[75] John Fryer, *A New Account*, Vol 1, p. 83.

European companies used the services of these brokers for every possible service they wanted to avail to. John Fryer informs that, 'out of the local banyas, are brokers for the company, and are allowed 2% on all bargains, besides what they squeeze secretly out of the price of the thing brought; which cannot be well understood for want of knowledge in their language.'[76] Francois Martin talked about the hold and influence of the Bora brothers who acted as brokers for the French company at Surat.[77]

These were the merchants powerful enough who by shear strength of their commerce and their influence over local mercantile and producing communities as well as over the Mughal officials to a certain extent, commanded the respect of the local community as well as of the European companies.

- **The Parsi Mercantile community: -**

Parsis like banyas were found in closely knit units. The leading Parsi merchant of the time was Rustamji Manekji, who was the broker for Dutch before 1681, and then figured prominently as brokers to Portuguese and New English Company. Another leading broker belonging to the community was Bhimji Parekh[78], who was given a medal and a chain of gold for his services to the company. His family had a long history of working as brokers for the English company, through out the 17th century and their successes and difficulties are generally characteristic of the mercantile broker community of the time. Martin notes the dealing of the European companies with him, in order to broke a deal with the Mughal govt. for relaxing the custom duties on the European companies, which had been raised to 3 ½ percent from previous 2 ½ percent. Parekh promised the companies to bring about an agreement and asked for an amount of Rs. 21,000 to broke the deal.[79]

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[76] ibid, p. 85.

[77] Martin explicitly states that they were Hindus, hence should not be confused with the Bohra community who were Muslims

[78] Lotika Varadarajan identifies the Parsi merchant mentioned by Martin as Bhimji Parekh, Lotika Varadarajan, *India of Seventeenth Century*, Vol 2, part 1, n 30, p 829,

[79] ibid

Virji Vora the leading Parsi merchant of the region exercised considerable influence over the commercial life of Surat during greater part of 17th century. English factors at a consultation held at Surat on 8 April, 1634 noted that '...the potency of Virji Vora (who had been the usual merchant and is now become the sole monopolist of European commodities) is observed to bear such a sway amongst the inferior merchants of this town, that when they would often times buy (and give greater price) they are still restrained not daring to betray their intents to his knowledge and their own sufferance, in so much that time and price is still in his will and at his own disposure'.[80] So much perturbed the factors were at the time by the grip of Virji Vora over the market of various goods at Surat that they advanced it as one of the reasons for their appeal to the court of directors to transfer the presidency from Surat to Ahmadabad.

> Here in Suratt all merchants, as well as town dwellers as those that come from abroad, are so over awed by the overgrowne greatness of Verge Vora that, if it be a commoditie which he is accustomed or doth intend to buy, no man dares look upon it, nor the broker (even our owne, which have sole dependence upon your businesse) dare not accompanie such a merchant into our house; from whence it comes to passé that although we sould the fine corrall unto Tapidas almost two years. Since, which he not dareing to avowch, for feare of Verge Vora, continues still in our possession in our names, there hath not been in all this time one man that hath desired to see or buy it butt here it lies still unrequetted and unregarded.[81]

The power of Virji Vora can be gauged from the fact that he was one of the main signatories in the treaty signed between the Mughal officials at Surat and the English, which established the English position at Surat in clearer terms.[82]

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[80] William Foster ed., *English Factories, 1634-36*, p. 24.

[81] ibid, p. 218.

[82] Agreement signed on 7 Sep 1624. Signatories: Saif Khan (Governor); Qazi Mahmud Qasim; Jam Quli Beg (captain of the castle); Ishaq Beg; Ali Hasan; Nazmuddin; Ali Quli Sadr; Ali Quli Mahmud; Muhamad Ali Isphani; Ali Mashadi; Saadat Yar; Mutawalli Mahmud; Mahmud Ibrahim; Haji Abdul Nabi; Hari Vaisya; Virji Vora., William Foster ed., *English Factories, 1624-29*, pp. 27-30.

ARTISANS, WORKERS, CARRIERS & OTHER SECTIONS: -

The major portion of the population of coastal Gukarat comprises of the workers and artisans engaged in such activities as carpenters, smiths, tailors, shoemakers, seamen, which were primarily industrial or commercial in nature. Other than these were the ordinary peasants variously styled as Kolis, Kunbees and Kathis engaged in agricultural activities as sowing and harvesting of crops. Master identified the Peasants as the Coolees, which are the poore country peasants that plough and soe, and gather corne.[83]

The composition of the section was heterogeneous in character when seen in terms of religious affiliation of the members, and constituted of both the Hindus and Muslims. Most of these were originally the native inhabitants converted over generation of Muslim rule in the region. However, conversion to Islam did not always resulted in elevation of the person to higher social strata, and at times meant little when it comes to the daily life and practices to be followed by the converts. Streynsham Master noted that many of the Hindooes that have turned Moores retaine many of their idolatrous Customes.[84] Master identified these communities as belonging to the fourth and the fifth division of the Hindu caste based social division.[85]

- **Seamen or Lascars: -**

The region with a strong mercantile tradition was home to some of the most competent shipping communities of the sub continent, proficient in navigating ships across the Indian seas. These form the bulk of crew on board the Indian ships sailing for the ports of west Asia and to south East Asia. De Laet informs us of the community of seamen residing in the town of Rander, called Naites.[86] Ovington called the seamen by the name of Lascars.[87] Alexander Forbes informs us about the ancestry of seamen who were resident at Ghoga, and says:

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[83] Extract from *Diary of William Hedges*, Vol 2, p. cccx.

[84] ibid, p. cccix.

[85] ibid

[86] Joannes De Laet, *De Imperio Magini Mogolis, etc., 1631*, transl. J.S.Hoyland, annotated by S.N.Banerjee as *The Empire of the Great Mogul*, Bombay, 1928, p 18

[87] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 173.

> Its seamen, called Ghogarees, partly of Mohumedan faith, and partly Kolee, or Hindoo, the descendants of the Navigators fostered by the King of Unhilwara...still maintain their ancient reputation, and form the best and most trusted portions of every Indian crew that sail the sea under the flag of England.[88]

- **Carriers of Goods or Banjaras: -**

These cariers of goods across the country have variously been termed in our sources as banjaras, or 'Manaris' as Tavernier called them. Describing them he says, 'They never dwell in houses and take along with them their women and children. Some of them posses 100 oxen others more or less, and they all have a chief, who acts as prince'.[89] Peter Mundy called a moving assemblage of banjaras a 'tanda'. 'Theis Banjaras carrie all their household along with them, as wives and children, one tanda consisting of many families. Their course of life is somewhat like carriers, continually driving from place to place...there may bee in such a tanda 6 or 700 persons, men, women and children'.[90] Regarding the community structure and organization with in the banjaras community Tavernier gives an interesting account:

> In order to enable reader to understand this manner of carrying in India, it should be remarked that among the idolaters of this country there are four tribes, whom they call Manaris, of which each numbers around one hundred thousand souls. These people dwell in tents, as I have said, and have no other trade but to transport provisions from one country to another. The first of these tribes has to do with corn only, the second with rice, the third with pulse, and the fourth with salt, which it obtains from Surat, and even from as far as Cape Comorin.[91]

However, Tavernier's statement on the caste and customs of these carriers cannot be taken on its face value, as one cannot say with the certainty that all the banjaras were Hindus,

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[88] Forbes, p 245

[89] J.B. Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, p. 33.

[90] Peter Mundy, *Travels*, Vol 2, pp. 95-96.

[91] J.B. Tavernier, *Travels*, Vol 1, pp. 33-34.

and as Irfan Habib has shown that there were other communities, such as Muslims also involved in the profession. Moreover the carriers were not always restricting themselves to a particular commodity, and in-fact anything that yielded profit was dealt with.[92]

- **Halalchors: -**

They constitte the lowest strata or ladder of the social structre in the region. Primarily employed as cleaners of waste in the houses of other inhabitants and in the city, they were looked down upon socially, and were segregated from the rest of the community, however their importance in the city life of the region cannot be under estimated. Employed as the cleaners in the houses, streets, carrying of dirt and dung, and in washing of dead bodies and conveying them to the place of cremation their role can hardly be negated.[93] Ovington tells us that the term Halalchors signified in Persian language the Eat-alls or Eaters at large.[94] He also provides us with a detailed description of the social status of these people and the extent of segregation they had to under go during the period:

> These despicable persons take all in good part, cringe and bow to all they pass by, Eat whatever is offered them from any hand, and go through with their drudgery with out noise and concern. The halalchors industriously avoids the touching of ay persons for fear of offence; he is separated from all the rest of the casts, as a thing unclean; for if he happens to come too near a banian, he defiles him by his touch, and puts him to trouble of some purification, to wash off the Defilement he contracted upon it. Therefore are they shunned by all, and endeavour to keep at a distance by all.[95]

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[92] Irfan Habib, 'Merchant Communities in Pre-colonial India', in James D. Tracy ed., *The Rise of Merchant Empire: Long Distance Trade in Early Modern world 1350-1750*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 377.

[93] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 223.

[94] ibid

[95] ibid

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS IN A COASTAL SOCIETY: -

The environmental conditions existing in an area, determines to a large extent the conditions of survival and the nature of social formation and the material culture which took shape in the region. This is moreover apparent in case of medieval social and cultural formations, which took shape in the various regions of the subcontinent. The role of Environmental factors in determining such livelihood concerns as the food, clothing and shelter, and even the occurrence and nature of the diseases and pestilences in the region. At another plane the natural conditions played a determining influence in shaping of the cultural, and religious makeup of the area

- **Shelter: -**

The nature of shelter sough in a particular area was to a large extent determined by the availability of building material and the climatic conditions existing in the region. Since climate for most part of the year remained hot and sultry the construction of houses in the region was generally on the pattern, which allowed much air to ventilate them, and were constructed primarily of the such building material as stone and lime quarried from the mines of the region. The Khulasat-ut Tawarikh informs us that the houses in the region were generally made up of bricks and lime, with tilled roofs; with some being made on broad stone foundation, with broad passages. The buildings were also some times covered with lime and mortar in such a way that pure and clean rain water enters into the cave which has been made like a tank, to be used latter for drinking and other daily use for rest of the year.[96]

With the exception of some of the buildings constructed of lime and mortar and stone, most of the houses were constructed of bamboo reeds and palm leaves belonging to common people. Fr. Manuel Godinho describes the houses in the city of Surat in following words: 'The buildings are mostly unpretentious and covered with olai [interlaced Palm leaves].[97] Ovington also seconds the opinion with regard to the houses of the poors, and described them as

[96] Jadunath Sarkar, *India of Aurangzeb*, p. 61.

[97] Manuel Godinho, *Intrepid Itinerant: Manuel Godinho and his journey from India to Portugal in 1663*, transl. Vitalio lobo and Correia-Afonso, Bombay, 1990, p. 47.

having walls only Bambous at a fot distance with reeds wove through them; and their covering is only cajan or palm leaves of trees, which gives them the common name of Cajan Houses.[98]

Other then these dwellings of the poor and ordinary people the cities did possessed of stately houses constructed properly of stone and other building materials. Edward Terry wrote about the houses at Ahmadabad in the following manner:

> Their buildings are generally base, except it be in the their cities, wherein I have observed many faire piles. Man of their homes are built high and flat on the toppe, from whence in the cold seasons of the day they take in fresh ayre. They have no chimnies to their houses, for they never use fire but to dresse their meate. In their upper roomes the have many lights and doores to let in the ayre, but use no glasse. The material for their best buildings are bricke or stone, well squared and composed; which I have observed in Amadavar.[99]

Thevenot informs us that the houses generally were built of lime and brick because stone was not easily available and the timber used was generally brought down from the forests southwards around Daman, where the teak wood was available in plenty.[100] However many of these belonging to the merchants were rather ungainly in appearance: 'there are however some noble and stately buildings, belonging to the leading personages, which are not at all impressive outwardly'.[101] The travellers visiting the region have observed the poor construction of houses in the cities of the region. Ovington attributed such a state of affair with regard to the construction of houses to the attempts made by the inhabitants to conceal their wealth, lest it should prove too powerful a temptation to the Avarice of the Mogul.[102]

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[98] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 130.

[99] W. Foster ed., *Early Travels*, p. 300.

[100] S.N. Sen ed., *Indian Travels*, p. 22.

[101] Manuel Godinho, *Intrepid Itinerant*, p. 47.

[102] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 130.

- **Dietary Habits: -**

The dietary habits of the various sections o f population in the region have been noted and observed with much detail by the European travellers. They have generally tended to segregate and identify the communities in accordance with their eating habits. Thus the Muslims or the Moors were the people who had no problem in eating flesh, with only exception being the pork: 'these eat highly of all flesh Dumpoked, which is baked with spice in butter; Pillow, a stew of rice and butter with flesh, fowl or fish; fruits, Achars or pickles, and sweetmeats'.[103] Similarly the Hindus, Parsis and Jains were identified and sometimes confused with belonging to one religious identity due to their adherence to vegetarianism, and the respect they showed towards the living beings. Within the Hindu population itself were many castes and sub groupings who had no problems in eating meat, except that of the cow; and this thus formed the basis of segregation between a Brahman, Banya and a Rajput:

> The Rashboote will generally eat flesh of goates, and henns and fish and many of them drinke wine, but esteem a great and unpardonable offence to kill a cow, or to eat any such flesh as beef or vrale, the Bramans many of them will doe as the Rashbootes, but there be many of them that are alsoe very severe in ther dyetts and habits, will eat noe thing that has had live in it, nor drinke wine or any intoxicating thing, nay some there are that will not eat corne because it hath the seed in it selfe, and will produce it like, soe they feed only upon milke, which they esteem the most innocent of all foods, and for that reason have the cow in soe very great reverence.[104]

On the nature of food taken by the Indians Ovington came up with a highly informative remark. He discussed the various sorts of fruits and dishes that were savoured by the Indians in accordance with the climate of the region, which for the most part of the year remained hot and sultry. He thus mentions of such fruits as Grapes and Mangoes, which were eaten in vast quantities by the Indians and Europeans, as well for security of their health as for

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[103] John Fryer, *New Account*, Vol 1, p 234

[104] Extract from *Diary of William Hedges*, Vol 2, p. cccxi.

the pleasure and delight.'[105] He also mentions of Cucumber, which was so prepared and digested by the Sun's heat, that the Banians, without endangering their health will feed upon them as plentifully as we do upon Apples.[106] The watermelons were also the refreshing and cooling fruit of the summer season.[107] Ovington also makes one of the earliest remarks upon the intake of tea and coffee by the Banians, which they did to revive their wasted spirits, any part of the day.[108]

Another preparation of the Indians described with interest by Ovington was Dahi (Dye). Describing it he wrote:

> Dye is a particular innocent kind of diet fed upon by the Indians for the most part about noon. It is sweet milk turned thicked, mixed with boiled rice and sugar, and is very effectual against the rage of fevers and of fluxes...early in the morning or late at night, the seldome touch it, because they esteem it too cool for their stomachs and Nocturnal delights.[109]

Another diet quite common amongst the Indians was the Kitcheree or a preparation made by boiling small round pea or Dol and rice together. Jahangir in his memoirs made particular reference of this dish and the manner of its preparation; and informs of his liking towards it and that he ordered it to be served to him during the days of abstinence.[110] The Europeans found it to be very strengthening a food, although not very savoury and the sailors feed upon this once or twice a week to get over the exhaustion and illness they had suffered over the long voyages; and such days of abstaining from having meat and eating Kitcheree were named by the sailors as Bannian days.[111]

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[105] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 179.

[106] ibid

[107] ibid

[108] ibid

[109] ibid, p. 183.

[110] Jahangir, *Tuzuk-I Jahangiri*, Vol 1, p 419

[111] ibid

- **Manner of Dress: -**

The dresses worn by the inhabitants of the region although were consummate with the social status and wealth of the wearer, however the nature of fabrics used was to a large extent determined by the climatic conditions of the region. The sultry hot conditions of Gujarat did not allow men to wear clothes made of heavy stuffs for the heat at times get unbearable. This was one of the principal reasons for the Europeans who came to the country to adopt the dressing habits of the inhabitants.

- **Diseases: -**

The common diseases in the country reported in the records of the period were dysenteries, fevers and venereal complaints.[112] John Fryer[113] writing on the diseases peculiar to the region informs us that the diseases reign according to the season and elaborating further, he wrote that the dry season was good for health as no fever could entrench itself in body and the season generally was good for digestion and excretion. In the variable seasons such diseases as Coughs and Catarrhs, Tumours of the mouth and throat, Rheumatisms, and intermitting fevers rage. He also informs us that Small Pox also was a dreaded disease, particularly for the youths. During seasons of extreme heats, the Cholera Morbus, inflammation of the eyes by dust and the fiery temper of the air can be caught of. In the Rainy season, one should be careful of such as Fluxes, Apopleixes, and all distempers of Brains, as well as Stomach.

Ovington again provides us with information on the common diseases[114], which infected the English men who visited the country and were not used to the harsh climate or immune from the diseases peculiar to the land. He lists fevers as the most common distemper that destroys the most in India, and with which the Europeans with difficulty escape. Cholera or Mordechine as he named it was cased by excessive eating particularly of meat and fish together. The most peculiar distemper with which the Europeans were infected in the region was Barbeers or a kind of paralysis caused by sleeping in the open, or due to overexposure to the North East

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[112] Joannes De Laet, *De Imperio Magini Mogolis*, p. 85.

[113] John Fryer, *New Account*, Vol 1, pp. 285-86.

[114] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, pp. 204-05.

winds. The infected person becomes incapable to use or move their hands and feets. The exposure of the limbs to cold vapours of the night, and negligence in securing them from the mist, which fell in those parts, was given as chief reason behind contacting the distemper.

Among some of the most peculiar diseases recorded in the region mention may be made of Bubonic Plague whose first recorded out burst in the country was noted in the year 1616. The disease caused wide spread deaths and panic in the region and even Jahangir's camp was not left untouched. The year 1682-83 also saw an occurrence of Bubonic Plague during which saw great death in the city of Surat. Ovington recorded an instance when on a single day around hundred gentiles were carried off the gates to be cremated, and he puts the mortality rate to about 300 a day.[115]

- **Environment & Culture: -**

The continuous engagement of the local inhabitants with such natural determinants as the Ocean, the wind and rainfall in the region resulted in considerable influence being exercised by these on the local culture and ritual and religious outlook of the local populace.

Being a primarily commercial society with majority of the inhabitants depending on the oceanic commerce and shipping activities in their vicinity for their subsistence and survival, the influence of ocean on the lives of the inhabitants was considerable. The constant concern for the safety of their ships and merchandise on high seas from storms and winds reflected itself in certain activities of religious and cultural importance, which ere performed by the people of the coast. The primary purpose behind such offering was to request their gods to pacify the sea and ensure the safety of their ships, merchandise and kinsmen who were on high seas, engaged in commerce and trade. Thus John Fryer while in Bombay noted the peculiar practice of offering coconuts to the ocean among the Banyas of the region[116]. Francois Martin records the rite of offering coconuts into the river Tapti by the Hindus, marking the beginning of the sailing season. He also informs that the practice continue to take place annually with many

[115] J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, p. 203.

[116] John Fryer, *New Account*, Vol 1, p. 7.

leading banyas with their ships on high seas joining in, despite an injunction against it by Aurangzeb.[117]

Again, travellers to the area have noted various practices adopted on native ships to ensure favourable wind conditions on voyages and for safety from the sea storms. Abbe Carre travelling on a native Muslim ship from Surat to Bandar Abbas noted the various rituals and ceremonies and acts of superstitions performed at the behest of the Nakuda of the ship, so as to please the God to send a favourable breeze.[118]

There were also prayers and rites undertaken to ensure normal monsoon rainfall for prosperous agricultural and industrial production and growth. That the whole pattern of life, the subsistence base, the activities of commerce were dependent on the rains is evident throughout the course of or discussion. In such as scenario, the Monsoon rains were venerated and given eminent place in the customs and manners of the times. Thus we come across several references to the customs and rites being performed and observed with regard to instigate the rain gods for timely arrival of rains.

Ain-i Akbari, records an instance or a phenomenon observed in the town of Mul Mahdeo on the coast of Kathiawar some distance from the port of Porbandar:

> 'Every year on a certain day before the rainy season, a bird called Mukh appears. It is somewhat smaller than pigeon, with a coarser beak and pied in colour. It alights on the temple, disports itself for a while, and then rolls over and dies. On this day, the people of the city assemble and burns various kinds of perfume and from the proportions of black and white in the plumage of the bird, they calculate the extent of the coming rainfall, the black portending rain, the white draught'.[119]

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[117] Lotika Varadarajan, *India in Seventeenth Century*, Vol 2, Part 1, p 916

[118] Abbe' Carre', *The Travels*, Vol 2, p

[119] Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol 2, p. 253.

The faith reflected in such perceived supernatural occurrences by the inhabitants of the region, and their curiosity for gaining a prior knowledge regarding the occurrence and extent of rainfall, does brings into focus the extent to which the rains have influenced the lives of the people in the region.

Streynsham Master also records the procession taken out at Surat, under the leadership of the governor and the general fast kept by the inhabitants of the city, for the rains, which had not fallen during the year:

> Upon a great dearth or want of raine, I have known the governour of the towne appoint a day for a generall fast and prayer for raine, and then he had all the moors of the note in the towne have gone a procession barefoote almost a mile out of the towne to a saints tomb, and there the have all very solemnly said their prayers and returned, the very cattle being alsoe forced to fast and not suffered to goe out of towns gates for some hours, neither to feed nor water.[120]

Alexander Forbes in his work had recorded many other such methods prevalent among the inhabitants of the region to induce rains. In facts he records a verse common in use among the women of Gujarat to effect that if rain do not fall in the first five days of Shrawun, a famine will ensue:

> If in the first five days of Shrawun,
>
> The cloud-king do not begin to scatter his drops,
>
> Husband, do you go to Malwa,
>
> I shall go home to my father's house.[121]

Forbes further adds that in case of failure of the rains the Hindu population of the region attributed to the wrath of the rain god Indra, and thence they sought to pacify him with

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[120] Extract from *Diary of William Hedges*, Vol 2, p. cccxi.

[121] Alexander K. Forbes, *Rasmala*, p 605

various methods as leaving their habitat for a day as waste and cook their food outside their settlement.[122] Another method which he noted was relying of Hindus on the powers of a person called Bhoowos, who were supposed to be inspired by the local devi, and behaved in the manner as if performing mediation between the devi and the devotees; and if the rain falls the devotees thought it to be inspired by the powers of the devi.[123] On such occasion some times the Koonbee and Bheel women parade the streets singing songs devoted to rain god inducing him to send rain:

> The cultivator has abandoned the plough, O! Meyhoola,
>
> In pity to him do thou rain, therefore, O! Meyhoola,
>
> The good man has packed off the good women home, O! Meyhoola,
>
> Separated from her are her little children, O! Meyhoola
>
> The stream is dry in the river's bed, O! Meyhoola.[124]

[122] ibid

[123] ibid

[124] ibid, p. 606.

CONCLUSION

The province of Gujarat comes across as a region possessing a unique and complex environmental setting. The physiographic complexity ranged from the almost desert like conditions existing in the region of Rann to heavily wooded and rocky terrain in the Kathiawar peninsula, and towards the North, East and Southern end of the province, to the fertile and almost flat flood plains of the Sabarmati, Mahi, Narmada and Tapti, and along the coastline. The climatic conditions in the region ranges from hot and sultry summers typical of the tropical climate, to a season of an almost continuous and heavy rainfall, to cold winters. Again the temperature differential across the province ranges from almost bearable conditions along the coastline, which was cooled by the.sea breeze, to hot and humid conditions in the interiors.

Similarly the soil conditions in the province exhibited complex range and differential. Thus we find the soil along the region of southern Gujarat and in the flood planes of the central Gujarat, and along the coastline suited the cultivation of such crops as cotton, and indigo. The water retention capacity of the soil along the course of the Narmada and Tapti rivers suited the rice cultivation. However moving towards the North and North west, the soil became heavily saline due to frequent inundation of the area of Rann by sea water, thus made unfit for any sort of agricultural activities. The interior of Gujarat peninsula, though heavily wooded, does at places exhibit soil conditions suitable for the agricultural activities, though the ground conditions for the most part was rocky.

The material culture, which took shape in the region and the political and economic conditions in the region were to a large extent determined by the above mentioned environmental determinants such as topography, soil conditions, and the rain fall pattern in the region. Thus we find the commerce and the commercial activities in the region being conditioned by the above-mentioned environmental determinants. The conditions of shipping in the period of discussion, in an age when the wind and the currents determined the course to be taken and the routes of commerce, we find the conditions along the coastal Gujarat not too favourable. The annual Monsoon determined the season for navigation along the coastal Gujarat, and during the season of Southwest

Monsoon the shipping in the area almost becomes impossible, due to the rough nature of sea along the coastline in the season.[1]

The coastline however was geographically suited for the commerce as the numerous creeks and inlets provided safe roadstead and harbours for the ships, from the rough tidal waves. The tidal waves and the numerous sand banks along the coastline, especially in the Gulf of Cambay, also created trouble for shipping in the region.[2] The port of Cambay suffered in main due to its blockage over centuries by the deposition of sand and the sifting nature of the sand deposition in the Gulf. Similarly the port of Surat was also partially accessible to heavy ships and towards the end of the century only small barks were able to reach the city, with heavy European ships had to anchor at the Swally Hole.[3]

Moving towards the interiors we find that most of the important trade routes connecting various important commercial and trading centres of the province as well as those of the North India, and Deccan moved along the coastal plains of Gujarat, and the flood plains of Sabarmati, Mahi, Narmada and Tapti, and scarcely run through the interiors of the peninsula or across the mountains along the eastern boundary of the province. However along these highways also the travelling conditions were not always a pleasurable experience, since the various rivers and rivulets which criss-cross the plains of Gujarat created the problem of fording them, and more especially during the season of rain, when most of them acquired a turbulent nature.[4] This was especially true of the rivers in the peninsula, such as Bhadar and Shetrunji, which gets converted from small streams to big rivers during the times of rain, and the Sabarmati and Tapti, which during

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[1] Bernier in his work warns the navigators from venturing too close to the shore line due to the choppy nature of the sea during the season of Southwest monsoon – Bernier, Travels, pp 433-34

[2] A merchant onboard a ship *'Ascension'* destined for Surat, resorts the destruction and loss of ship to the tide and the banks in the Gulf of Cambay, due to inexperience and immaturity of the pilot of the ship thus exposing to us the dangers which were faced by the sailors and mariners while traversing the Gulf of Cambay. - Letters Received by East India Company, pp 35-37

[3] Tavernier, notes the trouble which the ships face in reaching the port at Surat, due to sandbanks which had formed at the mouth of river Tapti...*large vessels cannot enter the river at Surat until after they are unloaded, on account of sandbanks at mouth*, Tavernier, Travels, Vol 1, p 5

[4] Francois Martin on his way to Surat had to face troubles in crossing many fords, rivulets and small rivers, as he was travelling at the height of the raining season – Lotika varadarajan, Vol 1, Part 2, pp 776 - 78

the entire period of our study exhibited frequent flooding, causing considerable damage along their banks to life and property.[5]

Again the agriculture in the region was largely rain dependent since most of the important rivers such as Mahi, Narmada and Tapti had high banks and hence were unsuitable for irrigation.[6] Thus the dependence on rainwater for both irrigation as well as for the drinking and other daily use was exhibited in the construction of numerous wells and tanks by the inhabitants and the rulers for public as well as the private use in the cities and in the countryside.[7] The agricultural produce for which the region was famous during the period – Cotton and Indigo, were primarily rain dependent, and their season of flowering and harvesting were determined by the annual rains.[8]

Thus we find that almost every aspect of the commercial life of the region was dependent on the annual monsoon winds and rains and on the regularity of the rains. Any break in this regularity had caused havoc in the region and a crisis in every sense – social or economic. The region saw numerous famines and conditions of shortage during the course of 17th and the 18th century. These famines not only had a negative impact on the commerce and economy of the region but the also proved to be social disasters. The shortcoming of food and daily rations at times reached to such level that resorting to cannibalism was a common practice adopted for survival.[9] The people were forced to sell their children at small cost so that they could get something in their hand for survival and their children would get at least food and shelters in the homes of the strangers to whom the were sold to. [10]

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[5] Jahangir during his stay at Ahmadabad talks about the destruction caused to the city due to heavy rains and flooding in Sabarmati, - Jahangir, Tuzuk-I Jahangiri, Vol 2, p 21

[6] Imperial Gazetteer of India: *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 1, pp. 173 and 177.

[7] Pietro della Valle, The Travels, Vol 1, p 32

[8] Pelsaert, p 13

[9] *Destitution at length reached such a pitch that men began to devour each other, and the flesh of a son was preferred to his love.* - Abdul Hamid Lahori, Badshahnama, extract from Elliot & Dowson ed. History of India as told by its own Historians, vol VII, p 24

[10] Peter Mundy, Travels, Vol 2, p 42

The topography of the coastline as well as of the interiors played a determining and influential role in conditioning the nature of political control over the region. The broken nature of coastline characterized by many creeks, sand banks and islands suited the local inhabitants in their piratical activities. In a similar manner, the control over important ports and islands also shaped the nature of interaction between the various political powers, primarily the European companies, who were engaged in competitive and military rivalry against each other, so as to gain ascendancy and control over the trade of the East.

In a similar manner the broken nature of the inland topography, especially in the region of peninsula and along the eastern and southern boundary of Gujarat had a defining influence on the political contours of the region during the course of two centuries. The tough terrain and almost inaccessible jungles and mountains cut through ravines and river channels made it extremely difficult for the Mughal governors of the place and for the official s appointed for the purpose, to keep a check on the marauding and depredating activities of the local rajas, zamindars and on the roving bands of Kolis and Kathi tribesmen. Similarly the Marathas in course of their forays into the province from the deccan and Malwa, made full use of the difficult terrain to surprise the Mughal commanders, and thus ultimately eroded the base of the Mughal authority gaining control over the entire province by the mid of the18th century.[11]

The influence of environment of the region was also all too apparent in the material culture, which evolved in the region during the course of two centuries under survey. Such aspects of daily life as shelter, clothing, and food were all decided by the climatic conditions and the natural resources available. Thus we find that the hot conditions prevalent in the region were primarily responsible for the extensive reliance on cotton clothing and other stuffs, which suited the climate. The nature of houses constructed and their architectural modelling was to a large extent determined by the raw material available in the region. As we had already seen that the houses were generally

[11] Thevenot had detaild the route taken by Shivaji during his raid on Srat in 1667, although may not be taken as entirely accurate since he wrote few years after the incidence, however it does reflects the use of rough terrain by the maratha marauding parties to escape the notice of the Mughal officials. – S.N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p 40

built of lime and bricks since stone was not readily available in the area. The dietary habits of the local people was also influenced by the weather and the food available, thus we come across description of such dishes as Dahi and Khitchree which were considered to be speciality of the province, since the suited the bodily requirements in the hot and sultry conditions.

At another level the forces of environment also influenced the cultural sphere. In an age when scientific knowledge regarding the occurrences of various natural phenomenon such as lightening, earthquakes among others was limited, people sought explanation and refuge in prayers to their gods and goddesses, who were often identified with such forces of nature. Thus Indra was said to be the god of rain and lightening, and one who controlled both these elements.[12] Thus we come across instances when people venerated these gods to satisfy them so as to ensure normal rainfall and as prevention against any natural calamity. Since most of the inhabitants of the region were merchants or were engaged in activities related to commerce and trade, the influence of ocean on their daily lives was very apparent.

That Gujarat lived by its commerce with the west and south East Asia made it imperative for these residents to find ways to satiate their fears regarding the safety of goods on the high seas. Thus we come across the prayers and rituals being conducted in the start of the commercial season, and offerings made to ocean for ensuring the safety of their ships. Another phenomenon which captured he imagination of the people, especially the sailors and the cultivators was the Monsoon winds and rains and we find numerous epithets, hymns and prayers being addressed to the rain god and the ceremonies performed so as to ensure proper rainfall and a good harvest for the season.

However, the interaction between the Human societies and the natural environment is a two way process, with Human activities being one of the most powerful force behind he environmental change. Environment as an entity is not static in nature and under goes constant change and revival during its interaction with the Human agency. Thus we find such activities as those related to agriculture, irrigation, mining as

[12] Alexander Forbes, *Rasmala*, Vol 2, 605

primary agents for bringing about an almost permanent change in the environment and the ecological balance of the region.

Thus the agricultural pattern across the two centuries had a detrimental impact on the environment and ecological balance of the region. The reduction in forest cover of the province and in the wild life of the region was the direct result of the clearing of forests by the cultivators for agricultural purposes, and by the Mughal official for the dual purpose of increasing the area under cultivation and for gaining access to the strongholds of the Koli and Kathi tribes men.[13]

The activities related to hunting along with the clearing of forests had a direct bearing on the wild life of the region. Jahangir in his memoirs stated the following reasons for undertaking the tour of the province:

> As I had never in my life had any elephant-hunting, and had a great desire to see the province of Gujarat and to look on the salt sea, and my huntsmen had often gone and seen wild elephants and fixed on hunting-places, it occurred to me to travel through Ahmadabad and look on the sea.[14]

However the British records dated to late 19th century explicitly states that there were no elephants or tigers in the province: 'the tiger has retreated before the advance of cultivation, and is now found only in remote jungles'.[15]

Again the pattern of Human habitation and the style of living of most of the inhabitants was a primary determining element behind the occurrences of certain diseases such as plague, of which the earliest occurrence in the subcontinent is dated to the year 1616. Ovington remarking on the plague informs us of the filthy habitations of most of the inhabitants, and during the course of rain this filth and dirt becomes the

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[13] Mirat-I Ahmadi, 186

[14] Jahangir, Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, Vol 1, tr. A. Rodgers ed. H.Beveridge, 1909, rep. Delhi, 1989, p 401

[15] Imperial Gazetteer of India: *Bombay Presidency*, Vol 1, p 12

residing place for the disease causing agents. Jahangir also in his memoir stated that the conditions in Ahmadabad:

> Its air is poisonous, and its soil has little water, and is of sand and dust...its water is very bad and unpalatable, and the river, which is by the side of the city is always dry except in the rainy season. Its well are mostly salty and bitter, and the tanks in the neighbourhood of the city have become like buttermilk from washerman's soap...the evils of water to which the air never penetrates, and which has no way for the vapour to come out by, are evident...Now, I do not know whether to call it Samumistan (the place of the samun or simoom), or Bimaristan (adobe of sickness), or Zaqqum-zar (the thorn bed), or Jahannamabad (the house of hell), for it contains all these varieties.[16]

Thus, we may conclude by stating that the interaction between the material cultures, social formations and the economic systems and the networks of commerce, which operated in the region of Gujarat, were shaped by the environmental factors, which existed in the region. The pattern of the interaction was however not a unidirectional one, and the Human activities also played a major role in shaping the immediate natural environment of the area.

[16] ibid, Vol 2, p 13

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