

## **THE NEW POWER STRUCTURE**

The disintegration of the Mughal Empire in Gujarat led to the gradual emergence of various independent political entities in the region. The composition and structure of each polity differed from the other in many respects. However, there were certain characteristics that were common in the entire region. These features are to be seen as a natural outcome of a situation calling for realignment at the political level. The newly emergent polities hardly had any control over these factors/elements. They lacked the necessary administrative apparatus to put into force a more feasible alternative. The perennial want of resources experienced by these polities was an added hurdle.

We have seen in the earlier chapter that the effective Mughal authority had declined by about the middle of 1730's. The pervasive presence of the Marathas was felt by their occupation of Dabhoi, Baroda, Champaner, Viramgam and settlement of regular Chauth in Bharuch, Cambay and Surat. In 1737-38 the Subah came to be administered jointly by the Mughals and the Marathas. In 1758 Ahmadabad came under firm authority of the Peshwa's officers thereby establishing Maratha rule in the region of Gujarat. Under the

various *Sarsubahdars*<sup>81</sup> after 1758 the smaller Rajput and Koli chiefs to the North and North-east of the region were subdued and a claim to *Salami* or *Udhad Jamabandi*<sup>82</sup> was established by the Marathas. Similarly, in Saurashtra the Marathas could establish a right to tribute from the Chieftains called *khandani*. The decline of the Mughal authority, the subsequent rise of the new political entities and the establishment of Maratha rule in the region led to the emergence of a number of power wielders at the local level. In the following pages we will trace the fortunes of these local potentates in various parts of Gujarat.

### **SAURASHTRA**

The Peninsula of Gujarat known in the Mughal sources as Sorath comprised mainly of the Sarkar by the same name and some other Peshkashi Zamindaris and *Bantha* (wanta) holding chiefdoms. Except for the Sorath *sarkar*, with Junagadh as its capital, other areas in Saurashtra were not administered directly by the Mughals even in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The decline of the Mughal power brought definite changes in the power relations of this sub-region as well. Since 1722 the Maratha incursions into Saurashtra had started on a regular basis. In the initial stages the Marathas did gain a foothold here but later they could only collect the tribute through the Mulk giri expeditions. The size of Sorath *sarkar* was reduced by 1727 as the *Faujdars* of Sorath lost control over the outlying thanas. The frequent change of

<sup>81</sup> Representatives of the Peshwa, similar to Mughal Nazim.

<sup>82</sup> Walter Hamilton, *Description of Hindostan, A General, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindostan and the adjacent Countries*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1971, P. 607.

*faujdar*s in the subsequent years and their inability to crystallize their hold over this *faujdari* led to a situation of chaos. The only Mughal *faujdar* capable of administering the area effectively was Sher Khan Babi. He was consequently made the *Naib-faujdar* of the region in 1727 by Ghulam Muhiyuddin Khan, who succeeded as *faujdar* after the death of his father, Asad Khan.<sup>83</sup> Sher Khan was also given the *Ijara* of the place for Rs.80, 000<sup>84</sup>. In 1730 Mir Ismail replaced Sher Khan Babi.<sup>85</sup> Later, Behram Khan, on being ousted from Surat, was appointed to the *faujdari* of Sorath replacing Mir Ismail. He was also given the additional charge of Viramgam for the possession of which he had to contest with the Naib-*Nazim*, Ratan Singh Bhandari. He therefore left Syed Aqil Khan as his Naib at Junagadh and went to Viramgam. In the battle that ensued, Behram Khan was killed. Hizbar Khan was then appointed as the *faujdar* of Junagadh around 1740 and he gave the Niabat to Mir Dost'Ali Khan. However, Mir Dost Khan and Sadiq Khan, the joint *faujdar*s of the place could not manage its affairs. The *ryots* and the *Desais* of the place, therefore, sent one Dalpat Ram, who was the *vakil* of the Arab *sibandis*, to bring Sher Khan Babi to Junagadh.<sup>86</sup> The *Mirat* attributes Mir Dost Ali's inability to pay his soldiers as the reason for the recall of Sher Khan Babi. Sher Khan Babi took over the administration from Mir Dost Ali. It seems that Sher Khan Babi could gain local support i.e., from the *ryots* and *desais* because he took the *ijara* of this area several times in the past, both from the Mughal Subahdars and the Marathas. He is also said to

<sup>83</sup> *Mirat*, P. 354.

<sup>84</sup> Ranchodji Amarji, *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, trans. E. Rehatsek, London, 1882, P.134. In case of 18<sup>th</sup> Century the official word *Naib* invariably implied taking of the post on *ijara*.

<sup>85</sup> *Mirat*, P.469.

<sup>86</sup> *Tarikh-i-sorath*, P.139.

have conducted revenue settlements of the region prior to the collection of *peshkash* by the *Nazim* of Ahmadabad. He also used to be the surety holder for the revenue payments of the local *zamindars* of Sorath as well as mainland Gujarat.<sup>87</sup> Sher Khan assumed the title of 'Bahadur Khan' and became the first Nawab of Junagadh in 1747.

The power groups at Junagadh comprised of the Sayyids, Nagars and the Qasbatis. Amongst these, the Sayyids and Nagars were exempt from payment of *zakat*.<sup>88</sup> The only other group exempt from *zakat* was of the *Sipahis*.<sup>89</sup> The Sayyids, Bokhari and Qadiri, were *wazifadars* of the Sultans and their grants were renewed by the Mughals. By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century they seem to have assumed zamindari rights in Sorath. They are said to have expelled the Waghelas, the original zamindars of Mangrol and occupied it themselves.<sup>90</sup> They had also held land in Kodinar and Kutiana in *wazifa*. At Kutiana the Sayyids had built two stone forts in the wake of the disturbances in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century and became independent of Junagadh *faujdar*. These invited Niamat Khan Lodi to administer the place. However, later they ousted him and invited Rana Surtanji of Porbandar for the same. Still later Hashim Khan, the adopted son of Bahadur Khan Babi was called in. It was from him that Diwan Amarji wrested this place and included it into Junagadh's possession.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. P.138.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. P.33.

<sup>89</sup> Sipahis were originally Afghans and were in the profession of soldiery. They were given small land grants by the Gujarat Sultans in this area and in course of time, they became well entrenched in the region.

<sup>90</sup> *Tarikh-i-sorath*, P. 52.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Pp. 49-50.

The next important group was of the Qasbatis. The definition of the Qasbatis is not available in our sources. Neither is their origin specified. What seems definite is that this was a section of the indigenous population residing in the Qasbas with soldiery as their profession. The Qasbatis of Dholka were well known. Prof. S.C.Mishra says that the Qasbatis were an agrarian community similar to Girasias and concedes that their origin is dubious.<sup>92</sup> Qasbatis in the 18<sup>th</sup> century had emerged as a power group in many of the major urban centers and fortified towns. There seems to have been a constant tussle between the Sayyid Wazifadars and the Qasbatis to take control of the fortifications in this sub-region. This is borne by several instances. At Mangrol, Shaikh Mian, the son of Qazi Fakhrudin, a Syed, ousted the Peshwa's *thanadar* Jadhav Jaswant in 1748 and took control of the fort and the *pargana* of Mangrol. His main supporters were the Patani-Qasbatis<sup>93</sup> of Mangrol. He later ousted the *qasbatis* from this place and ruled independently and for this the latter nursed a grudge against him.<sup>94</sup> In 1770-71 Latif Mian another Sayyid from Delwada conquered Una from the Qasbatis of that place. However, later, due to Amarji's interference the place was restored to the Qasbatis.<sup>95</sup>

The Nagars who held the *desaigiri* rights in the Mangrol *pargana*, as elsewhere in Saurashtra, had emerged as the third most important power group during this period. The Nagars were thus an

<sup>92</sup> S.C.Mishra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1985, New Delhi, Pp.72-73.

<sup>93</sup> According to the *Tarikh-i-Sorath* Patanis were Qasbatis converted to Islam. This implies that not all Qasbatis were Muslims as suggested by the British sources.

<sup>94</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, Pp. 53 & 66.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. P.78.

influential group and therefore any one who wanted to consolidate his position in the region tried to befriend them and seek their help.<sup>96</sup> The Nagars had come to hold important administrative positions in the administration of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century principalities of Gujarat, especially because of their fluency with Persian and Marathi languages.<sup>97</sup> The Nagars expanded their power under the tutelage of the Diwan of Junagadh, Ranchodji Amarji in Junagadh. He single handedly expanded the possessions of this Nawabi during the period after Bahadur Khan. Bahadur Khan Babi ruled over the much-reduced area of Sorath and tried to expand his principality and conquered the fort of Veraval with the support of Niamat Khan Lodhi. He was, however, too preoccupied with the affairs of mainland as he was holding Balasinor. Due to this reason he remained away from Sorath for long and his wives looked after Junagadh's administration. Consequently, after his death in 1758 the stability of the kingdom was adversely affected. Many of Sorath's areas were encroached upon because of the expansionist activities of the wanta chieftains of Porbandar, Gondal, Bhavnagar and Nawanagar while the outlying *thanas* of Mangrol, Veraval, Kutiana, Una-Delwada, Amreli, etc were separated from Junagadh, the *thanadars* declaring their independence. New forts like Sutrapada, Hirakot, Dhamlej, Lodhwa, Pushnavara, Lathi, etc came up as symbols of assertion of independence by different power groups in respective regions.<sup>98</sup> It was under these conditions that Amarji came to control the affairs of Junagadh. The Marathas were levying tribute on

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.146.

<sup>97</sup> C.R.Naik, *Gujarat ma Nagaron nu Farsi Bhasha ane sahityanu Khedan*, Ahmedabad, 1950, passim.

<sup>98</sup> *Tarikh-i-sorath*, P.64.

all the principalities here since 1724-25 except for Junagadh. In Kodinar the Marathas obtained 50% of the revenue but Amarji succeeded in repelling them and fixed the Peshkash of this place at Rs. 5000.<sup>99</sup> At Mangrol the Peshwa had established a Thana around 1737. However, the *zamindars* of the *pargana* migrated from the region to Junagadh and adjoining areas as a result of the harassment from Naib Nataji, the Naib of the Peshwa.<sup>100</sup> The Musalmans and the Jats were also harassed on account of the *ekadashi* and Monday fasting, possibly forcing a shut down of business on these days. These factors were responsible for Shaikh Mian's success in the conquest of Mangrol in 1748 and expelling of the Maratha ruler.<sup>101</sup>

Amarji had come to Junagadh at the head of a band of Arab sibandis and offered to conquer the fort of Veralwal from Shaikh Mian of Mangrol who had taken it from Sultana Bibi, aunt of the Nawab. He was 18 years old then. The new Nawab, Mahabat Khan agreed to take him into service if he could accomplish the above task. Following his success in this venture, he was employed, although he was not given the charge of the *Mulki* or revenue and Judiciary departments immediately.<sup>102</sup> It was only after the fort of Talaja was conquered in 1771 by the joint forces of the British East India Company, Bhavnagar chief, the Nawab of Cambay and Amarji from Junagadh that he was given the insignia of the Diwan like *palki*, etc.<sup>103</sup> Following this he made many conquests in the peninsula adding to Junagadh's

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. P.77.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. P.52.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.Pp. 52-53.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. P.148.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.Pp. 150-151.

possessions. Amarji conquered Sutrapada from Chand Qasbati, a Patani Qasbati. Kutiana was also conquered from Hashim Khan before Rana Surtanji of Porbandar could purchase it through an intrigue.<sup>104</sup> He also attacked Mangrol and could fix half the share of its revenue as the Nawab's share.<sup>105</sup> The joint forces of Amarji and Mehraman Khawas of Nawanagar reduced the port of Okha.<sup>106</sup> In 1774-75 the tribute of Jhalawad was fixed.<sup>107</sup>

Diwan Amarji thus stood out as the most important person in the state. He consolidated his position also because the successive Nawabs of Junagadh, Mahabat Khan and Hamid Khan were both of a weak disposition. During this period, the Amarji asserted his position and placed his own trusted people at important positions. The brothers, sons and other close relatives of the Diwan belonging to the Nagar caste, wielded the real powers in the state. The Arab Sibandis who were employed since earliest times by Amarji also remained his confidants. The name of one Salim Jamadar amongst his main supporters appears frequently

Another reason for Amarji's importance was that he also enjoyed the trust of the Marathas. Aburai Mahipatrai, the *sarsubah* of Ahmadabad, entrusted Amarji the work of revenue collection of the share of the Marathas.<sup>108</sup> In spite of this, Amarji continued to oppose the Marathas whenever the interests of Junagadh were involved. In

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid. P.150.

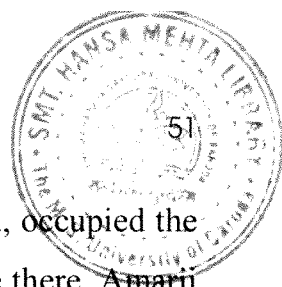
<sup>105</sup> Ibid.P.152.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.Pp.159-160.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.P.160.

<sup>108</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*,P.161.





1777 one Jiwaji Shamraj, deputy of Fatehsing Gaekwad, occupied the fort of Amreli. He tried to establish an independent rule there. Amarji attacked him and destroyed the fort of Amreli and expelled the Maratha sardar from Saurashtra.<sup>109</sup> Following this incident Fatehsing invaded the peninsula but before military confrontation could begin, the various chieftains brought about an agreement and presents were exchanged between Amarji and Fatehsing. In 1777 also Fatehsing could not levy any tribute in Saurashtra because of Amarji.<sup>110</sup> Similarly Amarji could defeat Amrit Rai and Thoban, Peshwa's representatives at about the same time.<sup>111</sup>

The Diwan, in the process of expanding his power also made many enemies. The Gondal Chief Jadeja Kumbhaji was chief amongst them. He was an energetic ruler with a small area of authority in the northwest of Junagadh. He aspired to expand his possessions at the expense of Junagadh. He was a man of resources and constantly intrigued against the Diwan. Mehraman Khawas, the Diwan of Nawanagar was another of Amarji's enemies. Rana Surtanji of Porbandar and Shaikh Mian of Mangrol, as also Raja Wakhatsinh held grudge against him. They had realized that so long as Amarji was at the helm of affairs at Junagadh, they would not be able to achieve their ambitions in the region. Therefore they indulged in intrigues to remove him. The nature of dealings between the Nawab and Amarji also contributed in the breach of relations between them. Amarji's family was amongst the *desais* of Mangrol *pargana* and they were

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. Pp. 163-164; J.W. Watson (ed), *Statistical Account of Junagadh*, Bombay, 1883, P.40.

<sup>110</sup> *Statistical account of Junagadh*, Pp. 40-41.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Pp. 39-40.

resourceful and powerful, as noticed before. They also took *Ijaras* of various places, which was practically perpetual. Being a man of resources, Amarji, the Diwan used to give loans to the Nawab as the latter was always in need of money. In the course of time the Nawab had a huge debt to pay to Amarji and had mortgaged revenues of various places to him. Amarji was the beneficiary at the expense of the Nawab. In addition to this, the Arab *sibandis* who were largely employed in this chieftaincy, were defrayed their salaries by the Diwan who also acted as their Vakil. The *sibandis* therefore, paid direct allegiance to him and not to the Nawab. Under these situations the intriguers succeeded in precipitating a conflict between the Nawab and Diwan Amarji and Nawab Mahabat Khan assassinated Amarji in 1784. The members of Amarji's family were imprisoned.

Immediate to this event, the Nawab levied zakat on the Nagars and collected considerable amount of money. The Nawab, however, could not reap the benefits of his act. The Marathas, Fatehsing Gaekwad and Rupaji Sindhia, on behalf of the Peshwa intervened as overlords and restored Amarji's sons to power. The Nawab had to grant immunity to Amarji's family as a price for Amarji's assassination. The outstanding payments of the late Diwan by the Nawab had amounted to a sum of 60 lakhs of Jam Kodis. It was agreed that the *parganas* of Una, Delwada, Mangrol, Sil and Dilwasa were to be mortgaged to his family by the Nawab until the liquidation of the above debt with interest. Besides this, the Nawab also had to cede four villages of Halyad, Bhansan, Antaroli and Akhodar as compensation for the murder of the Diwan. In addition to that, the

children of the Diwan were to receive 5 villages each from Mangrol and Sutrapada respectively.<sup>112</sup> Raghunathji and Dulabji, sons of Amarji, were also appointed jointly as Diwans. Their position was however not stable as the Nawab continued to hold grudge against them, and their representatives who administered the fortifications under Junagadh's authority were ousted one by one by the Nawab. They had to leave Junagadh later and found employment in Nawanagar for some years. They had to be recalled by the Nawab found it difficult to manage financial affairs. The relations between the Nawab and the Diwan brothers continued to be conflict ridden. With the death of Dulabji the power of the Diwan family was greatly reduced. Raghunathji continued to function as the Diwan well up to the end of Hamid Khan's reign but could not exercise much hold over the Nawab as his late father. With the succession of Bahadur Khan II in 1815 Umar Mukhasan, an Arab Jamadar, became all-powerful at Junagadh. Raghunathji quit the office of the Diwan because of a fall-out with the regent-mother of the new Nawab. She had kept him out of the revenue settlement made with the English East India Company. With the coming of the British, the power relations in the region underwent a change. Umar Mukhasan Jamadar was soon ousted from Junagadh, and Raghunathji, who was seen as a threat to the exercise of British influence at Junagadh, was also kept out of Durbar affairs. Sunderji Shivji, a horse trader from Kutch, on the recommendation of Captain Ballantine, the officer in charge of Kathiawad affairs was appointed the Diwan of Junagdh. It was Sunderji Shivji who made over Junagadh's Mulk giri rights in Jhalawad to the British through an

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid. Pp. 174-175.

agreement. Later, the fortification of Kutiana, which was considered a right of the Amarji family, was taken away from Raghunathji and handed over to the Gaekwad, a protégé of the British.

At the lower level a constant struggle between Porbandar and Mangrol was going on during this period. Shaikh Mian of Mangrol's resources proved to be inadequate and he used to occasionally raid the Kathiawad area and carry away cattle from that region so that he could pay salaries to his soldiers. He also levied tribute on Keshod, Chorwad, Kodinar, Patan and Porbandar.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, the chieftain of Porbandar too collected tribute from villages belonging to Mangrol.

Bhavnagar and Nawanagar, on the other hand, expanded their spheres of authority after Amarji's death. This was made possible, as the Gaekwad chieftaincy had become lax in asserting its authority on this region following its own internal problems. The Maratha *Khandani* had fallen into arrears of past several years. The situation was favourable for both Bhavnagar and Nawanagar chieftains to expand their territories at the expense of their neighbours, the Kathis and their own *Bhayad*. The increased power of the Bhavnagar chieftain could be gauged from the fact that he could successfully defy the Gaekwad Mulkigiri army under Shivram Gardi in the last years of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. This tendency of encroachments and expansion at the cost of each other by the chieftain's of Saurashtra ended when the British were able to enforce their revenue settlements in the region.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid. P.53

### **HEREDITARY SUPERIOR RIGHT HOLDERS**

During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, following the disturbed conditions, the balance in the agrarian relationships brought about under the Mughals was disturbed to a great extent. Anyone who was in a position to gain an advantage attempted to augment his resources and power at the expense of the other. In these anarchic conditions invariably the hereditary superior right holders benefited the most. These superior right holders had accumulated wealth from the beginning of the century. Amongst them the *desai* were the most important. Many of the *desais* had been holding *ijara* of lands during this period and hence they were a well-entrenched section of agrarian society of the time. By virtue of he being in-charge of the *pargana* the *desai* had access to the real state of the *jama*, the methods of assessment and collection in the *pargana* and such details that were useful to the new rulers, the Marathas. The support of the *desais*, therefore, became extremely important for the Marathas.

These landed elements played a pivotal role in the emergence of several independent political entities as well. In case of the Gaekwad's occupation of Baroda it was the *desais* and *muqaddams* of

Baroda and surrounding areas<sup>114</sup> viz., Dala Muqaddam of Padra, *desais* of Bhayli and Chhani who invited Pilaji to occupy Baroda and supported him in the operations.<sup>115</sup> Similarly at Viramgam, it was the *desai* Bhausingh, who invited Renkoji, the Naib of Damaji Gaekwad, to occupy Viramgam *pargana*. It will be worthwhile to take note of the events leading to Damaji's occupation of Viramgam. Udaikiran the *desai* of Viramgam was a wealthy and influential person, probably also the *ijaradar* of the *pargana*. During the period of political instability of early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, a *Tank* Qasbati murdered him over a personal dispute. Safdar Khan Babi, the *faujdar* of Viramgam also died almost the same time. Therefore, Bhau Singh, the son of the deceased *desai* approached the *Nazim* Mubariz-ul-Mulk Sarbuland Khan demanding action against the culprits. The *Nazim* did not take any action in the matter, as he was busy resisting the new *Nazim* who was sent to take the charge from him. Bhau Singh had, in the mean while, started managing the revenue affairs of the *pargana*. In 1733 Ratan Singh Bhandari, the Naib *Nazim* set his eyes on the wealth of this family. He accordingly set out a plan whereby Jawan Mard Khan, the *faujdar* of that place was asked to arrest the *desai* and send him in chains to Ahmadabad. When Jawan Mard Khan arrested the *desai*, those who had stood sureties for Jawan Mard Khan when he was appointed the *faujdar* threatened him with dire consequences if the latter sent the *desai* to the Naib *Nazim*. We do not have any information about these surety holders in our sources, but they were certainly people with power and influence. The *faujdar* had to yield

<sup>114</sup> Padra, Bhayli and Chhani are villages on the outskirts of Baroda town.

<sup>115</sup> *Baroda State Gazetteer*, Pp. 439-440.

before their threat and set the *desai* free.<sup>116</sup> This incident made the *desai* apprehensive of his safety from the Mughal officers and on the first available pretext he invited Renkoji to take control of the Fort of Viramgam. He was perhaps under the impression that the Marathas, who were emerging as a power in the region, would be able to provide better security to him than the Mughals. His hopes were belied when he realized that the Marathas too were eyeing the wealth of the *pargana*.

The *desai* soon decided to get rid of the Marathas from Viramgam. He raised a force consisting of the Arab and Rohilla *sibandis* and shut the doors of the fort on the Marathas. Renkoji laid siege to the fort. When the siege persisted, the *sibandis* started clamouring for their salary from the *desai*. The latter had no other option than to sue for peace with the Marathas. In the agreement that followed, the Marathas gave Bhausingh *desai* the town of Patri/Patdi, situated on the border of the Rann of Cutch, along with its dependencies, in exchange for Viramgam. These dependencies consisted of 8 villages taken from Kathiawad and 16 villages from Viramgam. In this way in 1740-41 the *Pargana* of Viramgam passed into Maratha hands.<sup>117</sup> The *desai* of Viramgam, on the other hand, became the ruler of Patri, which later became a princely state under the British.

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<sup>116</sup> *Mirat*, P. 512.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* Pp .600-601.

A similar incident that shows the power of the landed classes is that of Baroda. Dala, the *muqaddam* of Padra was a wealthy and influential man. As mentioned earlier, it was at his behest that Pilaji had occupied Baroda. Following the murder of Pilaji Rao, the Mughals under the Nizamat of Maharaja Abhay Singh reoccupied Baroda. While the Maharaja was settling the affairs of the place, Dala went to meet him as he wished to take the *ijara* of Baroda *pargana*. During the meeting he realized that the Maharaja was intent on arresting him and fleece him of his wealth. Dala however succeeded in escaping from the custody of the Nazim. Later, he wrote to the Nazim that if the latter desired to receive stable income from him, he should appoint Sardar Mohammad Khan Ghorni as the *faujdar* of Baroda.<sup>118</sup> That Mohammad Khan Ghorni was subsequently appointed as the *faujdar* of Baroda shows the clout that the *muqaddam* enjoyed *vis a vis* the administration. Later it was with his help that Mahmaji<sup>119</sup> captured Baroda from Sher Khan Babi and it passed permanently into Gaekwad's control.<sup>120</sup>

The *desais* also seem to have further consolidated their economic and social position during the course of the century. We have already observed how one of them became the chief of a principality, Bhau Singh, the *desai* of Viramgam becoming the chief of Patri. During the rule of the Peshwa some of them became *kamavisdars* and *manotidars*.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> His name is given differently in different sources: Mahaji in *Ahwal*, Mahmaji in *Mirat* and Mahadji in the *Baroda State Gazetteer* I.

<sup>120</sup> *Mirat*, P. 513.



The office of a *kamavisdar* was central to the Maratha revenue administration. In him was vested the authority to collect revenue, administer police and act as judicial officer. He was usually given the charge of one *pargana* and in some cases more than one *pargana*. *Karkuns* (clerks) and *Sibandis* assisted him. Upon appointment a *kamavisdar* had to pay at least half the amount of *Ijara*, called *rasad* to the Marathas. The other half was given at the end of the stipulated period of his office, after deduction of the expenses. During the Maratha period a *kamavisdar* was most of the time an outsider. He had to seek local help in performance of his duties. Besides, he found it difficult to administer all the *mahals* under his control, as he was not familiar with local revenue administrative practices. He, therefore, farmed out such *mahals* especially the *sair mahals*, usually to the local people, thus leading to the practice of sub-farming. Very often it was the local *desai*, who being a man of means, would take such *ijaras*. As the Marathas got entrenched in the region the *desais* turned *kamavisdars* and held *ijaras* themselves. In both cases the *desai* made the *jamabandi* with the village Patel directly.<sup>121</sup>

Since there was a time lag between the appointment of the *kamavisdar* and his actual control of the territory assigned to him, he had to make arrangements with the *amin* and the *desais* for realization of revenue for the period prior to taking actual charge of the place.

<sup>121</sup> Jaspal Kaur Dhot, *Economy and Society of Northern Gujarat with Special Reference to Kheda District, 1750-1850*, unpublished Ph.d Dissertation, Maharaja Sayaji Rao University, Baroda, 1986, P.234. The author has reproduced these statistics from the Marathi records in the Peshwa Daftar.

This arrangement was termed as *ta'ahud*<sup>122</sup> and the holders of such a charge as *muta'ahids*.<sup>123</sup> For this service the *muta'ahid* received a certain share of the revenue collection.<sup>124</sup> This arrangement was also resorted to by *kamavisdars* for bringing wasteland under and villages depopulated for various reasons, under cultivation.

The dependence of the *kamavisdars* on superior land right holders like the *desais* was also because of their frequent transfers. For instance, in *pargana* Kheda, between 1752 and 1815, 65 *kamavisdars* were appointed that works out the average term of one year to each *kamavisdar*. The tenures of such *ijaras* varied between one to five years.<sup>125</sup>

During the second half of the eighteenth century we notice an increase in the incidence of *desais* turning *kamavisdars* either in the same *parganas* or other *parganas*. In Nadiad Bapuji *desai* held the *ijara* of the *Pargana* in 1789-90.<sup>126</sup> Balaji Yamaji, the *Kamavisdar* was also the *desai* of Balesar *pargana*.<sup>127</sup> Sureshwar *desai* of Baroda *pargana* held the *Ijara* of Baroda, Ghode, Shinor, Koral, Rajpipla and

<sup>122</sup> S.Hasan Mahmud, *An Eighteenth Century Agrarian Manual: Yasin's Datur-i-Malguzari*, Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi, 2000, P. 162.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Jaspal Kaur Dhot, op.cit., P.292.

<sup>125</sup> Alexander Walker, *Selections from the Bombay Government no: XXXIX, New Series, Part-I*, Bombay, 1856, P. 25.

<sup>126</sup> Jaspal Kaur Dhot, op, cit., Pp. 234-235.

<sup>127</sup> Baroda State Records, *Historical Selections from the Baroda State Records*, Vol. II, Baroda, 1936, P. 169.(Now onwards HSBSR).

Nadiad *parganas* around 1766.<sup>128</sup> It is seen that in cases where the *desai* himself was a *kamavisdar* he enjoyed absolute authority in revenue collection. In Kapadvanj *pargana* the price of grains had risen during the year 1813-14. Rajaram, the *desai*, who was also the *kamavisdar* of Kapadvanj at this time, changed the mode of revenue collection from cash to kind.<sup>129</sup>

The rights (*haq*) of the *desai*<sup>130</sup> consisted of 2.5% of the total revenue collection, together with *pasaitu* and *jeewuk*, which was in lieu of the services that he performed. *pasaitu* revenue free land while *jeewuk* was realized in cash.<sup>131</sup> Both these rights were hereditary and greatly valued. In addition to these a *desai* also received *nazrana* from residents of villages. He was also *sukhdi*, possibly a perquisite in cash, since it was deducted from the *jama*. *Sukhdi* was collected by the *desais*, *kamavisdars*, *amins* and such other superior land right holders.<sup>132</sup> The *desais* who held lands on *ijara* were given an additional allowance in cash called *inam*. Also, the *desais* who paid *giras* to the *girasias* on behalf of the state also received a present from the *girasias* called *cheerda* for the timely payment of the amount. Besides these, the *desais* also enjoyed a number of other perquisites. A *desai* who was also the *kamavisdar* was exempt from *rahdari* (transit dues) in his area of jurisdiction. He also exercised rights over

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<sup>128</sup> HSBSR-I, P. 115.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. P.234.

<sup>130</sup> For the position and role of *Desais* in Gujarat, see B.R. Grover, *The Position of Desai in the Pargana administration of Subah Gujarat*, PIHC, Delhi, 1961.

<sup>131</sup> Jaspal Kaur Dhot, op, cit., P. 236.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. Pp. 238-239.

artisans and professionals such as the potters, brick makers, etc who supplied their articles of trade or manufacture free or at a concessional rate to him.<sup>133</sup> It was largely as a result of control of the resources at the local level that with the passage of time the *desais* became powerful at those levels. Hence, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Kapadwanj, the *desais* held 1,259 *bighas* of land in *pasaitu*; in the fertile tracts of Petlad 2,782 *bighas*; 3,200 *bighas* in Matar *pargana*,<sup>134</sup> in Bharuch *pargana* 36,563 *bighas*,<sup>135</sup> and in Ankleshwar *pargana* it was 8,517 *bighas*.

There is evidence to suggest that the *desais* invested their income in various commercial activities. Many *desais* had emerged as retailers, bankers and Shroffs, through money lending, *manotidari*, etc. For instance, Amin Bhai Bhagwan Das *Desai* of Mahudha *pargana*, Anandram Sewakram and Jalalchand, the *desais* of *pargana* Matar had emerged as bankers having their agencies in the major towns of Gujarat and Malwa. Besides lending money and dealing in *hundis*, they also undertook trade activities. They brought cloth and opium from Malwa and sold them to retailers in the villages, while they sold produce of the countryside in the towns.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid. P.242

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. P.235

<sup>135</sup> Rajkumar Hans, *Agrarian Economy of Broach district during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century*, unpublished Ph.D dissertation, M.S. University, 1987, P. 74.

<sup>136</sup> Jaspal Kaur Dhot, op, cit., P. 241.

B. R. Grover has thrown sufficient light on the nature of the *desaigiri* right in Gujarat in an important study.<sup>137</sup> He notes that the office of *desai* could not be identified with any of the known offices such as of the *patwari*, *muqaddam*, *chaudhri*, *qanungo*, *shiqdar*, etc.<sup>138</sup> However, both the *desai* and the *chaudhri* were primary land right holders and their titles entitled them to enjoy certain additional rights. Some of their duties and functions were also similar. Just as the *chaudhri* was entitled to *nankar*, the *desai* was entitled to *pasaitu*, suggesting that *pasaitu* was the local term for *nankar*. Both the *chaudhri* and the *desai* were held responsible for the assessment of revenue (*jamabandi*) in the area under their charge and to endeavour to enlarge the area of cultivation and look after the welfare of the *riaya*.<sup>139</sup>

### IJARA

The institution of *ijara* had been prevalent in the Mughal Empire from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In Gujarat also we have the evidence of the same. The existence *ijara* in the port towns of Surat and Cambay has been brought to light through a recent study.<sup>140</sup> The institution of *ijara* during the 17<sup>th</sup> century was highly regulated. However, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century we find not only an increase in the incidence of *ijara*,

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<sup>137</sup> B.R. Grover, op.cit.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. P.150.

<sup>139</sup> Compare the functions of *chaudhri* in N.A.Siddiqui, *Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals*, New Delhi, 1989, p: 90-91 with the functions of *Desais* in B.R.Grover, op.cit.

<sup>140</sup> Farhat Hasan, op.cit.

but also dilution of principles governing this practice. In Gujarat during this period, *ijara* became an instrument of aggrandizement of wealth and resources and thus its holders played an important role in the emerging power structure in the region.

During our period of study the sources of revenue as well as various offices were held on *Ijara*. The office of Naib-Nazim and Naib-Faujdar were let out to individuals on *ijara*. Such a practice was necessitated as a single person held many offices simultaneously during this period. Such a person had to appoint his *Naib* to look after the duties of his offices that he was unable to supervise personally. The *Naib* held the charge on *ijara*. *Mirat-ul-Haqa'iq* contains useful information on farming of offices during the 18<sup>th</sup> century Gujarat. In 1719 for instance, Amir-ul-Umrah Hasan Ali Khan was appointed as *mutasaddi* of Surat, who in turn farmed out the office to one Shaikh-ul-Islam on the payment of ten lakh rupees and made him his *Naib*.<sup>141</sup> Rustam Ali Khan similarly paid ten lakhs for the office of Mutsaddi of Surat.<sup>142</sup> Sher Khan Babi was similarly given the *ijara* of the *faujdari* of Junagadh in 1730 for Rs. 80,000<sup>143</sup> and later in 1740 Hizabar Khan gave the office of *faujdari* of Junagadh to Mir Dost Ali Khan and Sadiq Khan jointly.<sup>144</sup> Momin Khan I gave *ijara* of the post of Naib-

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<sup>141</sup> *Mirat-ul-Haqa'iq*, f.149 (a).

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* f.269 (a).

<sup>143</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, P.134.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* P.139.

muttsaddi of the port of Cambay to Fida-ud-din Khan along with the *ijara* of chorasi *pargana*.<sup>145</sup>

The *faujdars* were also given *ijara* of revenues of *parganas* under their charge. This helped them in entrenching themselves locally. As already seen, Sher Khan Babi, by virtue of having held the *ijara* of Junagadh for many years, was recalled at the instance of the *ryots* of the region to replace Hizabar Khan as the *faujdar* of Junagadh. Sher Khan, the *faujdar*, was responsible for establishing the Babi Nawabi at Junagadh. Similarly, Jawan Mard Khan, the *faujdar* of Patan held the *ijara* of Patan, Vijapur, Kheralu and other places. He laid the foundations of the Nawabi of Radhanpur. Momin Khan, the *faujdar* of Cambay, held the *ijara* of *parganas* Cambay Petlad, Arhar Matar, and other areas around Cambay. He later established the *nawabi* of Cambay. Rustam Ali Khan was given the *ijara* of *peshkash* from the smaller wanta holders on the river Vatrak and Mundah.<sup>146</sup> With the rise of Shuja'at Khan as the Naib-Nazim in the Subah, he was the given the *ijara* of Dholka, Haveli *pargana* Ahmadabad, Bharuch, Jambusar, Maqbulabad (Amod), Bulsar and Kadi *pargana*.<sup>147</sup>

With the Marathas taking over larger territories in the region, they introduced the *kamavisdari* system, which was an

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<sup>145</sup> *Mirat*, P. 482.

<sup>146</sup> *Mirat*, P. 412.

<sup>147</sup> *Mirat*, P. 416.

institutionalized form of *ijara*. The Marathas gave three types of *ijaras*: *Maqta*, *kutchra* and *istawa*. In *maqta* a *kamavisdar* was to pay a fixed amount as *rasad*<sup>148</sup>, or advance, consisting of half the amount of the *jama*. If he, subsequently, suffered any legitimate loss in the revenue collection, he would get a remission in revenue after investigation. If he collected more than the stipulated amount, he was entitled to keep that to himself. In *kutchra* the *kamavisdar* was obliged to pay to government whatever he collected, after deducting all incurred expenses. In this case he received a fixed salary. In case of *istawa*, revenue demand was fixed on an ascending scale. This practice was adopted for places where agriculture had suffered due to some reasons and it needed to be rehabilitated.<sup>149</sup> The collection of *Chauth* was also let out on *Ijara*, such an *ijaradar* being known as *chauthia*.

The British in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century too resorted to *ijaradari* (revenue farming). Besides the land revenue, the customs belonging to the East India Company at Bhavnagar was farmed out. We have figures for the year 1777. Out of four bidders, Nasservanji Bomanji and Bocundas Mohandas, the highest bidders, were given *ijara* of Bhavnagar (Rs. 10,125/-) and Mahuwa, a port of lesser importance in the kingdom of Bhavnagar, (Rs. 1,126/-), respectively.<sup>150</sup> Towards the

<sup>148</sup> *Rasad* consisted of two parts: one paid in advance at the time of taking the *ijara* of the place. It used to be generally in Ashvin Shud (October). The other part called *kharaj rasad* was paid at year end or end of the *ijara* contract., J.H.Gense and D.R.Banaji (ed), *The Gaekwads of Baroda-English Documents*, Vol: V, Bombay, (Now onwards GOB), Pp.156 & 165-166.

<sup>149</sup> N.A.Siddiqui, op.cit., Pp. 92-101; Jaspal. Kaur. Dhot, op.cit., P. 289.

<sup>150</sup> G.W.forrest (ed), *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and other State Papers*, Home Series, Vol. I, Surat, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1777, P. 394.



end of the Century the British also wanted to take *ijara* of Gaekwad *chauth* in Surat so as to resolve frequent disputes over revenue sharing between the Nawab of Surat and the Marathas.<sup>151</sup> The factors at Surat gave the *chaukis* (*thanas*) in Valsad districts on *ijara* for six months at the rate of Rs. 5,000 per month around 1780.<sup>152</sup> Presumably other *chaukis* were also given on *Ijara*.

The practice of *ijara* gave rise to *manotidari*, the sub-farming of revenues, and employment of *marfatias* in revenue collection machinery. Manoti means financial surety and was given in two places. As mentioned earlier, upon obtaining the *ijara* a *kamavisdar* had to pay half of the assessed revenue in advance known as *rasad* to the government. For this the shroffs or merchants (Parekhs) advanced him the required amount of money for which they charged interest called as *manoti*. The rates of *manoti* depended on the amount advanced and it also differed from place to place. Secondly, the needful ryots took loans from wealthy individuals, usually a *desai*, either for revenue payment or for the purchase of cattle, seeds, etc (*taqavi*). In this case the *manoti* could be as high as 25%.<sup>153</sup> In addition to that, the village had to maintain a *havaladar* or a *mehta* (scribe) on behalf of the *manotidar*.<sup>154</sup> Very often the surety holders abused their position and usurped the produce of land or the land of

<sup>151</sup> G.S.Sardesai (ed), *Poona Residency correspondence, vol:II, Malet's Embassy*, Bombay, 1936, P.320.

<sup>152</sup> *GOB III*, P. 60.

<sup>153</sup> *Walker-Selections XXXIX*, Pp. 26-27.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* Pp.40-41

the farmers itself.<sup>155</sup> In case of the *ijaradari* and *manotidari* combining in the same individual or group, it led to greater hold over the *ryots*. This was especially true of the *Qasbatis* of Dholka.<sup>156</sup>

### SECURITIES

The practice of securing security of someone for good conduct was an old one. Under the Mughals the erring *zamindars* and *malguzars* had to furnish security of a reliable person for the timely regular and payment of land revenue. In Gujarat, the *Nazims* regularly sought securities from recalcitrant *ryots* and *zamindars* such as the *kolis*. We also find the members of the *bhat* community standing as securities. It is suggested that even Todar Mal also favoured the *bhats* as security holders in Gujarat. The *bhats* and *charans* in Gujarat were the traditional genealogists who maintained the histories of the native Gujarati chiefs. They were held in high reverence throughout the region without exception.

Since the earliest times the *bhats* functioned as guides and provided security to the travelers and merchants passing through the areas of the refractory Zamindar. A good description of this is given by a 16<sup>th</sup> Century a Turkish traveler, who wrote:

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid. Pp. 26-27

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. Pp. 39-40.

*"In Gujarat there is a tribe of Bamiano called Bhats, who warrant the safe conveyance of merchants and travelers from one country to another for a stipulated sum of money. If the Rajputs meet the caravan with the intention of robbing them the bhats would draw their daggers and threaten to kill themselves if the least harm should happen to the caravan. The Rajputs then let the caravan pass unmolested. But if it suffers the least damage the Bhats kill themselves and if they did not, they would lose their honour and never afterwards be respected. Of on the contrary, they devote themselves for the sake of caravans the Rajputs are judged guilty of death and are executed by their Reis together with their whole families. Two Bhats were sent to attend us".*<sup>157</sup>

During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the role of the *bhats* and that of the *charans*, became more important in the context of the prevailing conditions of insecurity. Therefore, no monetary transaction was considered safe unless it involved a strong security on both sides, assuring the fair performance of the stipulated terms by both the sides. This system of security seeking was known in Gujarat as *bandheri*.<sup>158</sup> Securities were sought in all transactions, of both public and private nature. Since the beginning of the century, as a safeguard against the harassment by the Imperial officers, prominent citizens and the general public insisted on seeking security of a reliable person for

<sup>157</sup> Statement of Sidhi Ali Kapudan who visited Gujarat in 1553. *Translations of Literary Society- Bombay-II*. P 9. C.f., Campbell (ed), *Bom.Pre.Gaz.Population- Hindus*, op.cit., footnote-1, P. 210.

<sup>158</sup> *Bandheri* is a term mentioned in the Mirat. Alexander Walker, on the other hand calls it *Bhandari*.

good behavior by the officers. There are instances cited in the *Mirat* which shows that sometimes powerful officers tried to violate their securities; sometimes they were successful, sometimes they were not. Here is the case of Ganga Das, a wealthy silk merchant of Ahmedabad who was made the *Nagarsheth* of Ahmadabad by Mubariz-ul-Mulk. Upon Maharaja Abhay Singh's assumption of *Nizamat*, he furnished the security of Abhay Karan Singh to Ganga Das. Abhay Karan Singh, the son of Durga Das Rathod was well known in the region and was a confidante of the *Nazim*. The *Nagarsheth* therefore felt relaxed and regarded himself safe from the exactions of the *Nazim*. However, the *Nazim* secured an Imperial order for imprisonment of the *Nagarsheth* on false charges of misappropriation of money. Subsequently, he arrested the *Nagarsheth* and escheated the wealth belonging to him and also imposed fines on people associated with the silk industry of Ahmadabad. Abhay Karan Singh's reputation was greatly tarnished since he could not honour the security.<sup>159</sup> Another incident, also mentioned before is that of Ratan Singh Bhandari, the *Naib-Nazim* who had sought to seize the wealth of Bhau Singh, the wealthy *Desai* of Viramgam. The *Naib-Nazim* could not be successful because there was an active resistance from the surety holders. Jawan Mard Khan, the *faujdar* of Viramgam had to be replaced by Sher Khan Babi as a measure to pacify the securities.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *Mirat*, Pp. 487-488

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* Pp. 512-513.

As seen above, only that individual or party could undertake to provide security that had the capability to enforce the terms of agreement. In case of the *Bhats* and Charans it was the socio-religious reverence attached to them that rendered them most capable of such an undertaking. The social position of the *bhats* can be gauged from the fact that no sale-deed or transaction was considered valid unless it was countersigned by a *bhat*. *Kolis*, *bhils* and Rajputs all respected a Bhat security.<sup>161</sup> In case of a breach of agreement by either of the parties, a Bhat could force him to fulfill his terms by resorting to the practice of *dharna* and *traga*. *Dharna* was the practice where a Bhat would collect men from his caste and sit before the residence of the person not fulfilling the stipulated terms of the agreement. The Bhat would not leave the place unless the person complied. In case of *traga* the Bhat would go a step further and either inflicts injures on his person or kill a member of his own family. The most extreme step he would resort to would be to commit suicide in front of the house of the defaulter. Suicide by a *bhat* was most dreaded by the people as it was considered that a *bhat's* soul will not get salvation and it will leave a curse who one who forced such an action. It seems that the practice of *traga* was not confined to *Bhats* alone but even some Brahmins practiced it.<sup>162</sup>

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a Bhat was also considered to be a connecting link between the Mewasi population and the Maratha

<sup>161</sup> James Campbell (ed), *Bom.Pres.Gaz. Population-Hindus*, op.cit., Pp. 209-210

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. P. 311

government.<sup>163</sup> Charans could stand security of large amounts running in lakhs of rupees. The Rajputs preferred the surety of a *bhat* over that of the wealthiest banker.<sup>164</sup>

The moral authority wielded by the *bhat* was utilized by various parties to settle contentious issues. During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century various polities trying to garner maximum resources put extravagant demands on the peasantry which the latter was unable to pay. Sometimes the peasantry refused to give even the legitimate amount of revenue to the authorities. In such cases, the *bhats* interceded on behalf of the peasantry with the authorities and worked out a mutually agreed sum and stood surety for the same before the authorities. Such a role played by the *bhat* was mutually advantageous both to the *ryots* and to the authorities. The Qasbatis of Dholka also were known to perform these duties.

The security of the *bhats* was also sought, when, at the time of maturity of crop, the *patel* of the village asked the *kamavisdar* to issue the permission slip for harvesting. The *bhats* had to stand as sureties at this point of time for not allowing the *ryots* to reap the harvest without the permission of the *kamavisdar* and also ensure that the harvested crop is not taken away by stealth.<sup>165</sup> The extent of trust kept in the *Bhats* is exhibited in the fact that the sub leasing of the

<sup>163</sup> Walter Hamilton, op.cit., P. 609.

<sup>164</sup> Bom.Pres.Gaz. Population-Hindus, op. cit., P.217.

<sup>165</sup> Walker-Selections XXXIX, P. 5.

uncultivated and depopulated lands of a villages by the Kamavisdar did not involve any written order, instead a Bhat security was considered enough to confirm the agreement.<sup>166</sup> When the Marathas started collecting *khandani* (tribute) in their *mulkgiri* expeditions in Gujarat, they also insisted on someone standing surety for the *khandani* to be paid by the chieftains. This system was in vogue in Saurashtra and the Mewasi sections of North Gujarat comprising the divisions of Mahi-Kantha and Rewa Kantha.<sup>167</sup> Alexander Walker has listed the following six kinds of Securities.<sup>168</sup>

- a. 'Fail Zamin' or 'Chaloo Zamin' meant for securing the good behavior of the subordinate chiefs.
- b. 'Hazar Zamin' or security for personal appearance.
- c. 'Mahal Zamin' was the security for Money, Property or Revenue.
- d. 'Lila Zamin' was permanent, literally eternal. This was also the security for good Behaviour but more binding and solemn.
- e. 'Arr (ad) Zamin' was additional security.
- f. The sixth security was called 'Ootkhand Mahadev'. This was resorted to in extreme cases. It was a solemn invocation in which the Bhat undertaking the security bound himself most

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. P. 25.

<sup>167</sup> *Kantha* in Gujarati means a river bank. Mahi Kantha was the area on the river Mahi and Rewa Kantha was the Banks of Narmada. These areas were inhabited by the Koli Zamindars who were largely recalcitrant and force was required to collect revenues from them. These areas were officially referred to as *Mewasi* by the Marathas, meaning recalcitrant.

<sup>168</sup> Walker- Selections XXXIX, P. 36.

securely. It was exacted from only the most refractory of the Mewasis.

In addition to the above, *sankla zamin* or connected security was also taken. It means the security given by a chief for the conduct of the chief of his adjoining territory, thus forming a chain of securities, making them responsible for each other.<sup>169</sup> This was resorted to by the British East India Company in the revenue settlements of Saurashtra and Mahi Kantha.

An instance showing the important position the Bhat security had come to hold is recorded in the English sources. It is a conversation between Takhtabai, the favourite wife of Anand Rao Gaekwad and Gangadhar Shastri, the *karbhari* of the British Residency at Baroda, in 1803. Takhtabai was accused of intriguing to oust the British Resident from Baroda.

**“... (Takhta) Bai:** *What is desired?*

**Shatri:** *You must plainly disclose the transactions lately passed;  
again you must give the security of some person  
possessed of two lakhs of Rupees. (To gain freedom)*

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. P.98.



**Bai:** *How can a woman find a money security against inimical Intrigues, who has been once accused of them?*

**Shastri:** *What security then will you give?*

**Bai:** *I will give that of a Bhat.*

**Shastri:** *What can a poor Bhat do, if you, Bai should unfortunately fall again amid the foes?*

**Bai:** *It is true in a temporal light the Bhats are poor. But, if I failed in my engagements, a Bhat would bring a thousand of his order and shed their blood before my face, cursing and upbraiding; which much I would fear. Therefore this security may be taken with the fullest confidence.*

**Shastri:** *A Bhat has nothing. How can you offer such security?*

**Bai:** *All over Gujarat the Bhats stand securities for Lakhs of Rupees, do they not? And the object, for which he pledges himself, is fulfilled from the fear that he else would shed his blood; so you must take Bhat Jamin ... ”*<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> GOB VI, P. 77.

Later the *Zamin* of Vishwaram Bhat was given by Takhta Bai.

Major Alexander Walker had given a detailed account of the practice of securities in Baroda under the Gaikwads in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. It mainly relates to the engagements between the Gaikwad chief and his subjects. He further informs that every transaction of the government was secured by a *Bhandari*; that its use pervades every department of the Government and continues in chain downwards through its subjects in all the transactions of any consequence. These subjects were the Arab *jamadars* and some other principal military officers. In this capacity the Arab *jamadars* had every right to interfere in the activities of the government. This in turn increased their influence and power.<sup>171</sup>

The term *Bhandari* seems to be derivation from Sanskrit 'Bahu' meaning a hand and 'Dherda', to place or to seize.<sup>172</sup> There were Securities safeguarding the property as well as persons. In case of a crime having been committed by the person having a security, the security giver was taken into confidence by the administration before proceeding to deal with that person.<sup>173</sup> No *koli* would go out of his village without a security. In some cases security was also sought from the chief of a place before an individual, may be a merchant,

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid. Pp. 146-147.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. Pp. 147-150.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

took up his residence there.<sup>174</sup> In case of property also the government could not abuse the party having security, unduly.

The power which the security giver enjoyed and how the company expanded its influence in the domestic affairs of the Gaekwad Government because of it being a security holder, is explained by Alexander Walker in the following words:

*“ ...Generally speaking and considering the extensive power conferred by giving a Bhandari, which necessarily implies a power of enforcing a due performance of the obligation and the control acquired thereby in many important affairs of the Govt, it may rather be considered as a beneficial engagement, and the risk must be trifling...*

*In fact a Bhandari is very seldom or never broken. It is the support of a weak Government, and a breach would threaten a dissolution of it. From what has been said the Bhandari will be found to have many advantages. In the case of substitution of the Company's for the Arab Bhandari, the Hon'ble Company became possessed of a very extensive influence and at the same time deprived the Gaekwad sardars of a powerful means by which they derived a right of controlling their Governments...*

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

*It also affords another mode of extending the Company's influence; for, as the Bhandari on their side is perfectly disinterested and gratuitous, it must be considered as an act of condescension and favour, and establishes a connection with the Moneyed men, which the company have reaped much benefit from in their pecuniary transactions in Baroda.*"<sup>175</sup>

While the East India Company undertook to disband the Arab Sibandis from the Gaekwad's principality, the Gaekwad had to take enormous amounts of loans from both the Company and other Shroffs, to make payments of arrears of pay to the *Sibandis*. In this case also the Company stood guarantee to see to it that the districts allotted by the Gaekwad for the repayment of the said loans to the Shroffs will be used for that purpose only.<sup>176</sup> On discharge of the Arab *jamadars*, their security responsibilities were taken over by the Company.<sup>177</sup> The East India Company considered this security system as the basis of their relationship with the native rulers of this region which gave 'almost unlimited powers' to interfere in the internal administration of the Gaekwads.<sup>178</sup> The Revenue Settlement agreements undertaken by the Company with the various principalities of Saurashtra and North-eastern Gujarat were also in the nature of the Securities.

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> GOB VII, pp. 146-147.

<sup>177</sup> G.S.Sardesai (ed), *Poona Residency Correspondence*, Vol. 13, *Elphinstone's Embassy*, Bombay, 1958, Lt.12, Pp. 55-60.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

The business of security holding was a source of great income to its holders. The *bhats* and *charans* were able to maintain large droves of carriages of cattle, which they used for inland trading in grain and other commodities.<sup>179</sup> Also they acted as money lenders and as pawnbrokers.<sup>180</sup> We have the evidence of Jambusar where the *charans* were holding large chunks of revenue free land and other pieces of land acquired through mortgage or purchase.<sup>181</sup> The Qasbatis of Dholka were also benefitted because of their acting as security holders.<sup>182</sup> The East India Company used this practice as a tool to enhance its position and role in the region. Such possessions augmented their resources and provided them further means to strengthen their economic and political position.

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<sup>179</sup> Walter Hamilton, op.cit., P. 610.

<sup>180</sup> *Bom.Pres. Gaz*, vol.IV, Ahmadabad, 1879, P.38.

<sup>181</sup> Thomas Marshall, 'A Statistical Account of the Pargana of Jambusar', 26<sup>th</sup> Dec, 1820, in *The Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay*, Vol: III, 1823, P. 377.

<sup>182</sup> *Bom.Pres. Gaz- Ahmadabad*, op.cit., P. 148