

MULTIPLE AUTHORITIES - DISPUTED SOVEREIGNTY

It has been observed in the following pages that an acute fragmentation of authority had taken place in Gujarat during this period. This situation led to an overlapping of rights of various contenders over different areas of the region, which led to regular conflicts amongst them. This fragmentation of power was a result of the breakdown of the Mughal authority in the region subsequently leading to the establishment of many independent principalities of varying denominations. The question of the establishment and sustenance of so many principalities without a homogenous source of legitimacy has engaged the attention of scholars working on 18th century Gujarat for sometime. This study attempts to understand the extent of this fragmentation and the milieu in which the subsequent conflicts came into being. One of the most striking features of the political scenario of the period was the haphazard way in which these principalities came to exercise authority. In almost all the places the authority was divided and shared between multiple claimants and this created confusion regarding the actual nature of sovereignty in these principalities. The lack of resources with these principalities and the mounting expenditure made territorial aggrandizement a necessity for their survival. As noted in the second chapter, the security holders, the Girasias, the *desais*, etc had developed considerable political clout during this period diluting the actual power of the rulers, the Marathas and the *Nawabs* alike.

Authority in this context is to be understood as the claim and the right to govern and collect a share in the revenues in any given place. The revenue rights that came to be exercised by various claimants during the 18th Century disregarded the traditional fiscal divisions of *parganas* and *sarkars*. The right to collect revenues also implied a right to administer the place. Thus, in the towns that were jointly administered by the Marathas and the Nawabs a *chauthia* was appointed as the Maratha representative. Here also the consideration was to keep an actual account of the everyday income that was collected in the towns and the city gates like the customs duties, fines, etc. The claimants were only keen to share such income among themselves and not everyone was keen to administer the region. Several incidents that took place during this period throw some light on the ethos of the politics of that period.

The process of sharing authority and revenues between two or more superior authorities in the region began since 1725 when Pilaji Rao and Kanthaji Kadam Bande were assigned the *chauth* of south and North of river Mahi respectively by Hamid Khan. With the establishment of dual Mughal-Maratha rule in 1737-38, the administration was also shared between the two. According to the terms of agreement, Renkoji posted his own men at Raigadh Gate, Khan Jahan Gate, Jamalpur Gate, Astodia and Raipur Gates. Manning these gates was left in the Maratha charge. Renkoji appointed his own *naibs*, *havalgars*, *faujdars*, *thanadars* in addition to the Mughal officers, at places where revenues under different heads were collected. These places included the office for the collection of

religious taxes, miscellaneous taxes, animal markets, mint, Jeweler's market, *pan* market, oil and vegetables *mandis*, fords and *chaklas*. Renkoji's *naibs* were instructed to work in co-operation with the Nazim's officers.³¹⁷ The sharing of administration was bound to create friction. Since the beginning of dual administration we find regular skirmishes taking place between the two parties, mainly on the issue of revenue sharing.

With the death of Momin Khan I Najm-ud-Daula in 1741 the situation worsened. More factional fights amongst the *naibs* of both the Mughals and the Marathas ensued. Muftakhir Khan and Fida-ud-Din Khan were jointly appointed as the Mughal Naib-Nazims who however could not hold on to power. They made way to Jawan Mard Khan. Khande Rao Gaekwad, as Damaji Rao's deputy at Ahmedabad, on the other hand replaced Renkoji. Renkoji was imprisoned for mismanagement of funds. He was recalled by Umabai Dabhade to the Deccan to be reinstated after one year to his earlier position of Maratha *naib* at Ahmadabad. In the meanwhile Jawan Mard Khan ousted the *naib* of Khande Rao from Ahmadabad and wrested *pargana haveli* Ahmadabad from him and became the sole master of the Maratha *mahals* as well.³¹⁸ It could be seen here that both parties treated the agreement of joint rule as a temporary arrangement. It was an arrangement in which each party waited to eliminate the other from power and take complete control of the territories. Repeatedly the Mughal *naibs* attempted to oust the Maratha *naibs* and similarly Renkoji also intrigued to occupy Ahmadabad completely. The

³¹⁷ *Mirat*, P. 576.

³¹⁸ *Mirat*, P. 688.

factional fights amongst both parties however induced them to seek cross-alliances. Thus, Khande Rao and Jawan Mard Khan allied for a while against Renkoji, while the latter sought the help of Sher Khan Babi.³¹⁹ In fact since 1725 it was no longer a Mughal-Maratha contest; the local *faujdars* and the various Maratha *sardars* individually were trying to take control of the region and at times allying with each other.

The phase of joint Mughal-Maratha rule came to an end in 1752 with the conquest of Ahmadabad by Peshwa's deputy. At the same time, Damaji Rao was compelled to surrender half of the conquered territories in Gujarat to the Peshwa. Since then the Peshwa became a direct party with territorial interests in the region. Thus, we find the emergence of another kind of dual authority in the region: that of the Peshwa and the Gaekwads. At this time Shripat Rao was appointed as *Sarsubah* at Ahmadabad and Sewak Ram as Damaji Rao's *naib*. Rs. 6,000 was fixed as Gaekwad's share of expenses for guarding the city of Ahmadabad.³²⁰

The situation in the region did not change much with this development. Friction existed in the Peshwa-Gaekwad relations as well. Three major battles took place between the Gaekwads and the Peshwas at different points of time. Unlike Sindhia and Holkar, the protégés who owed their independent position to the Peshwa, the Gaekwads were not a natural vassal of the Peshwa. The status of vassalage to the Peshwa was imposed on the Gaekwads. In fact the

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid. P.750.

two represented two rival factions of the Maratha polity. It is important here to understand the nature of relationship between the two and for this we need to trace back the rise of Peshwa as the superior authority and dwell on the nature of Maratha polity for a while.

The Maratha polity during the 18th century was a loose confederacy of various factions claiming legitimacy from Shivaji's successor Raja Shahu. With the death of Shivaji in 1680 and the rapid Mughal expansion into the Deccan, the Maratha polity disintegrated. Sambhaji, the first son of Shivaji and his successor was killed by Aurangzeb. Shivaji's second son, Rajaram with his headquarters at Kolhapur kept up the opposition to Mughal authority. Subsequent conquests were being carried out by individual Maratha Sardars. Emperor Bahadur Shah, Aurangzeb's successor, released Sambhaji's son Shahu, who was brought up by Aurangzeb, in order to control the Marathas. Shahu's release created a schism amongst the Marathas. At this time the Maratha administration was carried on by, what is known as, the *Ashtha Pradhan* (council of eight ministers). Amongst the important offices in the *Ashtha Pradhan* was that of *Peshwa* and *Senapati*. The *Senapati* was in charge of the Military and the *Peshwa* that of fiscal administration. It was during this struggle for hegemony between the two factions of Shivaji's successors that the office of *Peshwa* gained prominence under Balaji Vishwanath. Balaji Vishwanath was a *Karkun* in the service of a prominent Maratha *sardar* Dhanaji Jadhav.³²¹ He could rise in Shahu's favour by helping

³²¹ Grant Duff, Vol I, op.cit., P.423.

Shahu gain an upper hand in his struggle with Tarabai, wife of Rajaram and regent to her son, during 1712-13. During this time he also rose from being a mere administrator to becoming a military general. In 1714 Balaji Vishwanath was appointed to the office of *Peshwa*. After the assumption of office he made certain arrangements in the administration that made the Maratha *sardars* largely independent of the Raja. Their obligation towards the Raja was confined merely to the payment of *Sardeshmukhi*. The revenue collection and management of the territories conquered were left completely to the respective sardars.³²² The Peshwa also took complete control of the administration replacing the Raja for all practical purposes. Under Baji Rao the office of the Peshwa came to acquire definite military overtones and the office also became hereditary in this Family. The Peshwa thus replaced the Raja as the focal point of the Maratha power. Meanwhile, in the period intervening between Balaji Vishwanath's death in 1720 and the formal investiture of Baji Rao I to the office of Peshwa in 1721, Damaji Rao Gaekwad I, who was under the command of Khande Rao Dabhade, the *Senapati*, distinguished himself and came to be invested with the title of *Shamsher Bahadur* and the post of second-in-command of Khande Rao Dabhade.³²³ In the following decade Baji Rao Peshwa expanded his sphere of authority at the expense of the *Senapati* in Deccan. This was resented by the *Senapati* who allied with Nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Jah I to subvert the rising power of the Peshwa. Gaekwad and Kanthaji as protégés and vassals of the

³²² Satish Chandra, *Medieval India, II-Mughal Empire*, Delhi, 2007, Pp.498-499.

³²³ Grant Duff, Vol I, op.cit., P.472.

Senapati were consolidating their position in Gujarat. Their position became more definite after the *chauth* settlements of 1725 with Hamid Khan and later with Sarbuland Khan. At this juncture the Peshwa struck a harsh blow to this faction by killing the *Senapati* in the Battle of Bhilupur³²⁴ in Gujarat. He also sent Udaji Powar as a check on the growing power of the Gaekwads and allied himself with the Mughal Nazim Sarbuland Khan. However, the Peshwa did not intervene in the affairs of Gujarat effectively until 1752, and by 1735 Damaji Rao Gaekwad was the only Maratha *sardar* who could firmly establish his authority in Gujarat. After the Battle of Bhilupur, the *Senapati* faction itself experienced uncertainty as the Dabhade family declined even though Umabai Dabhade continued to hold the reigns for a while. Umabai's death and the rise of Damaji Rao Gaekwad II and his rift with the Dabhade family sealed the fate of the Dabhade family.³²⁵ By 1749 Damaji Rao Gaekwad had become very powerful. At this time the Maratha Raja, Shahu died leading to another spate of succession wars. Tara Bai, in a bid to oust Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao from power, formed a confederacy of Maratha *sardars* who were opposed to the Peshwa. She invited Damaji Rao Gaekwad to lead the confederacy. Initially the confederates gained some success. Later the Peshwa invited the members of the opposing confederacy to his camp on the pretext of negotiations by taking sacred oaths and fraudulently imprisoned them. Damaji Rao was also imprisoned for almost two years and was compelled to surrender to the Peshwa half the share of his territories in Gujarat. He was also made to accept the over lordship

³²⁴ Bhilupur is situated to the North of Ahmedabad.

³²⁵ P.M.Joshi (ed), *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar*, no.12, New Series, Bombay, 1962, passim.

of the Peshwa, pay annual tribute and render military service. Since then the Peshwa gained supremacy over the Gaekwads. However, the Gaekwads never accepted Peshwa's overlordship wholeheartedly and allied with any force that opposed Peshwa's power: earlier it was the Nizam and later in the Century the English East India Company. The third battle between the Peshwa and the Gaekwads took place in 1768, just before the death of Damaji Rao Gaekwad. While Madhav Rao I was the Peshwa at Poona, Raghunath Rao, the brother of Balaji Baji Rao and a rival claimant to the office of the Peshwa, rebelled against his nephew. In this, Damaji Rao Gaekwad supported Raghunath Rao and sent military help with his son Govind Rao as the commander of the army. Raghunath Rao along with his supporters including Govind Rao, were taken prisoners in the Battle of Dhodap fought again in Gujarat. A large amount of money was levied on Damaji Rao as fine for rebellion and as outstanding tribute. In the following year, the death of Damaji Rao and the struggle for succession amongst his sons, mainly Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad and Govind Rao Gaekwad, gave further scope for the Peshwa to intervene and subvert the power of the Gaekwads. The question of the inter-relationship of the Peshwa and Gaekwad was raised a decade later by the East India Company servants in the lengthy discussions relating to the right to alienate lands belonging to the Gaekwads' share of the territories in Gujarat, following the Treaty of Purandhar.

LOCAL CHIEFTAINCIES

The structure of authority in Gujarat was stratified since many centuries; there existed a hierarchy of political authorities. At the apex was the Head of a centralized State who was the highest authority. Below this was another layer of people exercising power located in different areas and invariably organized on clan basis. The local Rajputs³²⁶ are to be included in this category. They exercised hereditary rights of various kinds over their territory. However, the rights of this class of people was evolving and undergoing changes throughout the medieval period. The indigenous population of the region originally consisted of Kolis and Bhils. The Bhils were geographically marginalized with the emergence of the Rajputs such as the Solankis, Waghelas, etc. The Rajputs subsequently established a relatively centralized political authority in the region. Thus, the process of subverting these smaller polities and extracting tribute as a mark of over lordship started. Since then at least two levels of authority came into being. There was a constant tussle between this local group and the new rulers. This tussle got magnified with the establishment of the Sultanate of Gujarat that wanted to control the entire region centrally. It was at this juncture that the system of *wanta* (*bantha*) and *tilpad*, demarcating the revenue share was introduced by

³²⁶ The term Rajput has been used here with certain reservations. These groups called themselves by their clan names: Parmars, Chauhans, Gohel, Jethwas, Jadejas, etc. before the Mughal period. This is very clearly evident from the inscriptions found in various parts of Gujarat where the clan names alone are mentioned. It is from the time of the Mughals that they were termed as Rajputs and by implication, *kshatriyas*. I am grateful to Professor S. Hasan Mahmud for pointing out this fact to me.

the Sultans as a compromise.³²⁷ The local rulers were left with superior rights over one fourth of their lands (*bantha*), while the Sultans exercised his rights over the remaining three-fourth part (*tilpad*). The same system continued under the Mughals. With the establishment of the Maratha sway *salami* was levied on the smaller *wanta* chieftains to the north and the east of Ahmedabad.³²⁸ This was collected through *mulkgiri* expeditions. Following the decline of Mughal power and the Maratha expansion these *zamindars* attempted to augment their possessions. The Chiefs of Saurashtra were benefited the most. In Gujarat mainland, smaller *wanta* holders established claims (*giras*) in the revenues of neighbouring villages, something similar to the Maratha *chauth*.

The nature of polity amongst these chieftaincies was based on the lines of *Bhayad*, loosely translated as 'Brotherhood' in the English sources. These polities were largely clan based. The law of primogeniture prevailed in case of succession to the chieftaincy. The younger members of the family were entitled to a share in the territory for their subsistence. This was known as *giras*, literally meaning a mouthful, and its holder a *girasia*, also called *bhoomia* and sometimes *thakurda*. Within their *giras* the *girasias* were absolute sovereigns and the chief made no interference in its internal matters of administration. The *Girasias* were only duty bound to furnish their chief with military aid in case of war. In Kutch they gave no annual monetary *nazrana* to their chief but in Saurashtra it was customary to give a certain amount of annual *nazrana*. This was to defray the tribute that was levied by

³²⁷ A.K.Forbes, *Rasmala*, Vol: II, Oxford, Pp. 270-271.

³²⁸ Walter Hamilton, op.cit., P. 607.

the superior powers.³²⁹ This *bhayad* system of dividing the sovereign rights led to acute fragmentation. It also led the younger and more dynamic and impoverished *girasias* to resort to loot and plunder; such *girasias* that plundered others' *giras* were called *bharwatio*. The outlaws were driven by a sense of deprivation and an inflated idea of honour, and they were glorified and eulogized in local ballads.³³⁰ They were referred to as *Lutero* (looter) in a sense meaning a hero. This practice was widespread during this period and it led to much disturbance.

The term *giras* has two meanings. The first was the hereditary right of the younger clan member in the revenue of the Principality. This kind of *giras* and the *girasia* were considered honourable. However, due to the acute fragmentation of the *girasia* rights the younger *girasias* received less amount of subsistence in land. This fact coupled with their zeal for expansion made these *girasias* expand their areas of activity and lay claim to a share of revenue in their neighbouring villages. These villages happened to be *rasti* or peaceful villages as against the *mewasi* or recalcitrant villages. Generally the *mewasi girasia* chiefs laid claims in the *rasti* villages. Such a claim was also called as *giras*, differentiated sometimes with a prefix *toda*, i.e., *toda-giras*. Because of the complete breakdown of the law and order of the region during the 18th century many *girasias* expanded their claim to *toda-giras*.

³²⁹ James Mac Murdo, "An Account of Cutch and of the countries lying between Guzerat and the river Indus, from Anjar", 29th Sept, 1818, *Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay*, Vol. II, 1820, Pp. 233-236.

³³⁰ C.A.Kincaid, *Outlaws of Kathiawad and other Studies*, Bombay, 1905, P.19. For similar tendencies in Andhra Pradesh see J.F.Richards and V.Narayan Rao, "Banditry in Mughal India: Historical and Folk perceptions", *IESHR*, Vol XVII, No. 1, 1980.

The major local principalities of Saurashtra and North Gujarat functioned on the lines of *bhayad*. This included Nawanagar, Bhavnagar, Porbandar, Dhrangadhra, Gondal, etc. in Saurashtra, as also Idar, Palanpur, etc in North Gujarat and Chhota Udaipur, Devgadhi Bariya, and Rajpipla on the Eastern fringes of Gujarat. Since Nawanagar and Bhavnagar had expanded their areas of direct control at the expense of their own *girasias*, the latter were never reconciled with the former. The British East India Company exploited this situation by supporting the *girasias* against these chieftains of the region and thus exert pressure on them.

In case of Kutch this situation was more complicated. Here, the *girasias* were stratified entities. A class of them called *teelats* had their own sub-*girasias*. These sub-*girasias* were duty bound to render military assistance to their respective *teelats* and not to the Maharao directly. Thus, a hierarchy within hierarchy had emerged amongst the *girasias* in Kutch. The Maharao did not have any control over these sub-*girasias*. The *teelats* respected the autonomy of their sub-*girasias* and did not intervene in their internal matters. Since the Maharao did not pay tribute to any higher authority such as the Marathas, the *girasias* were not obliged to pay the annual *nazrana* to him.

Many of the principalities that came into being during the 18th Century were based on the *bhayad* system. It was due to this that we get three parallel lines of Gaekwad rule: one in Baroda which was regarded as the supreme authority; the second in Kadi and Nadiad which comprised of the *jagir* of Khande Rao, bestowed on him by Damaji Rao Gaekwad, and the third at Sankheda, held in *jagir* by

another member of the Gaekwad family. However, with the intervention of the British, the latter two *jagirs* were reverted to the Gaikwads of Baroda in 1802-3. The various Babi *nawabis* can also be included into this category.

In this scenario of rapid changes taking place in political authority in different regions of Gujarat, various contending parties sought after the areas that were rich in revenue, both agricultural and non-agricultural. Let us consider the case of Bharuch. Since its inception Bharuch Nawabi was faced with danger from its neighbours. The Nawabi consisted of the Mughal *sarkar* of Bharuch including the port-town and the *pargana* of Bharuch, the *parganas* of Ankleshwar, Hansot, Olpad, Amod and Jambusar. With Damaji Rao Gaekwad's offensive against Bharuch in 1741 the *parganas* of Ankleshwar, Olpad, Hansot, Amod and Jambusar fell into Maratha hands. Before Damaji Rao could conquer Bharuch town itself a compromise was reached between him and Nek Nam Khan, the Nawab of Bharuch, at the behest of the Nizam. It was settled to assign 60% of the revenues of Bharuch to the Gaekwads and 40% was to be left with the Nawab. Since then the administration of the countryside was solely taken over by Gaekwad's *kamavisdars*. The administration of the *pargana* and the town of Bharuch were further shared between the *Nawab* and the Gaekwad *chauthia*. In 1752 the Gaekwad's territories in Gujarat were shared half-and-half between the Peshwa and the Gaekwads whereby the Peshwa came into the possession of the *parganas* of Ankleshwar, Hansot, Olpad, Amod and Jambusar and the Gaekwads were left with the *pargana* and town of Bharuch. In the course of the 20 years

following 1741 division, the *Nawab* managed to lay a claim on the jama' of the Peshwa's *parganas* of Jambusar and Amod through *Mulkgiri* expeditions.³³¹ He collected this share from the Rajas of the two places and presumably not from the Peshwa's *kamavisdars*. Besides the Nawab and the Marathas, the local chieftains, mostly Kolis, also had a claim in the revenue of the countryside of Bharuch. The Raja of Rajpipla also levied *toda-giras* from 16 villages in Hansot and Bharuch *parganas*.³³²

The simultaneous exercise of revenue rights by several claimants led to frequent disputes and confrontations. Many such confrontations between the Nawabs of Bharuch and their neighbours are recorded in our sources.³³³ The nature and frequency of these conflicts brings forth the instability experienced by the Bharuch Nawabi. There was an instance during the rule of Nawab Hasan Ali Khan of Bharuch when the Surat Nawab, Hafiz Masud Khan, in collusion with an Ijaradar of Ankleshwar, Mianji, had conspired to capture Bharuch.³³⁴ Similarly, in 1761 the Peshwa sent orders to chastise the Nawab of Bharuch for attempting to take over Amod from the Peshwa's *kamavisdar*, which was however averted after Govind Rao Gaekwad assured the Peshwa of tackling the Nawab.³³⁵ This incident occurred immediate to the defeat of the Marathas in the third battle of Panipat, when the various Nawabs of Gujarat, as representatives of the Mughal Emperor, were ordered to conquer the

³³¹ *GOB II*, P.119.

³³² Walter Hamilton, *op.cit.*, P. 713.

³³³ Saeed Hasan, *Majmua-i-Danish*, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p. 4 & Vol. II, p. 35

³³⁴ *MD III*, f. 42 in *HOB*, Pp. 25-28.

³³⁵ P.M.Joshi (ed), *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar*, Vol. III, Revival of Maratha power, Bombay, 1962, Lt.224, P.271.

territories under Maratha control.³³⁶ Another major confrontation took place in 1768 between Muazzaz Khan and Shripat Rao, Peshwa's *kamavisdar* of Amod. Two actions of Shripat Rao brought about this conflict. In the process of revenue collection expedition in Amod the Nawab was attempting to get a *muchalka* from the zamindar of that place through Azam Rana, *patel* of a village. Shripat Rao interfered in the matter and invited Azam Rana for negotiations but imprisoned him, despite having promised a safe conduct earlier. He also extracted a sum of Rs. 5,000 from Azam Rana. In addition Shripat Rao also collected revenues from the villages of Bharuch pargana, which did not fall in his jurisdiction. Because of the behaviour of Shripat Rao Muazzaz Khan revoked the surety of Khandoji Sainkar, given earlier for the Nawab's good behaviour (i.e., to not encroach on the other party's rights).³³⁷ In retaliation the Nawab carried away the cattle belonging to the *parganas* of Shripat Rao. This seems to have alarmed Shripat Rao who unable to bear the expenses of Sibandi, implored the Nawab for negotiations.³³⁸ However the matter was settled through a battle in which Shripat Rao was defeated.³³⁹ Similarly, a battle took place between Fatehsing and Muazzaz Khan, when in 1770 Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad's officers collected revenues without informing the Nawab. Fatehsing Rao further made the Nawab's officers accept his claim to more revenues than was collected.³⁴⁰ It seems that collecting one's share of revenues without

³³⁶ *Mirat*, P. 923.

³³⁷ *MD III*, f.101 in *HOB*, P. 47.

³³⁸ *Ibid.* P.48.

³³⁹ Kishore Das Munshi, *Majmua-e-Danish*, transl. Saeed Hasan, Allahabad, 1957, Lt: 16, Pp. 33- 36.

³⁴⁰ *MD III*, Lt: 151 in *HOB*, P.55.

informing the other claimant was considered an illegitimate act and would be a cause of conflict. It is understood that in such cases there were chances that the party that proceeded on *Mulkgiri* would extract more than its due share. The *patels* and the *desais* also refused to settle the *jamabandi* unless representatives of both parties concerned were present. Following the first British expedition of Bharuch the ryots of Bharuch were apprehensive of another attack and refused to pay the *jama*'. Lallubhai therefore asked Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad to address letters to the *desais* to placate them and reassure them of Gaekwad support in safeguarding their interests.³⁴¹

With the British conquest of Bharuch the conflicts between the new rulers of Bharuch and the Gaekwads with regard to their respective shares in Bharuch had begun. However, diplomacy and not force was used to resolve these conflicts. The reason for this was that Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad wanted to remain friendly with the British, in who he saw a powerful ally against the highhanded behaviour of the Peshwa. On the other hand, Anglo-Peshwa relations before the first Anglo-Maratha war were not hostile, if not exactly friendly. They both did not want to antagonize each other unnecessarily. In an incident that occurred immediately after the British conquered Bharuch in 1772, we see a confrontation between Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad and the British Factors at Bharuch. Immediate after the British takeover of Bharuch, Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad arrived in the vicinity of Bharuch with a large force to settle his rights in Bharuch with the British on the same terms as it existed during the times of the

³⁴¹ *GOB II*, P.15.

Nawabs.³⁴² The British, on the other hand, attempted to reduce the number of claimants on the revenues they had to share with. Accordingly, they tried to induce Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad to accept a certain sum of money in lieu of his claims on Bharuch revenues.³⁴³ This did not work. After much procrastination the Bharuch Factors admitted Fatehsing Rao's claims, but only for one year.³⁴⁴ With the commencement of the first Anglo-Maratha war almost immediately, the renewal of the agreement could not be done by the British and matters stood where they were.

In 1773 another dispute took place, this time between the Peshwa's *Kamavisdars* and British Factors at Bharuch. While Mr. Mostyn was at Poona in the capacity of the Company's ambassador, he was asked for certain clarifications by the Poona *darbar*. It was complained that the British officers at Bharuch had collected an amount of Rs. 17,000 from the '*amaldar*' of Amod and were demanding an additional amount of Rs. 6,000 for the expenses of the expedition carried out by them. The Poona *darbar* demanded that the Company return the amount collected and release the prisoners. Upon inquiry it was found that the peshwa's '*amaldars*' had refused to pay what was rightfully due to the Company and to enforce that right the Factors sent a force. It was only just that the charges for such an expedition be defrayed by the '*amaldars*'. This argument seems to have convinced the Poona *darbar* and the matter was not pursued

³⁴² Ibid. Pp. 119 & 126.

³⁴³ Ibid. P.121.

³⁴⁴ Ibid. P.140.

further.³⁴⁵ Besides, Poona did not want to end diplomatic relations with the Company, who could have proved a dangerous enemy in the wake of the disorderly conditions at Poona following the death of Peshwa Madhavrao I.³⁴⁶ At about the same time the Poona darbar made another complaint, again in relation to Bharuch Factors. It was alleged that the Bharuch Factors were demanding a share in the revenues of Hansot and Ankleshwar and were threatening with reprisals in case of non-compliance. The Peshwa's representative insisted that none of the two *parganas* ever paid anything before to Bharuch, as they were always under the jurisdiction of Surat. The British demanded revenues of these places, both from Surat and Bharuch.³⁴⁷ The Maratha officer (*chitnis*) informed Mr. Mostyn that the above *parganas* were absolutely under Surat's authority and they paid Rs. 20 to 21 thousand annually and Bharuch had no claim on either. The Nawab of Bharuch had reportedly coerced these places to pay him some amount since five-six years back. This, the Poona darbar asserted, was no ground for the British claims.³⁴⁸ In August the same year another complaint was received at Poona where the Bharuch Factors were accused of threatening the '*amaldar* of *Olpad* and demanding a present in the form of money,³⁴⁹ hay and provisions.³⁵⁰ In reply the Bharuch Factors asserted that they intended to take only that part which formerly belonged to the *Nawab* and that they repeatedly sent envoys to ask the *kamavisdar* to cooperate. The

³⁴⁵ *Mostyn's Diary*, Pp. 175-176

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.* P.180.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Pp. 180-181.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.* P.195.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.* P.196.

kamavisdar (also referred to as *pandit* in English sources) in charge of Olpad did not respond despite several communications. He also had held the *patels* in the small-fortified village, which made it imperative for the British to take action. In the process the *kamavisdar* fled. According to the British Factors at Bharuch “...*the nabobs demand on these places was not, we beg leave to observe, founded in violence; but these provinces as well as Amod and Jambusar actually appertained in former times to Broach, and stand so on the Mogals books to this day. The Peshwa and the Gaiqua (Gaekwad) therefore have been the unjust usurpers of those countries, and by violence stripped this government of them...*”³⁵¹

The above statement indicates that the basis of revenue claims was Mughal and the *jamabandi* was settled according to the revenue records of the Mughal times. It is curious also to observe the British refer to the Marathas as ‘usurpers’ of the Nawab’s rights when they themselves had no scruples in conquering Bharuch from the Nawab.

At Surat too the Marathas administered the parganas³⁵² and the Nawab had to share the town administration with the Maratha *chauthia*, in addition to the English East India Company since their occupation of the castle in 1759. So, in effect, the authority was extremely fragmented in the town, with the English being a major power there since 1759.³⁵³ The revenues of Surat were divided into three parts: one part being assigned to the Nawab, another to the holder of the castle and the third part went to the Marathas called

³⁵¹ Ibid. Pp. 214-218.

³⁵² See chapter III.

³⁵³ V.G. Hatakhar, op.cit., Pp. 71-72.

chauth. The Marathas further divided it into two equal parts between the Gaekwads and the Peshwa. The position in the *parganas* was even more complex. There were local chiefs like that of Dharampur, Mandvi, etc, who also had established their rights on the revenues of their respective areas. Hence revenue sharing in the *parganas* was extremely fragmented. In fact the existence of representatives of several authorities at the place of collection of customs duties, according to a French officer, was one of the reasons that scared away foreign merchants who saw a hoard of inspectors when their goods entered the town.³⁵⁴ Surat too experienced frequent disputes between the above-mentioned three contenders. The parties who failed to meet their claims in Surat resorted to disruption of trade in the town. The Marathas *chauthias* frequently went out of the town and stopped provisions and goods from entering the fortified areas of the town. This inconvenience prodded the Nawab to negotiate the issue on hand. The British too made similar attempts but on Sea. They had taken control of the 'Mullah Gate' or Seafarer's Gate, at the mouth of the river Tapi, from where the goods would be loaded on Ships for overseas trade. In 1752 and in 1758-59 the British Factors stopped the trade of the town for almost one year because of which the Nawab was forced to listen to their grievances. At Cambay also, the Peshwa and the Nawab governed the town jointly. The Nawab frequently sought British help to thwart frequent Maratha attempts to capture the portions of the town that did not belong to the Marathas. The Gaekwad exercised claims of *ghasdana* on Cambay.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

To understand another kind of disputes we will now revert to Bharuch. While the English Factors were dealing with the various disputes relating to the Marathas, another development put the Bharuch Factors in dilemma. Early in January 1774 Govind Rao Gaekwad, Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad's brother and a rival claimant to the Gaekwad's *gaddi* was made the rightful successor to the *gaddi* of Baroda by Raghunath Rao, the new Peshwa.³⁵⁵ Govind Rao immediately set out with a large army to Gujarat. He encamped near Bharuch. Simultaneously Fatehsing Rao also encamped in the vicinity of Bharuch to stop Govind Rao from entering the region. The Factors at Bharuch were apprehensive that the prospective battle would be fought in their *parganas* which would have naturally reduced their revenues. The Factors resorted to diplomacy and asked Govind Rao to not enter their *parganas*. Govind Rao on the other hand asked the Factors to not permit Fatehsing Rao to collect revenues from Bharuch *parganas*.³⁵⁶ The British treated this issue as a dispute between the two brothers although the villages were getting affected. In the subsequent battle Fatehsing Rao was defeated and he fled to Baroda fort. While the matters were in this state, the British planned to induce the Surat Nawab to recover as many *parganas* as he could into his control, earlier taken by the Marathas, since the Marathas (Gaekwads) were at war with each other.³⁵⁷ The Bombay authorities wished to remain neutral in reply to Govind Rao's solicitations but advised the Factors to support that party which is strongest for the purpose of

³⁵⁵ Govind Rao was given the *gaddi* in place of Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, whose regent was Fatehsing Rao. Sayaji Rao was of a weak personality and therefore all power in the Gaekwad chieftaincy rested with Fatehsing Rao.

³⁵⁶ *GOB II*, P.180.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.* P.183.

revenue collection.³⁵⁸ However, Govind Rao had by then come to control the entire countryside and Fatehsing was holed up in Baroda. The British Factors therefore received Govind Rao's *chauthia* in place of Fatehsing Rao's *chauthia*.³⁵⁹ In the meanwhile Raghunath Rao had to flee under British protection against the Poona *darbar*. The struggle for Bharuch between the Gaekwad brothers was subsumed within the larger battle of the first Anglo-Maratha war. This situation led to another dispute regarding the actual political status of the Gaekwad vis-à-vis the Peshwa.

The context in which the vexed issue of the Gaekwad-Peshwa relationship was discussed by the British authorities is as follows: While the negotiations for supporting Raghoba by the Bombay presidency was afoot, he was asked to alienate certain lands, especially the Maratha share of Bharuch's revenues. This, the British Factors found, was not to be given by Raghoba as it belonged to Gaekwad chief and only he had the right to alienate his lands.³⁶⁰ It was accordingly decided to make Raghoba obtain the grant of these revenues from the Gaekwad for the English.³⁶¹ In the Treaty of Surat, territories falling between Bombay and Bharuch were received by British but excluding the Gaekwad's share.³⁶² It is to be remembered that Raghoba made these cessations as the rightful Peshwa and the British planned to put him in the Peshwa's office through this war.

³⁵⁸ Ibid. P.188.

³⁵⁹ Ibid. Pp. 224-225. It is not explicitly mentioned as to when Govind Rao's *chauthia* was allowed to undertake his duties but by the time the Poona ministers' army was pursuing Raghoba we find Govind Rao's *chauthia* in Bharuch requesting the English for aid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid. P.201.

³⁶¹ Ibid. Pp. 216-217.

³⁶² Ibid. 5th Article in the Treaty of Surat, P. 250.

The cessations so obtained would then have become legal. He also promised to procure *sanads* from the Gaekwad granting his shares as well.³⁶³ Later, Fatehsing also became a party in the alliance against the ministers at Poona and made over several cessations like Koral, Chikli, Variav and Batta. This process was stopped midway due to the interference of Bengal and Col. Upton was sent as envoy to Poona. As truce was declared between the English and the Marathas, and with Warren Hastings' invalidating the Treaty of Surat, one would have believed that the cessations made by Fatehsing Rao would have reverted back to him. However, Warren Hastings categorically asked the Bombay Presidency to retain the possession of the Gaekwad's share of Bharuch revenues along with above-mentioned areas until a peace treaty was concluded.³⁶⁴ Hastings was probably pressurized to make this order, as the Bombay Presidency was unwilling to hand over its gains.

While Col. Upton was in Poona the ministers refused to acknowledge Gaekwad's right to alienate territories and asserted that he was a mere vassal of the Peshwa and that Gujarat was his *jagir* and as such he had no right to alienate it without permission from the Peshwa. Following this, a spate of correspondence was exchanged

³⁶³ Ibid. 6th Article in the treaty of Surat.

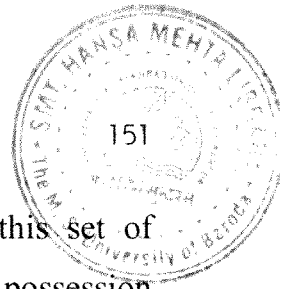
³⁶⁴ *GOB II*, Pp. 322-323. Here let us consider the meaning of the term *jagir* in this context. The very idea of *jagir* in Maratha terminology sounds vague and is used in several formal grants of territories. In 1752 when the Marathas conquered Ahmedabad from Jawan Mard Khan he was given the parganas of Patan, Sami, Munjpur, Kheralu and others as *jagir* as per the settlement. This was inspite of the fact that the Marathas could not capture Ahmedabad even after prolonged siege and had to take its possession through negotiations. Similarly Cambay and Petlad were given as *jagir* to Momin Khan Ilin 1758-59, this too after a prolonged siege of Ahmedabad in 1758-59. It is interesting also considering that these Nawabs claimed independence from the Marathas and their legitimacy from the Mughal Emperor directly and the Marathas had failed to conquer these areas from the Nawabs.

between Bombay, Calcutta and Poona where each party asserted its own point of view. The Bombay authorities and Surat Factors asserted the independent status of Gaekwad but Calcutta was adamant to treat the Peshwa as the undisputed head of Maratha polity. Col. Upton had expressed orders to please Poona and as such Bombay's claims fell on deaf ears. For Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad the alliance of Bombay was important to save his own position against Govind Rao and, therefore, he supported Bombay's claims, although later we find Fatehsing Rao acknowledging his position as a *jagirdar* of the Peshwa and declared his possessions as a *jagir*.³⁶⁵ Bombay authorities, however, refused to acknowledge Poona's point of view. They quoted several instances where the Gaekwad had earlier undertaken decisions of sovereign nature on his own and without referring to the Peshwa. They said that the district of Variav was ceded to the English since 1759.³⁶⁶ Similarly, when the British conquered Bharuch, Fatehsing Rao concluded a treaty with the English safeguarding his share of revenues in Bharuch with no reference to the Peshwa. The Poona *Darbar* too did not raise objections to this, even though Mr. Mostyn, the English envoy, was at Poona at that time.³⁶⁷ Earlier, in 1772 according to an agreement concluded between Sayaji Rao-Fatehsing Rao and Madhav Rao Peshwa, the Gaekwads asked permission to undertake operations against the Nawabs of Gujarat and enlarge their own domain. The Peshwa categorically said that he was not concerned with the areas in

³⁶⁵ *GOB III*, Pp. 22-23.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Pp. 2-4.

³⁶⁷ *GOB II*, P.24.



the Gaekwad's share of territories.³⁶⁸ On the basis of this set of evidence, Calcutta authorities permitted Bombay to keep possession of the territories ceded to them until the ministers, as per a clause in the Treaty of Purandhar, provided a more viable proof of the Gaekwad's dependence on Poona.³⁶⁹ This issued got prolonged.

The Maratha sources on the other hand seem to support the claims of Poona ministers. It may be worthwhile to briefly take stock of the developments that had determined the position of the Gaekwads in the Maratha polity. Umabai Dabhade appointed Damaji Rao as the *mamlatdar* of Gujarat after Pilaji Rao's death.³⁷⁰ In 1752 when Balaji Baji Rao Peshwa had imprisoned Damaji Rao Gaekwad and demanded surrender of half his territories in Gujarat he stated his status as being merely a *mutaliq* or deputy of Dabhades.³⁷¹ With the death of Shahu in 1749 and the defeat of the rival party in Maratha politics the Peshwa had emerged as the supreme authority. In the partition treaty of 1752 we find the Peshwa granting half of Maratha territories of Gujarat to the Gaekwad in his own name.³⁷² Since then the official documents refer to the Peshwa as the *sarkar*. Thus, it is possible that the Peshwa was the accepted overlord of the Gaekwad but the inherent rift between the two made Gaekwad aspire for freedom from his tutelage. It is also possible that alienation of lands was a part of the Gaekwad's right as a *sardar* who single-handedly conquered the whole province and therefore was not usually interfered

³⁶⁸ Ibid. Pp.15-16.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ *HSBSR-I*, Lt: 28, P. 21.

³⁷¹ *Baroda State Gazetteer*, Pp. 452-453.

³⁷² *HSBSR I*, P. 52.

with by the Peshwa. This was an important characteristic of the Maratha polity during this period where the Peshwa was lenient with *sardars* who operated on their own outside *swarajya*.³⁷³ In this particular case the Poona ministers were apprehensive of the rise of Bombay as a counterpoise to their own power in western India and therefore sought to curb Bombay's territorial ambitions. The issue was settled in the Treaty of Salbai in 1782 in favour of Poona *Darbar* and the British had to return the *parganas* ceded earlier. Bharuch also was taken from Fatehsing Rao by Poona, possibly to make their point, and given as a gift to the English for peace settlements. The British in turn gave it to the Sindhia. Thus, Gaekwad's position as the vassal of Peshwa was reaffirmed.

As mentioned elsewhere, the British East India Company wanted to reduce the number of claimants to revenues in areas controlled by it. In pursuance of this ambition they introduced a clause in the Treaty of Kundhela (concluded during the first Anglo-Maratha war) whereby territories conquered from the Peshwa in Gujarat was proposed to be partitioned in such a way that the Gaekwad and the English had sole possession of their respective shares.³⁷⁴ According to this agreement the British were to receive territories in the south around Surat and Bharuch, while the Gaekwads would be given the territories in the North, comprising Ahmadabad and other areas.

³⁷³ Swarajya was the term used for the areas originally conquered by Shivaji as distinct from the Moglai or Mughal's areas that were conquered by the Maratha sardars subsequently. Swarajya formed the core area of the Maratha Kingdom. In Moglai areas the revenue rights were shared with the Mughals.

³⁷⁴ *GOB III*, 5th article in the Treaty of Kundhela, P. 96.

MULKGIRI

The British east India Company became a direct party with territorial rights in Saurashtra in 1803 with their taking possession of the four districts of Gogha, Ranpur, Dholka and Dhandhuka, obtained from the Peshwa through the Treaty of Bassein. This later became Kaira collectorate. They found the political situation in the region to be a complex one. They made efforts to understand the nature of Maratha relations with the smaller chieftains of Saurashtra and Mahi-Kantha-Rewa Kantha (North Gujarat) regions. The Marathas had been conducting annual *mulkgiri* or revenue collection expeditions into these regions. The chiefs were obliged to pay a *khandani* (tribute) and accept the Marathas as overlords. The amount of *khandani* varied from year to year and depended on the resistance power of the chiefs as well as the force at the command of the tribute collectors. For all practical purposes these chiefs were free to manage their chieftaincies without any interference from their Maratha overlords.

The Maratha *mulkgiri* claims consisted of two parts, one *jamabandi* and other *kharajat*.³⁷⁵ *kharajat* consisted of many perquisites, *ghasdana* being an important perquisite reserved for the *sardar* who conducted the *mulkgiri* campaign. Prior to the introduction of the British, the Marathas had principally the right to interfere in settling succession disputes; punish offenders; deal with

³⁷⁵ It is the corrupt word for *ikhrajat*, an established head of revenue under the Mughals. Baroda State Gazetteer, P.665.

lawless elements; oversee the maintenance of internal peace by the local chiefs etc.³⁷⁶ The Gaekwads came to exercise these rights in a more definite way after the British entry into Saurashtra. The British recognised the rights of the Gekwads to exercise control over the chieftains of the region as it was also in their interest. Vithalrao Devaji, the Gaekwad *sarsubah* obtained a footing in the region by capturing Amreli town and expanding the Gaekwad possessions in the peninsula after 1804. The British could not do this directly since they had no legitimate authority to interfere in the region; they were content to be seen as an ally of the Gekwads. It was only after the transfer of Peshwa's territories in Gujarat to the Company in 1817-18 that the British servants came to exercise direct control.

Major Alexander Walker, who has made important observations on the nature of sovereignty in Saurashtra, notes that the chieftains of Saurashtra were indifferent during the transition of their over lordship from the Mughal to the Maratha governments. They paid *jama* ' to whoever possessed the local authority in the area and that neither Nawabs nor the Marathas interfered in their internal matters. The only activity they undertook was the *mulkgiri* expeditions, which in the course of time established their own conventions. Accordingly, when the Maratha *mulkgiri* force appeared in Saurashtra, all fights amongst the local chiefs were to stop. In case any chieftain did not comply with this rule, the Marathas levied a fine on that chief. Similarly, upon the appearance of the force on the borders of a principality the local chief was required to send his *vakils*

³⁷⁶ C.U.Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol: VI, Calcutta, 1932, Pp. 80-81.

or *karbharis* to settle his tribute. After this, he had to leave a few soldiers there to tell any other *mulkigiri* party that settlement has already been made. This saved them from the possible loot and plunder. This practice was called *bhandar*. In case a chief refused to settle his tribute, the *mulkigiri* forces would ravage the territory and compel the chief to make a settlement.³⁷⁷

The practice of *mulkigiri* was not confined to the Marathas alone. The Nawab of Junagadh had an equal right to *mulkigiri* in Saurashtra.³⁷⁸ The *parganas* of Salem, Banthali, Veraval, Patan, Div, Kutiana, Bhad, Miari, Aliah, Biarej, Chorwad, Sutrapada, Kodinar, Una, Delwada were directly ruled by the Nawab. In the *parganas* of Mangrol, Jetpur, Jhanapoli, Rampur, Bagasra, Bilkha, Sil Bandar, Veraval and Amreli he had to share the *mulkigiri* revenue with other claimants.³⁷⁹ Besides the various principalities of Saurashtra, Junagadh's claim to *mulkigiri* extended well into the provinces of Jhalawad, Dhandhuka, Ranpur and Gogha (in Ahmadabad *sarkar*). In Saurashtra it extended up to Hallad, Machu Kantha, etc.³⁸⁰ In 1821 there were 193 different principalities in Saurashtra, out of which 134 including Bhavnagar, Nawanagar, Porbandar, Morbi and Dhrangadhra paid *zortalabi* (the equivalent of the Maratha *khandani*) to Junagadh.³⁸¹ In addition to *zortalabi*, the Nawab also collected *ghasdana* like the Marathas. According to the *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, Saurashtra was divided into 188 separate states during the British

³⁷⁷ Walker-Selections XXXIX, Pp. 269-272.

³⁷⁸ Ibid. P.272.

³⁷⁹ Tarikh-i-Sorath, P.33.

³⁸⁰ Walker-Selections, P.273.

³⁸¹ Barnewall's report to Govt, 31st Oct, 1821, c.f. *The Babi rulers of Sorath*, Junagadh State Press, 1903, P. 4.

times, out of which 13 did not pay any tribute, 96 paid the tribute to the British and 70 to Gaekwads and 9 to both. Out of 188 principalities, 132 paid *zortalabi* to Junagadh as well.³⁸² In addition the chiefs of Bhavnagar, Nawanagar and Wadhwan also conducted *mulkgiri* and collected tribute from their *bhayad* as also from the smaller chiefs in the neighbourhood. In Mangrol the Raja of Mangrol and Junagadh Nawab jointly exercised revenue rights.³⁸³ Mian Badrud-Din who had come to administer Mangrol after driving out the Marathas in 1748 also had a share in the revenue of the place. Besides, he collected tribute from Keshod, Chorwad, Kodinar, Patan, Porbandar, etc.³⁸⁴

The extent of fragmentation of the revenue rights in central Saurashtra can be had from some statistics available with us. In 1803 the Company officers found that in Dhanduka there were 103 villages out of which 26 villages sought protection from Bhavnagar and 26 from the chief of Limdi. All 103 villages paid *jama* to the Company (they had earlier paid that to the Peshwa) but owed no other obligation.³⁸⁵ In case of Ranpur only the Qasba of Ranpur and 3 *rasti* villages comprised Company's areas of direct authority; the rest were under their respective *girasias* who ruled independently.³⁸⁶ The *girasias* again paid a fixed sum as tribute to Bhavnagar, Limdi and Wadhwan for protection against depredations.³⁸⁷ Similarly, in Gogha the Company had direct rule in the town of Gogha and 2 *rasti* villages

³⁸² *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, P.2.

³⁸³ Ibid. Pp. 57-58.

³⁸⁴ Ibid. P.53.

³⁸⁵ *Walker-Selections XXXIX*, P. 16.

³⁸⁶ Ibid. P. 18.

³⁸⁷ Ibid. P.19.

whereas 59 villages belonged to Bhavnagar and 86 to *girasias*. There were in total 84 villages.³⁸⁸ In fact, although Gogha district belonged to the Company the Bhavnagar Raja was acknowledged as the principal sovereign in most parts. He was one of the *girasias* of the area. The *girasias* on the other hand paid *mulkgiri* tribute to the Marathas and Junagadh besides the *jama* to the Company.³⁸⁹ The Bhavnagar chief had a share in the customs of the Gogha port as well.³⁹⁰ Thus, Alexander Walker observes that 'it is difficult to point out a single paramount power in the region, as the authority was divided extremely' but asserts that no dispute arose between the various claimants as each party received its due share without any conflict.³⁹¹

In mainland areas as well, multiple claims to tribute were established in the course of the Century. This was more pronounced in the areas referred to as Rewa-Kantha and Mahi-Kantha in British sources. These areas were called *mewasi* areas in Maratha sources. In extreme north as also on the eastern fringes of the region, multiple claims to revenues had come into being. In the Rewa Kantha Agency, the British had recognized 6 large and 55 small states. Amongst the large states were Chota Udepur, Sunth, Devgadh Bariya, Rajpipla, Lunawada and Balasinor.³⁹² Mahi-Kantha comprised of 59 states.³⁹³ Lunawada paid tribute to Gaekwads, Sindhias³⁹⁴ and Babis of

³⁸⁸ Ibid. P. 20.

³⁸⁹ Ibid. P. 21.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² *Bom. Pres. Gaz- Rewa kantha*, op.cit., Pp. 1-2.

³⁹³ Ibid. *Mahi-Kantha*, Pp. 355-356.

³⁹⁴ *GOB VI*, P. 93.

Balasinor.³⁹⁵ Bhameria and Kanjeri principalities similarly paid tribute to both Gaekwads and Sindhias.³⁹⁶ Devgadh Bariya, however, resisted the attempts of the Sindhia to a claim in its revenues and instead itself had a claim on the revenues of Dohad, Halol and Kalol, areas in the Panch Mahal district that were under Sindhia's management.³⁹⁷ At Palanpur the Peshwa, Holkar and the Gaekwads levied tribute.³⁹⁸ The Nawab of Radhanpur was a vassal of Palanpur, and the chiefs of Wagad district in Kutch were in turn vassals of the Nawab of Radhanpur.³⁹⁹ The Panch Mahals in eastern Gujarat was under the authority of the Sindhia and Godhra was the administrative headquarter of the district. Dungarpur and Banswara in north-eastern Gujarat were tributary to the Powars of Dhar.⁴⁰⁰ Idar and Balasinor undertook *mulkiri* expeditions on surrounding areas occasionally. The Idar chief too undertook *Mulkiri* expeditions and also levied a cess called *khichree*, similar to Maratha *ghasdana*, which was formally recognized as a right and thus safeguarded by the British in the revenue settlements.⁴⁰¹ They also paid tribute to the *mulkiri* forces of Sindhia and Holkar but were otherwise independent sovereigns in their own right.⁴⁰² These figures, by no means complete, give an idea of the extent and the range of fragmentation of revenue collection rights in 18th century Gujarat.

³⁹⁵ *Bom.Pres.Gaz-Rewa Kantha*, op.cit., P. 128.

³⁹⁶ *GOB VI*, P. 93.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.* P.119.

³⁹⁸ *Bom. Pres. Gaz-Palanpur*, op.cit., P. 321.

³⁹⁹ Walter-Hamilton, op.cit., Pp. 629-630.

⁴⁰⁰ *GOB VI*, Pp. 92-93.

⁴⁰¹ *Selections-Mahee Kantha*, op.cit., P.6.

⁴⁰² *GOB VI*, P. 100.

PROTECTION

In this highly fragmented polity in Gujarat and the struggle amongst various contenders for territorial gains at the expense of the other created conditions where various sections of society, including functionaries of the state, sought protection from another power in times of distress. Hence, we find members of the mercantile and business community such as merchants and bankers, superior land right holders like the *patels* and the *desais* as also nobles and officials of a territory seeking protection of some outside power against their own chiefs. Sometimes it was designed to further their vested interests. We are citing here some of such examples.

Immediately after the British conquest of Bharuch, Lallubhai took the protection of Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad and refused to go over to the British. He was considered to be an important official, being the *diwan* of the Nawab, and was also the *desai* and *ijaradar* of agriculturally fertile Bharuch *pargana*. Strong securities and counter securities, assuring a safe conduct were given by the British East India Company to secure the person of Lallubhai.⁴⁰³ Another case was of Rudraji *desai* of Chorasi *pargana* who had fled from Gaekwad's service and without settling his accounts. He sought the protection of the British at Surat and was appointed the '*amaldar* of Chikli. The Gaekwad demanded that Rudraji be made over to him, as he was his

⁴⁰³ *GOB III*, Pp. 127 & 149.

servant.⁴⁰⁴ Similarly, in 1790 Manaji Rao Gaekwad, who succeeded Fatehsing Rao, accused the English Chief of Surat and the Nawab of Surat, of giving refuge to one Bhimaji Bhaskar, the *sarsubah* of Navsari, who had owed large amounts to the Gaekwads. To this the Bombay authorities reminded Manaji Rao of a certain Maratha treaty of 1739 whereby he was required to furnish proofs against the said person for the Nawab to hand him over. Later the Surat chief was authorized to deal with the issue though we do not know the end result.⁴⁰⁵ Another significant case is that of Muncherji, the *desai* of Navsari. Kanhoji imprisoned Muncherji's family with the intention of extracting money from him under some pretext. Muncherji sought the Company's help to intervene on his behalf as he was under its protection. He was released later with the British help. He, however, tried to bring down Kanhoji Rao from power and supported Raoba in bringing the British to power at Baroda.⁴⁰⁶ Similarly, in Cambay Mohammad Quli, the successor of Momin Khan II, gave protection to one Tapidas, the *patel* of a Gaekwad village. Fatehsing Rao sent a force to get Tapidas and a fine of Rs. 15,000 was also levied on Cambay. Tapidas however fled to Bhavnagar.⁴⁰⁷

Besides individuals, the smaller principalities also sought protection from the bigger powers to safeguard their political interests. Thus in 1752 when Gujarat was divided between the Peshwa and the Gaekwads, the Nawab of Cambay sent his *peshkar* Brajlal to Poona requesting the Peshwa to collect the *chauth* from Cambay instead of

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. P.9.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. P. 169.

⁴⁰⁶ *GOB IV*, Pp. 39-40 & 43-44.

⁴⁰⁷ *Walker-Selections XXXIX*, P.81.

the Gaekwad. The Nawab hence was seeking protection of the Peshwa against the Gaekwads.⁴⁰⁸ In 1782 the Vala Kathis of Gir, in possession of Visavadar and Chelna, sought protection of the Nawab of Junagadh against the more powerful kingdoms in Saurashtra and pledged revenues of half of their villages to the Nawab. In 1794 Nawab Mahabat Khan of Junagadh transferred Visavadar and Chelna districts to the Nawab of Bantwa for management as he found managing the turbulent Kathis a difficult job.⁴⁰⁹ Junagadh however failed to protect these principalities from the encroachments of Bhavnagar and Nawanagar. Thus, the Kathi chiefs of Chital, Jasdan, Jetpur and Kundla applied for British protection in 1803 especially against Bhavnagar and Nawanagar.⁴¹⁰ In another case, the Peshwa gave Ballu Mian, the descendant of the Sidi of Janjira, the *jagir* of Satargam in Surat Athavisi in 1797, after taking over Janjira from the Sidi chief. The British stood as protector in the agreement. The Sidi later obtained a *sanad* from the Mughal Court and formed the Nawabi of Sachin.⁴¹¹

It could be seen that the British had emerged as the most sought after protectors in the region by the end of the 18th Century. This happened due to the increase in their political authority in the region. They now also acted as protectors to various principalities against bigger powers. Thus, through the *Treaty of Salbai* in 1782 the English

⁴⁰⁸ H.D.Robertson, *Historical Narrative of the city of Cambay* in *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, XXVI, New Series, Bombay, 1856, P. 65.

⁴⁰⁹ C.A.Kincaid, op.cit., P.16.

⁴¹⁰ *Walker-Selections XXXIX*, P.64.

⁴¹¹ W.H.Harrison, *Rough notes connected with Sachin estate in the Surat Collectorate*, in *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, no. XXVI, New Series, Bombay, Pp. 26-27.

agreed to protect the Gaekwads against any kind of encroachments on their territories by the Peshwa. Consequently, when in 1795 Govind Rao took over the *gaddi* of Baroda and the Poona ministers tried to get the Gaekwad share of Surat *chauth* and Chorasi *pargana*, the British resident C.W. Malet intervened to stop it.⁴¹² In fact after the conclusion of the treaty of Salbai the Peshwa addressed his objections with regard to the Gaekwads through the agency of the British. For instance, in 1785 the Peshwa complained against Fatehsing Rao to the Company saying he was neither paying tribute nor providing military aid and was also plundering the Peshwa's *mahals* in Gujarat.⁴¹³ In 1793 Manaji Rao asked to be protected by the Company in case of an attack from his brother Govind Rao, referring to the treaty of Salbai. The Company though decided not to intervene in the internal affairs of the family on the advice of Malet, who held that Govind Rao would most probably succeed Manaji Rao who had no direct successors while Govind Rao had, Company's intervention would place it in a precarious position.⁴¹⁴ Protection to Manaji Rao was thus refused to safeguard the Company's interests.

INTERMEDIARIES

The intertwining of the revenue interests of various parties also provided scope for the emergence of intermediaries with diplomatic skills. The commercial agents like *modi*, *marfatia* and *vakil* existed

⁴¹² Poona Residency Correspondence, Vol. II, op.cit., P.

⁴¹³ GOB III, P. 156.

⁴¹⁴ GOB III, Pp. 179-181 & 182.

since earlier times facilitating the interaction of the foreign merchants and the East India Companies with the local officials. The 18th century however saw similar mediators emerging in the political sphere as well. Thus, the office of *peshkar*, comes to our notice. The nature of office of *peshkar* was earlier mundane revenue related one while during this period the functions of mediation came to be added, in addition to the revenue record keeping. Since the joint Mughal-Maratha rule came to be established at Ahmedabad the need to maintain accurate revenue accounts was felt by both sides. As both sides attempted to augment their own resources at the expense of the other, the *peshkar* became an important official. He also served as a link between the two parties. Some of them, like Balidas the *peshkar* of Najm-ud-Daula Momin Khan and also during the Niabat of Fida-ud-din Khan and Renkoji at Ahmedabad, could gain personal benefits because of his diplomatic skills.⁴¹⁵ The intermediary nature of the officer *peshkar* comes to our notice in certain other cases also. *Peshkar* Brajlal went to Poona to settle the *Chauth* affairs of Cambay Nawab.⁴¹⁶ Similarly Vajeram too was an influential *peshkar* of the Nawab of Cambay. *Desai* Surji, the *diwan* cum *peshkar* of Bhavnagar acted as an intermediary with the Maratha overlords of Bhavnagar and its neighbouring chiefs of Junagadh and Surat.⁴¹⁷ It seems that the post of *diwan* in case of these local principalities was vested in a person who was a combination of *peshkar*, *vakil* of *sibandis* and *desai* of fertile parganas. Surji was the *desai* of Gogha in addition to being a

⁴¹⁵ *Mirat*, P. 599.

⁴¹⁶ *Mirat*, Pp. 753 & 768.

⁴¹⁷ J.W. Watson, "Historical sketch of the town of Bhavnagar", *Indian Antiquary*, 1874, P.284.

vakil of the Arab *sibandis* as well.⁴¹⁸ The case was the same with Lallubhai of Bharuch and *diwan* Amarji of Junagadh and Mehraman Khawas of Nawanagar.

Sometimes temporary mediators were required. Thus, we find Dhanji Shaw Parsi mediating with Nawab Muazzaz Khan on behalf of English East India Company post the first English expedition on Bharuch. Later when the English had conquered Bharuch, Dhanji Shaw was again representing the Company with the Gaekwads while Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad sent Rudraji Bapu as his representative in the negotiations regarding the sharing of the revenues of Bharuch.⁴¹⁹

Similar to the office of *peshkar* was that of the *karbhari*. *Karbhari* is a Marathi term used for intermediaries. This was an official position and the sole function of mediation was attached to a *karbhari*. A *karbhari*'s skills included knowledge of languages like Persian, Marathi, Gujarati and at times English and one of *karbhari*'s important functions included translations as well. Some *karbharis* enjoyed prominence as their services were considered to be important especially to a new power like the British East India Company towards the end of the 18th century. Gangadhar Shastri, the *karbhari* of Baroda, was one such high profile *karbhari* who was sent on the mission of persuading the Peshwa Baji Rao II to renew the *ijara* of his share of Gujarat's revenues to the Gaekwads in 1814. Triambak Danglia assassinated Gangadhar Shastri which became an antecedent to the third Anglo-Maratha war. Gangadhar Shastri also seems to have

⁴¹⁸ He also had a banking firm in Gogha.

⁴¹⁹ For Rudraji see *GOB II*, P. 127; for Dhanji Shaw *GOB II*, passim.

had several *vakils* or lesser agents under his authority in different towns. He had a *vakil* in Baroda and another in Poona to inform him of the developments there. It seems that the office of *Karbhari* as an independent diplomatic office came up with the introduction of British residency in Baroda.

In case of the local Principalities the agents were referred to as *vakils*. Different agents were employed for specific functions. For instance *vakils* of the *sibandis* looked after recruitment of the *sibandis*. Similarly political *vakils* worked as a link with the higher authorities on behalf of their master. They also negotiated with the higher powers in case of disputes and resolved conflicts. Thus in case of Khandani settlements the *vakils* negotiated with the higher authorities.⁴²⁰

Thus, the chaos resulting from the existence of multiple authorities during the 18th century was managed to some extent by these mechanisms.

⁴²⁰ Walker-selections XXXIX. Passim.