

### CONCLUSION

Study conducted above throw light on the agriculture, rural and urban economy and society of Ahmedabad during hundred years from c.1750 to c.1850. This period of transition set new tone for fundamental changes in the socio-economic pattern. As it has been seen, this period remained a period of experiment and changes, conducted by the Marathas and later on by the British. The present study primarily based on contemporary sources in Modi and English has examined these features.

With its large fertile tracts, good climate, wide range of crops sown and only twenty per cent of the total area of 4,402-55 square miles lying waste, Ahmedabad Collectorate occupied an important position in the agrarian economy of Gujarat. Goraroo, Kalee, Kaurda and Bhata were the major varieties of soil found here. As rivers were not suited for direct irrigation, water was raised by the system called Dekoree. Means of irrigation were quite primitive, well irrigation being the most common mode throughout the Collectorate. Tank irrigation was however used for raising superior crops like sugarcane, plantains etc. Canal irrigation was unknown in this part. In the absence of adequate means of irrigation peasants were highly dependent on the rains and they had no means to cope up with the recurring draughts which adversely effected the economic condition of the ryots. Very little was done to improve the means of irrigation or the primitive modes of cultivation, either by the Marathas or the British.

One positive change that occurred under the British was an increase in the area under cultivation. Sincere attempts were

made to bring all waste lands under tillage, leases were granted on concessional terms to Patels and other such interested people to bring under cultivation the waste fields. Another change that one witnesses is that under the pressure of commercial economy there was a growing trend in favour of cash crops which effected the crop pattern to some extent. However, it must be added that no major shift was witnessed as government bigoti on expensive crops was so high that it consumed all the profits and Jowar and Bajri still remained the major crops of Ahmedabad.

Land tenures and rights enjoyed by different people are the aspects of highest importance in any agrarian economic set up. Lands could be broadly categorised into Khalisa and alienated. Khalisa or government land basically constituted of Senja and Nirwa land holdings. In Senja village, the village was held entire by the Patels, i.e. it was not divided into small shares and was held under a single or a few Patels. Revenue demands were settled with the Patel and then Patel settled the terms with each ryot, each ryot being responsible for his own share. The other prevalent tenure was the Nirwa or the Bhagdari. Here villages were divided among the different shares of the original Patels. These shares were called Patees and the share holders pateedars. Even the smallest Pateedar was in a way Patel himself. Their share was in the revenue decided according to the Patee held by them. The most striking feature of this system was the joint responsibility which Pateedars held for the revenue, loss of one was to be made by the others. Under the increasing pressures of revenue demand during the eighteenth century this system lost its liability and when British got control of Ahmedabad, only fifteen

out of one thousand and twenty villages were held under this tenure.

It is the alienated tenures which needs more attention. There were two types of alienated lands viz. the Nukro lands such as Inam, Saranjams, Devasthan, Dharmadaya grants etc. which paid no or very little revenue, and the Salamee lands (paying a quit rent) which were basically held by independent chiefs called Grassias, Kolis, Mewasies, Talugadars etc. This class held more than one third of the total lands. Grassias were the original petty independent chieftains when Sultan Ahmed founded the city of Ahmedabad in 1411. They were stripped off their power by the Sultan and only  $\frac{1}{4}$ <sup>th</sup> of their original territory was left to them. This was termed as banth and the rest  $\frac{3}{4}$ <sup>th</sup> was incorporated into Khalisa.

These chiefs who remained turbulent and defied claims of the government came to be known as Mewasis. They paid a fixed quit rent or Salamee to the government. By the Partition Treaty of 1752 the whole of the revenue of Gujarat inclusive of tribute payable by these chiefs was divided equally between the Peshwa and the Gaikwad and these chiefs observed a strict neutrality during the contest for supremacy between the Mughal and Maratha powers. They paid their revenue with equal facility to the person who possessed local authority in their area. So even the Marathas never interfered in their internal policies as long as they received their dues. These chiefs also continued to possess their earlier rights and privileges. So during the second half of the eighteenth century hardly any change could be traced regarding the position of Grassias or Mewasis except for the gradual

increase of their Jama (tribute). Drastic changes appeared in the position of these independent chiefs under the British. British proceeded in order to impose check on their power with a policy of encouraging them to enter into written engagements, binding themselves and their posterity to submit to Company's court of justice. Rental of various chiefs was decided according to a fixed ankrah (amount) for a number of years (usually seven years). However, it must be added that British could not evolve one generally accepted policy towards these chiefs. There was a duality in their approach. At one place the rights of these chiefs was declared to be that of hereditary farmers and on the other hand laws regarding their debts were enforced so strictly by decrees of civil courts, that many of them were forced to sell their property. Properties of many of the Chiefs were attached and placed under the Collector's management. Major blow to the power of these chiefs came with the appointment of Mukhi Patels and Talatis, particularly the latter. The introduction of the Talatis under the Regulation XIV of 1814 was indeed a direct interference in the affairs of the independent chiefs.

Various changes were introduced with regards to other alienated tenures also. Most important of those were the Vechania and Girania i.e. the lands sold or mortgaged by the Patels. Policies followed regarding these were quite inconsistent. Earlier the period of enjoyment of alienated lands was 60 years but later it was reduced to 30 years. Many of the Vechan Salamee lands which were earlier questioned were now recognized. In short within the 30 years of British rule in Ahmedabad no definite policy regarding the independent chiefs and other alienated

tenures could be formulated and all this added to the prevailing confusion. There had been a great deal of over hauling in the agrarian relations which effected the land rights as well as relationship between the Taluqadars and the ryots on the one hand and State and Taluqadars on the other.

Diversity of tenures prevailing in this Collectorate made it difficult to evolve any uniform system either for assessment or collection of revenue. Various modes of assessment in prevalence were Bigoti, Bhagbatai, Jinuswar Bigoti, Khatabundy, Hull Vera etc. Under Marathas as many as twenty seven such modes were in operation. Under British, major changes were effected in the land revenue administration. Firstly, it was attempted to introduce universal bigoti in all the parganas. Initially, Maratha practice of leasing out villages to Patels or other moneyed men was adhered to but later all British attempts were directed towards introducing ryotwar settlement and bigoti rates in all the parganas. However, not much success was obtained by them in this field till the middle of the century. Till 1843 only 18 villages out of 346 Khalisa villages were brought under annual bigoti.

Under Marathas the land revenue constituted of Ain Jama and Kamavis Jama. Ain Jama again comprised of Ain Mal i.e. revenue from the land and Siwai Jama i.e. additional cesses. Kamavis Jama also constituted of various veras and babtees over and above the standard revenue demand. These extra cesses and veras although individually amounting to trifling sum fell heavy on ryots when taken together. Jamabandi reports show that revenue demand of the government was about fifty five percent of the total produce. And by any standard this was not a very high rate. Under Mughals and

later under various British settlements this was the average rate of assessment. The only change which seems to have occurred was the amalgamation of various veras and babtees into a single land tax. Maximization of the revenue was the guiding principle behind all the British policies. So British claims of reducing the land revenue and improving a lot of the ryots is a mere farce. Infact bigoti rates introduced under British were in many cases higher than those prevailing earlier. There is no denying the fact that under the pressures of war economy the revenue demand under Marathas was quite high but to accept the general prevailing view that peasantry was impoverished is quite far fetched. Ryots always had the choice of deserting their fields in case of excessive extortion, which they didn't; this compiled with the fact that in almost all the parganas the Jama figures showed an increasing trend (however, the increase in the Jama figures has also to be seen keeping in view the increase in prices of food grains and other crops) proves that ryots had capacity of parting with that much of surplus (of course, in any case the bare minimum for their subsistence must have been left to them).

Maratha practice of revenue farming and Manoti has also earned widespread criticism, but if we keep in view the prevailing scene of uncertainty in mind these practices could however be justified. Being the new comers themselves and not having proper knowledge of the resources of the country, revenue farming was the only means to ensure a non stop flow of revenue to the State. It also induced the capitalist or moneyed men from the towns and cities to employ their capital in rural areas.

Initially even British adhered to this policy of farming to highest bidders (of course in theory, preference was given to the Patels).

Bhat security and manoti were infact necessary instruments for safeguarding the public revenue. Village records have also shown that Manoti was not paid by the ryots. Both the system do not appear to be as oppressive as has been made out to be, by the early British reports. Both Bhat security and Manoti system were abolished by the British but then they had their law courts, police force etc. to ensure their revenue and other dues.

British settlements with the Taluqadars and other independent Chiefs were also inconsistent and to an extent harsh. From the Raja and landlords they were reduced to the position of mere revenue farmers. Their territories were given to them on leases at a fixed ankrah. Some of the Kasbati Chiefs etc. earlier paid one third to the government but under later settlements only one third was left to them. This class of Taluqadars were highly in the shackles of debt. Estates of many of them were attached by the Collectors and thus they were left at the mercy of the State.

As far as the basic structure of village society was concerned no fundamental changes were introduced under the Marathas. As we have seen in chapter fourth it was during this period the Patels and other moneyed people acquired more and more rights in the village economy and also expanded their right on Khudkashta land. It was because of this tendency that we find a great deal of stratification in the village society. Besides, the employment of tenants from outside, the Patels and moneyed men sold the lands

to outsiders, and this class formed an additional category of village society. Infact when British acquired their control in 1818, they faced serious problem to determine the rights and position of different categories of peasants vis. a vis. Patel and State. A power which was alien to Indian tradition and practices tried to see each and every right in a legal perspective. Therefore, it became a source of dispute on various issues pertaining to the rights and privileges of various categories of village cultivators. Worst effected of all the village officials was village headman or Patel. Knowing it fully well that he was the most influential person in the village, British were determined to make him dependent on the wish of the State. It was with the introduction of Talatis that agrarian relations at various stages, were effected. The revenue system which was practiced under the Marathas infact helped in intensifying the monetization of agrarian economy. The interest of the ijaradars had penetrated to lowest sector of the revenue and market, which ultimately provided a more lively link with the urban economy.

Ahmedabad city and various Kasbas of Dholka, Parantij, Viramgam etc. were the key constituents of the Urban economy of the region. Trading and other business activities operated in various Mandis, Nakas and Chaklas of these cities and qasbahs. There was a very healthy unexploitative relationship between cities and qasbahs, and qasbahs and rural areas. Under the Marathas, Sair revenues were collected under various heads at every point of economic transaction which makes them appear too



heavy and extorting. Much has been said about ill effects of Maratha rule in Ahmedabad. Marathas have been basically held responsible for the shattered economy of Ahmedabad during the latter half of the eighteenth century. However, our study does not endorse such view. Jama figures of Sair showed increasing trend over the years. As this revenue comprised of receipts from exports, imports, sale and purchase of goods etc. the increasing figures indicate the growth rate (even if we keep some allowance for rising prices). Revenue figures from various Mandis and Nakas also suggest that the trading activities were going on there as usual and there was no sign of stagnation as such. Various Kanuzabtas and other such documents indicate that Marathas were much concerned about improving trade and commerce, bringing back peace and prosperity to the city which had suffered a lot due to prolonged Mughal Maratha fights during the first half of the century. At various instances the octroi rates were reduced at the behest of the merchants and traders. Leaving apart the oppressive acts of incompetent Maratha Subhadars like Aba Selukar, Maratha rule in Ahmedabad was not as dark as it has been pointed out to be. Major changes brought about by the British were the repair of city wall for which a town wall fund was formed. Beginning of the Ahmedabad municipality could be traced back to this fund which initially was used to repair the town wall but later was applied for other municipal works too. Abolition of all town duties on all the goods coming or going out of the city was also a major step introduced by the British. Credit of opening the first English school and foundation of Gujarat Vernacular Society must also go to the British.

Ahmedabad held an important position as a manufacturing and trading districts in Gujarat. Ahmedabad's kinkhobs, cotton piece goods etc. found market not only all over India but also in various South East Asian countries. Trade and commerce via sea or land were subjected to various duties. Land customs or Sair taxes comprised of Town duties and Transit duties. All the goods entering or going out of the cities had to pay town duties and on their way to other places they had to pay rahadari at each and every Naka falling in between. Marathas attempted to introduce Pargana Par system whereby Ravanas (passes) were issued at one Naka and then goods could pass through all the Nakas falling under the jurisdiction of that authority without making any further payment. However, this system could not be introduced throughout the Maratha territory as most of the Nakas as well as revenue from various trade routes was farmed out.

When British acquired power they considered the town duties most vexatious and thus a draft regulation abolishing all such collections within the towns and qasbahs falling under Bombay Presidency was passed. Abolition of such duties automatically led to the increase in the volume of trade. But it was only in 1844 that the town duties were finally abolished by Act XIX. Regarding the transit duties, initially it was decided to extend pargana par system to greater number of divisions. Ravanas were granted to traders at one Naka and then they were free to proceed to other areas mentioned in Ravana without further payment. On the face these regulations appeared to be very conducive for the free flow of goods throughout the British territory. However, a careful study of the composition of trade

would show that Transit duty system and Town duty system operated to turn British India into a protected market for British merchants and for products made in Britain. The transit duty system became more oppressive under the British rule, for the Company's power was more far reaching, absolute and undisputed and thus each low paid officer at each Naka or toll house had the means of exercising greater oppression. It operated to discriminate against the merchandize traded by non British. While the cotton manufactures of England were imported into India on payment of duty of 2.5 per cent, the cotton manufactures of India were subjected to a duty on the raw material of 5 per cent, to a further duty on yarn of 7.5 per cent, to an additional duty upon the manufactured articles of 2.5 per cent, and finally to another duty of 2.5 per cent if the cloth was to be dyed after the Ravana had been taken out for white cloth. Thus altogether cotton goods of our country paid 17.5 per cent as duty. Similarly, hides in all paid 15 per cent. Similarly sugar being imported into a town paid 5 per cent in customs and 5 per cent in town duty and when manufactured it paid on exportation from the same town 5 per cent more, in all 15 per cent. No less than 235 articles were subjected to inland duties. Rigidness practiced in searching the goods at the Nakas further negated any good that was proposed to be achieved by the new system.

Finance is the fuel for any economic set up. For their strength or rather the very existence, even the great empires looked forward to swift and unimpeded supply of finances. Maratha system of taking rasad from the Kamavisdars opened new avenues

for the penetration of moneyed men into the rural areas. Practice of ijara or farming of revenue not only from the land but also from various Nakas, Mandis, trade routes further enhanced the involvement of the financial magnates in the affairs of the State. Under the Marathas we see the rise of big banking families of Hari Bhakti, Mangal Sakhidas, Vakhat Sha Seth, Ambaidas, Samul Bechur etc. They acted not only as bankers and money lenders but also as State Potedars. Hari Bhakti etc. managed all the financial transactions of the Peshwa and the Gaikwad State. These bankers also acted as revenue farmers. Thus they played a very significant role not only in urban economy but rural economy also. Their economic indispensability enhanced their political powers to a great extent. These bankers had become so powerful that they coined their own fictitious currencies like Anth and Waeeda which created great problems for the merchants. British tried their level best to stop gambling in Anth but failed. British also acknowledged the importance of alliance with such powerful a community. Guarantees were issued to various bankers by the British for safeguarding their payments.

Money lending on the rural side was absolutely in the hands of village bania. Heavy revenue demands had forced the ryots into thwaledrums of the village banias who extracted exorbitant rate of interest on all borrowings. Some regulations were passed for safeguarding the interests of ryots but all fell short of the expectations and plight of peasantry remained pitiable.

Discussion enumerated above makes it clear that period from c.1750 to c.1850 was a period of transition. Two prominent political powers remained in action and influenced the economy

and society of that period. Marathas as such made very few innovations, the British on the other hand professed to undertake changes in the agrarian economy and society and the urban economy. However, they found it unpracticable to do so, at least during the first thirty years of their rule in Ahmedabad. Some changes were ofcourse brought in by the British, with the introduction of Talati Regulation etc. but most of the time was consumed in formulation and experimentation of different plans related to land rights and land tenures. It was only after 1853 that major changes were introduced in this Collectorate. Chief aim of the British being the maximization of the revenue, the welfare of the peasants came only second. Although they boasted of reducing or abolishing various veras and other duties on trade and commerce but actually all attempts were made to discourage all indigeneous manufactures and turn India into a protected market for British goods.