STUDIES IN ECONOMIC LIFE IN MUGHAL INDIA

By
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DEDICATED
TO
MY STUDENTS

Who have always inspired me and some of whom may be inspired to pursue the theme of this book by the vision of its immense potentialities
PREFACE

This book is a collection of research papers on some aspects of economic life in Mughal India written by me since 1934 and published in various journals. Dr. Alexander Chicherov, a noted Russian Indologist, acknowledged to me in 1963 that he had been attracted to a study of the economic structure of Mughal India by reading some of my articles including that on 'The Cotton Trade of Patna in early Seventeenth Century', published in 1936, which constitutes the first section of the first chapter of this book, though he differed from some of my conclusions. The late Sir Jadunath Sarkar recommended the publication of my article on The Saltpetre Industry of India (Ch. 2, Sec. A of this book) in the *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*. The idea of publishing my articles in one volume had been in my mind during the last few years. But exigencies of service and various preoccupations stood in the way of implementing it so long.

The sources utilised in the preparation of these articles are (i) European factory records, mainly English or in English, (ii) Accounts of foreign travellers, agents and others, (iii) Persian chronicles and (iv) Literature. A detailed bibliography is given at the end. These studies show the immense potentialities of pursuing the subject, both on an all-India plane, and on a regional plane. On the all-India plane, the book focuses attention on some staple industries of our country during the

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1. In presenting two books written in Russian containing his article entitled *Some data on the development of handicrafts and trade in the eastern and southern regions of India in XVII century*, and *Some materials on handicrafts in the northern-eastern parts of India in the XVI-XVII centuries* A. Chicherov wrote 'To Dr. J.N. Sarkar with best wishes on memory that your articles helped me very much to understand economic history of India' and 'To Dr. J.N. Sarkar with best wishes from Soviet Scholar who studies the same problems of economic history of India (Calcutta, 30, 3, 63)' See also A.I. Chicherov, *India: Economic Development in 16th-18th centuries: Outline History of Crafts & Trade*, Moscow, 1971.
seventeenth century like textiles, saltpetre and indigo, and throws light on their production, organisation, transport, trade competition and distribution, the manner in which trade was carried on, the impediments faced, including the nature and extent of administrative influence, as well as the prevalence of corruption, black marketeering etc. Some light is also thrown on the existence of monopolies and monopolistic controls in various articles. There are some interesting details as regards the nature and development of towns in Mughal India as also on India’s mercantile marine. Nowadays we are familiar with strikes or hartals in different spheres of our socio-economic life. It may be of interest to know that the merchants of western India organised a strike and even forced an emperor like Aurangzeb to yield by redressing their grievances. On the regional plane there are a few chapters on the economic life of medieval Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. The economic position of the Mughal empire in the pre-Plassey epoch has been surveyed. At the end attention is focussed on recent trends and the problems of the research worker in writing the socio-economic history of medieval India. To avoid repetition and economise space some changes have been made in the chapters by omitting details given in the original articles and giving cross-references in the footnotes. Footnotes have been consolidated as far as possible. Quaint 17th century English of factory correspondence and foreign travellers’ accounts has been retained at places.

This book is evidently not a comprehensive study of economic life in Mughal India. It is just an analytical study of some facts of economic life and organisation, without any reference to any pre-conceived theories. Particular emphasis has been given on the industrial and commercial history of the period. The reader is free to draw his own conclusions.

It is now my pleasant duty to acknowledge my indebtedness to those persons and institutions who/which contributed to the shaping of my articles and hence to the eventual preparation of the book. I recall with gratitude the encouragement and help which I, as a young researcher, received from the late Sir Jadunath Sarkar. The late Dr. Subimal Chandra Sarkar, then Professor and Head of the Department of History, Patna College and his successor, Dr. K.K. Datta, subsequently Vice-Chancellor of Magadh and Patna Universities (now retired),
offered many useful suggestions on many of my articles before their publication. My studies on the economic conditions in Mughal India began since 1932 when, as a young lecturer, I was entrusted with teaching the subject in the postgraduate classes of the Patna College. It was again in its Archaeological and Historical Society that I first read some of the sections or chapters\(^1\) of this book, and came to realise their shortcomings during the discussions. Today after the lapse of more than forty years I cannot forget the deep debt of gratitude which I owe not only to my teachers, colleagues and students but also to my alma mater, which supplied a convenient forum and served as a training ground for my future research. A few chapters of this book were originally contributed to different sessions of the Indian History Congress,\(^2\) Indian Historical Records Commission,\(^3\) and Seminars held in Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla,\(^4\) and Jadavpur University\(^5\) and Institute of Historical Studies\(^6\). A few chapters were published in standard journals of our country like the Journal of Bihar and Orissa (later on only Bihar) Research Society,\(^7\) Indian Historical Quarterly,\(^8\) Journal of

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1. Chapter 1 (Secs. A and B); chapter 2 (Secs. A-D); Chapter 8 Section A, first published in *Historical Miscellany* Patna College.
   Gwalior, 1952; Delhi, 1948 (ch. 6, sec. A);
   (ch. 9, Sec. B); Waltair 1953 (ch. 9, sec. C);
   Ranchi, 1964 (ch. 4. Sec. B); Allahabad, 1965 (ch. 3—published in Dr. Satkari Mookerji Commemoration Volume.
6. (i) Symposium. 1963. Problems of the Research Worker in writing the socio-economic history of Medieval India. This forms a part of ch. 10 of this work. (ii) Annual Conference. Symposium on The Economic Policy of the State in Medieval India, Ranchi, 1964 (ch. 4. sec. A).
7. JBORS Vol. XXIII Pt. 3, 1917 (ch 2. Sec. A);
   Vol. XXV Pt. 1, 1939 (ch 2, sec. B);
   JBRs Vol. XXXIV Pts. 1&2, 1948 (ch 5, sec. B);
   Vol. XXXV Pts. 3&4, 1949 (ch 6, sec. B);
   Vol. XXXVI Pts. 3 & 4, 1950 (ch 9, sec. A);
   Vol. XXXVII Pts. 3&4, 1951 (ch 8, sec B);
   Vol. XL Pt 4, 1954 (ch. 1, sec. C); 1954 (ch. 9, Sec. B);
   Vol L Pts 1—4, 1964 ch. 4, sec. B),
Indian History,\textsuperscript{1} some University journals\textsuperscript{2}, Journal of Andhra Pradesh Archives (\textit{Itihas})\textsuperscript{3} and Quarterly Review of Historical Studies\textsuperscript{4}. Dr. S.P. Sen, Director of the Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, laid me under a debt of gratitude by asking me to read a paper on the Problems of the Research Worker in writing the socio-economic history of Medieval India in 1963 and on the Economic Policy of the State in Medieval India in 1964. The editors of the journals who first published my articles and permitted me to publish these in book form deserve my sincere thanks. Professor S.H. Askari of Patna College and ex-Director, K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, Dr. N.K. Sinha, Ashutosh Professor of Medieval and Modern History, Calcutta University (now retired), Dr. P.C. Gupta, formerly Professor and Head of the Department of History, Jadavpur University and now Vice-Chancellor, Viswa Bharati, encouraged me in different ways. My youthful colleague, Sri Amalendu Dc of Jadavpur University and my research students, Dr. Pinaki Ranjan Mahapatra and Shri Phanindra Nath Chakravarty, M.A., very kindly helped me in checking up certain references, correction of proofs and the preparation of the bibliography. Sri Inderjeet Sharma, the proprietor and Sri Nag Sharan Singh of the Oriental Publishers, Delhi, deserve my heartfelt thanks for their promptness and efficiency in publishing this book inspite of numerous impediments. I am thankful to Shri Jamna Dass Akhtar for arranging the preparation of the index. None is, however, responsible for the various limitations of the book. Constructive suggestions will be thankfully received.

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\textbf{Calcutta-32} \\
\textit{Jagadish Narayan Sarkar} \\
\textbf{14-4-73}
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\begin{enumerate}
\item JIH. Vol. XIX (1941) (ch. 2, sec. D); Vol. XXVII, Pt. II No. 80 (ch. 6, sec. A).
\item Journal of Bihar University, Vol. 1, 1956 (ch. 9, sec. C).
\item 1973. vol. I. No. 1. (ch. 10).
\item QRHS, Vol. IV, No. 4; 1964-5, (ch. 4, sec. A).
\end{enumerate}
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CHAPTER I

Aspects of The Textile Trade in India in Early Seventeenth Century

SECTION A

THE COTTON TRADE OF PATNA IN EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

1. First English Commercial Mission to Patna

By the beginning of the seventeenth century English merchants in India came to be attracted by the fame of Patna as a ‘great trading centre’ of Hindustan. The establishment of a factory at Patna in 1620 for purchase of local calicoes and Bengal silk was an important phase of ‘England’s Quest of Eastern Trade’ and it synchronised with the establishment of factories in other parts of India. Thus, apart from Surat and Masulipatam, ‘the permanent footholds for English commerce in India’, factories were extended to Ahmedabad, Cambay, Baroda and Broach, other places in Gujrat, Agra, with sub-factories in 1620 at Lahore and Samana. Almost all these places were either important centres of production of calicoes, or bleaching or distribution. Patna occupied no very inferior position among these places.¹

The English East India Company’s servants in India came to know that the cloths generally called ambertees or ambertrees (ambati or ambarti) or stout, close calicoes of narrow width were procured cheaply and in large quantities at Patna. So the Council at Surat deputed Robert Hughes from Agra on 5th

¹ IHRC (1930), 161-2; Tarikh-i-Daudi, E. & D. iv, 477-8. Ryley, Ralph Fitch, 109; Foster, Early Travels, 23-24; England’s Quest of Eastern Trade, 314-5; Mundy, II. 157.

Pieter Van Den Broeke (February, 1622) writes that the English had a factory at Baroda, but this was in his time forbidden by the Surat people. JIH.X (1931), 245-6.
June, 1620. He reached Patna on 3rd July, 1620, and was joined by John Parker as an assistant from September.  
Hughes was quite competent and after four months’ observations, in a region, entirely new and unknown to English traders, he reported that the “two mayne (main) propes (props) which must upholld (uphold) this (Patna) factory and they not to be provided in any quantitycs without a continual residence” were ambati calicoes and raw silk.

2. **Ambatis, their description and varieties**

The *ambatis* (*Ambertees or Ambartrees*) were a species of Northern Indian cloths. These were “stronge, closeemade and well-conditioned,” and stouter than the varieties of white cotton cloth known as Deriabads (made at Daryabad in Bara Banki district), Chhairabads (Khairabad in Sitapur district) and Semianos (or Samana, a fine cloth made at Samana in the Patiala State). It was of course narrow, being only 40”, and so midway between the present single and double bahars. The Agra factors wrote to the Co. in 1619 that it “hath noe fault but the narrowness;” Hughes wrote to Surat that it was “a full jehanger cov’d (=40” or a little more) broade, which is yeard, half quarter English which breadth, as theye saye, theye cannot exceed to have them close wrought;” the letter of Hughes and Parker to the Co. dated November 30, 1620 says: “neither can the weavers conveniently make them broader (as themselves saye) to have them substantialye and close woven.” Thus the narrowness of the *ambati* cloth was the price of its durability.

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Agra to Co., 1619; *EF*, 1618-21, p. 161; *EF*, 1634-6, p. 146n; Hughes to Surat, 3 March, 1621; *FRP*, I. p. 22; *IA*, XLIII, 1914, pp. 98-99.

Hindi—amrīti, imrāti, amirī, imarti; Sanskrit—Amrita or Amritaka. Modern forms,—ambāta, ambati, ambatī, (Amberti, umbertee, ambertree). Carnac Temple and Foster explain the term as ‘anything sweet.’ But a more probable explanation is ‘an inferior kind of clot’”(-Ambara-tari).
In October, 1620, 1975 pieces of *ambatis* were sent. In August, 1621, 9500 pieces of *ambatis* were procured.\(^5\)

The weavers made the *ambatis* brown or raw or unbleached. When just coming from the loom, these were generally 13 coverds (14\(\frac{3}{4}\) yds.) long but of different breadths. The letter of Hughes to Surat, 11th November, 1620 refers to *ambatis* of various species, sizes and prices.\(^6\) Firstly, the *rasis* or *rasseyes* or *razai*, (not quilt, but orneka razai or thick-woven cotton wrapper). It is described in the letter of November 30, 1620 as “the first narrow breddths.......generally corce, (coarse) and fewe or none above two rups net the picee of about halfe a yeadre and 13 yeards longe.”\(^7\) They were thus 20” wide and priced at Rs. 2 net a piece. Secondly, the *Zeffcrconnyes* or *Zafarkhani*, so called probably from the products of the Karkhana of Zafar Khan, governor of Behar, ‘some years before.’ According to the letter of Hughes to Surat, November 11, 1620 these were “\(\frac{1}{12}\) or at most \(\frac{1}{6}\) broader then those (razais) from 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) to 6 rups the net picee;” while the letter of Hughes and Parker of November 30, 1620 to the Company describes them “at most may bee one-fourth broader then the former, but much fynyer and of hyer prizes, from two to six rups per picee.”\(^8\) They were thus 25” to 30” wide and priced at Rs. 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) to


Coved is the name of a measure varying much locally in value in European settlements not only in India but in China etc. It is a corruption, probably an Indo-Portuguese form of Port. *Covado*, a cubit or ell. *Hobson Jobson*, p. 207.

6. “as brought from the loom. They are not all of one exacte length, but some come out shorter then others by a coved and generalye maye bee 13 coverds Jehanger longe or of Puttana”, and “In lengths these are about 13 coverds and therein litle difference bewtwene either of the sortes”. (Letter to Surat Nov. 11, 1620); to Co. Nov. 30. 1620; *FRP.* I, pp. 13, 16; *I.A.* XLIII, 1914, pp. 79-81; *EF.* 1618-21, pp. 205, 213; Mundy II, App. D, p. 369.

7. Explained by C. Temple as ordinarily a quilt, coverlet, here applied to narrow breadth cloth’, *EF.*, 1618-21, p. 213; also in letter of November 11, 1620 to Surat. *FRP.*, I, p. 13; *I.A.*, XLIII, 1914, pp. 79-81 and n.


The letter of Hughes to Surat, 3 March, 1621 gives their price as (Contd. on next page)
6 net a piece. Thirdly, the Jehangeres or Jahangiris, the third and last variety, the broadest and the finest known at Patna, about 40" wide, priced at Rs. 3 to 12 net a piece.9

Thus it appears from the Patna Factory Records (1620-21) that in each case 'quality as well as quantity had to do with the price.' About ten years later (1632) Peter Mundy observed that the ambatis which the English Company chiefly required from Patna were dearer than usual, as most of the weavers were engaged in the Karkhana of the local Governor Abdullah Khan in making fine linen for his mahal or searglio.10 None of the 20 or 30 pieces which brokers brought to Peter Mundy was "soe Lowe prized (priced) as required" and were returned (26th to 28th September) as unfit for English demand. Hence Mundy held that ambatis could be found cheaper at Agra than at Patna and that it would be wasteful to establish a factory at Patna.10

3. Other Varieties of Calicoes

Besides ambati cloths other varieties of calicoes, both fine and coarse, were procurable in the neighbourhood of Patna and Lukhawar.11

(i) Sahan (either Sohan, fine sheeting or Sahan, enduring). Mention of Sahans or Sahuns has been made in the correspondence of the Patna factors with Agra, Surat and the Company. In 1621 they could procure only "12 corges (score) of Sahan cloth costing 78 repees net" (or about 5-6 as each). It is included among the cotton cloths in the Ain-i-Akbari, without any explanation, priced a piece at 1 to 3 M (mahmudies) and

(Contd. from previous page)

"under 2 rups per peece"; FRP. I, p. 22; IA. XLIII, 1914, pp. 98-99.
We know from an inscription on a stone slab, preserved at the Pathanpura masjid of Colgong and found by K.K. Datta of Patna College in 1935, that a fort was built by one, who declared himself a Banda of Nawab Zafar Khan in 1012 A.H. or 1603 A.D.

11. Mundy, II. App. D. pp. 370-1. Pelsaert ref rs to "co ton goods (viz. Bengal cassas, chouters semianos. ambertees and various other white cloths);" JL., p. 23. In Buchanan's time, Patna was noted for coarse and fine cotton cloth (354-5), ornamented wove cloths (365), gold and silver flowered muslin (357), chintz (357), cotton tape (357) and carpets; Martin, EI., Patna.
referred to by Pelsaert among the products of Jagannath as *tsehen* a superior wide cloth suitable for bedsheets.  

(ii) *Hammām*, towelling, is mentioned occasionally in the correspondence of the Patna factors. Pelsaert speaks of it among Orissa products. Peter Mundy in 1632 mentioned "Hamaones, lynnen, 11 coveds longe, 1½ broad, from Oreshawe (Orissa)" among the sundry commodities to be had in Patna. Taylor describes it as a "cloth of a thick stout texture and generally worn as a wrapper in the cold season."

It is interesting to note in the Patna Factory records that the trade in both these varieties (*Sahan* and *Hammām*) was in the hands of the Pathan dealers, who imported them in small parcels from lower Bengal in boats. Thus is appears that they were not local products of Patna. Neither were they very much in demand for local consumption; but the needs of the English factors led to a gradual increase in their imports into Patna. The letter of 12th July, 1620, notes: "Of Sahannes and hammomes theire are but fewe at present in towne;" that of August 6, 1620 shows that import was increasing: "Of Sahannes theire come none to towne. Diverse boates are shortlye expected from the lower partrs of Bengalla, which by reporte bringe quantitye," while the letter of November 11, 1620 notes: "For other sortes of callico cloth, as *Sahanes* and *hannomes*, wee perceave them not to bee bought hether in anye great quantities, but a continuance here maye doubtles provide some, but to what number I cannot saye." In 1620, 60 pieces of Sahans and Hammāms were supplied by the Patna factors to the Agra factory.

12. To Co., August 14, 1621; *FRP.*, I, p. 33; *EF.*, 1618-21, pp. 191-6n, 260; also in letters to Surat of July 12, 1620 and of January 30, 1621. Blochman, vol. I, p. 94; 1 mahmudi is equivalent to about 1s; Mundy, II, p. 211; *JI.*, p. 8.


14. Hughes to Surat, *FRP.*, I, pp. 2, 4, 12; *EF.*, 1618-21, pp. 191-6, 197-8, 205-6; *IA.*, XLIII, 1914, pp. 73-4, 81, 77; to Agra, 6 October, 1620.

It should be noted that the English E.I.C. had no factories in the Bengal side as yet, and these goods were exported via Agra and Surat.
(iii) Chautahā (Chautah, Chautahi, Chautai) or Choutare, a variety of thick calicoes. Literally the word means fourfolds, a coarse double length double width cotton cloth. It is also referred to by Pelsaert as a possible article of indent on Agra for Holland or Batavia. From the correspondence of the Patna factors, Sahans and Hammāms also seem to be two varieties of Choutare. Probably it had a "wide range of meaning, but as used by the Dutch at this period it seems to cover the calicoes of Oudh and Benares." 15

(iv) Rahmoutes. rawat, a kind of chautāhā, or wide coarse cotton cloth. (Raoti=a tent).

While the Dutch did not indent the varieties of chautāhā for Holland or Batavia—a fact which Pelsaert regretted, the English factors at Patna endeavoured to procure these for their investments. 16

(v) Kamsukhā : literally slightly dried or partly prepared; hence, a rough unfinished product. As the bleaching of Lukhawar ambatis caused much delay and expense, Hughes suggested to Surat factory (11 November, 1620) the supply of caumsoucks (kamsukha) as a quicker and cheaper alternative. But if transported unbleached it had to be cleaned of grease or mandye and dirt from the loom, otherwise it would not last out a journey. In 1620 Hughes and Parker sent as musters (samples) 8 pieces of Kamsukhās whitened only without starch, and 10 pieces with starch, all provided at Lukhawar. 17

(vi) Cassa (a variety of muslin) : mentioned by the Patna factors as an export from Patna. Pelsaert wrote: "Patna


16. To Surat, 12 July, 1620: FRP., I. p. 2: EF., 1618-21, pp. 191-6. Carnac Temple was unable to trace the word in any vernacular unless it is a mistranslation for rawat, raot, rawati, raoti,—IA., 1914, p 70n.

17. Hughes to Surat, 11 November, 6 October, 1620, FRP., I. pp. 13, 11; EF., 1618-21, p. 205 and ν; IA., XLIII, 1914, p. 80; Mundy, II, p. 371. It is difficult to agree with Foster's note: "Mandi is Hindi for starch, but that does not seem to be the meaning intended here." Probably the Patna factors did not know the exact processes of manufacture.
produces much muslin (*cassia*), but it is coarse, worth 4 or 5 rupees the piece.  

One variety of muslin was the *Kaimkhani*, probably so-called after Qaim Khan, and referred to by John Kenn, chief of Casimbazar (1658-65). It was "a sort of thine cloth" of Bihar, very like coarse *cassia* (muslin) 14 covered by 4/5 covered, and priced at 40, 50 and 60 rupees a score. i.e., 2-3 Rs. a piece. It was chiefly brought by *Mogols* (Mughals) and *Praychaes* (and also Armenians in the sixties of the 17th century), for transport to Lahore and thence to Persia. Hughes proposed to send samples for a trial. Both the Patna factors and the Surat authorities realised the Bihar Kaimkhansis to be "fitter for Persia than England, yet as fit for Barcary or Turkey as any other place."  

Another variety was "a thin cloth like callico lawnes", referred to by the Patna factors, as "procurable in good quantities."

(vii) *Doupattas*: from Hindi *dopattah*, two breadths. It was a kind of narrow calico much used for garments and imported from Malda by the *Praychaes*.

4. *Places of Manufacture*

From the description of *ambatis* and different varieties available, let us now pass to the places of manufacture.  

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18. "An ordinary *cassia* is only 21-22 *gaz* by $\frac{1}{4}$ but these are usually 24-25 *gaz* by $\frac{1}{4}$ equivalent to Holland ells long by $\frac{1}{4}$ ells broad. Here *Ilahi gaz* of 32" is intended not Bengal *gaz* of 27".—Pelsaert, *JI.*, 7-8, 8n; Mundy speaks of "*cassas* at Sunargaon. 300 corse downe the river Ganges, a fine and thin cloth" (quoted *EF.*, 1618-21, pp. 191-6). Two hundred years later (1811-12) Buchanan referred to gold and silver flowered muslin made at Patna by women, similar to that at Malda. Martin, *Eastern India*, Patna, pp. 356-7.

19. Acc. to Foster, camcans of Kenn's notes; *EF.*, 1618-21, pp. 192n, 195.


21. Hughes and Parker to the Co November 30, 1620; *FRP.*, I, p. 16; *EF.*, 1618-21, p. 213 (Lawn means fine, open texture).

localities round Patna, within a radius of 30 miles, were important centres of cotton manufacture. Soon after his arrival there in 1620, Hughes found that the *ambati* calicoes he was seeking were "made a days journey from this place (Patna) in a prigonye (paragana) or shier (sahar) called Lackhower." Peter Mundy in 1632 described it as "a place 12 course (coss) off, where is much cloth made and brought hither (Patna)." It has been identified with Lukhawar of the Indian Atlas, a town some 25 or 30 miles SSW of Patna. Hughes described it as "the pente or fayer" i.e., it was a market of cloth goods for the surrounding villages where they were woven. At Lukhawar they were "bought of all prizes, infinite quantityes, from the poor weavers." Pelsaert wrote that "Lakhawar produces *ambertees*, a superior grade of white cloth, 14 gaz long and of different widths worth from four to ten rupees the piece." Apparently he is referring to the *Jahangiri* variety of the *ambatis*.

Besides Lukhawar, there were other centres of production. Thus Mundy mentions "*Ambartrees* made at Nundownepore and Selimpore etc., 12 and 14 course (coss) off, 10½ coveds longe and ner (sic) 1 broad." Carnac Temple could not identify these two places. In the *Ain-i-Akbari* a Salimpur is given among the *mahals* in the *Sarkar* of Tirhut. A glance at the Survey of India map (Patna district), however, suggests the possibility that Salimpur is modern Islapur of the Fûtwa-Islampur railway line and that Nundownepore is probably represented by Nundun, about 30 miles South of Patna. The town of Bihar, as it is even now, was also a centre of cloth production. About 1661 Kenn (Chief of Cassimbazar factory

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24. *JI.,* p. 7. He describes it as 15 Kos further than Oudh, but this is evidently wrong. References to Lukhawar cloths (Laccowrees) are found in the 18th century records also; see K.K. Datta's *Studies in Bengal Subah,* ch. 3.

25. Mundy, II. p. 154 and n: *Jarrett,* II, p. 156; The Survey of India Map shows 2 other Selimpurs, one near Baikunthpur about 15m., the other 7½ m. south of Lukhawar.
1658-65) wrote: “At Banaras (? Behar) 12 course from Pattana, and Lachore, 16 there white cloth fitt for Persia to be had called Umbertees and Camcanys, from Rs. 1/8/- to 3/- rupees per piece.” Further, just as Pelsaert says that from Chabaspur and Sonargaon to Jagannath all live by the weaving industry, so also in the neighbourhood of Patna, every village, every town was a centre of cloth production, as Mundy mentions that the merchants had to go “from towe to towee.”

5. Comparison of Patna Calicoes with Samana and Gujarat Calicoes

The cotton industry at Patna was regarded in the twenties of the 17th century as better suited to the English Company’s demand than that at Semiana (Samana) in the Patiala State. The contention of Hughes that the Zafarkhanis of Lukhawar were better made than the Samana calicoes is corroborated by the letter of Robert Youung at Semiana to the President and Council at Surat, dated August 2, 1621 to the effect that Patna was “a more fitting place than Samana, as it was reported to afford greater quantities of wellmade cloth which is more fitting our country than the cloth of these partes being for the most part of a slighter making and of uncertayne lengths and breadths.” Further, in the twenties of the 17th century the Zafarkhanis of Lukhawar were in no way worse than the baftas of Broach, as the letter of Hughes at Lukhawar to Surat dated August 3, 1621 states that “the Jafferchanes both for length and breadth, will parallel, if not exceed your narrowre Barroch bafteas.” Conditions changed in the thirties; Gujrat was “returning to its former estate,” after the famine of 1630, and Peter Mundy doubted whether the calicoes of Patna would be equal to those of Gujrat, better known for goodness and cheapness. The Gujrat calicoes were also referred to by Pietro Della Valle (1623-7) and Mandelslo (1638-9).

Mundy, II, pp. 145-6. In Buchanan’s time Patna, Futwah, Gaya and Nawada were centres of cloth production. Buchanan’s Patna Report in Martin’s Eastern India, p. 352.

27. EF., 1618-21, p. 258; FRP., I., p. 31; Mundy, II, p. 151. Pietro Della Valle (1623-7), pp. 60-61; Calcutta Review, 1882. p. 73, article by E. Rehatsak on Mandelslo and Thevenot.
6. *Production of Cotton*

The correspondence of the Patna factors does not throw any light on the question whether the cotton was produced in the neighbourhood of Patna or imported. But the invaluable journal of Peter Mundy notes that on 16th to 17th September, 1632, he saw cotton fields standing, together with other trees, in the area between Nauhatpur and Patna. Therefore we can safely say that at least a part of what was used in the cloth industry was produced in Patna.\(^{28}\)

7. *Supply of capital*

As in the 18th and early 19th centuries, so in the early part of the 17th century also, the merchants had to supply capital to the weavers who were described as ‘poor’ in the correspondence of the Patna factors. Goods could be made to order and meet the requirements of the merchants. But it is not clear from the Patna records whether the *dadni* system encouraged indolence among the workmen and reduced them to "a state of dependence little better, if so good, as slavery," as it did in early 19th century.\(^{29}\)

The trade in *ambati* cloths at Lukhawar was large, but it was not so large as originally expected by the Patna factors. According to the letter of August 6, 1620, Hughes learnt on hearsay evidence (reports of weavers) that daily 1000 pieces could be procured, and as the provision of raw goods lasted from 3 to 4 months, this would bring the annual outturn to

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28. Mundy, II, p. 134. On 16th September 1932, Mundy reached Nauhatpur. On 17th he reached "this Citie (Pattana, 8 course); noe wast ground all the way, but full of Mango Trees, Cocotrees, Sugar Cane, Corten and graine." He also noticed (Dec. 1630) green Cotton fields in C. India; *Ibid.*, p 55, lxvi. Probably the silence of the Patna factors (1620-1) was due to the fact that they traded mostly with the South of Patna, while the cotton fields were to its west. Buchanan wrote in early 19th century: "Cotton is by far the most common material used in the cloth manufacture of these districts; and a great part of what is used is produced in the country." Martin, *Eastern India*, Dt. Patna, p. 349.

29. Letter of 6th August, 1620. Buchanan wrote in 1812: "The system of advances and a good deal of the fine cloth is made on advance, produces its usual consequences; and the workmen, becoming indolent, do not make a greater value than they do when working at coarse goods for ready money sale." (Martin's *Eastern India*, Patna, p. 354); and further the "System of advances is totally unnecessary but it is here pursued by all the native dealers, as keeping the workmen in a state of dependence little better, if so good, as slavery" (p. 355).
from 90,000 to 120,000 pieces, valued at from Rs. 200,000 to Rs. 250,000 in round numbers @ Rs. 2/- a piece all round. So Hughes suggested that Rs. 50,000 could be safely invested in brown ambatis alone. But after securing definite information about the conditions of Lukhawar, Hughes wrote on November 11, 1620 that "20,000 pieces maye yearlye bee provided browne." We may compare this estimate with what Peter Mundy wrote in 1632, that "in 5 or 6 months the merchants who had used this trade for a long time might procure 40 or 50 Core (Kori, score of pieces) or perhaps 100 (i.e., about 800, 1000 or 2000 pieces) and that the chief Broker for coarse linen suggested that the English might invest Rs. 2 or 3000 a month, after the business was set on foot, and the country came to know the object of the English."

The English factors were greatly hampered by late arrival of funds, often insufficient and "sent in dibblets." Thus only 37,000 rupees were sent in all in 1620-1, whereas Rs. 50,000 were demanded for raw ambatis alone.30

8. Marketing Organisation

Some details of the marketing organisation and the difficulties of cotton trade may be gathered from the correspondence of the Patna factors. It appears that the Patna factors, though enjoying full initiative in dealing with the weavers and responsibility in sending the goods, were bound down by the general instructions of the authorities at Surat and Agra. Thus on September 14, 1620, Hughes wrote to Agra that he "noted the instructions from Surat regarding purchase of ambertyes etc."

The principal time of dealing with the weavers in procuring raw ambatis was from about October to November. The letter of Hughes to Surat of October 31, 1620 notes: "with the proceeds of sale to the governor, Hughes wanted to go to Lackhoure whither Mr. Parker is gone before with 900 rups to make enterance with the rave Ambertyes, the tyme beinge now principall good for their provision, and no buyers alreadye."

30. Hughes to Surat, August 6, 1620; FRP. I., pp. 4-6; IA. XLIII, 1914, 74: Letter of November 11, 1620; Mundy, II, pp. 145-6 and App. D.

Hence it may be inferred that the other merchants, rival of the English, did not begin dealing with the weavers before October.

Usually, *ambati* calicoes were purchased at Lukhawar raw from weavers who brought them from neighbouring *gonjes* or manufacturing villages, at the rate of about 50, 60 or 100 pieces daily. But some weavers of Lukhawar also brought *ambatis* to Patna town, for sale in the local bazar from whom Hughes purchased small parcels.\(^{32}\)

In buying raw *ambatis* from the weavers, at Patna, it was customary for the purchasers to get a discount or *dasturi* of 4 annas in the rupee of 16 annas i.e., an abatement or allowance of 25%. But at Lukhawar the discount was uncertain, depending on the bargaining power of the merchant.

The provision of raw *ambatis* appears to take about 3 or 4 months i.e., approximately from November to February. But bleaching was necessary to make them fit for the European market. Some weavers of course used to bring bleached calicoes ‘in small parcels’ to Patna town only for the bazar demand, but from them Hughes could not (November, 1620), in spite of his best efforts, procure more than one thousand pieces. So he had to purchase raw calicoes for investments partly at Lukhawar and partly from other merchants. They used to buy calicoes raw and then bleach them themselves and they would not sell them even with 12½% profit, as they made greater profits by transporting them to Agra and Lahore.\(^{33}\)

Hence Hughes held that with sufficient time at disposal, the best and cheapest course was to purchase them raw or unbleached from the weavers and then immediately to have them bleached. But bleaching was “exceedinge teadious and troublesome, though put forth as bought,” as “the whitster detaynes them in whitinge and starchinge about three monthes. Apart from this delay from March to May approximately, bleaching involved many charges, varying according to the fineness and breadth of the cloths, besides the cost of cleaning materials. The letter of November 11, 1620 notes that “their

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charge in curing them more or less, according to their fineness and breadth, some 2½, some 3, and some 3½ rups, per course (score) besides sops (soaps) ette." So the charge of bleaching was approximately 2 to 3 as. a piece, somewhat higher than in the time of Buchanan.

This cost of bleaching had to be borne, not by the weavers, as they sold the goods raw, but at first by the merchants who had to adapt the raw goods to the needs of the markets by bleaching. And the merchants used to cover these charges by the old custom of the ‘reza’ or by cutting off a fragment of 10% of the total length of the piece before sending it to be bleached. This ‘reza’ could be sold as unbleached stuff and was a ‘valuable asset’ in cases of large scale purchases. But as the length of the bleached cotton goods would be reduced from 14½ to about 13 yards, the Company’s factors did not follow the custom but “whited the intier pece (entire piece) as bought from the loom.”

Thus the provision of ambatis, bleached and unbleached, and their preparation and finishing for sale, required from about 8 to 10 months. It was necessary for the merchants “to goe gatheringe of it by litle and litle, from Towne to Towne, knowe its valewe, and where to finde it,” as Mundy remarked, or “to have the yeare and meanes beforehand to be perpetually doinge therein,” as Hughes wrote. Hard reconnaissance and search for one year, and adequate supply of funds were antecedent

34. Hughes’ letters to Strat at Aug. 6, November II, July 12, 1620; FRP., I, pp. 4, 132; IA., XLIII, 1914, pp. 73, 79-81, EF., 1618-21, pp. 197-8, 205, 191-6.

In the time of Peter Mundy (1632) the time taken for whitening was “above a month”. Mundy, II, p 146, App. D, p. 369. Possibly in the thirties, owing to reduced demand after the expulsion of Portuguese, washermen could bleach a larger number of cotton goods in a shorter time than before.

Details of bleaching and washermen, in 19th century are given by Buchanan in 1811-2 (Martin, pp. 328-29, 356). “The coarse goods made for market sale are always sold as they come from the loom, but that intended for sale is all bleached.” In early 19th century, the cost of bleaching one score (of 28 pieces) varied acc. to size from “2 rs. 7 anas, 3 pieces to 3 rs 3 anas, 6 picces” or roughly from Rs. 2½ to 3½, including the cost of soap, soda, lime and requisite implements, which the washermen got from the Co.’s factory.

Carnac Temple explains the above as: “that the reza was usually 10% of the whole piece, and constituted a species of discount, like our own 13 to the baker’s dozen.”, IA., XLIII, 1914, p. 80; Mundy, II, App. D, pp 369-70.
conditions of a successful investment. Hence, starting rather late in the season, and getting only about three months' time, (July-October), Hughes could not send any material shipping in the first year (1620), except some samples of unbleached goods. Peter Mundy also had to discard the idea of establishing a factory at Patna in 1632, on account of the limited time at his disposal (17th September to 16th November, 1632).

In the marketing organisation of the period, brokers played an important and indispensable part. They used to act as intermediaries between the merchant and the producer, finding out for the former the sources of supply of cotton goods and bringing samples for approval, to be returned, if disapproved. Thus Peter Mundy set brokers to seek out coarse ambatis on 26th September, 1632. Next day they bought 20 or 30 pieces, which were, however, returned on the 28th as being unsuitable for the English demand. Probably there were different brokers who specialised in different varieties of goods e.g., as Peter Mundy mentions "Gangā Rām, the Chiefest Broker in theis parts for Corse linen." In return for these services, there was a brokerage paid by the maker both at Patna and at Lakhawar. From the correspondence of the Patna factors it appears that on unbleached goods the brokerage was fluctuating and uncertain, and that on bleached goods it was about 5 pice a piece, paid by the maker. Of this 2 pice went to the "Governor or Shikdar" or revenue officer of the paragana, 2 pice to the broker, and 1 pice was paid to the merchant. Hence "over every transaction there must have been a great deal of calculation, and each party had to keep head cool and eyes wide open." This was a very wide custom, but apparently the Patna factors regarded it as unpleasant and tried to reduce it.

Mundy was ordered to complete business in Patna so as to reach Agra by the middle of January, 1633. So he would have to start by the end of November and had to finish everything in about 6 weeks' time. Introduction, Mundy, II, xxxii, pp. 151, 145-6.

It is not clear from Hughes' note whether the amount was paid to the Governor or Shikdar or to both of them. Probably it was paid only to the Shikdar, the revenue officer.
Variations in Measurement

Absence of standardised units of measurement increased the difficulties of the cloth trade. There were four different measures, the Jahangiri coved of 40" (13J = 14½ yds.), the Ilahigaz or the Agra coved of 33", the Patna coved of 41", and the Lukhawar coved of 43½". Hughes took the Jahangiri coved to be the standard. But the Surat factors confused it with the Agra coved of 33" and then thought it to be 32½". Hence there was "a disconcerting discrepancy in accounts." Owing to the difference between the Patna and the Lakhawar coves, the weavers necessarily suffered the loss of 1/6 or 6½% on sales.37

The provision and despatch of goods were also hindered by the rainy season. The letter of Hughes to Surat dated August 6, 1620, notes that "the raynes (rains) is some impediment to their provision for that the weavers by reason thereof come not to towne as wontedly".38 The provisions of 1620 were finished before 6th October, 1620.

9. Trade Competition and Distribution

Apart from the English Company's factors, other merchants were engaged in trade with Patna, and the former had to meet a severe competition in the Portuguese, Persian, Mughal, Pathan, Armenian and Indian merchants including East Bengal merchants. Speaking of provision of Calicoes, Hughes wrote to Surat on 6th August, 1620: "There are greate store of buyers abroade which hath somwhat inhsased (i.e., enhanced the price of) the Commodity."

The Portuguese merchants who were already in possession of the field, used to come to Patna in their diverse frigates from


(a) "the jehangery [which is one-fourth longer than the elahye (=33") of Agra]=12 July, 1620.

(b) "the cloth are generally 13 coves Jehanger longe or of Puttana, betweene which and the coved of Luckhoure is some small difference, the country coved beinge the longer by allmost a gie y (1/16 of a gaz) or 1/16".=11 November, 1620. Peter Mundy (1632) notes: "The Coved here is 1½ coved of Agra, and 5 coves of Agra make 4 English yards, Soe that this Coved is neerest hand (as near as possible) 1 yard 2 inches; Mundy, II, p. 156.

38. Hughes to Surat, August 6, 1620; FRP., I, p.4; IA., XLIII, 1914, p. 73; EF., 1618-21, pp. 197-8.
the "bottom of Bengalla," from Satgaon, Hugli and Pipli and used to "bye up all they can laye hand of. They traded via Bengal and yearly had shipping from Malacca and Cochin. In return for Chinese silks, spices, tin and jewellery which they imported, they exported from Patna *ambati* calicoes, *Khassa* or variety of muslim, all sorts of thin cloth, "dyed into redds purposely for saile to the southwards," silk, and course Jaunpur carpets. The Portuguese were of course persecuted by Shahjahan and were expelled from Bengal about 1632, an event which must have seriously affected the cotton trade but the other merchants continued to "make great investments" at Patna in the first half of the 17th century.\(^{39}\)

Hughes notes in his letter of 12th July, 1620: "The *Mogoles* and *Praychaes* are here like bees." The word *Mogoles* does not indicate a definite race, but it is applied to all sorts of Central Asiatic foreigners including Persians and merchants from the Northwest Frontier regions.\(^{40}\) Probably the word *Praychaes* does not mean inhabitants of Oudh and Behar, as Sir William Foster conjectures, nor Brachios or Persians, as the late N. Raye writes, but East Bengal traders, judging from the word and the spelling of the word—as it was not in use in Bihar or Oudh vernaculars and is only creditable to Bengali; and the vowel transposition is peculiar to East Bengal; and also from the fact that the village ballads of East Bengal as preserved from the mediaeval period onwards distinctly show that all the Gangetic waterways were frequented by Bengal boats and merchants carrying Bengal products far and wide even out into different parts of Indo-China and East Indies. The two indications about the carrying trade of the *Praychaes* are (1) bringing Malda products to Patna market, and (2) taking Bihar products to Bengal.\(^{41}\)

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39. These places were known to the English only by distorted names and reports. Letters to Surat, Aug. 6, July 12; to Co. Nov. 30, July 20, 1620: *FRP.*, I, pp. 4-6. 2. 16-18; *IA.*, XLIII, 1914, pp. 73, 83; *EF*., 1618-21, pp 19-16; Mudny, II, 362, 366, 145-6.


41. "This unusual word is possibly to be explained by the Sanskrit *Prachya*, meaning like *purbiya*, "an inhabitant of the countries to the (Contd. on next page)"
The chief exports of both the Mogoles (Mughals) and the Prychaeas out of Patna were ambati calicoes, mandils or turban cloths of Benares (? Bihar), demanded in Persia, girdles or Karmarbands, layches (alāchah, alācha, ilācha) or short silk and thread cloth, and douppattas or cotton goods in the form of sheets from Malda; also some types of muslims and a sort of thin cloth called caymeconyes (Kaimkhani) of Bihar (a coarse variety of Khassa), which were not fit for the English market. They were brought for transport by the Mogoles to Lahore and Northwest India generally and found a ready market in Persia, Turkey and North Africa. They purchased anything required by importing only specie or bills of exchange.

Besides these, there were the Pathan traders, engaged in bringing Sahans from lower Bengal. It is probable that they were mostly indigenous Pathans who had recently been dispossessed of political power and territorial possessions, and not the foreign Pathans who began to come to India from about the middle of the 17th century.42

Armenian merchants are referred to by Pelsaert at Lahore, together with merchants of Aleppo. But from the notes of Peter Mundy (1632) we know that the Armenians had trade relations with Patna also. There was a cosmopolitan sarai for the comfort of these traders. Speaking of the “Zeffe Ckauns Sarae,” Mundy says, “this place is chiefly for Merchants of strange Countries, as Mogolls, Persians, Armenians, where they may lodge and keepe their goods the tyme of their stay heere, payeinge so much by the moneth. Theis are usuallie in great citties, but the other sort of Saraes are in all places servinge for

(Contd. from previous page)
eastwards” i.e., to those at Agra (where Hughes probably learnt the term) the inhabitants of Oudh, Behar etc. But this is mere conjecture.—EF., 1618-21. p. 195n; Mundy, II, p. 362; IA., XLIII, 1914, p. 71n.
The words ‘Porop’ and ‘Bengalen Porop’ are common in Pelsaert’s Remonstrantie, Jf., p. 4; Pelsaert used the first term to include the Mogul provinces of Allahabad, Bihar, and Orissa, but not Bengal; Ibid., p. 4n; see also Mundy, II, p. 99n; N. Raye, EAEB., p. 27n.
The Bengal colony at Jaipur dates from about the last decade of the 16th century.
42. Letters November 11, July 12, 1620; FRP., I, pp. 1-4; IA., XLIII, 1914, pp. 82, 71, Mundy, II, pp. 366, 362; J. N. Sarkar, Fall of Mughal Empire, vol. I.
all sorts of Travellers that come att night and away in the morninge."43

In January 1622, an Italian, Villentine Bernardine, came to Agra, enroute to Patna to make investments for Persia. Possibly he got information from the English factors who "dispelled him on his way." But he was not heard of again.44

Regarding distribution, it appears that there was a small local demand in the Patna bazar for the unbleached and bleached cloths of Lukhawar. There was also some inter-provincial trade carried on by the English and other merchants with Agra and Lahore in bleached cotton goods, and also with South and North Bengal. Some of the bleached goods were again exported by the English merchants for use in England, other European countries, Persia, Barbary and Turkey.46 Persia was a market for the *ambatis* and *Kaimkhanis*46 of Bihar and Lukhawar at least up to the middle of the 17th century, if not later. Speaking of the possible use of *ambatis* in England, Hughes wrote: "The narrowest sorts (of *amberti* cloth) uniting either for England transporte as likewise the broader sorts (i.e., *Zafarkhanis* in the letter of 3rd August 1620) to come shorts in their lenghets and breadthes for the use of sheeting, shirting etts...The well-making of the Clothe wherein it exceeds either Samanes or your *bafiae* (of Broach in the letter to Surat,

43. *JL*, p. 30; Mundy, II, p. 159. Zeffle Ckaun is Saif Khan, late Governor of Bihar, 1627—32, see Mundy, II, pp. 108-9n. Calcutta was an Armenian trade centre from before 1630 (Sukeas Street from Sukiea, a merchant prince and benefactor). An Armenian widow's tomb is referred to in the *Sunday Statesman*, 9th February, 1936.

44. N. Raye, *EAEB*. pp. 27-28 quoting the letter of Hughes aud Parker to Surat, October 18, 1621. "Probabiby he availed himself of one of the Portuguese frigates coming to Patna from Hugli and Patna and sailed down the Ganges to the Sea and by sea to Persia whence he had come." See N. Raye, p. 28.

45. *Hbghes to Surat*, November 11, Aug. 6, 1620; *FRP*, I, pp. 13, 4; *IA*, XLIII, 1914, pp. 78-79. 73; *Et*, 1618—21, pp. 197-8. Hughes proposed to buy some small quantities as sample of the available bleach-ed articles for a trial for Lahore and Persia. Letter of July 12, 1620. *IA*, XLIII, 1914, p. 71. *bafias* and other cotton goods manufactured at Broach; were in this period, exported to England, Java, Mocha, and Persia, *JIH*, X, 1931, p. 245. It appears from the notes of Buchanan that there was such a local demand in the early 19th century; *Maizin, Eastern India*, Patna Report, pp. 353-4.

46. Kenn, 1661, quoted in *EF*, 1618—21, p. 192.
3rd August, 1621) will make it of good esteeme in England."47 Thus it appears that English demand was at this time for coarse and thick cotton stuffs, possibly to serve as substitute for wollens.

47. Hughes to Surat, Patna, 3 March, 1621; FRP., I, p. 22; IA., XLIII., 1914, pp. 98-99; Hughes to Surat, Lackhoure, 3 August, 1621; FRP., I, pp. 31-32; Ibid., p. 105.
SECTION B.
THE SILK TRADE OF PATNA IN EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

1. The Background

In the first half of the 17th century, Patna was famous not only for the production of raw cotton and manufacture and supply of cotton cloths of various kinds,¹ but also for being an important centre of silk trade. In 1620-21, under orders from the English E.I.C.'s authorities at Surat, the First Commercial Mission to Patna² was organised under Messers Hughes and Parker to procure Ambati calicoes and other cotton goods. It was then that Hughes discovered, for the E.I. Company, that Patna and its neighbourhood was a market for silk, skein and manufactured, imported from different parts of Bengal and Orissa and observed that “the two main props which must uphold this (Patna) factory...were ambati calicoes and raw silk,” which could not be provided, in the condition desired by the English E.I. Company, without a “continuance” (continual residence) at Patna.³

In order to understand the real significance of this discovery, it is necessary to explain the various extra-Indian and Indian circumstances which influenced the activities of the English traders.

Up to about 1250, large quantities of silk were imported to England, and even in the middle of the fifteenth century, the silk manufactures of England were confined to ribbands, laces etc. Owing to a complaint, made by the silk-women of London

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¹ ‘The Cotton Trade of Patna in early 17th century.’ ante. Ch. I. Sec. A.
² IA., XLIII, 1914; Mundy, II, Appendix D.
to Parliament in 1454, that the competition of foreign imported silk articles was depriving them of their honest employment, several acts were passed under Henry VI, which were followed by others under Edward IV and Henry VII, by which importation of wrought silk articles was prohibited (1454, 1481, 1504). Even in the early 16th century no manufactures of broad silk piecegoods were made in England. The foundation of silk manufactures in Southern France with Milanese workmen, and the success of Henry IV of France in extending silk manufactures through workmen from Flanders, stimulated James I in England to propagate silk in England, while the persecution of the French Huguenots and their immigration to England in the reign of Elizabeth had already led to the introduction of the art of weaving silk in England. Very soon the manufacture of raw silk into broad silkgoods began and although the effort of Charles I (about 1629) to acclimatise mulberry trees in England failed, the silk manufactures of England became 'a national object of much importance' by 1655. To feed this growing silk industry of England, it was necessary to get cheap and good raw silk. As early as 1558 some Persian silk was imported through Russia by Russia or Muscovy Company, but this project was soon dropped. Before the beginning of trade between England and the East Indies, England depended on silk from Turkey. In the beginning of the 17th century serious and expensive efforts were made to secure regular supplies from Persia of which we get numerous references in the English factory records. But the scarcity and dearness of Persian silk,

4. Milburn, II, 244ff.
5. Other sources were Persia, Syria, Sayd (Saida), Beyrout.
6. Ibid., The Czar had become less favourable to the English traders in the reign of Elizabeth. The Co. was denounced in the Common's Report (1604) as a most shameful monopoly and by 1615 the trade was practically extinct. Cunningham, Growth of English Industry & Commerce, Modern Times, Pt. I, 240.
7. Foster, English Factories. See also Peter Van Den Broecke in JIH., X, 235-50; XI, 203-18.
8. Due probably to:
(i) the organisation of the silk industry of Persia being a royal monopoly (Moreland, Akbar to Aurangzeb, 40) and the refusal of Shah Abbas to bind himself to a fixed price for silk.
and (iv) rivalry between Persia and Turkey.
worth 15s. a seer, among other things, induced the English factors at Agra and Masulipatam to attempt to procure raw silk from Bengal in 1618-19. After some futile endeavours it was found by William Methwold (December 7, 1619) that its price would conform to the Company’s desires. being about “15 or 16 pagodas per maund” (26 lbs.) or 5s. a lb., while Francis Fettiplace, Robert Hughes and John Parker wrote from Agra (December 15, 1619) that as the Company desired a “great store” of Bengal silk (in long skeins) “at or under 7s. the pound,” they would try to get as much as they could. 9

Thus, considering in the light of the foregoing facts, the attempts of Hughes to secure raw silk from Bengal must be regarded as a bold imaginative plan, the value of which the E.I.C’s authorities did not fully realise at that time.

2. Early experiments

Silk cocoons, skein (yarn) and cloths of different varieties were then available at Patna. Raw silk was imported into Patna in large quantities from Murshidabad and (adjacent) Saidabad in Bengal, which was universally considered to be the best variety of unwound silk or serbandy silk (i.e., cocoons). Some idea of the amount of imported raw silk can be formed from the Remonstrantie of the Dutch factor, Pelsaert (1620-26), who observed that Patna yielded “annually 1000 to 2000 mds. of raw silk.” 10 Though a considerable quantity of raw silk came from Bengal, a certain amount might have been imported from certain other parts of Behar.

In July 1620, the price of serbandy silk at Patna was Rs. 100 gross a maund (of 40 seers, each seer weighing 34½ pice). Deducting 25% for the savoye or sawai (an excess of a fourth), the net price would be Rs. 75 a maund. This included a brokerage of ½% from the buyer and 1% from the seller. Pelsaert wrote that the best raw silk available at Patna sold

9. EF., 1618-21, 46, 52, 127, 153, 161. Moreland, op. cit, 336. Thomas Munn wrote that the selling price of Persian silk in England was 20s. and further, “1629. From the regular supply of raw silk, which was now received from India, amounting to near £100,000 per annum, and the demand for silk goods in London, the silk manufacture was much extended.” Milburn, II, p. 247.
10. Serbandy or Sirbandi, head winding or, cocoon, usually called koya, pilab, Carnac Temple’s note, fn. L.4., XLIII, 70-71; Mundy, II, 155-56, 371; EF., 1618-21, 194n; Sarkar, Studies in Aurangzeb’s Reign 279; II. 7.
THE SILK TRADE OF PATNA

-evidently at Agra) at 16 or 17 moburs a maund (of 50 lbs. i.e. an Akbari md. of about 55 lbs. avoir). This would come to Rs. 110 to 120, taking a mohur equivalent to Rs. 7. On November, 14, 1632, Mundy observed that raw silk could be procured much better and cheaper elsewhere.\(^{11}\)

Serbandy silk was wound into skeins of various sorts. In 1620 Hughes despatched 'muster' or samples of these to Agra, for being sent after inspection, to Surat.

No. 1—two skeins of the first and second sorts (1 coved long), demanded by the E.I. Company and provided by the English at Agra. The price of these two sorts at Patna was then Rs. 5-8-0 gross a seer (of 34\(\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}\) pice weight) and deducting a discount (Kessure, Kasar, distury) of 17\%, Rs. 4-4-0 net.

No. 2—two skeins of the third and fourth sorts, usually purchased by the English in Agra, "not wound of aparte, for want of time." The price of these two sorts at Patna was then Rs. 4-4-0 gross a seer and deducting the discount, Rs. 3-9-0 net.

Commenting on the cheapness of the Patna price, as compared to that at Agra, Hughes wrote to Surat (12th July, 1620):

"These are their present prices, between which and that we buy in Agra. You will perceive a great difference in price for these four sorts. to say, one-third of the sort No. 1 and two-thirds of the sort No. 2 cost us together in Agra about Rs. 5-12-0 net the seer (of 30 pice), while here half the one and half the other may be bought for about Rs. 4 net the seer (of 34\(\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}\) pice weight) and I am promised at about these rates to have (them) delivered in from the silk-winders 10 or 15 mds. a month...and doubtless a greater quantity thereof may be procured, but then we must venture out some money beforehand, which I resolve upon, finding sufficient security for performance; and hereupon have advised them at Agra to desist further in its investments there, which per computation is at least 35\% dearer than here it may be bought."

\(^{11}\) IA., XLIII, 70-71. Hughes and Parker at Agra sold 'the best of the silk from Patna at 5 1/4 rupees the seer which was 15\% more than it cost.' (Letter to Surat, January 3, 1622); E.F., 1622-23, p. 9; JI., 7, & fn.; Mundy, II, 151.

\(^{12}\) Letter of July 12, 1620. IA., XLIII, 70-71. I have tried to give a modern form to the old English of Hughes. Cf. the letter of November 30, 1620: "Samples of raw silk sent. They can provide it cheaper than in Agra by 30 per cent, viz., Rs. 4.5/16 the seer of 33\(\frac{1}{2}\) pice (which seare is neare about 1 1/2 pounds English or haber depoziz) against Rs. 5.3/4 the seer of 30 pice in Agra." E.F., 1618-21, 218.
After sending the musters of Bengal skein silk, Hughes made further enquiries into the matter, which led him to try a unique experiment in winding skein silk from ‘serbandy’ or cocoons. He found that the sale of skein silk was a monopoly of the Governor, and it had to be purchased through the local kotwal or town magistrate as the Nawab’s agent, at rates 25%-37½% higher than what the kotwal had paid to the dealers, though the quality was not good. Hence he purchased a maund of serbandy for trial and had it wound into seven sorts of skeins. Four of these (second, third, fourth, and fifth) would sell at Rs. 4-4-0 net the seer (of 34½ pice weight), including all charges of winding (from 5 as. to 6 as. a seer); of the other three, the first would be sold in ready money at Rs. 4-9-0; the sixth at Rs. 1-8-0, and the seventh at Rs. 0-14-6 a seer 12a.

Hughes concluded that the cheapest and surest course would be to buy the serbandy and to get it wound on behalf of the Company, which process was expected to meet the exact requirements of the Company. He purchased 6 maunds of serbandy and started a karkhana (filature, winding house) with 30 silk-winders as an experiment. Encouraged by its results he increased the number to 100, and intended to employ 200 or 300, working for the whole year if the scheme and the price would be approved of by the Surat authorities.

So samples of the seven sorts of wound silk were sent by him to Surat via Agra (August, 1620); but the Agra authorities, on being instructed from the Surat council, discouraged the scheme (September). This naturally led Hughes to moderate and practically suspend his silk operations. But as he had already given advance money to the winders, which could not be recalled, it was impossible to close the filature suddenly. Hence, in order to avoid loss and work up the advance money, he proposed to have wound 10 or 12 maunds of serbandy at the most.

But he remained confident and optimistic of the commercial benefits of his scheme and wrote back to Agra that the sample he would send would “confirm its future provision, its price being considered.” On November 11, 1620, he wrote to

12a For the proportion of the seven sorts of silk vide IA., XLIII, 73-4, 81, also EF., 1618-21, 217. The approximate profit would be 450%—500% in the outlay involved.
Surat that owing to a recent fall in the price of *serbandy* silk, he would be able to supply wound silk threads at a better rate than before, and that with the proceeds of a sale of English goods to the Nawab, he had purchased about 10 mds. of *serbandy* silk and re-started its winding, for which he demanded some monetary help. As late as March 31, 1621, we find him engaged in purchase and winding of 30 mds. of *serbandy* (at Rs. 70-80 a md.) and appealing to Agra for permission and pecuniary help to persist in the investment. Hughes maintained his optimism till the last. Even only a month before the dissolution of the Patna factory, he wrote to the Company that the supply of 1621 would be better and cheaper than last year’s and would “yield in England expected profit.”

Another scheme of Hughes was to convert a part of the skein silk to floss or sleeve silk (or silk thread, capable of being separated into smaller filaments for use in embroidery). From his letter of August 6, 1620, we know that Hughes proposed to dye and dress some of the coarse varieties of *serbandy* silk into sleeve silk, for profitable investment in England. The process would involve a loss of 25% in weight and cost about 5 annas a seer. The price of ordinary floss silk was Rs. 2-2 a seer (? 33½ pice weight). Floss silk was generally made out of *shikasta* and *katwai* skeins, dyed in several colours; and in the provisions for England sent to Surat on trial on 1620, there was a small bale of sleeve silk, prepared from *Katwai*, except one skein of a “Watchet” (pale blue) which was produced from *shikasta*. This sample was, however, much inferior in quality to what might have been provided at Patna in large quantities. Best floss silk, dressed and dyed in several colours, would cost Rs. 4 net a seer (of 33½ pice weight).

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13. Hughes to Surat, (6th August, 11th November, 1620); Hughes to Agra (3rd September, 1620); *IA.*, XLIII, 73-4, 75, 79, 81, 82, 99, 108; *EF*, 1618-21, 198, 204. “The silk wound of (f) you will perceave to faile out in price as formerly advised, and by us expected. For its future provision wee shall not be overhastye, onlye worke out our monye delivered the silk winders, wherein their can te no losse but gayne in its present sayle here” (Letter of October 6, 1620; *IA.*, 78).


15. Ibid., 73-74, 74n. 78, 81. “The crimson is died in Lack, and all the rest of the collerees carrarye” (*karari*, firm, stable, fast, ingrained) (Letter, 6th October 1620, *IA.*, 78); *EF*, 1618-21, 199n., 204.
3. **Difficulties encountered**

Hughes was, however, conscious of the difficulties involved in making silk-investments, and probably it is these difficulties which led the authorities to discourage his experimental scheme. In the first place, wound silk\(^{16}\) was not available at Patna in the condition desired by the E.I. Company, as the silk dealers were so poor and beggarly that they could not supply goods without dādan (advance money) and even with it they did not give any guarantee for supply. Consequently the English factors did not follow the practice of dādan.

In the second place, the silk wound in the Company’s filature at Patna did not turn out to be as good as in Agra and Lahore, where there was tradition for such work, in which Patna was lacking. the art being newly introduced there by Hughes.\(^{17}\) Hence Hughes thought (January 31, 1621) that it would probably, in the ultimate analysis, be more advisable to have the silk wound at Agra, from the ‘original serbandy’, available there in ‘thousands of maunds’. But as the serbandy available at Agra was dearer than that at Patna or in Bengal, Hughes suggested to the Surat authorities that, if they were induced, by the samples he had sent, to think of drawing large provisions in silk, the cheapest and most advantageous course would be to get the serbandy at the source i.e. at Murshidabad. “which would be worth both labour and charge”, for assuredly there it might “be provided in infinite quantities at least twenty per cent cheaper than in any other place of India, and of the choicest stuff, wound of into what condition” the Company required it, as it came from the worm, and where were also “innumerable silkwinders, expert workmen and labour cheaper, by a third than elsewhere.”\(^{18}\) Consequently the Patna factors “ventured” to make another experiment,—to invest Rs. 500/- in attempting to procure the abundant cheap samples of silk, from

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16. The customary length of Bengal skeins was 1 coved of 33½" to 40" but for the purposes of the English market Hughes made it 1 yard. Mundy, II, App. D.

17. Manucci (Storia, II, 83-84) writes that (besides cloth of cotton, much fine silk’ was woven at Patna. The development of silk weaving industry at Patna remains yet to be written.

Murshidabad, though they admitted that it was done "rather for experience of that place than the necessity thereof." 19

Thirdly, unforeseen variations in prices was one of the reasons why the silk experiments were not approved of by the Company's authorities. Thus, on March 3, 1621, Hughes regretted that the raw silk sent to Agra for sale was in "so little esteem" but he was not surprised at it, as after its despatch, the original (serbandy) had fallen in price by almost 30%. So the Patna factors preferred selling the shikasta a rupee a net a seer, as offered to them locally, to "troubling" the Agra factors with it; but they decided to "detain" the katwai and gird (garad ?) varieties till the sanction of his superiors. On April 11, 1621, Hughes again wrote to the Agra authorities that he would abide by their directions about the disposal of the coarse varieties of wound silk, provided there were no hopes for selling them at Agra at better rates (including the transport and incidental charges). But there had been again a change in the price and as the serbandy had fallen by 25% in price, the silk could be wound much cheaper than before. It appears further from this letter that the Agra price was a factor which determined whether the silk experiment in Patna was to be continued or not. Thus Hughes enquired of the prices of raw silk in Agra:--"In your next I pray advise us of their (coarse sorts of wound silk) true value with you, for thereby will we govern ourselves either or its detention or sale here, for by merchants that purposely come from Agra to make their provisions in these sorts we are informed that Agra vends great quantities thereof, and at much better rates than here it can be sold." 20

In the fourth place, lack of sufficient and timely supply of funds was one of the standing difficulties of the English Company's factors in pursuing their schemes of investments in silk and cotton. On November 11, 1620, Hughes wrote to the Surat authorities that the maximum amount of serbandy, fit for England, he could provide was 30 mds. a month and this would require a good supply of money, so that the factors would be continually "in employment" (occupied); but that he could easily supply 300 mds. a year at Rs. 4/- a seer (of 33½ pice

19. Letter to Agra, April 11, 1621, ibid., 102. The time of journeying to Murshidabad and back was two months then.
20. IA., XLIII, 99, 102; EF., 1618-21, 236, 253.
weight). He estimated that at least Rs. 50,000 would be required for accomplishing the provision of that amount. But, although the authorities approved of the schemes for a year and promised to send a "speedy supply of money" for making investments in silk and calicoes, there are clear references to show that such promises remained unredeemed and that the Company's Patna factors had repeatedly to appeal for pecuniary help, sometimes to Agra and sometimes to Surat. "On December 22, 1620, they informed Agra that want of money had reduced them to idleness. Loss of about 4 months' time, caused by 'want of means', was also referred to in a letter to Surat, dated January 30, 1621, and as the provisions must be despatched by May before the rains, the time at the disposal of the Patna factors was very short. A letter of Hughes and Parker to the Company, dated August 14, 1621, clearly shows that the Surat authorities themselves were placed in various financial difficulties, due to the late arrival of the fleet from England in 1620, and other causes, which stood in their way of sending the promised money to Patna before March 1621. Agra sent the first supply of funds in bills of exchange for Rs. 5000/- (in February 1621) and future supplies amounting to Rs. 32,000 in all, came in driblets.21

This deficiency in financial equipment was sought to be made good by the Patna factors by employing the proceeds of sale at Patna (i) of diverse "brayed" (damaged) goods, sent from Agra, for Rs. 4000,22 and (ii) of English goods to the local Nawab.23 They expected a further supply of funds after the return of last year's ships from the Red Sea voyage.24 It may therefore be inferred that such financial stringency of the Company's authorities at Surat led them to discourage the Patna factory.

A new light on the dissolution of the Patna factory is thrown by the letter of the Surat factors to the Company dated November 7, 1621, which runs as follows: "Your prohibition

21. IA., XLIII, 81, 107; EF., 1618-21, 204, 217, 229-30.
22. This shows that Patna was used as a dumping ground of Agra for some articles.
23. Nawab Muqarrab Khan had a great passion for English goods. On the subject of the weakness of the aristocracy and high officers for European novelties or "toys," which had a great political and commercial bearing, see Moreland, Akb. to Aur. 68-71.
24. IA., XLIII, 107. Regarding the supplies of treasure from the Red Sea trade, see Moreland, op. cit., 38-39, 64 etc.
of Bengalia silke we have made knowne; as also of your desires of more than three or four thousands pieces amberta cloath yearley. Whereby we have also dissolved the factorie of Puttana, and will write to Masulipatan that they proceed noe further in providinge Bengala silke, although wee finde their prices to agree with your desires."

In the light of all these details we need not exaggerate the influence of the unfavourable prices of Bengal silk due to charges of transport and the cost of the factory, on the dissolution of the Patna factory, though it must be admitted that the Company regarded the attempt from their own point of view to be uncommercial in character. This consideration also led Peter Mundy to disapprove of the idea of establishing a factory at Patna in 1632. But these should not lead one to belittle the importance of Patna as a commercial centre.

We cannot say how far the experiments, if logically followed, would have been successful, but the triple scheme of silk-winding, converting skein into floss silk, and finding raw silk at Murshidabad came to an abrupt close, as the Patna factory was discouraged and ultimately dissolved. The orders of the Surat Council for dissolution of the factory, to be effected as early as possible, compelled the Patna factors to stop further provisions of Bengal silk and wind up their business with the silk winders. Referring to the silk experiments of the First Commercial Mission to Patna and the reasons of their failure, Pelsaert (1627) observes: "Formerly the English had a factory at Patna for the purchase of raw silk, but, owing to heavy losses, the trade has been discontinued, for 6 or 7 years, and does not appear likely to be resumed; besides they are now getting Persian silk at a more reasonable price."

4. Silk goods available at Patna

Silk manufactures, available at Patna, may be classified under two heads, viz., (i) those imported from outside and

25. EF., 1618-21, 327. For failure of supply of Bengal silk at Masulipatam due to Portugues competition, see Ibid., 264.
26. Ibid., Intro. xxiii, IHRC., 1930, XIII, 163.
27. Letter to Surat, August 3, 1621; IA., XLIII, 105; EF., 1618-21, 258; JI., 7. I intend later on to give details on the interesting subject of the development of the trade in Persian silk. In November, 1619 the Persian Shah gave a farman granting the sole trade in silks by the sea route to the English. EF., 1618-21, Intro. xxviii.
(ii) those produced locally or in the neighbourhood and exported outside.

Among imported silk manufactures were imports from Lower Bengal—Satgaon quilts and Tasar silk goods. The Satgaon quilts seem to be what we call "down quilts" now. It is generally known that their use in European countries is derived from the Orient. But there are clear references in the Patna-Surat and Surat-Agra factory correspondence of this period which show the Bengal had a share in setting the fashion for using such quilts in Europe and other parts of India. Silk quilts were not made at Patna but brought "from the bottom of Bangala." On 12th July, 1620, Hughes wrote to the Surat authorities that he would provide some quilts of Sutgonge (Satgaon), prepared with yellow silk, at "reasonable rates." By that date he had already secured ten such quilts and had been promised more daily as they would come to the town. This expected supply did not come, for on 3rd September, 1620, Hughes's supply of Satgaon quilts had not exceeded a dozen. However, he trimmed them up with silk fringe, tassels, feathers, etc., and lined them partly with taffeta and partly with tasar. He did not want to send more in 1620 unless he had definite orders of approval from the Surat authorities. All these quilts despatched were brought "at such reasonable rates" that Hughes expected a good muzera (or profit). Further he suggested to the Company (30th November, 1620) that if these samples would be approved of and find a good market in England, then they might be provided annually in large numbers. Any other kind of quilt was not available at Patna.28

In their letter of March 16, 1619, Thomas Kerridge and others at Surat enclosed directions to the Agra factors regarding the supply of Bengal quilts. In some the lining and upper part were to be of one kind of chintz: in others they were to be of different chintzes such that either side might be used: the sides of some were to be of one colour, but their borders (1 coved long) were to be of different colours, and they were to hang by the bed-side on all sides alike. The Surat factors observed that

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28. As a matter of fact 22 such quilts were sent. IA., XLIII, 71, 75, 77, 82, 82n, 83; EF., 1618-21, 126n; 195; 198; TPM., II, 372-73. The word "Muzera" is either nasarrat in Persian, "joy," or preferably Persian 'mazra', lis. 'a place of seed produce and hence used unmistakably to mean produce or profit. EF., 1618-21, 84-5, 235, 250,
the last variety was "most used in India" and considered that it would be "most pleasing in England," provided they were made a little thicker and stronger stiched than the ordinary varieties, for durability. They further remarked; "Lawne quiltes wee do conceive soe fitt for England as if they were of semianoe, amberttes or Sahume cloth, which will be much more lastinge, stichte with birdes (feathers), beastes (furs) or worke very thicke, such as used by the Mores instead of carpitts. Of this sorte there comes, itt seemes, from Bengal. His Lordship had three or four which he brought as asker, stichte with cullered silk, that will (give) good contente in England; and we doubt not, by bespeakinge, you will procure them to be made of such sizes as the companies letter doth mention."

The trade in Satgaon quilts carried on a Patna seems to have existed quite independently of the activities of the English factors and throws light on the standard of life and comfort at that time. It must have had its basis either in local needs of Patna or in the demand of other traders, Indian or European, for needs elsewhere. For, we find that even after the failure of the First Commercial Mission of the English in Patna (1620-1), the trade in this article continued, and Peter Mundy (II, 156) mentioned among the names of sundry commodities available in Patna, "Bengal quilts from Sategame" (Satgaon).

Tasar is a kind of coarse or inferior, dark coloured silk, prepared from tasar worms. From time immemorial, the people of Bengal and other adjacent provinces have got a considerable supply of this silk, which is woven into dhoeties or other goods, and exported outside. The Italian traveller Caesari die Federici mentioned tasar silk as "erba" or "herba" (1565), while a later usage of the word denotes a fabric of silk and cotton. Thus in the Aín-i-Akbari we read of tasar selling at Rs. ½ to Rs. 2, a piece. In 1620-21 the tasar (tussore) silk goods were described as being of "half silk, half cotton." Hughes quickly observed the value of such tasar goods, which were imported to Patna at the rate of "40 or 50 corge" (score) (800 or 1,000 pieces) every from Lower Bengal. So he invested Rs. 400 in them on

29. Sir William Foster puts a (not ?) in bracket between 'do' and 'conceave', but that does not fit in the context and sense of the passage. See ante Sec. A for explanation of terms like semianoe, amberttes, Sahume.
trial; but the attempt did not succeed, and it was left to Streynsham Master to start the trade in that valuable commodity in 1679.30

From Malda in North Bengal, three varieties of silk-goods came to Patna (1632).31
(a) Ornees or Orhnis, or women’s veils, ornamented with silk and gold. 16 coveds long.
(b) Ballabands or balaband. turban band, wrought with silk and gold, 3 coveds long,
(c) Alachah or Ellachas, a silk striped stuff or silk cloths with a wavy pattern running lengthwise, 16 coveds long. Abdul Fazi refers to Alchah or alachah, also called Tarhdar, meaning a kind of corded stuff, priced at $1 \frac{1}{2}$ to 2 Rs. a yard.

From Sherpur (Sherpur Murcha, or Serrpore Mercha) in Bogra district, which in the 17th century was noted for its Tasar silk, there came to Patna a very thin variety of ccoloured silk cloth. (Tiffany or Taffeta), manufactured there, called Amber or Jettaleses, or variegated, spotted or striped piece-goods used for female apparel, (4×$\frac{7}{8}$ coved) (1632).32

From Orissa, came to Patna varieties of lines, called Ambarees (canopy) and charconnaes or charkhanas, or chequer-

30. Milburn, 303, II, 244; Hobson-Jobson 720-21; Watt, Commercial Products, 1002 ff, Dictionary of Econ. Products of India, Vol. VI, Pt. III, 98 ff; IA., XXIX, 339-40; Blochman, I, 94; Letters of 6th August and 11th November, 1602; IA., XLII, 73-4, 81; 73n; Mundy, I, 362-3; Master, I, 112, 136; II, 299n; Rowley, 162n. The word ‘erba’ or ‘herba’ means grass, and from a false etymology, it led to a belief that tassar goods were made from some kind of grass and not silk. Master, I, 136. In 1676 Hugli and Balasore were important centres of production of Tasar or Herba goods. Hedges II, ccxxix, cxxi; Master, I, 54; II, 81, 82, 84-5 Sarkar, Aurangzib’s Reign, 279-80; EF., 1618-21, 112.

31. Mundy, II, 155; EF., 1630-33, 4n; Blochman, I, 91n, 94. Malda (Maulda) was variously known in latter part of 17th century as English Bazar, Angrezabad and Engishavod; Master, I, 25, 26, 598n. The word Alachah probably means a stuff from Turkistan called in Turky alchah, alafah. Hobson-Jobson, sv. Alleja, p. 8.

32. Jettaleses may be a corruption of chital, variegated, spotted or striped. Mundy, II, 155-6n; Sherpur Murcha described by Peter Mundy as “100 course eastwards” has been identified with Sherpur in Bogra district. It was different from Sherpur in Mymensingh and it was not a port, as mention by Peter Mundy, Carnac Temple’s note in Mundy, II, 152; Master, I, 482; II, 299; Streynsham Master described Ghorahat as a centre of Tasar or Eri cloth manufacture and Sherpur as a place where the “worms are kept as silkworms,” (op. cit).
ed muslin, which were striped with white silk, 16 coveds long and 1 broad. 33

Probably the best variety of silk-goods, available at Patna was what Mundy calls by the name of "Cuttanees (Katani, the finest linen) or Atchabanees (Achchabani, fine fabric or fine silk thread). They refer to a fine cloth, embroidered with silk, silver and gold, flowers, and spotted, 4 coveds long. 34

5. Baikunthpur silk goods

Regarding the second group of manufactures, produced locally or in the neighbourhood, I have not yet found any reference to silk goods manufactured at Patna in early 17th century; but Baikunthpur, described to be about 10 miles east of Patna, seemed to have been an important centre of silk manufacture, producing, "in infinite quantities," what were called Baikunthpur alachah and tuckrees or becutpoories; both intended for being used as women's petticoats.

Speaking of the Baikunthpur alachahs, Hughes informed the Surat authorities on August 6, 1620, that he had invested some money in "Bicuntpoore layches," purchasing 320 pieces, at 12, 10, 16 rupees a score (of 20) (i.e. at prices varying from 8 as. to 13 as. each). Taking Rs. 13 as the average price for a score, the sum invested would amount to about Rs. 210. Being about "5½ coveds long and somewhat more than ¾ broad" (i.e. about 5½ yds. × 27 in.) they were regarded as of fit lengths for petticoats. They were generally purchased by the "Mogolles" (Mughal traders) for Persia (i.e. for petticoats of Persian ladies). Hughes was confident that on account of their cheap price, these would "doubtless sell in England to good profit," and so sent some patterns of these to Surat in 1620, adding that they could be made to order. In 1632 Peter Mundy referred to tuckrees or becutpoories, a variety of silk petticoats for women; these were-

33. Ambari is a vulgar form of amari, a canopy of an elephant or camel howda. Abul Fazl mentions among silkcloths Ambari, selling at 4d. to ¼ R., a yd. Blochmann, I, 94.

34. Mundy, II, 155-6. The word Kuttan in Persian means flax or linen cloth, Hobson-Jobson, S. V Cuttanee, 224. Kitan seems to be a Persian cloth. It was so thin and delicate that "it tear when the moon shines on it." Abul Fazl mentions among silk cloths (i) Qutnī or stuff made of silk and wool, @ ¼ R. to 2 R. a piece, (ii) Katan, from Europe, ¼ to 1 R. a yard. Blochmann, I, 94n.
thin, striped silk stuffs, 4 coveds long and $\frac{7}{8}$ broad, also manufactured at Baikunthpur.35

6. **Organisation of silk trade**

Certain details about the distribution and organisation of the silk trade at Patna in the early part of the 17th century are available. As already noted, Patna was then a meeting place of merchants of different nationalities, the Portuguese, the Armenians, the Mughals, the Pathans, the Persians and the Praychaes or East Bengal traders, besides the English factors and there was a cosmopolitan sarai (Saif Khan’s sarai) for the benefit of these traders. There was possibly a local consumption of the imported silk cloths in Patna, while some amount of raw silk must have been utilized at Baikunthpur. As no purchaser could be found at Patna, the coarse silk was sent to Agra (May 1621). Merchants from Agra used to come to Patna for purchasing Bengal silk. A considerable portion of it was consumed in Gujrat especially at Ahmedabad, where brocades and flowered silk were woven; only a small amount was used in Agra. Thus, on October 6, 1620, the Patna factors sent a bale of silk containing gird, katwai and shikasta varieties, for sale in Agra. But a part of this silk must have flowed to Surat where carpets of silk or of silk and gold and silver thread were manufactured. Sleave silk was expected to have a market in England. Manufactured silk goods were partly sold in Agra and exported to England and Persia. The ‘Mughal’ merchants generally purchased the Baikunthpur alachahs and tukris, for being used as petticoats by Persian ladies, and the English factors of the First Commercial Mission expected that they would prove a very profitable investment in England also for similar uses. The Satgaon quilts were lined with taffeta (silk) or tasar and given silk fringes and tassels for the English market.36

35. *IA.*, XLIII, 73-4. Both Hughes and Mundy locate Baikunthpur 10 miles east of Patna, but the Orme Mss. India, XVII, 4699 gives it as 15 miles from Patna; Mundy, II, 155n. The road map of Patna Dt. shows a place, Baikatpur (north of Khusrupur) about 22 m. from Golghur, Patna. The word *Turki* means silk for women’s petticoats but the Tuckeries or short baftas of Ahmadabad appear to have been cotton goods being included in linen investments. *EF.*, 1621-23, 68.

36. ‘The Cotton Trade of Patna in early 17th century’ ante Sec. 1; Studies in Aurangzib’s Reign., 279; *IA.*, XLIII, 73-4, 78, 81, 102; *EF.*, 1618-21, 198, 253, 256; *JL.*, 7; Mundy, II, 373.

The Dutch opened the Japanese market to Bengal raw silk (1641-1653) *MAA.*, 66. Investment for silk was ordered in England in 1648.
Some idea of the amount of silk-goods and raw silk, provided by the English factors in 1620-21 may be gathered from the following figures. The silk provisions for 1620 (collected from August to October) included 12 scores (i.e. 240 pieces) of Tussar, 22 quilts of Satgaon, 334 pieces of Baikunthpur alachah, 270\frac{1}{2} seers (i.e. about 7 mds. of Bengal silk), and Malda wares for Persia, worth Rs. 600. In May 1621, the Patna factors sent to Agra 13 bales of Bengal silk, 6 of which contained 18 mds. 12 seers of wound skein silk (1 yard long), as desired by the Company’s authorities, the rest containing coarse varieties for sale in Agra. Owing to discouragement, the silk provisions for 1621 were not expected to exceed 25 mds. of varieties useful for England, as against the directions to purchase 100 maunds of Bengal silk.\(^{37}\)

As already noted above, the sale of skein silk was a monopoly of the Governor, and merchants had to buy it through the Kotwal in Patna, at rates 25%—37% higher than what the Kotwal paid to the dealers.\(^{38}\)

The trade in silk was complicated as in the case of cotton trade ‘by the system of dealing.’ There was a business discount of 25% on settling accounts. Thus the gross price of Serbandy silk was Rs. 100 a md., but after deducting the ‘Savoye’, sawai or 25%, the net price was about Rs. 75. Moreover, there was a legal brokerage. [As Hughes wrote to Surat (12th July, 1620) that the brokerage on serbandy silk and all other sorts of silk was, “by the Nabab’s command,” “but 5 annas of a rupye per cent from the buyer and 10 anyes from the seller,” but that the brokers usually took “one half per cent from the buyer and one per cent from the seller.”] Further there was a discount (Kessure or Kasar and distury) of 17%, which was deducted from the price of skein silk.\(^{39}\)

Variations in weight increased the difficulties in dealing. The weight of the seer varied from 30 pice at Agra to 33\frac{1}{2} and

\(^{37}\) Letters of October 6, 1620, and August 14, 1621; IA., XLIII, 77, 107-8.

\(^{38}\) This throws some new light on the Kotwal’s functions. He was of course expected to regulate prices, but here he was acting as the agent of the Governor who had a monopoly in the sale of skein silk.

\(^{39}\) Letter of July 12, 1620; IA., XLIII, 70-1. It is difficult to state definitely as the late Sir Richard Carnac Temple has done, that this discount of 17% referred to the commission of the Governor.
$34\frac{1}{2}$ pice at Patna. Such variations also existed in other trades at that time.

The correspondence of the Patna factors throws some incidental but interesting light on some aspects of the economic life of Patna at that time.

(i) We note in the first place the adverse influences exerted by high administrative officers. Muqarrab Khan, 'a liberal purchaser (of Company's goods) and a good paymaster,' was succeeded by Prince Parviz, Jahangir's second son, as Governor of Behar (in 1621). But Patna proved "too narrow" a place for his entertainment, and he "liberally bestowed" on his "great retinue," the abodes of the inhabitants and merchants. The English factors were put to great hardships, and they had to wander about for sheltering themselves and their goods from the inclemencies of weather (the time being May-June and the rains being in excess). After some difficulties they succeeded "through the help of Mr. Monye" (i.e. by paying a high price) in placing the silkwinders in a house, but they wrote to Agra (June 2, 1621) that they could not send additional supply of investments.

(ii) Secondly the silk dealers were so "poor and beggarly" that they could not furnish goods without advance money, and even, if given, they could not guarantee the supply.

(iii) In the third place, the fact that Hughes gave advance money to the silk winders to work in the Company's karkhanas throws some light on their economic position. Possibly they were unwilling and had to be given some material inducements to work in the Company's factories; but since the Patna factors nowhere allude to the unwillingness of the workers, it may be that the winders insisted on prior payment. This would tend to

40. Ibid., Mundy, II, 371-2.
42. IA., XLIII, 104; EF., 1618-21, 256; Travels of P. Della Valle, I, p. 57, An earlier misfortune which befell the Patna factors was a fire which occurred in the Company's factory at Alamganj (March 24, 1621). Except the account-book and the money, everything else was destroyed, including the proportion of the silk taken and the portion of the silk, that had been wound off and the cocoons still lying in the tanks, IA., XLIII, 101n.
43. Vide ante.
show that the system of begar or forced labour or ill-paid labour as referred to by Pelsaert\textsuperscript{44} and Bernier,\textsuperscript{45} had already set in and the workers wanted to save their position by taking advance wages.

\textsuperscript{44} Ji., 60-1.

\textsuperscript{45} Constable, 228, 255-6. See also Sarkar, Mughal Administration.
SECTION C

TWO YEARS OF THE COTTON INDUSTRY AND TRADE OF GUJRAT (1622-23)

The late Mr. Moreland observed that of the four principal areas for production of cotton manufactures for export, (1) the Indus plain with its outlet of the port of Lahari Bandar; (2) the country round the Gulf of Cambay as far south as Dabul; (3) the Coromandel coast; (4) and Bengal, the second one i.e. Gujrat was "the centre of the largest trade of all, drawing goods from Ahmdabad, Pattan, Baroda, Broach and Surat, and many smaller places and exporting largely east as well as west."\(^1\)

This Section is an attempt to study in detail the state of cotton industry and trade of Gujrat in 1622-23 on the basis of English factory records and with reference to the following points:

(A) Centres of Production and varieties of goods and Prices.
(B) Marketing Organization:
   1. Sources of supply, and factors governing it.
   2. Administrative interference:
      (a) Governor's Orveyance.
      (b) Governor's refusal to permit opening of trade.
      (c) Governor's claim of a share in brokerage.
   3. Trade competition.
   5. Role of brokers.
   7. Cotton, wool and yarn.
   8. Packing.
(C) Transport and factors governing it
   1. Governor's Prohibitions.
   2. Customs or toll stations.

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1. *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 182.
(D) Distributions.

Apart from their significance in the history of English commerce and settlements in the East, these two years were of considerable importance in the political history of India and especially of Gujrat, witnessing the death of Prince Khusrur, the rebellion of Prince Khurram (Mughal Viceroy of Gujrat from 1617) against his father and his ultimate defeat and the reconquest of the province by the imperialists. 2

(A) Centres of Production and varieties of Goods, and their Prices.

During the period under review the following places were associated with the production, marketing and storage of various classes of cotton goods, commonly grouped under the term ‘calicoes’ or spoken of as piece-goods.

(1) Ahmadabad. Long narrow baftas were available at Rs. 1/4/- to Rs. 2/8/- a piece.

The articles of investment ordered by Surat to be supplied (March, 1622) by the Ahmadabad factors included : 3

(a) Broader Serijas—10,000 pieces at Rs. 22 a corge. Rs. 11,000
(b) Duties (Dhootis)—10,000 pieces at Rs. 25 corge. 12,500
(c) Baftas narrow—20,000 pieces at Rs. 30 a corge. 30,000

Total Rs. 53,500

On March 11, 1622 the Ahmadabad factors informed Surat that as regards ‘Linen investments’ they provided 1400 pieces of long narrow baftas ‘of this place’ at Rs. 1/4/- to Rs. 3/- a piece, and about 300 of the shorter variety, the Tuckeryes priced at over Rs. 14/- (maximum not mentioned). They could purchase 200 pieces daily but had to carefully reject the inferior varieties.

2. Importance due to the (i) capture of Ormuz from the Portuguese, (ii) blockade of Goa by the English and the Dutch, (iii) temporary abandonment of the English factories in Northern India, (iv) quarrel between the English and the Mughal authorities at Surat, (v) the conclusion of a fresh agreement, (vi) the dissolution of Anglo-Dutch partnership in Plicatic. EF. Vol. II (1622-23), p. v-vi.

3. EF. ii. 68, 149, 156. For calicoes and piece goods and baftas respectively see Hobson Jobson, pp. 112-113, 535-6 and 35.
On August 6, 1622, the Ahmadabad factors informed Surat that “our lyners come in daily” and would be received within 15 days. Towards the end of November they were still proceeding with the purchase of piecegoods, and in the beginning of December, 1622 they made good progress in the purchase of piecegoods.4

(2) Broach:—Besides being a very convenient halting station on the Surat—Ahmadabad route, it was an emporium of calicoes coming from the surrounding areas in large quantities. The investments from here included (Aug. 15, 1622) (a) baftas, narrow and broad, (b) ‘necannes’, (i.e. Nicannes) (c) ‘poppele’ (d) ‘chokree’ (e) coppere’ (f) ‘hussane’ (g) ‘buckar’ (h) ‘gingams’ (ginghams) (i) duttyes (dhootis)’ (j) ‘trickandes’ (k) ‘seales’.5

(3) Cambay (Cambaia) provided the following goods:

(a) ‘mussaphes’, (b) ‘perragrees’ (c) ‘allejanes’ (d) ‘mentasses’ (e) ‘Cori a chander’.6

(4) Pettelan or Pattimee (probably Patan, on the Saraswati, in Baroda territory). The ready-made goods of this place could be purchased either at Cambay or Ahmadabad.7

(5) Sojitre (Sudjantrie of English factory records, Sozintra of Della Valle 16 miles, N. E. of Cambay) supplied duties or dhootis.

(6) Baroda supplied Baftas and buckar. A parcel of baftas came from Baroda to Broach in payment of a debt (June, 1622). Baftas were found to be ‘plentiful’ and very cheap at Baroda (Dec. 1623). The Baroda goods were exported to Mokha.8

(7) Dabhoi (Daboye of English factory records), 15 miles S.E. of Baroda, supplied cotton cloth.9

(8) Dholka (Doulke of English factory records) supplied broad duttyes (dhooties) and broad ‘seryès’, both plain (unstriped and striped for napkins. ‘Serryaes’ were also used for sails.

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4. Ibid, 68, 98, 158, 162.
6. Ibid 149.
8. EF. II. 92, 93, 100, 110, 118, 152, 159, 347, export (148, 149, 152, 157-158, 179).
9. Ibid, 93, 100.
In Feb. 1622, Ahmadabad factors started provision of broad dhootis of Dholka and broad seryas. In March, 1622, the Ahmadabad factors sent to Surat a specimen dhooti of Dholka of special size and requested orders on it and enquired as to the quality of striped and unstriped serijas wanted. They expected a large quantity of striped serijas from Dholka. But in April the Ahmadabad factors, evidently acting on orders from Surat, instructed their brokers at Dholka not to purchase striped serijas any longer but only plain serijas, and to provide dhootis of given size. About the middle of May the Ahmadabad factors hoped to go to Dholka to procure and dispatch same serijas.10

(9) Surat—The piece goods from Surat were in great demand in the East Indies, and especially suitable for Achin, Batavia and Bantam.11

(10) Rander (Rannell or Ranel) of factory records, 2 miles above Surat on the opposite bank of the river—a place for storing indigo and cotton of the English. Indigo alone almost filled five houses. They sought permission of the Surat authorities to rent another house for cotton goods at 22 mahmudis a month and their approval to purchase a dozen locks. By November 22, 1622, all goods from Broach were sent down from Rander.12

(11) Swally, the Port of Surat, was a test port, where articles were tested before shipment. Some of the cloth coming from Ahmadabad was found to be rotten (Nov. 1622).13

(B) Marketing Organization

(1) Sources of supply and factors governing it.

The Gujrat cotton industry represented the two different forms of industrial organization, the artisan system and the Karkhana system, prevailing in India during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the first system the poor weavers manufactured the cotton goods in their own looms in their houses and brought them to the market. In the words of Moreland, “the management of business had not been separated from the work of manufacture and production was carried on by artisans without superior capitalist direction”. To procure-

10. Ibid, 40, 58, 68, 72, 86, 93, 152, 172.
11. Ibid, 149, 26, 65, 81, 115, 124, 134, 164, 194, 201, 304, 323, 324, 483.
12. EF. II. 67, 152.
13. EF. II. 137,
cotton goods one had to make purchases of the varieties brought for sale by the weavers in the "bazar" (market). But articles of special quality, design or size had to be specially ordered. For this purpose advances of money had to be made to the weavers. The Broach factors wrote (Aug. 24, 1622) that narrow _baftas_ were easily available, but for broad _baftas_ money must be advanced beforehand, and the supplies would come at the sweet-will of the weavers and the brokers. Hence without prior instructions they did not consider it proper to place any special order and decided to purchase only those that were available in the market.\(^{14}\)

Supplies came not only from private individual weavers and dealers but from private establishments of provincial governors or high officials. This would imply (a) either that these high officials maintained private _Karkhanas_ or workshops, smaller editions of the imperial _Karkhanas_ or workshops where the artisans worked under direction with materials supplied by officials themselves or (b) that they engaged in private trade themselves, procuring manufactured articles by purchase in the market with the help of their agents or brokers. The late Mr. Moreland acutely surmised the existence of "private workshops" similar to the imperial _Karkhanas_ in some handicrafts, but he definitely stated that "our authorities say nothing about them.\(^{15}\)

A Baroda-Surat letter (Nov. 14, 1622) seems to indicate the existence of such private workshops in Gujarat cotton manufactures. Thus we read of supplies of cotton goods coming from the "Princes sarkar" or "Ishaq Begs sarkar" meaning evidently the private establishments of Prince Khurram, then Mughal Subahdar of Gujarat, and of Ishhaq Beg, spoken in the records as Governor (i.e. faujdar) or military commander of Surat. Out of goods destined for Mokha, and worth 25,000 mahmudis to be supplied by Baroda factors, those worth 5000 mahmudis were to come from the "Princes Sercar" and those worth 18,000 mahmudis from the 'Sercor' of Ishaq Beg, and the rest were to be procured in Surat, Cambay or Ahmadabad (Nov. 1622). Goods valued at 20,597½ mahmudis were then ready to be packed and the factors took security for the supply of the rest.

\(^{14}\) _India at the death of Akbar_, 184-5, _EF_. II. 116.
But the inference about the private workshops maintained by Prince Khurram and Ishhaq Beg is rendered doubtful by the Baroda-Surat letter of Nov. 19, 1622. It tells us that Ishhaq Beg’s broker at Baroda declared that he could not fulfil his engagement to supply 24,000 mahmudis worth of baftas and ‘buckar’ but would try his best to make up the deficiency with other piece-goods. This strongly suggests that Ishhaq Beg, the Governor of Surat, must have his own private trade, having brokers to collect cotton manufactures of the locality from the weavers and then sell them at a profit. Private workshops of nobles however, did exist and continued even to 18th century. This inference about private trade of high Mughal officials is supported by references in English factory records to the various forms of administrative interference in the cotton trade of Gujrat.

(2) Administrative interference

(a) Governor’s Purveyance:

Enjoyment of the right of purveyance in the matter of purchase of cotton goods by high officials, like Governor (faujdar), i.e. the right of making the first purchases in the market before any one else, was then an undisputed factor in the economic life of the country. Early in January, 1622, the Broach factors informed Surat, that the Governor (faujdar) of Broach (Himmat Khan) had forbidden the purchase of any goods “until his torne (turn) bee served.” So they gave him a letter from Surat and solicited his permission to buy narrow baftas of the varieties he did not want. But he did not give an immediate answer. He forbade the English from buying narrow baftas and had prohibited the weavers and brokers from selling them any broad baftas till he had all he wanted. A Cambay-Surat letter of December 9, 1622 tells us that a broker to Ji Ram Shah, principal broker at Cambay, promised the English some Sojitra dhootis but the Governor of Cambay (Mir Jafar) subsequently issued an order forbidding the dealers to sell dhootis or “allejanes” to anybody but himself.17

(b) Governor’s refusal to grant permission to trade.

Besides enjoying the right of purveyance, the Governor (faujdar) could refuse to grant permission to trade. A Cambay-

16. EF. II, 149, 152.
17. EF. II, 9, 19-20, 163.
Surat letter (of Nov. 14, 1622) tells us that the President and Council of Surat contracted with Kedar Chan (Khidr or Khizr Khan) and the broker of Prince Khurram for supplying goods for Mokha amounting to one lakh of mahmudis. One-fourth of this amount, (25,000) was to be delivered at Brodera (Baroda) and the rest (75,000) to be invested in Cambay. The Cambay factors had "some difficulty" in getting the licence for pursuing the trade from Mer Joffar (Mir Jafar, Governor of Cambay, since Nov. 9, 1622). On the 10th November they went to him to procure his "chope (chhap) for lycene for our more quiet pro-
ceedings" (i.e. licence for peaceful trade). He refused to grant it unless the English consented to give him a security that they should allow the caffila (caravan) of Goa, (which was expected at Cambay) along with all other ships of the Portuguese, Muhammedans and others, trading with Cambay, to freely pass in and out of Cambay ("in peace without any interruption or wrong done to them, by any of the English shipping"). The Cambay factors enquired "What More or Banyan" (i.e. Mu-
hammdan or banya) they had wronged and why they should be asked to give such a security since the Portuguese were known to have wronged the English and as the Anglo-Portuguese hostility was well-known, they refused to give a guarantee for the safety of the Portuguese even at the cost of being refused the licence. They sent their broker to 'Cogee Sindall' (Khwaja Sandal) the governor's capon (ennuch) and slave, who was "well affected" towards them reminding him of his previous kindness in inviting the English from Surat to Cambay and offering him a present in return for "his good offices". The Khwaja persuaded the Governor to accept an undertaking of the English not to molest any traders to the port of Cambay (except the Portuguese). The Governor granted an order for peaceful proceedings ('peasable proceedings') of the English at Cambay.  

(c) Governor's claims of a share in Brokerage.

Not only did the faujdar of Cambay continue this practice of buying goods but he started another project (from 11th Dec. 1622) for his private gain i.e. exacting from the brokers of

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18. EF. II. 148-49.
Cambay town half share in the brokerage on purchases. He ordered all brokers and merchants to give him a daily account of their purchases and sales respectively. None could sell anything except in the ‘bazar’ (market). The English factors characterized it as “Unaccustomed extorsion” (unusual extortion), the effect of which was that (1) the merchants refused to sell and the brokers refused to buy, and (2) the ‘poor’ weavers could not work as they could not sell what they manufactured. On the 14th December, they complained to the Governor in the hope of redress but he “unjustly whipped and imprisoned” some of them while the rest fled away, and several merchants and brokers also ran away. Thus the whole town was “in an uproar.”

These events hindered the English factors in their proceedings. They hoped that ultimately (1) “this tempest would not last long” (2) but that “it would be pacified with some bribe from these people” (3) that the governor, realising that this “dishonest project of his, would not take effect, would desist from this tyrannous proceeding.” But at the time of writing the letter to Surat (Dec. 18, 1622) “neither side (i.e. the governor on the one hand and the merchants and brokers on the other) was inclined to give way”, but “continued stoutly” in mutual opposition. Unaware of, and unable to foresee the possible consequences of these controversies but realising that these would “hinder their business”, if this deadlock continued, the English factors visited the Governor on Dec. 17 and complained to him of the merchants’ refusal to sell the English any goods as they dared not and could not violate the Governor’s order that no sales could take place except in the bazar. The English factors described the order to be “Contrary to their and our accustomed manner” i.e. contrary to the customary practice of the Indian merchants and brokers selling their wares and the factors purchasing them even outside the bazar. Hence the order was “contrary to the security” given by the governor’s licence that they could make purchase according to the customary practice.

The Governor replied that he had not forbidden any body to sell goods to them and asked them to produce before him.

19. The text says “One of their two in the hundred brockeridge” (EF, II 126-9). Later “half his brokredge” (Ibid, p. 170) is clearly noted.
whoever refused to do so and threatened the latter with dire consequences. The factors replied that the defaulting culprits were "not one but all" and begged him to arrange for delivery of goods to these in return for their money invested, especially as their procurement was already very small owing to the dealings of Jerramshaw (the Cambay broker) and further this new project of the governor was impeding their supplies. The Governor appeared to be dissatisfied with Jerramshaw's dealings with the English which he himself characterised as dishonest and assured the English factors that he would help them as best as he could. Accordingly he gave Vissendas (Vishnu das) a warrant under his chopp informing all merchants that the English had licence to buy according to their customary manner, and asking them to sell goods to them and submit to him a true account of their sales and asking the broker to render him "half his brokerage". Those who refused to sell any goods to the English on these terms would be severely punished by him on a report being made by the English (at Surat). Thus the Governor made many fair promises that he would take steps for quick progress of the English Factors' business.20

With their hands strengthened by the Governor's warrant, the English factors tried to purchase goods but they found it "very weak in effect". The merchants, undaunted by the Governor's threats, refused to sell goods to any one on these terms ("Let the Governor do what he can"). Hence the factors realised that a second complaint to the Governor would not bring any remedy. It might only lead to the torture of the "poor people" (weavers). It would reveal the over-eagerness of the English and create an impression among the people that the English wanted to purchase a huge store of goods, but since very few goods were available for sale in the town (evidently owing to suspension of manufacture by weavers after the order) the merchants would charge high rates (after the settlement of the dispute).21

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20. At the time of the departure of the English factors the Governor desired 'courtasse' (i.e. Portuguese cartaz, a pass) from the English for his ship bound for Hoderdo (Hodeida) in the Red Sea. The factors granted it in the hope of further favours, with a copy to the Surat authorities (EF. II. 171). Jerramshaw was Ji Ram Shah.

At last the wise patience of the factors was rewarded. On 24th December, 1622, the Governor granted licence to the merchants and brokers of Cambay to buy and sell according to their standing order without paying any "unusual duties" to him. Fear of imperial wrath on the part of the Governor and not any generosity or consciousness of the baneful effects of his "dishonest project" accounted for this sudden restoration of freedom of trade. Emperor Jahangir wanted to distribute cotton goods worth two lakhs of rupees as alms among the poor of Indaha (Mecca). Hence "the kings merchant" came to Cambay for the purpose of investment on Dec. 17, and at once the prices of Cambay goods rose by 25%. The faujdar's order stood in the way of the procurement mission of the imperial merchant and so the former feared to incur the "displeasure" of the latter. He threaten the faujdar that persistence in his tyrannical exactions, would cause the loss of his jagir (at the order of the Emperor if apprised by the merchant) or loss of his life (evidently in the hands of the desperate merchants and brokers and weavers (?). In either case the harm would more than neutralise the gain from the additional taxation on the brokers. 22

Such efforts of Governors and high officials to monopolise or control the production and prohibit the free sale of goods influenced the supply of the piece goods to other traders. It was also influenced by the exigencies and fluctuations of the market due to other reasons, and by the purchasing capacity of the buyers their abundance or paucity of capital or funds, and by the extent of competition among the purchasers.

(3) Trade Competition

The English factory records of these two years refer to three classes of competitors as regards purchase of cotton goods in the markets of Gujrat; (1) the English Company's factors and their Indian brokers and agents, (2) the Dutch Company's factors and their Indian brokers, and (3) Indian merchants and their agents. This competition naturally influenced the prices and

22. EF. II. 144, 171-2, 176; ("If he persisted in his tyranige might have been to the endangeringe of his life or at the least to the lossinge of his jagere if the Kinge should have had notice thereof (Which threateth this merchant used")
the course of the markets, and affected the distribution of the goods.

Towards the end of May, 1622, the English factors at Broach after describing the steps taken by them noted what the Dutch had already bought and observed that the Dutch were still buying narrow baftas, that some of the brokers were also purchasing on behalf of "Surat merchants" for Achin and the Red Sea, and that all these "are lets to us" i.e. were obstacles to the English. On 6th July 1622 the Broach factors categorically stated that they were hindered in their purchases by the number of buyers including the Dutch and some (i.e. Indian) brokers who were purchasing cotton goods for Achin. A month and a half later, the Dutch were found to buy little while the (Indian) purchasers for Achin had almost finished their investment and so the Broach factors reported that prices were reasonable. The competition of the Dutch and the Surat merchants continued next year also. Towards the end of July, 1623, the Dutch were making busy purchases in the markets of Baroda, Dabhoi and Broach and had also sent their broker Trickandas (Trikam Das) to Agra with bills for 5000 mahmudis to invest there. Other brokers made purchases for Achin and the Red Sea.23

(4) Markets.

A few words may be said regarding the conditions prevailing in the markets in different centres.

In the beginning of April, 1622 the markets at Broach were stagnant without 'augmentation, of quantetys' i.e. progressive increase in output of articles for sale. The daily purchases of narrow baftas by the Dutch and the English were almost equal in amount and prices were reasonable. The English factors could not prevent the Dutch from making their purchases, as that would have raised the prices of goods. The English expected that within a month or two the markets would be "quicker", i.e. more goods could be purchased in a shorter time. Towards the end of May, 1622 the Broach factors informed Surat that they hoped to procure the goods required without possible exception of "the fine narrow baftas" as these were then scarce

"(of which these are but few about"). Procuring operations of both the Dutch and the English for 1622 almost ended about the middle of August of the year. The English calculated the total amount purchased and the Dutch had perceptibly reduced their purchases as they themselves declared that their investment was nearly finished.

As the quality of the baftas of Baroda was satisfactory the Broach factors were recommended (June 19, 1622) a further purchase. The markets were then dull owing to the "More's Ede" i.e. Id, possibly the Shabi Barat eve of 14 Shaban (or June 14). This shows that the Muhammadans who constituted the majority of the sellers and manufacturers, did not attend the markets for the festival. Hence only 9 Corge (Kuri, score) of cloth of Dabhoi was procured.

The brokers of the English were slow in procurement and the Broach factors feared that the supply might fall short.24

Till August 15, 1622, the Broach factors did not receive the expected consignments of cotton cloth from Baroda and Dabhoi, as the rains rendered the ways impassable. On August 27, 1622, they reported to Surat that, Callyange (Kalyanji who had been supplying them with goods from Baroda was imprisoned (evidently by the local authorities) for doing so. They did not receive any cotton goods from Dabhoi. However, by Sept. 1622 they reported that the cloth from Dabhoi had arrived along without 100 pieces of bafta from Baroda.

Early in January 11, 1623, the Broach factors decided not to purchase narrow baftas till further orders from Surat. Next month they wanted to keep the broad baftas for the present. By January 19, 1623, the Broach factors found piece goods coming in fast, including broad and narrow baftas. About the middle of Feb. 1623 they were putting them in bales and procuring broad baftas slowly. By Feb. 13 they sent eight bales of Dhootis to Jahangirpur being the last consignment for Mokha. By Feb. 14, they sent the bulk of their goods under Thomas Aldworth, and enquired from Surat if their goods which would be ready by 19th February would be sent to Jahangirpur.25

24. EF. II. 72, 87, 110-115 (letters of Aug. 15 and 21, 1622.), 93, and n.
The markets, as a matter of course, quickly responded to these buyers who could purchase the goods with ready cash. One of the standing difficulties of the English factors was lack of funds which sometimes placed them at a disadvantage compared to the Dutch.

By the beginning of July, 1622, the Broach factors acting on the orders of Surat sent 2000 mahmudis to Baroda for investment in baftas with an assurance that more money would be sent if it could be employed. By July 1622, they received baftas from their broker at Baroda and duly expected cotton cloth from Dabhoi and so they wanted additional supply of money from Surat. By the end of July, 1622, the Broach factors sent a further remittance to Baroda for baftas. They procured good cloth from Dabhoi and expected more and their investments were progressing.

In November, 1622, the Broach factors received from Surat bills of exchange for 6,600 mahmudis for procuring goods for the Red Sea. They informed Surat that if broad baftas were required additional remittance was needed either in rupees or mahmudis, both being acceptable to the brokers. Towards the end of November the Broach factors were forced, for lack of funds, to stop buying narrow baftas and to confine their investment to goods for the Red Sea. With the immediate distribution of 7000 mahmudis received from Surat (December 1, 1622), supplies of cloth began to come in daily. But this sum was evidently insufficient. The Broach factors pathetically complained to Surat (Dec. 1, 1622) that while the Dutch arrived at Broach three days ago and immediately began purchases, the English were forced to sit still for lack of funds. Towards the end of July, 1623 the Broach factors paid the brokers 4800 mahmudis for ‘neecanes’ and 7200 for broad baftas. They also wanted to provide narrow baftas, but few were available till then. About the middle of August, 1623 their cotton cloth was coming in daily.26

(5) Role of Brokers

Hence George Pike at Baroda feared that goods worth not more than 20,000 mahmudis would be secured and enquired from Surat if he would accept the reduced quantity.

26. EF. II. 58, 100, 108, 153, 157, 159, 249, 256,
By the end of November, 1622, the Baroda factors received from one broker piecegoods worth 15,101 mahmudis 11 pice and from another worth 5,307 mahmudis 3:15½. These were packed in 49 bales and were lying in the broker’s house awaiting the permission of the Governor for dispatch. Pike started for Broach on November 30 and started for Surat, leaving Garrett and his broker to bring down the goods.

Thus the brokers played a considerable role in the economic and commercial life of the country. Indeed, to facilitate business, brokers were needed both by foreign companies like the English and the Dutch and the Indian traders and procurers like Ishhaq Beg, Governor of Surat. Their activities influenced the course and nature of trade.

A very important role was played in the commercial transaction of the period by ‘Jeram Shaw,’ the influential broker of Prince Khurram at Cambay, who appears to have business affiliations in places like Surat, Baroda and Cambay. In 1622 the President and Council of the English factory of Surat contracted with Kedar Chan (Khidr or Khizr Khan) and the Prince’s broker for (cotton) goods for Mocha worth one lakh of mahmudis of which one fourth i.e. goods worth 25,000 mahmudis were to be delivered at Brodera (Baroda) and 75,000 to be invested at Cambay. The Cambay factor (Nov. 14, 1622) delivered the relevant letter of Surat factory to Jeram Shawe,48 but considered him to be an “enemy” of the English who did his best to persuade the Governor (i.e. faujdar) of Surat (Mir Jaffar) to refuse the English permission to trade. Hence they requested the Surat authorities to send presents for the faujdar and for his pro-English eunuch and slave Khawaja Sandal.29 The Shah accompanied Raja Vikramjit, the Governor (faujdar) of Ahmadabad 40 kos beyond it in expedition against the predatory Kolis of Gujrat.

Hence on Nov. 16, 1622 the Cambay factors delivered the letter of Khizr Khan to Jeramshawe to his servant and learnt from the latter that supply of the goods could not be made before a month, though the time contracted was twenty days

27. EF. II. 152, 159, 148.
only. Hence the Cambay factors urged Surat to procure a letter from Khizr Khan and Ishhaq Beg urging Ji Ram Shah to fulfil the contract in time, especially as further investment could be made till the duftars (daftar, a register or list) of their contracted goods were received.

Towards the end of November, 1622, the Cambay factors could not do anything regarding the goods till the return of Ji Ram Shah. Though the latter promised fulfilment of the contract in a letter received by them on the 20th, they believed that he did not possess the promised quantity of goods and that his servants were “busily buying.” This raised the price of goods. His servants declared that the goods were already for delivery but when the factors insisted on seeing them only a part could be produced. Nevertheless they were promised (between Nov. 26-30) the whole of the “mussappes 100 busates (bastas, or bales) of perra-grees, 100 corge of allejanes, 100 corge mentasses and 100 corge of coria chander” amounting to about 37,136 mahmudis. The factors were refused further particulars pending the return of Ji Ram Shah. When, however, he returned to Cambay on Nov. 27, he declined to interview the factors on the plea of being tired by the journey and of the date being inauspicious. He again declined to meet the factors at Ahmadabad on 28th or 29th November on the ground of sickness. The latter expected that on arrival at Cambay he would try to fulfil his contract, and sent full directions to the Cambay factors, Salbank and Crispe. 80

By Dec. 7, 1622, Ji Ram Shah delivered to the Cambay factors 400 bastas or 1000 ‘core of mussappes’, and promised to supply within three days an additional quantity of other piece-goods making a total of Rs. 21,649. But disputes occurred with him concerning the prices. As Khidr (Khizr) Khan doubted their statement that the goods were not ready they had it testified to by their broker ‘Choutte’. But he was anxious that his letter should not be shown to Khidr Khan as he apprehended imprisonment or some other violence. The Cambay factors expected that Ji Ram Shah would supply the contracted amount and that the prices prevailing at Mokha would more than compensate the high rates and make the bargain profitable, especially as their lead was taken (by the Shah) in part payment. In spite of the

30. Ibid, 163, 150, 153, 156, 158.
Cambay factors’ repeated requests, Ji Ram Shah still wanted 8 days time on Dec. 9, 1622 for delivery of the contracted goods valued at 21,649 and further period of 15 or 18 days to definitely state his other goods. He also declared that he would probably be unable to supply varieties other than “mussappes or Cambay perragrees” of which the English had all they wanted. His broker promised them some Sojitra dhootis but owing to the Governor’s (faujdar’s) prohibition they doubted whether Ji Ram Shah would supply them with goods over and above Rs. 21,649 already contracted for, and held that the promise of goods worth Rs. 75,000 mahmudis was “a mere trick on his part or Khidr Khans”. So they awaited Surat’s early instruction as to their future course. All goods became “both scarce and dear”. On 9th December Ji Ram Shah refused to give the Cambay factors a written pledge for fulfilling his promises and intimated that, according to instructions from Khidr (Khizr) Khan only goods worth 67,000 mahmudis would be supplied and the balance of goods worth 8000 mahmudis would be furnished by a broker named Heras (Hira). The latter acknowledged that he had been directed to supply goods of that value but only if he procured them. They suspected that Ji Ram Shah did not intend to supply goods more than those already supplied worth Rs. 15,623. They enquired from Surat whether they should purchase from others to make up the required total, and demanded more money and detailed instructions as regards varieties of goods.

On Dec. 18, they complained to the Governor that owing to Ji Ram Shah’s dealings they had procured very few goods. The Governor was displeased with Ji Ram Shah’s dealings with them which he characterised as dishonest and he assured them all possible help.

Ji Ram Shah delivered (by Dec. 18) a few more goods, excusing his noncompliance on the ground of the dispute between the Governor and the merchants. He declared that within ten days (Dec. 28) he would make up the full amount of 67,000 mahmudis. The factors suggested to Surat that Khidr Khan be urged to arrange for the remaining 8000 mahmudis, according to contract, as ‘Heras’ (Hira, broker at Cambay) had had no further instructions.

The Cambay factors hoped that the supplies (for Mokha) would be finished by middle of January, 1623.
On Dec. 30, 1622, they informed Surat that the prices of articles received from Ji Ram Shah are net, as he was unwilling to accept other terms. Appeal to the Governor would be useless, as the factors apprehended collusion between him and the brokers, the chief conspirator being Ji Ram Shah. Redress could be expected only from Khyzr Khan.

The time limit fixed by Ji Ram Shah for delivery of goods expired on Dec. 29, 1622, but he only delivered a few more goods, holding out hopes still ("feedings us with Shabash, according to the base and wicked custom of this country"). He demanded higher rates for future deliveries on the pretext of a rise in prices, which the English factors refused to pay and stuck to the contract demanding either the goods or a money compensation. The latter had no faith on his promise of satisfaction. A broker informed them on Dec. 29 that he had orders from Surat to deliver goods worth 8000 mahmudis. He promised delivery of goods within 15 days, but they were sceptical. The Governor refused to accept the present of the cloth and satin sent from Surat, "till their business was ended." He promised to urge Ji Ram Shah to give satisfaction to the Cambay factors, but supported him as regards the higher prices which were "reasonable".

The Surat authorities instructed the Cambay factors not to wait further for Ji Ram Shah to fulfil his promises but to make up the required quantities by purchase in the market and to send the goods in time so as to reach Surat by the end of February. The Cambay factors feared that in spite of their best efforts they would not be able to get all they wanted. One of the factors (Crispe) would stay behind to procure the balance, if necessary. The Governor would not detain them as he appeared very friendly. The total value of the piece goods delivered by Ji Ram Shah was less than Rs. 20,000. 'Herra' (Hira) supplied a part of the contract and he was expected to supply the rest soon.31

Baroda: Tapi Das was the broker of the English at Baroda. He offered his assistance to the Broach factors (Jan.

31. *EF*. II, 161, 163-4, 170-1, 177-8, 184; Chote was imprisoned along with John Leachland and Matherdas at Baroda (May, 1623). He was released (Oct, 1623) on the Zawman (Zamin) surety of John Hopkinson of Surat. But he deserted the factors (Nov. 1623). *Ibid* 234, 292, 297.
1622) and believed that he could get the permission of Prince (Khurram), Mughal Viceroy of Gujrat, for the English to continue their trading operations at Baroda. Even if it was unsuccessful he could supply the English secretly with any goods which they wanted. He again assisted the English factors at Baroda by providing them house room (i.e. accommodation) there and promising to further their business operations (Nov. 1622).

Another helper of the English was Perebora (Pir Bhora) brother of Ishaq Beg, late Governor of Surat till Feb. 1622, who assured them that he could make up the 3000 mahmudis wanting if he was allowed to supply red ‘seales’ instead of the scheduled varieties (end of November, 1622). When Garrett failed to secure the licence of the Governor of Baroda (Sardar Khan) for the transport of goods out of the town he informed Surat that Pir Bhora, the bearer of his letter, would testify to the fact that he had done his utmost. Garrett considered the dealings of Pir Bhora and ‘Tappendas’ (Tapi Das) to be fair. Both of them desired that the English should keep a warehouse at Baroda so that they might have a hand in it and the former visited Surat to discuss the matter with the President and the Council.32

Broach: ‘Pangue’ was the broker of the English at Broach. Safi Khan wanted him (beginning of Oct. 1623) to go to Surat to arrange for the King’s ship proceeding to Gogha. Later on he was summoned to Surat by Nahir Khan. Towards the end of October Pangue was so ‘soundly chawbucked’ (severely whipped with 100 curraes or Korah or lash) that his flesh was miserably torn. His offence was that he had sent the English goods by sea from Broach, in spite of assurances by Joseph Hopkinson at Surat and by the broker that nothing except butter, bread and other provisions would be sent that way. Hopkinson suggested to President Rastell that a strong protest should be made against this ‘affront’ and some additional demands should be made or some one of the Mughals be similarly treated by the English. By Nov. 1, Hopkinson informed President Rastell that at the request of Mirza Safi Khan Pangue was set free as a matter of ‘great courtesy’. The release of the broker was due to Bahadur Khan’s good offices with Khan-i-Azam, who warned Safi Khan that he would hold him

to account if the consequences of his action were bad. Hopkinson wanted to show the wounds of their broker to Bahadur Khan who was expected to inform the Nawab (Khan-i-Azam).\textsuperscript{33}

Surge Nacke (Surji Naik) procured goods from Ahmadabad and Broach and John Leachland at Rannell recommended that he be paid 600 mahmudis at Surat.

‘Soweegee Deva’ was described in a Surat letter of Oct. 21, 1623 as “the Princes or Buckars broker”. This means that he was the broker of Prince Khurram for procuring ‘buckar’ (a variety of cotton goods). He was stated therein to have run away to an unknown destination along with “dives others of his fraternity who (as is procured) have yearly eaten good round somes of money by knavery, which were never honestly gotten nor they could be able to give reason of this expense.”\textsuperscript{34}

(6) \textit{Bleaching of Cotton Goods.}

The cotton goods were either brown i.e. unbleached, or white i.e. bleached or washed. When purchased in unfinished condition or unbleached they had to be washed or bleached by washers, if considered necessary by the factors.

Broach was one centre where local and Ahmadabad goods were bleached. In March 1622 the Broach factors forwarded to Surat 8 fardles of bleached Ahmadabad goods.

In April, 1622 the Broach factors disapproved of the proposal to send cotton cloth from Ahmadabad to Broach for the purpose, as after the rains their washers would be fully employed and also as double packing was troublesome. As ordered by Surat the Broach factors continued to try baftas to be sent unbleached as time would not permit bleaching (Aug. 24, 1622). But they put out the baftas from Broach to be bleached and dyed (Sept. 1, 1622). About Jan.—Feb. 1623, they received from Ahmadabad mine fardles of ‘Serryae’s and dhootis to be bleached at Broach’.

Ahmadabad was another centre of bleaching. But about the middle of May 1622 the local factors complained of the dilatoriness of the washers : “XX” Their own linens come back but slowly from the washers. By the beginning of June there were

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.} 272, 290, 294, 235.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid.} 137, 289.
still 1000 pieces lying unbleached with the washers the delay being due to the fact that the wells and tanks had almost dried up. The delay of the bleachers in returning the goods in time (besides the delay in getting the licence of the Raja for Dholka goods) accounted for the delay in the despatch of goods by the Ahmadabad factors.

There is an interesting case of theft of bleached cloth from the house of the washers, reported in an Ahmadabad letter of Feb. 19, 1622. The English factors brought the washers before the Kazi for trial. After a very formal hearing, the judge asked the washer who had lost 16 baftas from his house but who could not explain it, to compensate the English. But the man who could prove that he had lost 50 dhootis due to theft was exonerated from any compensation and the English had to suffer, on condition that if it was later on known that he did not actually lose he must compensate for the whole. We are told that it was the custom that loss sustained by forcible theft was to be borne by the actual owner, irrespective of the immediate custody. Among the claims which the English made for the losses, hindrances and exactions “during the government of Prince Khurram was one of 3525 mahmudis for the theft of “a bale of fine coloured baftas” out of a boat by Pumma the lighterman during unloading. Accordingly he was put into custody of officers (i.e. Kotwal’s prison) of Surat (reported Oct. 18, 1623). The Mugal authorities while holding that justice should be done in the case recognized no liability for payment of the loss. The English, considering it preferable to re-establish relations with the Mughals, held that “if the lighterman who lost the bale of baftas be brought to justice nothing more can reasonably be required (Nov. 5, 1623). It was ultimately settled that he would be handed over to the English for recovery of the lost goods. 35

(7) Cotton Wool: It was purchased (about Nov. 1622) by Surat factors. It was in demand in Persia. The English factors at Kuhestek (Kushistak) held (Jan. 24, 1622) that cotton wool was “both useful for packing and readily vendible”. It was also in great demand in England. The President and Council at Surat directed Richaed Wedmore, Master of the Reformation

35. Ibid. 50, 72, 116, 118, 189, 86, 89, 40-1.
in his voyage to Mokha (April 4, 1623) that “any pepper, gum lac, cotton wool or turmeric seized” was to be reserved for shipment to England. Cotton yarn was a highly prized article of export for which Surat authorities used to give instructions to centres like Broach, Baroda and Jahangirpur. In Nov. 1622 the Broach factors reported to Surat that cotton yarn fit for England could be procured in large quantities at from 7 to 20 pice the seer, and again, that the brokers held that in 6 or 8 months time they could buy 1000 maunds “right would fit for England” at 7-20 pice the seer. The “middle prices” (12-18) were most suitable for fustians (a kind of coarse, twilled cotton cloth). In January, 1623 while sending the samples of cotton yarn to Surat, the Broach factors observed (Jan. 11) that all the members could not bring the yarn to their house they were forced to purchase it in the market. By January 19, 1623 they had procured 12 packs of cotton but as the prices were rising they considered it would be better to buy more yarn in Surat and its neighbourhood. The daily outturn at Broach was 10 or 12 maunds and it would be available throughout the year. For want of funds the Broach factors could purchase (end of January 1623) only two packs of cotton yarn a day. They forwarded the barratt (order) to their broker at Baroda. Owing to want of supply of funds from Surat, the Broach factors were obliged to stop buying cotton yarn and were packing what had already been purchased. Towards the end of April 1623 the Broach factors enquired from Surat “whether they should buy some cotton yarn which had been offered them. By May 14, 1623, they completed the bargain for cotton yarn.”

(8) Packing:
The cotton goods were embaled i.e. packed in bales or bastas according to instructions received from Surat authorities and for this purpose gunny bags were required and the various subordinate factories demanded plentiful supply of these from Surat.

37. Ibid. 198, 256, (Broach, Feb, to July 1623), 100 (Ahmadabad, July, 1622),
(C) Transport of Cotton Goods and Factors Influencing it.

When all preliminary arrangements were ready, the goods were sent in Cafilas or Caravans in the charge of some factors. About the middle of August, 1622 the Broach factors hoped to despatch their goods soon.\(^{38}\)

(1) Official prohibitions

There were certain factors and conditions beyond the control of the factors e.g. (i) official prohibitions i.e. by individual governor's prohibitions and (ii) by officers of Customs or Toll stations. The Ahmadabad factors referred to the delay in getting the licence of the Raja for Dholka goods and informed the Surat authorities that they hoped to send these to them on June 19, 1622. About June 13, and Sept. 14, 1622 the Broach factors informed Surat that the goods (from Ahmadabad and Broach) could not be sent as the roads were impassable to carts owing to rains and sought instructions whether they should despatch them by water or on oxen or on buffaloes.

The transport of goods and articles of investment from the place of procurement (e.g. the markets of Dholka and Baroda) to the place of loading for export was occasionally subject to an embargo imposed by high officials like the Governor of Ahmadabad. Such an embargo was not the result of a consistent policy on the part of the Mughal authorities but motivated by private gain and could be melted away by presents or bribes.\(^{38}\)

Early in June 1622 the Ahmadabad factors hoped that the Dholka goods would be sent as soon as the licence was secured. But in spite of his promises, Raja Vikramjit, the new governor of Ahmadabad (May 24, on behalf of Prince Khurram) and the successor of Rustam Khan, refused it. The sequel may be described in their own words (June 5): “After waiting all the noon they were allowed to speak to him, when he at once demanded a present. They replied that they had none in the Kingdom should not have until the next fleet arrived; Whereupon he said that until a ‘toffa’ (Tuhfa, a present) came he would despatch no business. They knew not what to think of this sudden change.” They wrote to the brokers of Dholka to send

\(^{38}\) Ibid 110.
or bring the goods if they could get permission to do so.\textsuperscript{39}

The Surat factors ordered the Ahmadabad factors to procure a letter from the Governor of Cambay (Agha Salik) to “his master”, Raja Vikramjit, Governor of Ahmadabad, making a case for “our quiet trade there” i.e. for the quiet trade of the English at Cambay. Accordingly the Ahmadabad factors secured it but it was unavailing. Hence Nathaniel Halstead, the chief of the Ahmadabad factory intended to go there himself as soon as the roads became passable after the rains. They delivered to Raja Vikramjit the letter from the Governor of Surat (Jamshed Beg) and he promised to write to Prince (Khurram) as desired but reminded the factors that he expected a present after the arrival of ships. After some delay the Raja gave the English a \textit{Parwana} to the Governor of Cambay by July 15 with “continual remembrance of toffa”, but not any letter to the Prince.\textsuperscript{40}

A similar embargo also existed at Baroda. When requested by Richard Garrett the Governor (Sardar Khan) replied that the licence to dispatch the goods could not be permitted without an order from the Raja i.e. Raja Vikramjit, Governor of Ahmadabad. The English at Baroda believed that Sardar Khan could be bribed into compliance. They asked the Ahmadabad factors to procure an order from the Raja for releasing the goods. The Broach factors requested Hamett Chaun (Himmat Khan), the local Governor on his way to Baroda to meet the Raja (then proceeding to meet the Prince), and intercede with him for releasing the goods and granting a permission for future purchases. Richard Garrett also visited Himmat Khan twice and requested him to intercede for permission to transport their goods and for a licence for trade in the future. Himmat Khan told him that the “town was free for us to trade in and that the Governor of Baroda would like it very much. Himmat Khan also promised to write a letter to the Surat factory to establish a factory at Baroda, stating that it would be placed on a footing of equality with Broach, provided that the same duties paid to the Governor of Broach were paid to the Governor of Baroda.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid.} 93, 92, 124, 89.  
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.} 100.
Garrett requested the Governor of Baroda (Sardar Khan), who had come in during this talk, to grant a licence for the goods bought from the Prince. To his enquiry Garrett replied that (i) goods worth 5000 mahmudis would come from the Prince’s sarkar and (ii) those worth 5000 mahmudis from Ishhaq Beg’s (Governor of Surat) sarkar constituted a part of bargain with the Prince for one lakh of mahmudis. The Governor of Baroda replied that (i) the goods coming from the Prince’s sarkar were his master’s and would not be obstructed by him and could be taken away by the English but (ii) that the goods from the sarkar of Ishhaq Beg (no longer Governor since Feb. 1622) stood forfeited to him and (iii) that the English should pay him the same amount as was paid to the “other Governor” (i.e. Ishhaq Beg) at the time of purchasing the goods in the town but might deduct it from agreed prices. When the polite persuasion of Garrett proved fruitless, he sought instructions from Surat (Dec. 11, 1622). When Sardar Khan left Baroda for Broach along with Himmat Khan, Garrett asked Young (at Broach) to procure the release of the goods.41

(2) Customs and Transit Duties.

Uncleseir (Ankleshwar) situated on the southern bank of the Narbada opposite Broach was an important customs-house through which cotton goods had to pass on their way from Ahmadabad and Broach to Surat. Tolls on passing caravan had to be paid here. While the Dutch were permitted to pass here without paying any duty the English had to pay it. So the English factors at Broach got such a parwana from Ishhaq Beg, the Governor of Surat in the beginning of 1622 providing for a free passage of their goods to Ankleshwar, and requested the Surat authorities (Aug. 15 and in Sept. 1622) to arrange with him for allowing them pass duty free at the place as “in the last year.” Early in January, 1623 the Baroda factor, Garrett, was stopped on his way from Broach to Surat at Ankleshwar by a demand for a toll. The Broach factors thereupon sent ‘Scander’ (Iskander), an Armenian Catholic, the interpreter and broker of the Surat factory, to secure a clearance of the goods and Garrett was expected to reach Jahangirpur on January 6.

41. Ibid. 167-8.
But the authorities at Ankleshwar did not honour the parwana of the Governor of Surat and demanded a toll of 5 mahmudis on each cart. So the Broach factors returned it and wanted Surat (Feb. 3) to send a more effective parwana or order them to pay the tolls, while complaining of the invidious treatment to which they were subject. The goods from Cambay and the caravan from Ahmadabad coming to Broach on 1st and 2nd February respectively were likewise detained to allow the toll authorities to pass the goods of Prince Khurram which reached on the 2nd. The factors observed, "The great quantity of the latter retards the clearing of their own commodities, for 'the Prince' would be first served." The Broach factors expected to dispatch a further consignment of piecegoods procured by them by Feb. 8 or 9 and in the meantime forwarded 78 packs with Thomas Aldworth to Ankleshwar awaiting release on the strength of the second parwana from Surat. By Feb. 5, 1623, the goods of Prince Khurram passed the river but those of the English were detained.

The reason for the delay was that a dispute regarding customs was unsettled. The English wanted to set off the customs due from them on Broach and Ahmadabad goods exceeding 2000 mahmudis against the debt which the Governor of Broach owed to the English. But the customs office refused to deduct the amount from the Governor's debt. The customs officer daily pressed the factors for payment of their customs while the latter deferred it till repayment of the Governor's debt. The broker at Baroda had little hope of recovering it without the help of an Englishman. But the Broach factors sent him the letter of Mirza Muhammad Yar (brother of Himmat Khan, Governor of Broach) to Yakub Beg, Deputy Governor of Broach urging the repayment of the debt. By Feb. 14, 1623 the Governor (of Broach) partially repaid it. The Deputy Governor promised to repay the debt due to the factors at Baroda after the return of the Governor (faujdar) from his towns.

On 15th Feb. the Broach factors reported to Surat that their goods were stopped at Ankleshwar for paying 1700 mahmudis as customs for those passed previously. Hence they requested Surat either to send an order from the Governor of Surat to pass the goods or to direct them to pay the sum. The Customer (Customs officer), when appealed to by them, upheld the local
officials. At last they secured their release on paying 30 mahmudis “to be left in the hands of the customer pending a decision”, and requested the Surat factors to secure an order for its refund and to send reply within six days, otherwise the money would be forfeited.  

(D) Distribution

As regards distribution of the Gujrat cotton goods Moreland writes that Cambay cloth was used all along the east coast of Africa, at Aden, in the Persian Gulf, in Ceylon, in Pegu, in Malacca, in the East Indian Islands and in S.E. Asia including the coast of China.

The factory records of these two years show the English carried the cotton goods of Gujrat to (1) England (2) the countries bordering on the Red Sea including Mokha (3) the southwards. Of the 28,138 pieces of coarse narrow baftas (procured by Aug. 15, 1622) by the Broach factors, 20,000 were for England while the rest together with fine narrow baftas and the various stuffs were for southwards. In November 1622 they invested 6,600 mahmudis in goods for the Red Sea. They hoped that by the end of January, 1623 they would have all the goods ready for the Red Sea. According to previous arrangement Baroda was to furnish goods worth 25,000 mahmudis for Mokha. Those procured for the purpose were found in November, 1622 to be of good quality and “although with 12% added, they might perhaps be 20% dearer than their cost, if time and the licence of this place would permit us.” Yet on the whole the bargain was considered by the Baroda factors to be an advantageous one.

The instructions to the Merchants for the voyage to Mokha (March 15, 1625), included one as follows: The narrow baftas should not be sold except at better price than last year, for more profit could be made on them in England. The rest of their commodities might be got rid of at any price. Baftas and shesees

42. Ibid. 30, 110, 118, (Ankleshwar); 179 (Jahangirpur); (Della Valle’s description of Iskandir; 189(Surat parwana); 191 (customs dispute); 198, 232, (repayment of debt).

43. India at the Death of Akbar, 182; EF. II. 110, 153; Calicoes were in great demand in the Comoro islands in S.E. Asia. Ibid. I.
(turban cloths) were considered by the English merchants at Kuhestek (Kuhistak)\textsuperscript{14} likely to be in demand in Persia.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. 185, 149, 208, 23. It is a small port on the Persian Coast about 40 miles S.E. of Ormuz.
CHAPTER 2

The Saltpetre Industry and Trade of India in the Seventeenth Century

SECTION A

SALTPETRE MANUFACTURE IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BIHAR

1. Uses of Saltpetre

Saltpetre is a kind of artificial salt prepared from nitrates, found from time to time in a natural state in many parts of the world, chiefly South America, Persia, Spain, Hungary and southern parts of Europe, China and India. It has been used extensively for different objects— as an ingredient for gunpowder, in animal dyes, like lac and cochineal, for medicinal and antiseptic purposes like preservation of fish and meat and embellishing food preparations, for manure, especially of wheat and tobacco, and in glass-making, bleaching, washing and cooling purposes.¹

In the writings of the European travellers, merchants, agents etc., of the 17th century, we do not, however, get any reference to all these specific uses made of saltpetre, except as an ingredient for gunpowder, as a ballast for ships and for cooling purposes. "The origin of the trade", in saltpetre as an ingredient for gunpowder, 'must', as Moreland remarks, 'be sought in the military history of Europe.' A direct reference to the use of saltpetre in European wars is contained in the letter of the English E. I. C. to the Surat factors, dated September 12, 1653, urging the provision of 200 tons of well-refined saltpetre, which was demanded by their State and was "of great expense in those times of warr between them and the State of Holland......" But before it ranked as a primary object of trade in the middle of the 17th century, it was used as 'kittleedge' or 'ballast.

¹ Milburn, ii. 238; Watt, Dictionary, 431-47.
in ships by the English and the Dutch, though this was obviously a secondary and incidental use. It appears from the English factory correspondence that besides saltpetre, sugar was also used as ballast in place of stones, possibly as a cloak for saltpetre. The letter of the Surat factors to the Company in December, 1639 noted: “As no sugar could be got at Ahmadābād they send 104 bales of saltpetre. One or other of these commodities must be provided for each ship for use as ballast, but they will buy as little saltpetre as possible and ‘thereby peradventure increase its value in England.’” If bulk had to be carried, it was clearly more profitable to have aboard cheap bulky goods, likely to have a market in Europe, than materials of no value.

The practice of the English of using saltpetre as ballast in place of stones was borrowed from Dutch precedents. (The substitution of saltpetre for kankar ballast must have been of great help to Holland, then at war with the powers controlling saltpetre sources in Spain and Hungary.) In 1625 Captain Weddell aboard the Royal James suggested to President Kerridge at Surat that the Dutch, instead of ballasting with stones, used to carry saltpetre which could be had very cheap. So the latter promised to have a supply of saltpetre ready for the next shipping and also in future. In 1628 the Surat factors sent enough first class saltpetre as ballast and held out hopes to the Company of sending “a like quantity on every future ship and more” if it could be procured.

We get some idea of the amount used as ballast. President Rastell and the Council at Surat suggested to the Commanders at Swally on November 23, 1630: “For saltpetre, after two or three hundred bales have been stowed, notice should be given to Surat what further quantity is necessary for ballast.” On December 31, 1630, the Surat authorities informed the Company that the Discovery and the Reformation carried to England

2. EF. 1651-5, p. 196 (reference to war); Moreland, pp. 118-120; Master, I, pp. 116-7. On January 17, 1643, the Swally factors wrote to the Company, that the sea commanders were “not only infinitely desirous of such kintelage but the fraught thereof is as good as gained unto you whilst in place thereof, and for want of such ponderous goods for stifning, they are necessarily enforced to lay (in ?) and carry hence so much ballast” EF. 1642-5, p. 94.

3. EF. 1637-41, p. 198. See also Moreland, op. cit., 215. One bale of saltpetre was equivalent to about 295 lbs. Moreland, op. cit., 340.
597 bales of saltpetre in lieu of ballast; and on June 10, 1631, they wrote to the Agent and Factors in Persia that the William and the Blessings carried to England 700 to 800 bales of saltpetre as ballast. On March 29, 1644, the Company ordered the Surat factors to include 20 or 25 tons of well-refined saltpetre for ‘kintlage’ or ballast. It seems, however, that there was a limit to the amount to be used as ballast. On December 6, 1630, the Surat authorities wrote to Swally Marine that as the ships had taken in all the saltpetre necessary for ballast no more would be sent down; while, on December 31, they informed the Company that in each ship they would send a quantity of doubly refined saltpetre as ballast and would put as much as possible into casks, though the whole amount could not be packed in that way.

An interesting and curious light on the use of saltpetre as ballast is thrown by the letter of the Swally Marine factors to the Company dated December 29, 1640. They wrote that though according to the Company’s orders they had ‘abstained from buying saltpetre, the ships’ masters would be glad to carry such ponderous goods to stiffen your ships’. This saltpetre might be used either to supply enemy countries or private indent.

Apart from the external use of saltpetre there was also an internal consumption of it in India. In the 16th and 17th centuries it was used here as a refrigerating unit, for cooling drinking water or any other liquid and as an ingredient for gunpowder and for the preparation of explosives and fireworks. We find in the Ain-i-Akbari: “Saltpetre which in gunpowder produces the explosive heat, is used by His Majesty as a means of cooling water and is thus a source of joy for great and small.” This seems to be corroborated by the statement of Peter Mundy (1632) that water and other drinks were cooled in the summer with coarse saltpetre, by continually stirring the vessel of fresh water or other liquids in a kettle containing a mixture of water and saltpetre. But it appears from Bernier that the poor people could not afford to enjoy the luxury of using saltpetre for cooling water. He writes that cooling was

4. Use as ballast, EF. 1624-29, pp. 83, 208; 1630-33, pp. 101, 127, 159; 1642-45, p. 175; 1630-33, pp. 110, 125, 1637-41, p. 273. Swally was the port of Surat, situated at the month of the Tapti.
done (apparently by the common people) by placing a wet cloth on a jar, while the wealthier people made use of saltpetre, whether in town or with the army. "They pour the water or any other liquid they may wish to cool, into a tin (zinc ?) flagon, round and longnecked....... The flagon is then stirred for... seven or eight minutes, in water into which three or four handfuls of saltpetre have been thrown. The liquid thus becomes very cold, and is by no means unwholesome......though at first it sometimes affects the bowels." Thus, in one tent in the camp of Aurangzeb were kept the Ganges water and the saltpetre with which it was cooled. It is interesting to note that the English factors at Agra also employed saltpetre for cooling their water in the 17th century. With coarse saltpetre, the charge in one year was Rs. 49-50 pice, and with refined saltpetre it was Rs. 107-73 pice, in another year. These charges were included in the house expenses of the factors, but they were regarded by President Methwold and Council at Surat (in 1635 A.D.) as 'preposterous,' 'excessive' and 'unwarrantable extravagancies.' Due to the heavy cost in the use of saltpetre for cooling drinking water, it was, as has been suggested above, beyond the indulgence of the poor people.

2. Centres of Production

According to geologists, the necessary conditions for the formation of saltpetre in a soil are "(i) supplies of nitrogenous organic matter, (ii) climatic conditions favourable to the growth and action of nitrobacteria, (iii) the presence of potash, and (iv) meteorological conditions suitable for the efflorescence of the potassium nitrate at the surface." To a large extent the existence of natural facilities would indicate the principal centres of saltpetre supply and manufacture. These facilities are found in a marked degree in different districts of the Indo-Gangetic tracts especially the Bihar section,—Patna, Gaya, Tirhut, Saran and Champaran. But as contributing to national defence, saltpetre has always claimed attention of different governments, and so political exigencies also determined the working of other centres less favoured with natural resources. Thus it was essential that the different states of India should

5. Blochmann, i. 55; Mundy, II, pp. 76-77; Bernier, pp. 356-57, 364; EF. 1634-6, p. 113.
have their local sources of supply, which were sought to be tapped by the European companies for their own states.

Centres of saltpetre manufacture were widely distributed throughout India, but the attention of both Dutch and the English were at first directed to Peninsular India and not to the Gangetic plains. 6

In Peninsular India, saltpetre was found both in the East and the West coastal regions with their corresponding hinterlands. Thus Golkonda, besides being famous for its gold and diamond mines, steel, carpet and silk industries, tobacco, palm and elephants, was also noted for its supply of saltpetre, which was regarded as good at Surat. Mir Muhammad Said or Mir Jumla, the Minister of Golkonda told Walter Littleton and Venkata Brahman at Fort St. George (January 17, 1651) that “he could make and procure a great quantity” of saltpetre every year. The English factors at Fort St. George wrote to the Company (October 9, 1647) that they could supply 100 tons annually. In the Coromandal Coast, the principal ports of export of saltpetre were Masulipatam, Armagon and Pulicat. The existence of Armagon and Pulicat shows that the corresponding hinterland, the Carnatic, was an important sources of supply of saltpetre. There are many references to Pulicat gunpowder, which was used by the Dutch for their current needs. But the quality was not good and the Dutch relied on Holland powder for store, as the other would not keep “for being ill-corned, it grew all into clodds.” 7

In the West, Bijapur had a plentiful supply of unrefined saltpetre, chiefly at Rawbag (Rāybāg) and round its neighbourhood and in the Konkan Coast, and the corresponding port was Rājāpur. In 1651-2 the English factors met with several difficulties in Bijapur, viz., (i) saltpetre was a monopoly of the

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6. Watt, (Dictionary p. 972.) Other centres mentioned by Watt are U. P. (Cawnpore, Ghazipur, Allahabad, Benares), the Punjab, Kashmir, Central India (Bhind and Jwargarh), Bombay, Madras (Coimbatore, Salem, Kistna, Vellore, Trichinopoly, Madura) and lastly Burma (Tenassarim).
Moreland, pp. 119-20, 320; EF. 1622-23, p. 229.

7. Sarkar Aurangzeb, Vol. I & II, pp. 188-189; EF. 1651-4, p. 12, 22n, xxxv; 1646-50, p. 167; 1622-3, pp. 229, 128, 336; 1637-41, pp. 30, 40, 72, 52. Venkata was a Brahman broker or merchant-agent of the English. Armagon is just north of Pulicat and Pulicat is north of Madras.
king of Bijapur, who farmed it out to the highest bidder, (ii) the
E. I. C. had originally intended to obtain saltpetre there in ex-
change for broad-cloth "at 70 or 80 per cent on the latter." But it was soon found to be impracticable; for though broad-
cloth could be sold there at a great profit, the annual demand of cloth in the whole of Bijapur did not exceed 50 pieces. Hence timely notice from England was necessary before a suffi-
cient consignment of saltpetre could be procured. (iii) Further,
in January 1652, the expected quantity of raw saltpetre at Ray-
bag could not be secured, partly, owing to an "accident of fire" but chiefly because the merchants had not anticipated the sudden
demand of the English. Long notice was necessary also further south, in the Malabar Coast and the Deccan where plenty of saltpetre was available. In 1654 the Surat factors arranged to buy a quantity in the Deccan, especially as their relations with "the people of Deccan" was then good. It would thus appear that Surat itself was not very important as a source of supply of saltpetre. This is corroborated by the following facts also. In one early reference to the saltpetre trade of the English, Thomas Kerridge, President of the English factory at Surat, wrote to the Company (April 10, 1621) that no saltpetre was available near about Surat. The Dutch sent in July 1629 one of their factors named Claes Helmont from Surat to Burhanpur to buy saltpetre.

In Gujarat the region round Ahmadabad, and the neigh-
bouring state of Malpur, and in the Indo-Gangetic plains, Sind, the regions round Agra, Bengal and Bihar, were all associated with the production of saltpetre throughout the 17th century in a varying degree of importance. The Gujarat region, though geographically separate, had a very intimate commercial con-
tract with Agra and in commercial correspondence of the period, Agra and Ahmadabad are generally referred to together. The English Company did not begin to tap the Agra and Ahmadabad regions for supply of saltpetre before July 1625, and in-

8. EF. 1618-21, p. 251n; 1642-45, p. 225; 1646-50, pp. 34, 78, 298-299, 317; 1651-54, pp. 30, 36, 82-3, 299-300: Raybag is southwest of Bijapur; Rajapur is South West of Koinhapur.

9. Hague Transcripts no. cccviii, quoted in Mundy, II, 58n. Helmont wrote from there in March 1630 about his difficulties in sending the consignment (Ibid.). In March 1631 he was at Roude (Aravad)-EF. 1630-33, p. 138. Burhanpur is on the Tapti.
doing so they followed the previous example of the Dutch. At a consultation held at Surat on July 10, 1625, it was laid down that as the Dutch made annual investments in saltpetre, both in Agra and Ahmadabad, 3000 mds. should be bought at Ahmadabad for despatch to England by the next shipping.  

Mālpur is a small state in Mahikanta, situated nearly 50 miles northeast of Ahmadabad. As the English factors felt much difficulty in procuring saltpetre in Ahmadabad in 1643, they tried to tap Mālpur for the first time in 1644, as a possible source of better and cheaper unrefined saltpetre. Ignorance of actual conditions and the cost of refining, however, made them realise in January, 1645, that Mālpur saltpetre was neither as good nor as cheap as expected. Yet they intended to persevere and to send there for future management an able and experienced person. Indents on Mālpur were continued to be made by the Swally Marine and the Ahmadabad factors. The latter even heard a rumour that the Agra factors had come to know of the importance and fame of Mālpur and sent a man to buy saltpetre there. So they complained to the authorities at Surat that if the rumour was true, this internal competition might prejudice the interests of the Company.  

In March, 1647, the Ahmadabad factors learnt that ‘their people’ had made an agreement for 1500 ‘great maunds’ (=? double or Shahjahani maunds of 74 lbs. each) of saltpetre at Mālpur and so instructed them to double the quantity. But though the original amount was expected to be ‘well advanced,’ recent official restrictions made any additional supply difficult. So the local agents of the English tried privately to induce the ‘Bohras,’ the peasant cultivators of Gujrat, who prepared saltpetre, to allow them to share with the Dutch who had been tapping Mālpur for some time past. After a few months, during which the practice of the English factors of buying raw saltpetre at Mālpur seemed to be suspended—possibly owing to those restrictions—the Swally factors resumed it in January 1648 and decided in January 1649 to

11. *EF. 1642-45*, pp. 164n, 205, 232-33; 1646-50, pp. 78-9, 99. 108-9. The Swally Marine factors wrote to the company that they would not buy any quantity until the expected quantity from Tatta was received and examined.
laggah; so hereupon (he) was imprisoned, and after paying a little money got clear."\textsuperscript{18}

Attempts were sometimes made to procure saltpetre from Sind. In 1639 the Surat factors had had an offer of cheap and good saltpetre from Sind. In 1644 a quantity was ordered for England from Sind by the Swally Marine factors. By November, a little saltpetre was procured and despatched from Tatta on the Crispiana, which reached Swally Marine by January 1645. In 1647, 9 bales of saltpetre, all from Sind, were sent to England on the Dolphin. The Sind factors were instructed to purchase saltpetre in the Remembrance left by Merry with President Blackman dated January 17, 1652. But Sind went into the background as Bihar acquired prominence, and, as about this time Patna was being regarded as a principal source of supply of saltpetre, John Spiller wrote to the Sind factors (April 9, 1652) that the Surat authorities would expect from them nothing but well refined saltpetre—well refined, as plenty of cheap and good saltpetre was then procurable in Bihar.\textsuperscript{19}

The Bihar section of the Indo-Gangetic region, chiefly Patna and Saran, was in the past an important centre for the production of saltpetre. Curiously enough, Bihar came to acquire prominence only in the second half of the 17th century. No mention of saltpetre was made by Hughes and Parker, among the products of Patna, during their First Commercial Mission to Patna in 1620-21. Peter Mundy, who visited Patna in September-November 1632, referred to saltpetre produced in its neighbourhood among the commodities available there, but it was not of a very good quality, and better and cheaper saltpetre could be procured elsewhere.\textsuperscript{20} The conclusion becomes irresistible that whatever might have been the importance of Bihar under Afghan rule, the Mughal government drew its supplies from non-Bihar sources, especially from Agra and Ahmadabad and neighbouring regions, for its own military purposes and that it had not tapped Bihar for saltpetre—probably on account of distance and difficulties of transport. Hence:

\textsuperscript{18} EF. 1646-50, p. 119. It appears from this that the saltpetre manufacturers had to take the permission of the Governor to manufacture for the English or for any other customer.
\textsuperscript{19} EF. 1637-41, 94; 1642-45, pp. 136, 203, 234; 1646-50, p. 78; 1651-54, pp. 106, 119.
\textsuperscript{20} Mundy, II, pp. 151, 156.
Bihar saltpetre came to be used, if at all, for local purposes only (like manure) and could not acquire the high standard of being used as an ingredient for gunpowder. Thus the dormant potentialities of Bihar as a source of supply of first class saltpetre were worked up only as a result of foreign reconnaissance, access and demand. Then the importance of other centres diminished and Patna was generally acknowledged to be the best place for procuring saltpetre. Thus, as already mentioned, John Spiller informed the factors of Sind (April 1652) that the Surat factors expected from Sind only well refined saltpetre as saltpetre of good quality was available in Bihar at comparatively cheap prices. Bernier wrote: “Bengal is the principal emporium for saltpetre. A prodigious quantity is imported from Patna. It is carried down the Ganges with great facility and the Dutch and the English send large cargoes to many parts of the Indies and to Europe.” Manucci, too, remarked about Patna that it had “the materials for a great quantity of saltpetre, which is carried by the Europeans to Europe” and again that “European and other (Asiatic) traders carry away great quantities of saltpetre.” Hence it is not surprising that the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese had factories at Patna. The English factory at Patna is of somewhat later date. Of the Dutch, Tavernier wrote on reaching Patna, 21st December 1665: “The Dutch Company has an establishment there on account of the trade in saltpetre which is refined at a large village called Chapra...and the saltpetre refined there is sent by river at Hugli.” A few years later Bowrey (1669-79) observed: “The Dutch have a factory here (at Patna) also for procuring of saltpetre, but live with little freedom or Enjoyment of any worldly pleasures here, dareinge not to presume to enter any of the Gates of the city without leave from some of the great Officers.” Alexander Hamilton (1688-1723) also noted that at Patna the English and the Dutch had factories for saltpetre. The factories were utilised for procuring saltpetre till late in the 18th century. 21

After the failure of the First English Commercial Mission to Patna (1620-21) under Messrs. Hughes and Parker, and of the Second Mission under Peter Mundy (1632), there is no evidence of immediate opening up of fresh contact with Patna. But with the restoration of political order under Cromwell after the disorders of the Civil War, an attempt was made to ‘extend and improve’ the E. I. C.’s trade in Orissa and Bengal, by profitable investment, in some articles, especially saltpetre, silk and sugar. Thus the Company established a factory at Hugli, and a trading agency at Patna in 1651. Already by the end of August 1650, one Durson had reached Balasore on board the Loyalty and intended, after lading saltpetre to sail direct to England in January 1651. The letter of Captain Brookhaven of the Lyoness (dated Balasore, 14th December, 1650) to Messrs. James Bridgman Chief, Edward Stephens Second, William Blake and Francis Taylor, Assistants in the factories of Balasore and Hugli commended the example of the Dutch for imitation. It contained instructions that an endeavour should be made to procure a supply from Patna. It suggested that one person (Willem Volger, the, Dutchman) likely to give the required information was to be given “an opportunity of making some profit thereby,” as this encouragement to him would react favourably on the Company’s interests. The financial aspect of the venture was also considered in the letter. It noted that “the goods remaining in the factories should be speedily sold, to get funds for investment” and that “at least half their stock should be invested in this commodity...should the factors run into debt, it should be only for saltpetre, but it would be well to avoid this, at least without sanction from Fort St. George,” the rate of interest being so high.

A factory was established at Patna about 1659. Job Charnock was chief of this factory from 1664-80. His vigorous superintendence largely accounted for the progress of the saltpetre trade of the English. Thus we find that in the last quarter


We may compare what Pelsaert wrote “The English like monkeys, are eager to imitate whatever they see done by others” (p. 46). Dutch model served as the source of inspiration for J. Child’s declaration of 1688.
of the 17th century the Court of Directors continuously demanded saltpetre from Patna, "where it could be had so good and cheap that the control for it was discontinued on the West Coast in 1688 and at Masulipatam in 1670." In 1674, the agent at Hugli received orders "to keep the saltpetre men constantly employed, so as to have a stock always ready for shipment."23

As the trade of the English in saltpetre grew, the original difficulty or inconvenience of staying at Patna, arising from the adverse influence of the local administration and its officials, was met by staying at Singhee (Singhiya), where was built "one of the first factories occupied by Europeans" in Tirhut, with Mr. Blake as its Chief. It was close to the saltpetre ground and removed from the interference of the Bihar Nawab and his subordinates. Hence it was here that the Chief of the English establishment in Bihar usually lived and the account books were also kept. Streynsham Master in his journey up the Ganges on the 22nd September, 1676, met 17 saltpetre carrying boats coming from Singhiya and Patna.24 Another difficulty which Job Charnock had to face arose from the underhand dealings.

23. EF. 1646-50, pp. 332-33; 332n; Hedges, op. cit., 193-5; II. 45. Wilson, op. cit., pp. 25-26; Bruce, II., pp. 207, 259, 232 in Wilson, I, P. 46. At a consultation at Masulipatam held on February 19, 1651, it was decided to instruct the factors in the Bay "to invest their capital, half in saltpetre and the remaining half (in equal proportions) in silk, sugar and cloth" (EF 1651-4, p. 45). Another suggestion of Captain Brookhaven's letter that the saltpetre procured from Patna was to be refined at Hugli has been discussed in the section on 'Refining.'

24. Marshall's Accompit of Pattana; Master II, p. 89. I. 328; Hedges II. 234; Master, II, pp. 272-6. This place-Singhee (Singniya) has been identified with modern Singhiya near Lalganj in Hajipur subdivision, on the left bank of the Gandak, about 15 miles north of Patna. Hedges, II., p. 241; Rennell, Beagal Atlas; Master, II, p. 89n; Wilson, I, p. 53n, 54; Hamilton, II, p. 565; Thornton, p 905, John Marshall says: "It lies North of Pattana about ten or twelve miles, Extra-Gangem, and is scittuated in a pleasant but not whole (wholesome) place by reason of its being most saltpeter ground, but is convenient by reason thereof, for saltpetermen live not far from it." (Accompit of Pattana, in Master, II, p. 89; also quoted in Bowrey, p. 224n). From a letter of the Council at the Bay of Bengal dated 12th December, 1669, it appears that it was levelled by the rains (Bowrey, 224). It was not originally a Dutch Settlement for saltpetre as is mentioned in the Stat. Act. of Bengal (xii, 73) but passed on to them from the English when the outfactories were withdrawn about 1690. On 29th October, 1691, it was sold by the Dutch by auction. (Hedges, II., 241n). Singhiya is often referred to in the correspondence of Richard Edwardes Bengal, Past and Present Vol. XVIII-XIX, 1919 and Vol. XX-XXI ; 1920.
of the Dutch, and he had to prevent the saltpetre manufacturers employed by the English from selling to the Dutch.\textsuperscript{25}

A fourth place in Bihar connected with saltpetre was Nanagur (Nanagarh or Naungar), east of Patna. John Marshall writes: "The Hon'ble Company have a factory at Nanagur which lies to the east of Pattana (extra-Gangem) about 4 or 5 miles. There remaines generally a banian (baniya) or sometimes only Peons to receive the Peter (saltpetre) from the Petermen, which lies thereabouts to avoid carrying it to Singee, which would be chargeable; and when what there is received in, it's weighed and put abroad the Peter-boates there."\textsuperscript{26}

Another place of saltpetre production was "about 15 or 16 miles to the westward of Singee," where was "brought all the saltpetre near that place and put abroad the boats there..."\textsuperscript{27}

If Patna was the principal centre of supply of saltpetre from neighbouring parts, Hugli, Balasore and Pipili were the chief ports for its export. The whole amount of saltpetre collected at Patna was sent to Hugli in "great flattbottomed vessels of an exceedinge strength," called Patellas, each bringing down 4, 5, 6,000 Bengal maunds or about 200 tons. A letter from Hugli to Patna, dated 25th January, 1679, stated: "Wee exceedingly want the Peter you have ready......we would have the Warehouse Keeper see the weighing of all Peter." Orders for providing 600 tons of saltpetre in 1676 and 1677 were given by the Company in their letter to Hugli dated December 24, 1675. The importance of Hugli as an entrepot or trade mart has been noted by Alexander Hamilton (1688-1723), who writes: "...this

\textsuperscript{25} Master, I, p. 55, II, pp. 89-90.

\textsuperscript{26} Carnac Temple (Master, II, 89) could nor identify it. Marshall in his Notes and observations of East India writes: "... from thence (Hajipur) South Easterly about 4 course (kos) is Nanagur where the Company have a house of their owne which stands pleasantly by a River sides which come out of the River Ganges, and when Ganges is high, but at other times is dry; this Nanagur is a very pleasant place being scituated among Topes (groves or orchard—Hobson Jobson, p. 712) of trees and the way from thence to Hogipore (Hajipur) is very pleasant; Nanagur is also esteemed a very healthful place being scituated upon a hard clay ground. From Nanagur to Jonabad (? Shahjahanabad) is 9 course, viz., 4 to Hogipore, and thence to Jonabad 5 course more." Quoted in Master, Vol. II, p. 89, n3.

\textsuperscript{27} 'The Accompt of Pattana' by Marshall in Ibid., pp. 89-90; Bowrey, 224, nl. The name of the place is not given in any account, and its identification is not, therefore, possible.
town of Hugli drives a great Trade, because all foreign Goods are brought hither for Exportation. And the Mogul's Furza or Custom House is at this Place. It affords rich Cargoes for fifty or sixty ships yearly besides what is carried to neighbouring countries in small vessels; and there are vessels that bring saltpetre" from Patna. From Pipli the Dutch used to export in the middle of the 17th century about 2000 tons of refined saltpetre. In March 1683, Hedges attempted to build a saltpetre godown at the Bankshall, 7 miles from Balasore, and selected the most convenient plot at the Sandy Point near it. 28

3. Manufacture and Refining of saltpetre

Some details about the method of manufacturing saltpetre round Agra, in the first half of the 17th century, may be gathered from the accounts of the Dutch factor Pelsaert and the English factor Peter Mundy. Saltpetre was usually found in villages, which had formerly been inhabited and then abandoned for some years. It was prepared from three varieties of earth, black, yellow and white; but the black earth, being free from salt or brackishness, used to yield the finest saltpetre. The method noted by Peter Mundy, is somewhat brief and lacking in important details, compared to that described by Pelsaert. Speaking of Shawgur, Mundy writes: "From about 20 course off they bring a kinde of earth on carts, which is spread abroad in places made of purpose, powringe water thereto, which in a few days will cake like Ice on the Topp. This they take away now and then, and after refine it by boylinge it in water, all the durt and trash goeing to the bottome. This is the best saltpetre that is transported out of India to Christendome." Pelsaert gives further details: "Two shallow reservoirs like saltpans are made on the ground one much larger than the other. The larger is filled with the salt earth and flooded with water from a channel in the ground; the earth is then thoroughly trodden

28. Bowrey, p. 225, and note quoting Factory Records, Hugli, no. 5; Master, I, 311, 315, 316; A Hamilton. Foster's edition, (1930), Vol. 2, p. 12; E. F. 1651-4, p. 95. The Dutch used to purchase the greater part of their saltpetre thus exported from different places along the Ganges up to Patna and then bring it down in boats (ibid.). Hedges, I, 65, 67, 70, 71, 75. The word 'Bankshall' means 'a warehouse' or 'the office of a Harbour Master or other Port authority.' Hobson Jobson, 46-47.
out by numbers of labourers till it is pulverised and forms a thin paste; then it is allowed to stand for two days, so that the water may absorb all the substance. The water is then run off by a large outlet into the other reservoir, where a deposit settles, which is crude saltpetre. This is evaporated in iron pans once or twice according to the degree of whiteness and purity desired being skimmed continuously until scarcely any impurities rise. It is then placed in large earthen jars, holding 25 to 30 lbs.; a crust forms in the dew during the night, and if any impurities are still left, they sink to the bottom; the pots are then broken, and the saltpetre dried in the sun."

The peasants formed one of the most important classes engaged in the production of saltpetre, possibly as a subsidiary occupation, and they, with their cattle, would be able to supply whey, one of the essential elements in the production of saltpetre. The Dutch factor Pelsaert wrote from his seven years' experience (1620-6) at Agra: "The peasants have now recognised that the produce is wanted by us as well as by the English .......

In May 1647, the English factors at Ahmadabad sought to take the consent of the barahs or Bohras to allow the English to share with the Dutch. (These Bohras were probably not Shias or Ismailis, but Sunnis—essentially peasants, sturdy, thrifty, and excellent cultivators. They continued to prepare saltpetre even up to 1825).  

Refining of saltpetre was indispensably necessary for its commercial use. The best saltpetre of commerce, says Milburn, is "well refined in long, neat, and transparent crystals, cooling to the tongue, when applied to it, and flaming much when thrown upon burning coals." Good gunpowder could be made only from well refined saltpetre while unrefined saltpetre was likely to damage other goods by contact. Further, the

29. *Jahangir's India*, p. 46; Mundy, II, pp. 66-77. Milburn's description of saltpetre manufacture (1813). (II, 238) tallies substantially with that of Peter Mundy. This shows that practically the same method of manufacture prevailed up to early 19th century.

The proper season for making saltpetre probably began after the end of the rains (i.e., about end of September). John Spiller at Tatta wrote to Surat, on September 8, 1647. "The chief time of making saltpetre is now approaching. Money is needed."

E.F. 1646-50, p. 152. Early in 19th century November was the time for making saltpetre in Bengal (Bihar). (Watt, Dictionary, 434).

letter of the E.I.C. to Surat, dated April 25, 1653 shows that the charges for freight and customs were the same for refined and unrefined saltpetre. Hence the E.I.C.'s authorities in England repeatedly exhorted their factors in India to send only well refined saltpetre of a certain standard, and to reject all below that level. Thus, on November 27, 1643, the East India Company wrote to the Surat factors that ‘if saltpetre be sent, it must be ‘refined up to the assay of proofe’s as otherwise it was not worth carriage...’ In its letter of April 25, 1653, the Company complained to the Surat factors of the bad quality of saltpetre lately received, and ordered that in future it should only be sent refined. Similarly in its letter of September 12, 1653, the Company demanded from Surat 200 tons of refined saltpetre for the Dutch War, and wrote that saltpetre refined at Ahmedabad, though white was very bad, full of salt, and worse by 10 p.c. than Agra saltpetre, and that no Rajapur saltpetre was necessary, unless exceptionally well refined.\[31\]

It was natural, therefore, for the Company's factors in India, to make serious endeavours to have crude saltpetre well refined. About the middle of the 17th century (March 29, 1644), there was no "peterhouse" or saltpetre refineries at Surat, and saltpetre was usually refined at Ahmedabad or Agra. Raw saltpetre of Malpur was refined at Ahmedabad. On March 26, 1644, the Swally Marine factors wrote to the Company, that the unrefined saltpetre of Malpur brought to Ahmedabad would be refined there in the Company's "owne house," and they thus hoped to make it better and cheaper than in the last year. But the sum total of the cost price of raw saltpetre at Malpur, the excessive transit charges, and the cost of refining to the high level of purity desired by the Company rose so much that the Swally Marine factors enquired on November 28, 1644, whether the Company wanted to have further consignments refined to the same degree.\[31\] In spite of high charges, refining was vigorously pursued also at other places, like Raybag, Swally Marine, Masulipatam and Madras.\[32\] The method of refining saltpetre at Madras in about 1650 was, however, not satisfactory. It was generally done in large earthen pans imported in ships from

32. E.F. 1642-5, pp. 164, 175, 205; 1646-50, pp. 78-9, 186-7, 282; 1651-4, p. 22.
Assada (in Madagascar) but these were often broken during work and the whole procedure was ‘tedious and troublesome.’ It was, therefore, realised in January 1652, that in the absence of adequate equipment ‘the saltpetre must at present go home raw,’ increasing the charges for freight, customs etc., but this defect was hoped to be remedied in future. (This differentiation between refined and unrefined saltpetre in Vijayanagar customs tariff rates compares favourably with the failure of the Mughal government to make this distinction.)

Difficulties in refining saltpetre were met with not only in the West and East Coasts, but also in Bengal and Bihar. The letter of Captain Brookhaven dated Balasore, 14th December, 1650, suggested that the saltpetre procured from Patna was to be refined at Hugli. The need of refining was also emphasized in the letter of the Masulipatam factors to the Company (February 28, 1651) which noted that a properly equipped refinery would be required in Bengal, if the trade was to be continued. But these suggestions could not be carried into effect for about that time there seems to have been no refineries at Hugli. And though saltpetre was obtained in large quantities at Balasore and Hugli and other places, it could not be refined for want of suitable equipment (‘copper and pans’). Hence the Madras authorities wrote to Surat (14th January, 1652) asking for those implements which had been sent out to Assada to boil sugar there.

The deficiency in the method of adequate refining equipment at Patna was, however, made good during the vigorous superintendence of Job Charnock (1664-80). On September I, 1665, Mr. Blake in charge of the Bengal establishment at Hugli wrote to Madras that “the quantity of saltpetre sent home had been much improved of late. What (we) shall this year send up (will be) the best that has gone from these parts, of twise boyled, ocationed by the convenience of a warehouse which Mr. Charnock has built on the river side neere our petemen

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33. The Madras region, representing Vijayanagar Kingdom was evidently up to this time maintaining the tradition of commercial connexion with E. African coasts and islands, where there were in the days of Buddha Gupta (the Karnata teacher of the Buddhist monk-scholar Taranath of Tibet) (mid 16th century) numerous Buddhist settlements reached from India. Tucci in I.H.Q. December 1931, pp. 683-702. The African natives are noted for their big sized pottery.

34. E.F, 1646-50, pp. 332-3 ; 1651-4, pp. 49, 95 ; Hedges, III, 184.
that now he veeuws all they bring in, if bad returnes it to be by them boyled over againe. Also, the whole yeare they may be bringing it in by water. So that now, if (we) had moneyes, 1000 tonns might easily yearly be procured."  

Like the English, the Dutch, too, were particular about obtaining refined saltpetre. In 1641 the Dutch factors on the Coromandel coast requested the authorities at Batavia to send copper sheets for repairing their worn out cauldrons and to place orders for new cauldrons from Holland. In the middle of the 17th century, the Dutch were comparatively better off than the English regarding the saltpetre trade and equipment of factories. Agent Greenhill and William Gurney at Fort St. George wrote to the Company (January 14, 1652) that "The Dutch are soe well furnished with houses, and all other conveniences for that trade, that annually they shipp from Pipplee neare 2,000 tonns of this commodity, and all refined. . . ." But the decline in the position of the Dutch after the two Anglo-Dutch Wars and their handicaps in refining saltpetre may be realised from Tavernier's remarks: "The Dutch imported boilers from Holland, and employed refiners to refine the saltpetre for themselves; but have not succeeded, because the people of the country, seeing that they wished to deprive them of the profits of refining, would not supply them any longer with whey, without the aid of which the saltpetre can not be bleached, for it is worth nothing at all if it is not very white and very transparent."  

4. Prices  
Reference to prices of saltpetre in our period are not enough to enable us to form an estimate of their fluctuations. The price of saltpetre varied from place to place and in the same place in different circumstances. Generally speaking, saltpetre was considered to be an expensive commodity.

In 1640, Viththala Gomti, the Rajpur broker of the E.I.C., sold "250 candies (125000 lbs. or 5000 mds.) of saltpetre at 8½ pagodas (Rs. 30-10 as.) per candy" at Raybag i.e. at Re. I-8 as.-6p. a md. of 25 lbs. In 1648 as the cost of refining saltpetre at Raybag

36. Moreland, p. 122. E.F. 1651-4, 95. Tavernier, II, 10. The process of refining was yet confined to the natives; though cauldrons could be imported, yet the art was not sufficiently understood by Europeans.
proved excessive the remaining raw saltpetre was refined at Swally: but the "cost of the lot worked out at 4½ rupees the maund, which was much dearer than the saltpetre brought at Agra and Ahmedabad." From a letter of the Swally factors to the Company dated October 24, 1650, it appears that the last consignment of Malabar saltpetre cost nearly double that provided at Ahmedabad.

It appears that about November 1644, the Malpur saltpetre was better and cheaper than the Ahmadabad and the raw saltpetre at Malpur cost "no more than 4 and 4½ rupees for 5 double maunds" (=5×74 lbs.). But the excessive charges of transport to Ahmedabad more than doubled the prime cost. The cost of refining it to the desired "height and pureness," even in the economical way of the Company's house at Ahmedabad also amounted to a substantial sum. The cumulative effect of all this was so to enhance the cost of saltpetre, before it was embarked, as to exceed the estimate. In March 1647, the E. I. C.'s officers made an agreement for 1,500 great maund of saltpetre at 22 rupees per maund, which was one-eighth dearer than last year; this was due to the high cost of transport, owing to the lack of water and grass caused by the drought.

In December 1635, the saltpetre "made" at Tutta (Tattah) in Sind was very good but very dear, costing Rs. 6 a maund. In the beginning of 1652, it was feared that the arrival of the Dutch was likely to raise prices.

In March 1665, saltpetre brought to Surat was sold at a high price, the minimum being Rs. 4½ a maund.\footnote{E.F. 1637-41, pp. 58, 237 (Raybag); E.F. 1646-50, pp. 186-7, 317 (Malabar); Moreland, 335-36; E.F. 1642-5, p. 205 (Malpur); E.E. 1634-36, p. 130. (Sind). Probably this includes the cost of transport from other manufacturing places to Tutta. E.F. 1651-4, p. 119. E.F. 1665-7, p. 6. (Surat).}

Pelseaert observed that before his time saltpetre was in small demand and cheap in the Agra region, costing Rs.1½ for a maund of 64 lbs. But owing to the gradual growth of the Anglo-Dutch competition, the price rose, in the twenties of the 17th century, to about Rs. 2 and Rs. 2½, and Pelseaert noted that it was likely to rise steadily. Early in 1651, Richard Davidge at Delhi wrote to the President and Council at Surat that on reaching Agra he would try to reduce the price of saltpetre.
It appears from the Ahmedabad-Surat correspondence that there were wide variations in prices of saltpetre at Ahmedabad in 1628 during such a short time as about three months. In January 1628 the price of first class saltpetre was Rs. 2½ a maund, while by end of March it fell down to Re. 1½. This may be explained by the prevailing circumstances. In January 1628, the English factor at Ahmedabad were anxious to purchase saltpetre, of which only a very limited amount was available, in order to "forestall" the Dutch, and so they were willing to pay as high a price as Rs. 2½ a maund: in March the English caravan was detained for the clearing of saltpetre, so that unless the clearance was effected no further demand of saltpetre would be made, and this was likely to reduce the price. In other words, the price was determined by the limited supply, by Anglo-Dutch competition for demand, and also by the restrictions put on by government on clearance of saltpetre.

The East India Company's servants wrote to their authorities in England about the middle of the 17th century: 'Bengal is a rich province......The saltpetre is cheap, and of the best quality.' In December, 1650, James Bridgman wrote that saltpetre was plentiful and cost at Patna only Re. 1 a maund and at Hugli Re. 1-12 including customs and freight charges; and that saltpetre bought at Balasore for the Lioness cost about Rs. 2-10 a maund. It was natural that, when buying at a port, the Company's factors had no choice of material and price, and had "to take any trash they could get at whatever price the seller demanded." During 1651-4, the price of saltpetre at Patna was generally about half of that at Balasore. It is not surprising to find in reports and letters regarding the Company's affairs in 1661-65 that the idea of buying saltpetre and other goods at Balasore was given up, as cheaper and better goods could be had in other factories. About 1665-70, the saltpetre of Patna was cheaper than on the West Coast, and at Masulipatam. But the price at Patna seems to have risen from Re. 1 a maund in 1650 to about Rs. 2-3as. 2½p. in 1679; for early in December 1679 Streynsham Master received from Patna a copy of an

invoice of 31 boats laden with 29891 mds. 29 srs. of saltpetre amounting to Rs. 65791-0-6.39

Referring to Agra and Patna, Tavernier writes that the relative price of refined and brown saltpetre was 3 : 1 and that a maund of saltpetre (i.e. refined) cost 7 mahmudis40 or about Rs. 3-2.

From the above facts, we can say that among the principal factors which influenced the price of saltpetre were:

(i) Limited supply, as in Ahmedabad (1628).

(ii) Anglo-Dutch competition, e.g. in Agra in the twenties of the 17th century and in Ahmedabad (January 1628). The arrival of the Dutch in Sind (1652) was apprehended to raise prices.

(iii) Government restrictions on clearances of saltpetre, causing a glut, and reducing price as in Ahmedabad (March 1628).

(iv) Charges of transport (e.g. from Malpur to Ahmedabad) more than doubled the prime cost (1644).

(v) Natural calamities—lack of water and grass caused by drought, as in Malpur in 1644.

(vi) Purchase at port and not at the original place of manufacture, as at Balasore in 1650.


40. Tavernier, II, p. 10; Moreland gives some details about price of saltpetre, pp. 121-2. The value of 1 mahmudi was about 1 s., or four-ninths of a rupee. Moreland ibid., p. 331; Mundy, II, p. 211.
SECTION B

TRANSPORT OF SALTPETRE IN INDIA
IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

(A) Water Transport

Usually saltpetre was carried from Patna down to Hugli or Balasore or Pipili in various types of country-craft known as Patellas, Boras, Purgoes, Palwars, &c., and partly also in the sloops and pinnaces maintained by the English and the Dutch Companies on the river. As described by Bowrey, the Patellas were exceedingly strong, "very flat and burthensome" boats that used to come down from Patna with saltpetre or other goods; a Boora (bhar or bora derived from Bhada or lighters) was "a very floaty light boat, rowinge with 20 or 30 owers" (i.e. oars) and carrying saltpetre and other goods from Hugli downwards; and a Purgo was used mostly between Hugli and Pipili and Balasore. 1 Alexander Hamilton (1688-1723) observed that the Hugli-Patna saltpetre boats were over 50 yards long, 5 yards broad and 2½ yards deep and had a capacity of over 200 tons. In 1669, the Patna factors were directed to send the saltpetre down in time in small Pulwars or boats (Hindi, Palwar, a river boat) of about 12 to 15 tons. 2

Considerable difficulties were experienced during the transport of saltpetre along the river and down to the sea. Natural

   Bowrey, pp. 148. 228-229; Khan, John Marshall in India (1668-72),
   pp. 13, 83, 93n, 97-100.
   Some boras traded to Dacca with salt; and also served as tow boats
   for ships bound up and down the river. See also Hugli Diary, 27th Oct.
   1679. F.R. Hugl No. 2. Ibid, Hobson-Jobson
   Sir Jadunath Sarkar had very kindly suggested to me that the word
   Purgo might be a mistake for frigate, written in Persian as firkat or
   firgat.

   October, before the stream of the River, but were obliged to track
   them up again, with strength of Hand about 1000 miles. . . . . . . ."
   (Ibid) ; E.F. 1668-69, p. 303.
difficulties like eddies and shoals, or submerged sandbanks, &c., seemed to determine the types of boats used. For these saltpetre-carrying boats had to be built very strong and flat-bottomed, otherwise they would either capsize or be shattered to pieces, by being driven against a shoal by "the most impetuous eddies" met with in some places. Even with such boats, accidents did take place frequently, and both the English and the Dutch had to suffer great losses in some years. For example, a porgo, laden with the English Company's saltpetre, ran aground in the Bay of Bengal off Pipli, in the storm an January 1, 1681.3

The influence of tides and winds is illustrated by the following note about Hedges' voyage down the Hugli, January 26, 1683:—"This morning early we weighed anchor with the tide of Ebb, but having little wind got no further than the Point of Kegaria Island, where, meeting with the tide of flood, were forced to drop anchor. About 5 this afternoon the Ganges came upon to us, whom I ordered to take in 588 Bags of Saltpetre that lay ready for him in two boats within the Kejeria River, and make the best of his way to deliver it aboard of the Society and then to return to Hugli."4

Besides tides and winds, soundings of river beds also decided the length of the journey of the boats. Thus when the saltpetre boats were expected from Patna at Hugli towards the end of November, 1679, Streynsham Master at Cassimbazar sent two men to Merdaudpore (Mirdaupur) to find out if there was sufficient water for the passage of the saltpetre boats. The influence of the exigencies of river navigation is clearly illustrated by the fact that in 1669, the Kasimbazar factors were ordered that "if the lowness of the river prevent the boats from coming nearer than 'Merdoudpore,' the saltpetre should be fetched from thence by oxen, and so sent down 'on small

3. Bowrey, p. 225. "Dispatch Mr. Allen Catchpoole to Meirdaupore with directions if the Patelloes can by lightning themselves with their small boates get over the severall shoalides in the way hence to Hugly that then he offer them gratuity soe to doe." (Letter from Hugli, Dec. 9, 1679. F.R. Hugli, no. 5.) Bowrey, p. 225n, 3.

4. Hedges I, 64. See Hobson-Jobson, p. 364. s.v. Kedgeree,—"Khijri or Kijari, a village and police station on the lowlans near the mouth of the Hoogly on the west bank, and 68 miles below Calcutta. It was formerly well-known as a usual anchorage of the larger Indiamen."
dingees or fishing boats to Hugliy, where a great boat of the Companies shall lye ready to take it in and proceed with it aboard ship."

Besides these unavoidable natural difficulties on the river and the sea, the insecurity of river navigation, due to general disorders of the time also formed another impediment in the transport of saltpetre. During the middle of the seventeenth century, especially after Aurangzeb’s accession to the throne of Delhi, and consequent change of government in Bengal, the Hugli river came to be infested with pirates, and it was no longer safe to send goods “in small craft without a convoy.” The deep channel running east of Hijli, called the Rogues River, was the favourite haunt of the Arracanese pirates before the days of Shaista Khan.

Hence, about the middle of the 17th century, the Dutch, in transporting saltpetre in boats from Patna, had to provide security against the “theieving Arracan jelliaes,” besides having some “well-manned and munitioned” sloops or small ships. Agent Greenhill and William Gurney at Fort St. George suggested to the English E.I. company on January 14, 1652, that they also must adopt similar measures like those of the Dutch if they were “resolved to continue this river-trade to any purpose, especially for saltpetre.” From the same letter, it further appears that in February, 1651, the English Company’s servants had already bought a vessel at Masulipatam, but it had to be sold away as unsuitable by the Bay factors. Another boat was under construction, for which men and stores were necessary, but as neither could be spared at Fort St. George, it was suggested that the Company “must either send out one or two small

5. Diaries of Streynsham Master, II, pp. 298-99. Mirdaudpur was ‘within 4 or 5 hours travell of Cassumbazar’. Hedges, I, 33. Yule (ibid. III. 219) suggests that it was near one of the exits of the Jelinghi from the Ganges, but this seems to place it too far to the east. According to Valentyn (pt. V, 149) ‘Mierdapoer’ was 5 Dutch miles n.e. of Murshidabad. EF, 1668-69, p. 303, n.


Hedges, III, p. 198; Wilson, Early Annals, I, pp. 34, 53. At Hijli, ‘the Mogul had built a small fort to protect his saltworks with pits and for boiling brine.’

Hedges, II, p. 232; For details about the nefarious activities of the Arakanese pirates reference may be made to Sarkar, Studies in Aurangzeb’s Reign, chs. xi-xiii.
lightdraft vessels or supply men and stores for some to be built out here."

Moreover, in the sixties of the 17th century, Sir Edward Winter, the President at Fort St. George, who had also authority over the whole of the Bengal establishment, followed a bold and vigorous policy of spending a part of the Company’s funds in building and maintaining boats on the river to bring saltpetre from Patna. But this bold course was not approved of by the Court of Directors.7

The foregoing facts show that the necessities of saltpetre trade served as an incentive to boat construction under the patronage of the E. I. Company, and also determined the type of inland and coastal boat craft.

Besides the pirates, there were some exacting landholders and chiefs, “impertinent troublesome Rajahs,” along the banks of the Ganges between Patna and Cassimbazar, who used to levy and extort contributions on all merchandise passing along the Ganges and through neighbouring territories. Alexander Hamilton wrote that the Fort William garrison, usually two to three thousand strong, was intended less for defending the fort than for conveying the flotilla of boats with the Company’s saltpetre and other goods from Patna. Generally soldiers from Fort William had to come in boats to clear the river and some of them were killed in occasional skirmishes.8

In 1665, we hear of a novel type of interference with water transport in Bengal. The letter of Blake and Elwes in Hugli (Sept. I, 1665) to Madras stated that one obstacle to the quick lading of the ships was “the fact that the boats built the previous year at Hugli had been commandeered by the Gover-

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7. EF, 1651-54, p. 95; 1634-36, pp. 43-44. These were also called Jalbas,—very long and narrow, swift,—with no sails but having about 40 Oars. See Bowrey, 140n.

As an example of such exacting chiefs we may cite the Chakwars, a brave Hindu tribe of Samhbo in the Begusarai subdivision of the Monghry District. Holwell, Interesting Historical Events, pp. 68-70. There are several corroborative references in Fort William Consultations, 1718-22. (Wilson, op. cit. III, pp. 50, 153, 246, 255, 275, 283, 325, 353). These details were supplied to me by, Dr. K. K. Datta. Buchanan, Bhagalpur Report, gives some details about the Chakwars.
nor to fetch 'the Nabob's salt for this place from Hijili.' They had written to Pratt at Dacca to complain, but did not expect much satisfaction. The Nawab's *parwana* already obtained, 'Forbid persons from medling with ours or hired boats: but his commands (are) little vallowed, when the partye finds the not keeping them turnes to his masters advantage. We doe not heare as yet of any miscarriagd befallen the boats; if well, expect them in few daies. Without the use of said (boats we) shall not be able to procure transport for our goods from hence. They will carry neere 300 tons. Formerly boats might have been procured here on freight; now few or none, arising from the ill government of this place'. If the ships from England would come into the Hugli River, these difficulties would largely disappear."

A very interesting direct reference to the part played by Indian vessels in the transport of saltpetre is made by a letter from the Company, dated December 18, 1665, to the Bengal factors, which stated that 'a supply of saltpetre should be sent to the Coast in Indian shipping, to be ready for the vessel to be expected the following season.'

The superiority of the Dutch Company to the English in the amount of water transport business the former were doing between Patna and Hugli in the middle of the 17th century is clearly illustrated by the letter of Henry Aldworth at Patna to Agent Trevisa, dated July 12, 1660. In it Aldworth promised to despatch about 15,000 mds. of saltpetre to Hugli soon but requested the Agent to send Mir Jumla's *dustuck* as early as possible, because he had no *dustuck* with him. He observed that the Dutch had nine *patellas* of saltpetre "with some 25 in (i.e. or) 26,000 maunds," lying at PunPun (8 miles south of Patna, on the rivcr PunPun) for 16 days, which would start for Hugli in 3 or 4 days, as their *dustucks* were all ready.

Saltpetre, brought down from Patna to Hugli had to await the arrival of, and lading in, the ocean-going ships of the Company. The letter of the Bengal factors to the English Company, dated December 31, 1669, refers to some interesting details about (i) the reconnaissances of the river channels by the Company's ships during December-February, the best and the

only season for that work, (ii) the gratuities of £10 each for
William Bramstan (in charge of the Madras) and William
Walters (master of the Diligence) for every ship they would
carry up above Cock’s Island, and (iii) lack of discipline
among ‘arrogant and insolent’ captains of freighted ships. Thus
Gough stopped the saltpetre boats from going aborad the
Antelope, and Captain Goldsborough was constrained to fetch
them by force; further he carried off some of the saltpetre
intended for that vessel, in spite of orders to the contrary.10

(B) Land Transport

Saltpetre was carried down from Patna to Balasore, not
only on different boats along the Ganges, but also by oxen on
land. The Balasore factors wrote to the Company (December
15, 1659): “Saltpeeter, none is made here, but what comes from
Pattanah; some years 1000 maund, sometimes 2 or 3,000 mds.
Its brought downe by oxen, who carry up salt in returne; but
this yeare little come downe.”

Saltpetre collected at or near about Agra was usually
transported in caravans of carts or camels along both the well-
known land routes between Agra and Surat. On December 26,
1630, two Dutch factors Signor Claus and Signor Daniell (possi-
bly Claes Helmont and Daniel Coller) in charge of a kafila of
800 camels carrying indigo and saltpetre and bound for Surat
met and offered hospitality to Peter Mundy and his companion
at Sipri, southwest of Gwalior, while the latter were coming
from Surat to Agra along the Eastern route, i.e., Surat-Burhan-
pur-Sironj-Gwalior-Agra route. Another Dutch caravan of 40
carts, of which 7 were laden with saltpetre was noticed by
Mundy in the beginning of 1633 at Hindaun and Siwana on the
Western or Agra-Ajmer-Merta-Siwana-Ahmedabad-Baroda-
Surat road.

To provide security on the highways, guards had to
accompany all consignments of saltpetre. Thus, on February
25, 1632 (33) William Fremlin sent some articles, including 12
fardles or bundles of saltpetre under Peter Mundy with a con-
voy of 170 peons or soldiers from Agra to Surat. Similarly
the caravan from Baroda (November, 1630) was accompanied
to Rander by a guard of 40 ‘hired piones’ or foot soldiers.

10. Ibid. 1655-60, pp. 408-09, 314.
After necessary use these were discharged. In December, 1655, the Ahmedabad-Surat caravan was sent under the escort of 25 soldiers, who were to be paid one rupee each on arrival at Surat. Sometimes as a means of security against the exactions of the chowki officers, authoritative parwanas had to be procured and shown at the chowkis in jagirs through which the goods were to be carried. On November 15, 1630, the Surat authorities asked the Baroda factors to procure for their own and the Ahmedabad caravan Don Raw (Dhani Rāo) his perwanna to the choukees within the jurisdiction of Delli Ckauns (Dalil Khan’s) jaguir (jagir) for their better securing.\textsuperscript{11}

Towards the end of 1630, the ‘Rajah of Bilpare’ (Bhilāpur, about 12 miles south of Baroda) detained 42 fardles (bundles) of saltpetre of the English. The Surat authorities asked the factors at Broach (November 23, 1630) to write to those at Baroda to apply to the deputies of Delli Ckaun (Dalil Khan), jagirdar or governor of Baroda Sarkar, for their restoration. But as the Baroda factors did not succeed in recovering the saltpetre, the President of the Surat factory and the Company’s broker, Gurudas, tried to induce the Raja to release them, by reminding him of the extremely cordial relations between the English Company and his father;—how the latter had promised to protect the English caravans from loss or obstruction in their passage through or near his territories and how he had honourably kept up his promise by restoring goods stolen by bandits, defending them from his own people and in his own jurisdiction. If this conciliatory move proved futile, the President of the Surat factory proposed to make “representations to that Governour there (i.e. at Baroda), hinting that if he declined to help them, complaint would ultimately be made to higher authorities, where the English would have hopes of better right.”\textsuperscript{12}


Mundy, II, xxiv, pp. 58n, 59. Cipree, that is the stone walled town of Sipri near the Ahir Nadi, (See Jourdain, ed. Foster, p. 15 in.


A similar advice was given to the Baroda factors on November 9, 1630. \textit{Ibid.} p. 89, Dalil Khan was the late governour of Baroda. Mundy, II, p. 271.

\textsuperscript{12} This incident shows that the Raja of Bilpare was a subordinate of Dalil Khan. \textit{E.F}, 1630-33, pp. 95, 100, 103, 114, 154. 187, 208.
The trade in saltpetre was subject to many inland exactions, in spite of Jahangir’s firman, granted to the English in 1626, providing for freedom of trade and prohibition of rahdaris on their goods. On February 6, 1627, the Surat factors wrote to John Bangham at Lahore, then the seat of imperial government, that the firman was of little effect, for though it was shown everywhere, the Agra-Surat English caravan carrying saltpetre and sugar was forced to pay “most unreasonable exactions” at different places amounting to more than Rs. 2500 in all. At Bahdore (Bhadwar) the officers of Jadoray (Jadu Ray), who had lately “revolted from Nizam Shaw, King of Decan,” exacted Rs. 357½. At Daytah (Dhaita) the officers of Raja of Mohar Byram Shaw (Bhairam Shah) in Baglan exacted Rs. 443½, in spite of the letter of the Surat Governor. The Desai of Surat Sarkar did not obey the royal firman, though urged upon by the Diwan, Merja Hassan (Mirza Hasan) and demanded rahhari at Quirka (Khirka), Byara (Variao or Viara) and Balore (Balor), east of Bardoli; while the last cafila consisting of 230 laden camels, was detained for inland customs at Quirka (Khirka). The officers of Mir Musa (Mirmoosa), the jagirdar of Barnolee (Bardoli) detained there a laden camel of the first English caravan for rahhari. But the case which appeared the most vexatious and villainous to the Surat factors was that of Shaum (Shyam), the Desai of Querka (Khirka) who laughed both at the English and “the firmaen, keeping the camells as aforesaid.” Hence the Surat factors suggested to John Bangham, who was then at Lahore, to procure, if possible, some penal punishment for Shyam, and express orders for restitution from the others. They also insisted on some more effective security in future, otherwise it was no good taking recourse to bribery for getting royal firmans. Owing to these “exactions on the way down” the saltpetre of Agra proved very expensive at Surat (January 4, 1628).13

13. E.F. 1624-29, pp. 176-77, 208. Bahdore, mentioned in the letter as being within 10 course of Daytah, has been identified with Bhadwar between Nanurbar and Dhaita. (Ibid. 176n). Quirka described as 19 course from Surat, has been identified with Khirka. (Ibid. 28n.) Balore might possibly be ‘Balor’ of Tavernier about 10 kos east of Bardoli, and 5 kos west of Kerkoa. It is not mentioned in the Indian Atlas sheet of the district (Ibid. 176n). Byara might be either Variao (Contd.)
Thus it appears that towards the last years of Jahangir's reign, his authority was practically ignored by distant desais, jagirdars, and semi-independent Hindu chieftains near the Deccan frontier. As a matter of fact the authority of the Mughal Government was never strictly enforced in the distant corners of the country.

In February, 1656, owing to the possible imperial requirements of gunpowder, during the Mughal invasion of Golkonda, the English factor, Jesson, wrote from Agra to Surat (February, 6) that it might "perhaps be as dangerous to send the saltpetre by way of Brampore (Burhanpur) as Ahmedabad, for if Prince Aurangzeb required it, he would stop it, and it would be a troublesome business" to get compensation. Jesson desired early instructions on this point, but he was able by February 23, to make a suitable arrangement for the transport of saltpetre to Surat with the owners of a "parcell" of Deccan oxen bound back to Burhanpur, "willing to accept of a freight", to Surat, "at a very cheap rate", —at Rs. 11½ for 4½ mds., the Company sending 2 peons to accompany the party. They agreed to pay the Zakat or road dues, especially in parts of Rajputana controlled by semi-independent chiefs (for by the firman of 1650, they could not be claimed in imperial territory), and further promised not to come within 40 kos of Burhanpur. This was highly advantageous from the point of view of the Company which avoided the chances of Aurangzeb's seizing saltpetre and effected a great economy in saving the freight or Zakat, which would have been paid if the English factors had sent the saltpetre either on camels or carts. Moreover, to avoid the search by the King's officers, who had command for making 1000 mds. of powder besides providing saltpetre for cooling the King's drinking water, the oxen were removed to Ibrahimabad near Biana, and detained till the stipulated quantity was received from the saltpetre manufacturers. It must be remembered,

(Contd.)

or Viara. These three places were "not five course distant from each other," according to the letter. Barnolee, identified with Bardoli, about 18 miles east of Surat (12 course from Surat) (Ibid. 176n). All these places except Quirka are located in the map showing Murdy's routes between Surat and Agra. Mundy, II, p. 39. For later references to claim of duties, and stoppage of boats, see EF, 1670-77, p. 296.
however, that the King’s officers did not presume to molest the business of the English in Sadābād (17 miles north of Agra) in Sadulla Khan’s jagir. So Jesson expected to get an additional supply of 400 mds. from there. By April 9, 1656, a part of the saltpetre from Sadābād was dispatched, and it was arranged that this carvan would be joined at Kagarol (Caggarrole, 15 miles s.w. of Sadābād) by 60 more oxen carrying the portion formerly housed at Ibrahimabad. The latter started for Surat by the middle of April, ‘under the charge of two house-servants and an escort of six soldiers’. The zakat was to be borne by the ox-owners, except in Burhanpur, where the Company had to pay 10 as. an ox. Towards the end of 1657, directions were sent from Surat to Jesson at Agra to provide a quantity of saltpetre, the charges for transport being defrayed at Surat. The Company’s necessities were so great that though owing to the war of succession among Shahjahan’s sons, the country was in a disturbed state and no insurance could be effected, Jesson was ordered to venture the despatch of the consignment, with any other carvan coming south. The illness of Shahjahan in Delhi had caused great disorder in the country, but it was expected that his arrival in Agra (October 26, 1657), would make the highways more secure than before and then Jesson proposed to send the saltpetre.14

The war of succession among Shahjahan’s sons interfered with the land and water transport of saltpetre. By April 13, the imperialists had occupied Rajmahal, and ‘the whole country west of the Ganges passed out of Shuja’s hands.’ But the superior land force of Mir Jumla had one weakness,—‘he had not, at first, a single boat of his own for campaigning in this land of waterways’ against Shuja, who ‘had the entire flotilla of Bengal at his disposal.’ Gradually, however, the imperial army under Mir Jumla, was ‘distributed along the entire western bank, (Rajmahal, Dogachi 13 miles south, Dunapur, some 8 miles further south and Suti, the southernmost point of the Mughal lines, 28 miles south of Rajmahal). But on May 3, 1659, the imperialists were attacked by Shuja’s water forces. The chief hope of the imperialists for an early success rested upon the Mughal Governor of Bihar, Daud Khan’s crossing

the Ganges at Patna to assail Shuja’s right wing (May 16), under Khwaja Mishki, who had 30 ‘galliars’ and controlled the waterways so that not even one ‘dingi’ could pass to the assistance of Sultan Muhammad. But the flooded state of the Bengal rivers and the strength of Shuja’s flotilla stopped the advance of Daud Khan, who was forced to halt opposite Bhagalpur, where he remained till the end of 1659. That was the situation which the Patna factors, Pickering and Chamberlain, described in their letters, dated May 16 and 17, to Davies in Hugli. “The tide of battle having rolled away to the eastwards,” trade was resumed at Patna, but the factors remarked that “unless the Imperialists should succeed in forcing a passage across the river and routing Shah Shuja, there would be little chance of bringing the saltpetre down the river, as usual; it might possibly be carried overland to Suti and there embarked, but otherwise it would have to be transported to Hugli by land, at great expense. Even if the river passage were made available, there would be a difficulty in procuring the necessary boats, so many having been burnt by Shah Shuja, and the remainder having been requisitioned by Sultan Muhammad.”

Chamberlain afterwards managed to secure the necessary boats and arranged to send the saltpetre in them to Monghyr, where it was to be transported by land to Suti, so as to avoid the strip of river under Shuja’s control, and again by water from Suti to Hugli. But the flight of Sultan Muhammad (June 8) and the withdrawal of Mir Jumla’s forces from Suti upset this plan and saltpetre could not be brought down at all during the season.15

Thus, in 1659, no saltpetre was brought down by oxen from Patna to Balasore, owing partly to the war of succession and partly to the fact that the semi-independent forest chiefs, conscious of the value of the article to the English, used to purchase saltpetre from the caravan of oxen and sell them at enhanced prices at the last moment. The Balasore factors informed the Company (December 15, 1659):—“...The Roja (Raja) of the woods etc. Gentuews, meeting with them by the way, buy up the saltpetre and knowing that this two or three

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15. Sarkar Aurangzib, 93-4; My Mir Jumla; EF, 1655-60, p. 285, 290.
years the English are very desirous of it, will not sell it again in the vacancy of shipping, but keepe it until the shipps come, and then enhance the price according as they finde our necessity as they have been done by us this yeare."

The Civil War, throughout 1659, desolated Bihar and Bengal and incidentally stopped the trade of the English merchants and even threatened their personal safety. The purchase of saltpetre at Patna was, for the time, regarded by the local factors as being out of the question, as "the merchants had fled on the approach of the contending armies, while should they venture back, it was unlikely that the officials would allow any saltpetre to be sent down the river, for fear of its falling into the hands of Shah Shuja." On December 1, 1659, Chamberlain at Patna explained to Agent Trevisa the impossibility of sending down his saltpetre and suggested that he should now keep it back till the summer of 1660, when he could bring it down himself easily, as he had parwanas from Mir Jumla, Daud Khan and the Emperor's diwan. By the end of February, 1660, however, the Surat Council expressed the hope to Agent Trevisa that "the way would be open to carry the saltpetre from Patna to the port. This hope was not realised for we find that the Bengal Agent wrote to the Bantam factors (February 24, 1660) that the wars in this country and the troubles of Mir Jumla hindered the transport of saltpetre from Patna."16

SECTION C

THE ORGANISATION OF THE SALTPETRE INDUSTRY OF INDIA IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Speaking of the industrial organisation of India in the seventeenth century, Moreland writes that “production was carried on by artisans without superior capitalist direction,” and that the “first lesson” which the foreign merchants had to learn “was the need of provision in advance.” These remarks apply well to the saltpetre industry which was in the “artisan system of production.” For saltpetre advances of money must be continually made generally, from September to June; and the supplies came dribbling in all the year. Hence a permanent factory for dealing with the artisans and storage and management of details was found necessary by the Hugli factors in 1665 A.D. Saltpetre also was so much in demand in England that there was a standing order from the Company’s authorities there for an annual supply. For procuring saltpetre, the Company had its brokers, e.g. Benidas in Bijapur, Venkata Brahman in Golkonda, Gurudas in Surat, and others.

The Bohras or peasant cultivators of Gujrat were famous for its production and refining. The Banjaras or itinerant dealers occasionally used to bring it to Ahmedabad from the interior. In 1656 the Surat authorities inquired from Anthony Smith at Ahmedabad about the possibility of getting saltpetre from the Banjaras. But owing to adverse administrative influences, like the oppressions of the local Diwan and the officers of Murad Bakhsh, the Banjaras gave up the trade and stopped bringing saltpetre to Ahmedabad. So Anthony Smith held out to Surat

no hope of procuring it either then or in future (22 October, 1656).

Saltpetre was a state monopoly, of which a reference is to be found in the letter of the Surat factors dated March 15, 1636, which says: "Saltpetre is a prohibited commodity, and hath allwaies in all places paid some acknowledgment to the Governor of the place where it was bought." Again, from the letter of the Ahmedabad factors, dated December 7, 1646 we know that the seller had to pay to the king a duty of 1½%. A new light is thrown on the nature of this monopoly by a vaguely-worded imperial farman, referred to in English factory correspondence dated about the middle of December, 1646, that the English could take no more than what was necessary for their "occasions", and "none for their merchandise." Owing to the existence of such a monopoly, the Surat factors were not very hopeful about the prospects of a supply of saltpetre. They wrote to the Company (October 20, 1655) that the king who had "made it his own commodity," had "10,000 double maunds of saltpetre, once refined, very full of salt," costing (it was reported) 6½ rupees a md., lying ready at Ahmedabad, and that, so long as any of this quantity was unsold, the English would not be allowed to purchase any saltpetre 'in this kingdome,' or to procure the stipulated amounts from the saltpetre manufacturers. Towards the end of 1655, Anthony Smith at Ahmedabad suffered much trouble in the hands of the 'petulant' Diwan, Rymutt Ckawne (Rahamat Khan) who was "almost mad" as he could not enforce the monopoly by compelling the English or the Dutch to take the king's saltpetre.

State control was exercised in three ways;—(a) claim of purveyance or pre-emption, as shown in control of production, refinement and purchase of saltpetre, either for military or non-military purposes, (b) control of unlicensed purchase and transport, (c) occasional revocation of provincial government's orders.

2. Section A; EF., 1655-60, pp. 75-76, 162-63.
3. EF., 1634-36, p. 182; 1646-50, pp. 57-59, 63, 78-79; 1655-60, pp. 15, 17-18. Dealers in indigo and gumlac had also to pay duty at the same rate.
The Government claim of purveyance or pre-emption in saltpetre is clearly referred to in the letter of the Surat factors to the Company, dated January I, 1666: "Tis noe currant commodity, nor requir'd by any except this king for his particular occasions, forcing what he hath to be purposely provided; for which, although he pay as much as we, yet the payment is not soe good. Besides it is prohibited to all others to buy any and may lawfully be surpriz'd as the King's commodity, whenever the King's ministers are inclin'd to trouble them, which they are not backward to doe till they have forced them to compound, making their advantages upon them." No reasonable objection could be taken to the government claim of monopoly for its military needs. Thus in 1629 Shahjahan forbade saltpetre to be bought at Agra till he had been supplied with 10,000 mds. of powder ordered to be made there. Similarly, the necessities of the N. W. Frontier and Central Asiatic wars (1647-48) led him to strictly inhibit the export of saltpetre and his officers prohibited "boylng for any but the King's cirkar ('sarkar', government). But as a result of it the producers were extremely troubled and the Agra factors feared (1647) that they would not be able to procure more than 1,200 mds. of saltpetre.4

This sort of control was exercised not only by the emperor, but also by the provincial governors for their own wars. In February 1656, the English factors at Agra feared that, owing to military needs during the Mughal invasion of Golconda, prince Aurangzeb might capture saltpetre caravans going via Burhanpur, and further apprehended that the amount collected so far should be detained neither at the place of manufacture nor at Agra, but removed to Ibrahimmabad near Biana, lest the imperial officers might seize it for "theire masters occasions, as they have heretofore done." Towards the end of 1657, we read of Murad Bakhsh forcibly seizing from the English the saltpetre, "provided by particular persons" at Ahmedabad, probably for his military preparations for the war of succession. Hence the English factors at Surat thought it "unsafe to count upon procuring any goods from Ahmedabad in time for despatch by the next fleet." In the beginning of 1660, there is a

4. EF., 1665-67, pp. 28; 1624-29, p. 335; 1646-50, pp. 121-22, 203. Hob¬
son-Jobson, pp. 637-38. This refers to refining for government pur¬
poses.
reference in the letter of the Company to the Madras Agent and Council to Shah Shuja’s capturing saltpetre for his own use.  

Government control was exercised also for non-military purposes. In 1646 Aurangzeb, the then Governor of Gujrat, probably under the influence of *ulemas* or theologians, prohibited the sale of saltpetre to the English, lest gunpowder made from Indian saltpetre be used against a Moslem power. The factors at Swally Marine wrote on March 30, 1646,—“the Prince (very superstitious) possessed by some of his churchmen that it is not lawful for him, to suffer us to export that specie which peradventure may be employed against Moores, he hath strictly inhibited its delivery unto us, notwithstanding it is more than the moiety paid for.” This was regarded as a somewhat unusual and ‘unexpected impediment’ by the English factors. But as Moreland has aptly pointed out, “Christians of the period could have little right to object to his action in view of the fact that not very long before the Portuguese supply of horses to Bijapur had been challenged by ecclesiastics at Rome on precisely similar grounds.” Moreover, it was nothing but a temporary obstruction, as it disappeared with Aurangzeb’s transfer. Again, in 1689 at the request of the Sunni Sultan of Turkey, Aurangzeb forbade the sale of saltpetre to Christians, as it was often used against ‘good Muhammadans’; and the English lost for a while their saltpetre trade at Patna.  

Unlicensed purchase and transport of saltpetre by the English or the Dutch were also forbidden by the Mughal State. In March 1628 the Agra factors wrote to Surat that both they and the Dutch had troubles with the king “for buying and transporting saltpetre without his authority;” that two English factors, Gregory Clement and John Bangham, were imprisoned for a day and a night in the Agra castle; and that after making enquiries the emperor gave license. In 1646 also the caravan carts of the English Company were detained. In 1654 Shahjahan’s Diwan prohibited buying and transporting saltpetre from Ahmedabad. In December 1655 the permission to send

5. EF, 1655-60, pp. 63-64; 120-21, 397, Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, p. 34., vols. I & II.
away the caravan of goods from Ahmedabad and Agra was secured from the Diwan Rahamat Khan.

The royal fiat could at any time override local governor’s permission to trade in saltpetre. In 1654, Murad Bakhsh as governor of Ahmedabad had permitted the English to buy as much saltpetre as they wanted. But when part of it was received and being refined, the king’s Diwan sent an order prohibiting them from buying or transporting any saltpetre from Gujrat, and the embargo could not be removed.7

The Mughal government occasionally farmed out the saltpetre manufacture to particular persons, as for example, Mir Musa got such a farm in Gujrat (1646). But the farmer had no right to grant dastaks or license.

Besides seizing saltpetre for local military needs, the provincial governors and Diwans also endeavoured to establish their own monopolies in this article. During 1660-61, the Diwan of Patna, Mirza Lutfullah Beg, attempted to monopolise the sale of saltpetre for the benefit of the imperial revenues. He forced the dealers, in spite of their contracts with the Dutch, to deliver their saltpetre to him. The Dutch, whose Director Matheus Van den Broek at Hugli complained to Mir Jumla and to the English, alleged that these actions were secretly instigated by the English factor at Patna, Chamberlain, and his broker, Ganga Ram, who had promised to purchase saltpetre from the Diwan. The Agent of the English, Trevisa, disclaimed these allegations and agreed with the Dutch Director not to deal with the Diwan and not to purchase saltpetre except as before, directly from the dealers. Moreover as Mir Jumla sent a parwana to Lutfullah, forbidding him to hinder the Dutch, who had assisted the Governor in his operations against Bahadur Khan of Hijili, from trading freely in saltpetere, it was expected that the Anglo-Dutch dispute would be settled. But afterwards, Chamberlain was accused of trying to buy saltpetre from the Diwan (who had scraped together about 10,000 mds. of poor quality), secretly in violation of Trevisa’s agreement.8

Shaista Khan, as governor of Bengal (since December 1663), also tried to monopolise the entire saltpetre trade in his own hands and then to sell it to the English and the Dutch 'at his own rates', as he knew that their ships could not "go from the Bay empty." In 1664, his darogha or agent came to Patna with a commission to buy 20,000 mds. of saltpetre, and orders to prohibit the Dutch and the English from advancing any money to the manufacturers. He prevented the English from weighing and receiving the stipulated saltpetre from them, and put his 'seal on the several places of production'. So great was the oppression of the daroghals on the manufacturers and merchants that they used to run away daily, (without fulfilling their contracts to the English Company) and so the English factors held that the Nawab would not be able to procure more than four to five thousand maunds that year. On the other hand, Shaista Khan demanded of the English 20,000 mds. on the pretence of "buying for the king" and of "carrying on the king's wars" (i.e. Arakan wars).

The nature of his monopoly can be realised from the letter of Blake, at Hugli, to Surat (21 June, 1664). "......Upon our late complaints, in reply (he) tells us positively that he will not suffer us to weigh, buy or to bring downe any petre, unless we give him a writing enjagin (g) ourselves not to sell any goods or silver that our ships may bring into this country unto any person but to him, and the price must be what his agent thinke or make; and then doth not say we shall have liberty to buy that commodity as formerly, but that he will furnish us with it. The stop of said trade hath been neere two months, being the only time to get in petre......If your worship doth not procure a remedy for these abuses from the King, the trade of these parts will be quite lost. The Nabob is a person most addicted to covetiousnesse, and it is verrily beleived that he will engross all goods in which he conceives a benefitt may be had ... (he) demands English and Dutch men to serve him in said warres, and doth expect to be furnished. So dishonnerable and cove- tious a person never came into the parts for a governor." 9

Monopolies of saltpetre existed also in the Golkonda and Bijapur states. Thus the-Golkonda state sought to control the

production and trade of saltpetre for military purposes. The letters of the Masulipatam factors to Bengal dated July 16, 1666 and September 3, 1666 noted that owing to Aurangzeb’s wars with the Golkonda king, the latter had monopolised all available saltpetre from the producers, including a large part of what the English factors had contracted for over two years and already secured. Besides, fresh sales to others were also stopped. Similarly the king of Bijapur claimed a monopoly of saltpetre there and he farmed it out to any contractor who offered a large sum.10

The result of the government control on the organisation of the saltpetre industry, as exercised in 1665-66, was as follows:—

(i) The manufacturers did not keep any saltpetre in stock before-hand, and hence it took some time before raw saltpetre could be produced and refined. (ii) The manufacturers did not contract with the English factors except on such terms as would cover their expenses. (iii) The English factors had to suffer troubles to clear the saltpetre from the king’s ministers. (iv) There was a corresponding rise in price of saltpetre.

The Surat authorities wrote to the Company on January 1, 1666, "...You may not expect any from hence but what will cost you deare, especially the first yeare, untill all things be settled; whereas afterward you may have it more reasonable, provided you yearly enorder a quantity to be sent from these parts. Otherwise ‘twere better you lay downe the thoughts of it and thinks of something else for the kintlage of your ships.”11

But the monopoly was at times evaded in actual working. The producers and purchasers, who suffered on account of it, naturally tried to get rid of its rigours; and the state officers also were sometimes seduced by the lure of private gain. Thus in March 1628, with a ‘little judicious bribery’ and present to the royal minion the English factors were released from prison, and were licensed to purchase an additional quantity of 2000 mds. of saltpetre and their caravan was allowed to proceed. Similarly in 1647, the Agra factors hoped to procure saltpetre

(in spite of monopoly) easily by "corrupting with small bribes," were the time for the yeare fitt for their action. In 1648 also the Swally Marine factors hoped to supply 300 or 400 bales of saltpetre "by the meanes of friends." In 1655, in spite of the imperial monopoly in Ahmedabad, Jesson promised to send some quantity from Agra, while the Surat factors hoped to smuggle away a small amount with the indigo. In 1666, in spite of government monopoly in Golkonda, the English factors were sanguine of suddenly clearing their amount which had been seized by the government. But so long as that was not done, and the required amount of about 200 tons not secured, the Masulipatam factors requested the Bengal factors to send them 100 tons or more, "under cullour (colour) of some Moore, with all the secrecy imaginable." Occasional evasion of authority, was, however at best, only a negative and immediate remedy. A positive and a more permanent remedy was felt necessary and in Golkonda the factors of the English Company tried to acquire a monopoly of saltpetre trade; while in Bijapur, they tried to secure a partial exemption from customs on any saltpetre they might buy in future.

As the Bengal factors did not send down any saltpetre to Masulipatam, and as that provided locally had been seized for the use of the Golkonda state the Company's Masulipatam factors were in a sad predicament (January 7, 1667). Their difficulties were increased by the evil of the farming system in Golkonda, and the consequent impediments to internal trade. They had already deputed a named man Nicolaes to Golkonda for two objects: (i) first, to secure the release of the captured saltpetre, in which he had been by then partially successful, and (ii) second, to get a farman from the king of Golkonda, giving the English a monopoly of the trade in saltpetre. This seems to be the first attempt of the E.I. Company to establish a monopoly in saltpetre. The terms of Golkonda officials were as follows: (a) that the English should pay 500 pagodas (or Rs. 1750) and deliver to Golkonda State 500 candies (or 10,000

12. EF., 1624-29; xxx. Foster suggests that the royal minion was Reza Bauder. Possibly he was Radia Bahador who murdered Shahjahan's rivals. Ibid., 240n; 1646-50, pp. 121-22, 203; 1655-60, p. 15; 1665-67, pp. 245, 247. This is an early example of clandestine trade which became so rampant in Bengal in the mid-18th century.
mds.) of saltpetre within two months. This quantity was due to the Golkonda king from some merchants from whom the English could realise whatever possible. (b) That the English should supply the king with 500 candies (10,000 mds.) each year, on payment of the cost. The Masulipatam factors, while regarding these as ‘hard terms’, considered that they would soon compensate the outlay involved, for they expected to get saltpetre 20% cheaper than before and to procure it freely in future. But the E. I. Company’s authorities in England considered (January 24, 1668) these negotiations with the Golkonda government for monopoly of saltpetre “to be unwise” and expressed the hope to the Fort St. George authorities that they had been abandoned.13

In Bijapur the English E. I. Company’s factors attempted to procure the remission of the duty on any saltpetre the English might buy in future, by selling to the Bijapur authorities the Company’s granadoes’ (grenades), mortars and shells during Shivaji’s invasion of Bijapur (1660). Already the Rajapur factors had suggested to the Company towards the end of 1659, that they could lower the price of saltpetre if there was a remission of customs. When during his invasion of Bijapur, Shivaji was compelled to retire to Panhala (March 2, 1660), Revington, the Rajapur factor, quickly seized the opportunity of offering to sell his mortars and shells to the Abyssinian Commander of the Bijapur forces, Siddi Johar (Salabat Khan) for the reduction of the fortress. As the latter gave a favourable reply, Revington started on April 2, 1660 for his camp with one of the mortars and a quantity of shells. Moreover, on March 19, 1660 the Rajapur factors informed the Surat authorities that they could sell the Company’s ‘granadoes’ to Rustam Zaman, governor of Rajapur, at a ‘great profit’—not in cash, but by deduction of the price from customs of Rajapur as the governor himself suggested. It was rumoured that the king of Bijapur (Ali Adil Shah II) was much displeased with the English for this action and intended “to remove the English from all ports and entertain the Dutch,” and some clothes and

articles were despatched to the latter at Vengurala. But the Rajapur factors did not believe that this would actually come to pass (April 5).  

This incident throws a lurid light on the political weakness of the Bijapur government. It suggests that the king realised that the action of the English factors was not in the best interests of the state, but that, at the same time, he had to agree to barter away a portion of the state’s legitimate revenue for immediate military gains, and so could not afford to adopt a strong attitude against the English.  

By a letter dated April 23, 1660, the Rajapur factors agreed with Revington’s suggestions about the sale of ‘grana-does’ in return for remission of customs, on condition that the bargain or agreement was “made authentic” by the Dowager-Queen’s sanction, which would be necessary for the effective maintenance of right of the English, in the event of (i) any change of government in Bijapur, (ii) in case any enemies of the general Siddi Johar should in future maliciously allege that he had “abused his trust with those blanks the Queen had given him her chop (chhap, seal) to.” or (iii) also in case Shivaji became master of Bijapur, and might plead the same, (though the latter held it to be unreasonable). Commenting on this transaction, the Rajapur factors significantly remarked: “.... The putting off so dull a commodity here at present upon soe good termes will doubtless prove a very acceptable piece of service to our honourable imployers.” Great were the material gains of the English. If the factors had sold the shells and mortars for ready money, they would have got 3500 pagodas or Rs. 12,250. But since the E. I. Company required 2,000 candles a year or 40,000 mds. it would have to pay customs at the rate of 1½ pagoda per candy (or Rs. 49/8 for 20 mds.) i.e. Rs. 12,250. So the advantage of the transaction would be over in one year. But the method of sale, as suggested here would mean no additional strain on the Bijapur treasury and so financially welcome to that government; while to the English it meant a source of great financial gain. The price of the mortars and shells was perpetual remission of half the customs, i.e. Rs. 6,125 (@ 7/8 pagoda per candy Rs. 49/16 per 20 mds. So-

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in two years the price could be met and the Company would thereby save Rs. 6,125 in customs every year after the first two years.

After his escape from Panala, Shivaji plundered Rajapur, and confined the English factors in the beginning of 1661, on the charge of having assisted Siddi Johar with mortars and shells against himself. The English factors proposed to open negotiations with Shivaji, one of the clauses of which was that the English should be allowed to buy saltpetre freely.\textsuperscript{15}

The above details show how the foreign companies secured or attempted to secure political and economic advantages by participating in political affairs in different parts of India.

\textsuperscript{15} EF, 1655-60, p. 375; 1661-64, pp. 4-7.
SECTION D

ADMINISTRATIVE INTERFERENCE IN THE SALTPETRE TRADE OF INDIA IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

1. Nature and extent of interference

Students of Mughal history are familiar with numerous instances of complaints of foreign merchants against frequent administrative interference in their trade in different articles, of which saltpetre was an important one. But no systematic and critical study of the nature and the extent of this interference in saltpetre trade has yet been attempted. Mr. Moreland has, of course, pointed out that “the trade was subject to frequent interference on the part of the authorities” and observed that such “official interference” was one of the difficulties “attending the trade”.¹ But we must distinguish between administrative control of the industry and trade for state purposes² on the one hand, and interference therein on the other, varying according to the influence of personal equation or decline in administration and consequent disorders. Prohibition, if based on a sound and conscious policy, is good and beneficial to the state and the country, but irrational prohibition, guided by nothing but motives of private illicit gain can never be justified. The latter indicates a low level of administrative and social morality and sets up a chronic tendency to corruption and to evasion of authority, from the high to the low, and the indigenous to the foreigner. Yet, such being the case in the history of India at that time wherever we turn—from Agra to the Carnatic, or from Bengal to Gujrat,—the tale is everywhere the same.

A critical study of contemporary English factory correspondence, as given in Sir William Foster’s monumental series,

¹. Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb, p. 122.
². Vide Section C ante.
'The English Factories in India' continued by Sir Charles Fawcet, and of the accounts of the foreign merchants, agents and travellers, helps us to know how and to what extent administrative interference reacted adversely on Indian saltpetre trade of the period.

In the first place, we notice everywhere the tendency on the part of the provincial governors and the officials to interfere in the saltpetre trade, occasionally under the pretence of imperial orders, but often on their own initiative—either by local extortion or by detention of saltpetre caravans or cafílas or boats. This evil was aggravated by the system of farming out saltpetre, which prevailed in Gujarát and Bijapur, in the middle of the seventeenth century. Owing either to practical abeyance or decline of imperial authority, the unrestrained subordinate officers became very exacting. What Job Charnock wrote of Patna in 1679 was true also of other parts of India. He observed: "Here is noe order or Government. Every petty officer makes a pray of us and abusing us at pleasure to screw what they can out of us." The English factors remarked significantly, "The Governors underlings were as bad as he."

Secondly, administrative changes like new appointments and transfers of officials, etc, affected the course of saltpetre trade. The privileges granted by one governor might be cancelled by his successor. Thus one had to begin afresh with a new man, and the resultant evils in delay and expense were aggravated by other circumstances. Here we must distinguish between ease-loving and backboneless governors like Murad and Shuja, under whom the prospects of the English Company might brighten up, and strong and otherwise efficient men like Aurangzeb, Shaista Khan, or Mir Jumla, under whom the Company had to suffer numerous vexations.

Thirdly, to cope with the corruption of the high officials (e.g. the Governor) and to secure a royal farman for the release of their detained goods, the English had to spend money at the imperial court. This they considered to be the lesser of the

3. Master II. 272-6. For widespread disobedience of Aurangzeb's orders, see Mumakhabul Lubab, E. & D., VII.
4. EF. 1646-50, p. 150.
two evils. The Surat factors pertinently remarked (March 28, 1654) : "...they daily expect from Agra a royal farman ordering the release not only of the Ahmadabad saltpetre but also that stopped at Patna by the Governor there. Though such a farman means an outlay at Court, it is better to spend money thus than to bribe the local officials, who are never satisfied." 5

Lastly, there was even no certainty that the royal mandate would always be obeyed. When in 1646 Aurangzeb as Governor of Gujarat forbade the transport of saltpetre, the English factors at Swally Marine (March 30) did not expect its speedy release. As the Emperor was far off at Lahore, and the Court was usually dilatory, it was impossible to get a timely redress. Even if a royal warrant was given, the English factors thought it very doubtful whether it would be obeyed. 6

2. Gujarat

Gujarat in the middle of the seventeenth century was the scene of numerous administrative scandals. In the first place, it illustrated the evils of farming saltpetre. With Aurangzeb’s transfer from Gujarat (1646), the English factors began immediately to prepare their caravan (cafila) and procure the licence for transport of saltpetre. It had then been farmed out to Mir Musa, and through his ‘extraordinary friendship’, and the Bakhshi’s help, George Tash, the chief of the Ahmedabad factory, was introduced to, and courteously received, by the new Governor, Shaiesta Khan (December 1, 1646). As he was busy crushing an insurrection of the rebellious bandits, the ‘Kolis’, Mir Musa induced the English to believe that he had the authority to grant them the dustuck or licence. As a matter of fact, however, his dustuck proved useless. The English Company’s carts were detained. The usual duty of 1½%, remitted to the seller by Aurangzeb, was demanded from the English, who regarded it as unjust. Moreover, there was the ‘cart custome’ or the cart-fee of Rs. 2 a cart to be paid to the Governor. The English factors realised that the chief reason for the detention of saltpetre was to get something for “the king’s custome rented by an ‘exacting villain’”. But the irony of the situation was that since effective redress of these difficul-

5. Ibid. 1651-54, pp. 251-2.
ties and exactions from the governor would involve time and indefinitely hold up the caravan, the English factors, in order to release the saltpetre carts without the “governor’s leave” were forced to “part with” Rs. 125 “to feed the hungry maw of the same exacting villain.” As they apprehended that they would incur the Governor’s just displeasure, George Tash proposed to go to him, with the Bakhshi, in order to “procure freedom”, both in their “saltpetre and cart custome”, as formerly granted to the English by previous governors and beg pardon for what had already happened.

In the second place, there arose the question of freedom from transit duties. The proposed journey of George Tash to the Governor was dropped, owing to delay caused by Mir Musa, and the rebellion of the Kolis making the highways insecure. So George Tash wrote to the Bakhshi, requesting him to intercede to the Governor on behalf of the English for securing the necessary permits. The Governor, considering the previous immunities enjoyed by the English granted them the permits, but they were asked to produce the original royal farman for their exemption from road duties. So the Ahmadabad factors requested the Surat authorities to send it, together with some suitable presents for the Governor. By December 17, 1646, sixtyfive bales of saltpetre were released and despatched. But the vague and ambiguous expression of the imperial farman that the English could take no more than what was necessary for their “occasions and none for their merchandise”, bred “new scruples in these people”. So the English factors dared not contract for more saltpetre until the matter was definitely settled, which they expected to have to their satisfaction, as the new Governor, Shaista Khan, was favourably disposed towards them; and they expedited the refining of saltpetre, so that 208 bales were shipped by January 1647.7

As it became imperative to attend the Governor’s darbar, the English factors at Ahmadabad, with the help of Mir Musa, offered a present of red and green broad-cloth, a mirror, and a set of barber’s instruments to the Governor, who graciously accepted them and gave assurances of his goodwill. After several interviews, the chief factor, George Tash, succeeded in

clearing away all obstructions to the saltpetre business of the English. The Governor granted a parwana freeing the English from all transit duties, and authorised them to send “a man of quality” (i.e. an honest man) to recover all dues already paid. Tash also informed the Governor that a sum\(^8\) of Rs. 135 had been “unjustly extracted” from the English at “their first saltpetre’s dismissal” i.e., on the occasion of first dismissal of saltpetre. But as this money had “fallen into his owne purse...the motion for restitution was not soe well relished by him.” He promised to enquire into the matter and dismissed the factors with a gift of “two hammerine (hammams) or shawls” to Tash. The English factors gave a present to the Bakhshi also for his help and demanded some broadcloth from Surat to “repay Mir Musa with some ‘overplus’ as acknowledgment of his many favours” (February 28, 1647). Ultimately Shaista Khan gave the English permission to export saltpetre from Ahmadabad (March 31, 1647). Here is a clear case of disregard of a royal farman by the provincial Governor, Shaista Khan, the saltpetre farmer, and the Bakhshi.

But, about the middle of 1647, the Governor seized half of the saltpetre of the English. George Tash gave him a letter, addressed by the Surat factors, with a view to getting better treatment. But he regarded it as a forged one, and ordered that the English might weigh what was their own (i.e., they might have saltpetre worth the amount Rs.1,500, which they had already disbursed at Malpur and no more), “uttering with great passion that it was insufferable we (the English) should buy out all the goods in the country and that his occasion for saltpetre was more urgent than ours” (the English). Apparently it seems that the Governor realised the exploitation of the article, or that he was acting under imperial orders for necessities of the Central Asiatic campaign, or that he himself required gunpowder for some local needs. But these explanations are not sufficient. For the Governor had publicly given them permission to buy 5000 mds. and had recently satisfied himself with a bribe of Rs. 280. However, when the English factor renewed their efforts with the help of “some of his favouritites” he promised a more favourable treatment. These details would show that the stoppage of the Company’s

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8. Elsewhere the amount has been written as Rs. 125.
saltpetre by the Governor was not due to the pursuit of a conscious policy of controlling its trade but to his motives of personal gain. The Dutch also were in a somewhat worse predicament and the English factors believed that their (Dutch) saltpetre would be taken away. The English expected that one of the effects of his apprehended embargo on Dutch saltpetre and consequent cessation of Dutch demand for it would be a fall in its price.  

Early in January, 1653, two hundred bales of saltpetre were detained at Ahmadabad by the new Governor. Towards the end of the year, "pretending orders from the king," he refused to allow the export of saltpetre from Ahmadabad and also stopped all coming from Agra. A promise of a farman for its release remained unfulfilled till January 1654. The Surat factors came to realise that the saltpetre at Ahmadabad could not be released without offering a heavy bribe to the Governor. But they refused to give it for three reasons viz.: (i) there was little chance of shipping to England that year, (ii) the Governor, Shaista khan (1652-54) was to be replaced by Prince Murad Bakhsh, and (iii) they daily expected a royal farman, ordering release of saltpetre detained at Ahmadabad and Patna as well. Even up to May 12, 1654, this expected farman was not obtained, though the matter of release had been "on hand over twelve months". Before the impending transfer of Shaista Khan, the President and Council at Surat began negotiations for the release of saltpetre, detained at Ahmadabad. They reduced the price of the tapestry received by the Smyrna Merchant (for the use of the Governor) by more than £100; and the Governor allowed them to bring the saltpetre to Surat just before the rains. The Company, however, deferred the purchase of additional quantity till the coming of Murad Bakhsh, who permitted them to buy what they wanted. So they contracted for a quantity of saltpetre, but when part of it was received and being refined, the king's Diwan sent an order prohibiting them from buying or transporting any saltpetre from Gujrat. This embargo could not be removed, in spite of occasional promises of removal, and so the Company tried to secure the required amount from the Deccan.

2. Agra

The Agra region was also not free from official interference. On December 12, 1648, Richard Davidge at Biana wrote to Surat that as he had been offered only half the value in compensation for the saltpetre forcibly taken by the “king’s ministers”, he had delayed accepting it in order to extort better terms. However, he perceived that “this accurtious (accursed) king suffers any voya-
lence (violence) to be used by his officers if it redounds in the least to his benefit.” He wished that the Company’s position was so developed that the English “might become the object of their fear, as it is now the subject of their violence and mallice (malice).”

3. Bijapur

Interference of the Bijapur state officers similarly caused troubles for the English Company’s saltpetre trade. In 1646, Jusn-
ner Ckawne (? Jan Nisar Khan), the treasurer of the Bijapur king, wanted “to procure some new unreasonable duties”, be-
sides the usual customs at the port of Rajapur. So he had recently farmed out the saltpetre trade to Mustafa Khan, who imposed “extraordinary taxes” on it, and stopped at Rajapur the saltpetre, obtained by the English from Rāybāg. The English Company’s factors at Rajapur wanted the Company’s brokers, Benidas, to come from Rāybāg as early as possible, but he was ill, and the Company’s vessel, the Dolphin, had to return from Rajapur, without saltpetre, after waiting for about a month (November 15—December 13, 1646.) Later on (by March 31, 1647), the saltpetre detained at Rāybāg was released, on giving a bribe of 500 pagodas to Mustafa Khan.

There is a pointed reference to misgovernment in Bijapur and its adverse influence on the course of trade in a letter of the Rāybāg factors to Kolhapur, dated October 27, 1659. “It seems strange to us that there should be four governors in one towne and more strange that one should contradict the other; but it is there as it is here—no government, but everyone doth what is good in his owne eyes, and might takes place of right. For its not long since (when wee kept but four or five peons) wee were affronted in the bazar by the Governours and another merchant in towne souldyers, which overpowerings us wee were forced to submit ;

11. Ibid., 1646-50, 225.
but now having 25 horsemen sent us from our good friend Rustam Jemah (Rustam Zaman) we will make the Governour and the other merchant, Demosa by name, with all the rest, come and give us satisfaction, or else we will force it; for if we should put off this affront at first, we should have worse put upon us afterwards.”

4. Bihar, Bengal and Orissa

Early in 1653 the Governor of Bihar refused to release saltpetre for export from Patna. The letter of a Balasore factor named Waldegrave dated Balasore, January 4, 1654, refers to the forcible detention of saltpetre at Patna in that year. Similar interferences were also made at Hugli inspite of “costly firmaens and neshans”. The Dutch too suffered and their factory at Pipli was burnt. At the end of 1654 a quantity of saltpetre was detained at Rajmahal “for custome” and it was not expected to reach Hugli till after the rains. In order to secure its release, and for future negotiations the Balasore factors thought it essential to provide “some considerable and valuable present.... for the Prince and other great men yearly, especially as the Dutch give largely.” Again soon after Aurangzeb’s accession (July 1658), Mir Jumla, the imperial general, became the Nawab of Bengal (1659-63), in place of Shah Shuja, and he stopped all English boats laden with saltpetre, coming down the Ganges from Patna, at Rajmahal.

Mir Jumla was succeeded by a temporary acting viceroy and then came Shaista Khan as Aurangzeb’s viceroy of Bengal. Shaista Khan “forms a prominent figure in connection with the early commerical enterprises of the English E.I.C.” The period of his government from A.D. 1664-88 practically synchronises with that of Job Charnock’s chiefship of the Patna factory (1664-80). It appears from a study of English factory correspondence that Shaista Khan’s regime caused numerous hindrances and interferences to the English company’s trade in Bengal.

13. EF, 1651-54, 279, 271, 303-4; The Bihar Governor (1649-56) was Sadulla Khan, acting through his deputy, N. Raye, Early Annals of the English in Behar Appendix.
16. It must be admitted that the trade of foreign companies improved much in Shaista Khan’s time, in spite of such interferences.
The English factors even apprehended evil results from the transference of Balasore and Pipli to Bengal, as this would certainly extend the field of such interference. In 1664, the clearing of saltpetre from Government interference by Mr. Powell cost the Company nearly Rs. 3,000. From a letter of the Bengal factors to Madras dated April 24, 1665, it appears that Charnock did not till then meet with any “stop” or hindrance in the saltpetre investment at Patna, where a quantity of saltpetre had been collected, though he complained much for want of funds and fine cloth for present with which to placate the new Governor of Patna, Laskar Khan. But very soon the English factors in Bengal began to complain (Sept. 1, 1665; April 12, 1666; April 20, 1666; October 20, 1668) against the abuses, affronts and stops which Shaista Khan’s government caused to the English. Of course it must be admitted that, to some extent, the English E.I.C.’s outlook was unjustifiable, in so far as they claimed exemption from customs in lieu of a fixed sum of Rs. 3,000 which Shah Shuja had allowed them in 1656. For it was his personal affair, and successive governors were not bound by it. Moreover, the trade of Bengal had multiplied and Shaista Khan could reasonably demand customs from the English. But this is also true that the Company was subjected to occasional vexatious interferences, which evaporated only with handsome presents offered to the Nawab and his subordinates. The Company received “sundry abuses from his governors” (officers), and feared a general “stop” to their business, especially in the seizure of saltpetre and molesting of saltpetre investments as in 1664. So the Bengal factors considered the urgent necessity of procuring remedies for these abuses and stops.\textsuperscript{17}

These remedies were “money”, “presents” and “influence”. Thus in their letter to Surat dated April 12, 1666, they pressed the urgency of quickly sending them a large sum of money, and significantly pointed out that money was the “most effectual orator” and that it was an instrument of gaining privileges and a remedy for the insufferable abuses the Company received. The Dutch, the English factors represented, were very prompt in making large annual payments to the Governor. Without money the Company’s trade in Bengal in different articles might be

\textsuperscript{17} EF, 1655-67, 258-59, 138-40, 134-5.
destroyed. 18 English factory correspondence of this period is replete with allegations of covetousness against Shaista Khan and since no redress from him was possible without a present to him and his chief servant, the Bengal factors (letter of September 1, 1665) sent presents, worth Rs. 2,000 and more, to the Nawab through Pratt. The history of Pratt’s career clearly illustrates the power of “influence” in economic history of the period. He has been given an appointment 19 in Dacca by Agent Trevisa but he was subsequently discharged by Blake, the chief of Bengal establishment, on account of neglecting the Company’s affairs. However as there was no better person to “manage the Company’s complaints” at court. and as he was very helpful to the Nawab, who was “much distasted”, he was “entertained” from June and given his former allowances, and he also promised to “manage” faithfully and carefully what the Bengal factors would recommend. Pratt informed Blake that the Nawab was “well content with” the presents and had promised that the English “should not be molested” and also gave his parwana on all governors (officers). This the Bengal factors considered to be very advantageous and sufficient to carry on the business of that year, because the saltpetre boats came to Hugli without any stop.

The Bengal factors proposed another remedy (letter of April 12, 1666). They observed that since “injustice” was Shaista Khan’s “general exercise”, the only way to counteract the financial strain on the company caused by heavy payments (to “unjust nabob” and “bad governors, who have paid for a licence to oppresse, having bought their places of him”) would be to engage in large scale operations, so that the “greatnesse of the expense might be buried in the vastnesse of the investment. For these people cannot be brought proportionably to open their mouthes to the smallnesse of our trade, but stand hungerily gaping, ready to devour it at once, not by moresells.” 20

The letter of Blake and Bridge at Balasore to Surat, dated October 20, 1668 is significant. They considered the attested copy of Aurangzeb’s farman (June 26, 1667), procured by the

Surat authorities, prescribing 2% *ad valorem* duty,\(^{21}\) to be very favourable to the Company's business in Western India, regarding payment of customs and exemption from abuses, but at the same time, they proposed to keep it concealed and to show it to the officers of the Bengal government only when Shaista Khan would demand customs at a higher rate. They, however, expected that he would not do so, "considering our long enjoyed privileges to the contrary, given by the Prince (Shah Shuja) and since confirmed by several Nabobs." These details seem to imply (i) that the foreign companies customarily enjoyed privileges, granted by provincial governors, but not confirmed by the Emperor; and (ii) that the foreign companies could use royal *farmsans* as convenience dictated to them and thus deprive the provincial governments of legitimate revenue. Thus we infer that the economic interests of the country were frittered away by governors acting on their own initiative; and that the Mughal central government, by being unable to keep effective control over the tariff policy of its provincial governors, was guilty of a serious negligence of duty, alike from the administrative and the fiscal points of view.

This fact of the Company's enjoying privileges, not duly confirmed, was utilised by Shaista Khan as a lever and as a "pretence" for extortion (visits, presents etc.). The Balasore factors complained to the Surat authorities that Shaista Khan secretly empowered his officers in all places where the Company had business to molest it. They stated that a small parcel of saltpetre from Patna met "great stops in all place under his government, and that his officers openly declared that articles of transport must pay in future the custom of Gentues" (5% prescribed for Hindus in the imperial order of April 10, 1665), unless Shaista Khan's new *farmsan* was produced, the previous one taken at his coming, having become invalid. Therefore the Bengal factors wanted the Surat factors to procure from the Emperor a confirmation of their long-enjoyed traditional privileges.\(^{22}\)

Further illustrations of the influence of the local governors and their subordinates, when uncontrolled by their superiors,\(^{23}\) on the affairs of the English factory at Patna in the sixties and

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seventies of the seventeenth century are supplied by a connected study of the following extracts:—

(i) The Council at the Bay wrote to Fort St. George (December 12, 1669), explaining the request made before for permission to rebuild the house at Singee. “The Factory house we desired your Licence to build without Pattana was instead of that built since Mr. Blake Chiefe att Singee and levelled by the Rains. Pattana itselfe is not a place to manage the Peter trade in, yet that being the Residence of the Nabob that governs the country, the Chiefe must sometimes repair thither, .... and alwayes keepe a vikeel to solicite the Companies business. If the factory be without the cittle, nigh the place where the piter is made, the Convenience will be very great in encreasing the investments and securing the peetermen from selling what we have bought of them to others, and the charge lessee then to reside att Pattana; for by building of a new house there will not arrise a double charge of maintaining two factoreyes, but the expenses of the old one mitigated.”

(ii) The letter of Walter Clavell at Hughli to Matthew Gray, the Deputy President at (Surat January 19, 1673) contains “a long rehearsal of the troubles and interferences,” with the saltpetre trade, caused by the conduct of a supine and bookish Nawab Ibrahim Khan of Patna (1672). Till his coming business went very well on in Singee and thereabouts where we make our petre Investments; but since that time he being a bookish Nimmauzee, his officers have taken advantage of their master’s supineness in his other affairs and have almost ruined Pattana.

(iii) “The Accompt (account) of Pattana” by John Marshall, dated Balasore, December 10, 1676, notes: “The Hon’ble Company have no factory here but what hire, nor doth the Chiefe usually reside there, by reason the Nabob’s Pallace is in the City and his servants and officers are constantly craneing one thing or another, which if not given, though they

24. EF., 1668-69, 312-3; Bowrey, 224 n.
25. Hedges, II, 45 n. This shows that Ibrahim Khan was of a religious turn of mind and did not care much about administrative and economic affairs. Shaista Khan was Governor of Bengal at this time and Ibrahim was probably in charge of Bihar administration. He became Subahdar of Kashmir, Lahore, Bihar and Bengal “in quick succession,” the date of his Bengal viceroyalty being 1689-97 (Riyaz, 229; Steward’s Bengal, 366-80, Sarkar, Aurangzeb, V, 369). His conduct as Bengal viceroy seems to be just the opposite of what is described here.
have what they desire, yet they are not satisfied therewith, but create trouble and if given what they desire, will be very chargeable.” Marshall who had served at Patna for two years under Job Charnock, complained of the high-handedness of the Nawab that he used to forcibly exact from the patermen any amount of saltpetre he liked (possibly either for ammunition or cooling purposes) and that in case of delayed or smaller supply, he used to break open the Nanagar store house and collect the desired quantity.  

The saltpetre trade of the English at Patna suffered heavily due to these. Their factory there had to be closed for sometime. When Streynsham Master came about July 1676, the English had no factory of their own at Patna but they lived in hired houses. Marshall in December 1676 explained the reasons for the absence of factory at Patna. Meanwhile the Council at the Bay (of Bengal), realising “Pattana itself was not a place to manage the pater trade in” had applied to Fort St. George for licence (December 12, 1669) to build a factory house “without (outside) Pattana.” Here they were influenced by the example of the comparative security of the saltpetre trade of the Dutch, whose factory was about four miles west of the city of Sher Shah.

But a factory house had to be built outside Patna even without the licence from Madras, as the Singee factory under Blake’s chief-ship had been levelled by the rains. Such a factory outside Patna would be advantageous from several points of view: (i) it would be comparatively free from the local officials’ exactions, (ii) but not too far from the seat of the Nawab’s government, (iii) it would be near saltpetre ground and check fraudulent undersale of saltpetre to others, especially to the Dutch, and (iv) it would be safe from the floods which disturbed Singee. The site of this new English factory is probably now occupied by the Government Printing Press at Gulzarbagh, about one mile to the west of the Pachhim Darwaza, the western gate of the the city of Sher. It is probably to this factory that Bowrey referred when he wrote, “The

27. Wilson, op. cit., I, 53; n. 2.
English East India Company have a factory in Pattana, adjoin-\ing to the City, where we have all (or the most part) of the saltpetre sent yearly for England."

The letter of Job Charnock, the Chief of the Patna factory, dated Patna, October 13, 1679, to Streynsham Master at Hugli clearly illustrates the nature of administrative interference in the shape of the detention of saltpetre boats by the Nawab’s officials, the influence of administrative changes and the corruption of officers and other evils.\(^28\)

The then Nawab of Bihar\(^29\) at first demanded Rs. 500 as peshkash to allow the English to open their warehouse and to grant a dastak for their saltpetre boats. But subsequently he fell off from his promise, and demanded what “other governors” had taken from the English before. The Nawab’s new demand, intimated through the Jamadar and then darogha, was higher than Rs. 500, besides spices, Japan voiders (baskets) etc. Even after the payment of these, the promise was not fulfilled as a new Diwan came, and the Khalsa affairs were wholly in the Diwan’s hands. This “caused great dissensions between them, besides great troubles and stops to all merchants, for from the time of his first arrival, no goods whatever had any passage by land or water for want of bills.\(^30\) This Diwan, to whom the matter of detention of saltpetre boats was referred, became much concerned, agreed to advise the King, and dispatch the boats, after taking an account of the saltpetre and a bond (mochelka) from the English. So the Company’s vakil endeavoured to secure the dastak but in vain. The Diwan called for the papers and found fault with the copy of the farman—that “it was for all goods... to Surat, and not to Bengal ports”; the Husb ul hukm (by order) was “written on such thin-flawy paper” that the name “Suba Behar” had become very indistinct. So the Diwan suspected it to be a forged document. The vakil pleaded in vain. After some days the Diwan ordered

\(^28\) Master I, 52-55. Marshal in ibid., II, 89-90; Bowrey, 223-4; During 1677-80, the Governors of Bengal were Fidai Khan entitled Azam Khan Kokah, a grasping tyrant (less than a year) and Prince Muhammad Azam (one year). Sarkar, Aurangzeb, V, 368.

\(^29\) Either Ibrahim Khan, or Saif Khan (Stewart, History of Bengal, 350).

\(^30\) Master II, 272-6. It is a clear case of rivalry between the Behar Nawab and his Diwan, which adversely affected the economic life of the country, besides its political results.
through his *peshdast* or assistant that the English must for the present pay customs but that later on they should procure from Delhi a written exemption from customs in future. The assistant was induced, by promises of money and goods, to intercede on behalf of the English. Similarly the Patna factors induced Mamud Alle (Mahmud Ali), the Diwan’s mansabdar and seal-keeper, to move on their behalf.

The Diwan promised that he would open the warehouse and expedite the despatch of the boats on three conditions: (i) the English to give a *mochelka* (bond) to secure from Delhi a written exemption from customs in two months (ii) the salt-petre goods to be written down; (iii) the customs be fixed at 5% and deposited. Later on the Diwan relaxed his demands and asked the *peshdast* to give a *dastak* even without the customs, if the first two conditions were fulfilled. The *peshdast* suggested the alternative of following the Dutch practice of certifying from Hugli in four months’ time the arrival of the exact amount of saltpetre. The English quickly agreed to it, in view of the difficulty of procuring a *farman* from Delhi in so short a time in these “troublesome times.” This agreement was certified by the Kazi’s department, 31 after long delay. The tour programme of the Diwan caused further delay and he returned the *mochelka*, having the kazi’s *chhap* (seal), saying that “the papers of the English were not current,” and that owing to his differences with the Nawab he could not give his *parwana* without imperial sanction.

Hence the Company’s *vakil* pressed on the Diwan’s mansabdar Mahmud Ali, who secured the Kachhari *darogha*. Meya Hya (Miyan Hyat), to expedite the matter as the Company was suffering great loss by the detention of the boats. It was now arranged with the latter on promises of “money and goods,” worth Rs. 200, that the English would give a bond to procure exemption from Delhi in four months. The *darogha* brought the bond on October 10, which was sealed in the kazi’s court on the 12th. Charnock thus expected that with the help of the sealed bond, the *dastak* would be bought, and that after

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31. This throws a new light on the function of the Kazi’s department—that it had to certify the documents of foreign traders and illustrates the dilatory nature of the department (“Soe troublesome and full of delays are those mullavas”) Master II, *op. cit.*
all these troubles, the boats of the English would go down to Bengal.

Thus a change in the staff of the government necessitated fresh petitions, and numerous negotiations before a promise of a parwana permitting the saltpetre boats to sail could be obtained. The Company's vakil, the Diwan, and his assistant, the Diwan's mansabdar, and the sealkeeper, the Kazi and the court inspector were all associated in this attempt of the English to secure the necessary dastaks. Bribes had to be given to all these officers, except—it must be admitted to his credit—the Diwan, a man of scrupulous integrity, refusing to accept present from any person whatsoever.

During this long delay caused by corrupt officials, executive or judicial, high or low, by the dilatoriness of the general offices of the nawab or the diwan, of the judicial department, and even by private differences between the Nawab and the Diwan, the boatmen grew discontented, and complained to the Nawab that the English owed them demurrage to the value of Rs. 5,500. The matter was referred to the Adalat, where the Kazi and the Chupdars had to be heavily bribed, and the English promised the hcazi about Rs. 600 for security against affronts and unjust demands in the future.

Hence Charnock, the Chief of the Patna factory, wrote to Streynsham Master at Hugli, that there was little encouragement of trade at Patna owing to constant "stops", insufferable troubles," "daily affronts," "large expense" and after all "uncertainty of anything." But Master was not satisfied with Charnock's explanations, and censured him for not agreeing to the extortionate demands of the nawab, or, as he expressed it, "hazarding so great a concern of the Company for so little a matter as 1000 or 1,500 Rs...."

The illness of the King's Diwan at Bihar prevented the clearing of the saltpetre boats. The Patna factors, however, expected his dastak "to clear them suddenly" (letter of October 17, 1679, received by Master on 30th). All available bhars or lighters were ready to carry the saltpetre aboard the ships, but even on November 3 no news came. On the 13th Master at Cassimbazar complained to Joseph Hynmers, Deputy Governor etc., Council at Fort St. George, Madraspatnam, of the non-arrival of the Patna boats, apprehending damages,
caused, by the delay, especially to 1000 tons of saltpetre bought and laden (at Hugli ? or coming from Patna ?)32. On November 14, 1679, Master got letters from Charnock dated November 5, that clearance orders had been received with a present of Rs. 700 to the Nawab and Rs. 200 to the Mirbahri (Lord of Admiralty, harbour master).33 Meanwhile, the English were making endeavours to secure exemption from customs in Mughal territory and Charnock also informed Master that on October 30, he had heard from the Vakil at Delhi that the King had refused to accept Rs. 22,000 for a farman freeing the English from customs throughout the dominions, “saying he could not grant it for 22 lakhs.” The Company’s vakil, however was hopeful, as the Diwan or Vizier, Asad Khan, had held out chances of securing the same farman for Rs. 20,000 only, throughout the empire, except at Surat, without giving anything to the King. Nevertheless, the King, being informed how the English paid their customs at Surat, demanded that both the English and the Dutch should pay $\frac{1}{3}$%, which had been remitted for service done during Shivaji’s first sack of Surat (Jan. 1664) and turned out all the writers for letting it pass so long.34 On November 21 (night), Master got letters from Charnock dated 11th, stating that: (i) the Wazir, Asad Khan, had made another petition to the King on behalf of the English, for a customs-free farman, and hoped to get it for Rs. 20,000; (ii) the Nawab at Patna, for a peshkash of Rs. 700, had ordered the opening of the warehouse, and a dastak for the saltpetre boats, and so the boats would arrive in 2 or 3 days. (iii) On 22nd morning, a man was sent to Rajmahal with a letter to the English vakil and fine clothes, scarlet, broad-cloth, 3 sword blades, 1 small cedar looking glass, 1 knife handle tipt and twisted with silver, do wrought ivory haft, penknives ordinary, as presents to the Governor and others there to expedite the despatch of the boats.

33. This shows that Patna had a Mirbahri and was a harbour in the 17th century.
34. Bruce, Annals, II, 145; says that in return for their help the English were allowed an abatement of 1% on the rate of customs payable to the Mogul, Master II, 291-2 n. See Sarkar, Aurangzeb, V, 319.
The delay in the arrival of the long-expected boats, which did not reach even Rajmahal by November 28, 1679, was getting serious. The problem, as Master observed in his letter from Cassimbazar to Vincent at Hugli on that date, was what to do if the boats did not arrive before the departure of the ships to Europe—whether to await the arrival of the boats or to purchase as much saltpetre as was available and possible at Hugli. Master considered this question and thus sought the opinion of Vincent: "Should you goe about to buy up the petre in Hugli, which, though you should yield in to the utmost of their demands would take up more time than can possibly be spared for the ships to save their passage home, and we may reasonably hope that the Pattana Petre must be downe in as short time as you can buy up at Hugly.... If we doe not hear from him (Charnock) in a day or two more, we shall write you againe, and in the meantime you may be contriving how to compass in buying up all the Petre in Hugly upon a day at once, if we should conclude soe to doe, and give us your opinion herein with all speed." Vincent was further asked on November 30, to lade his purchase "upon freighted vessels and send it aboard the ships with all expedition possible," as nothing had been heard from Patna, or about the boats, for a long time. The need to get the saltpetre, down to the ships at Balasore was all the more urgent, since Shaista Khan's son and Deputy was nearing Rajmahal, and it was apprehended that this "change of government" might entail some hindrance to the despatch of the Company's goods. The appointment of new Governors was, as a rule, a signal for fresh extortions, and it was deemed wise to get the "piece-goods safely board, and send them down, in the charge of 'able pilots' to Balasor Road."35

The saltpetre boats left Patna on November 19, 1679, but they stopped at two other places, and the boatmen returned back to Patna. Later on all went again except "the two chief of them" who deserved, according to Charnock, "examplar punishment." The warehouse was not opened. As the boats carrying saltpetre did not arrive at Cassimbazar, Master sent orders on December 1, 1679, to buy up saltpetre in Hugli for the Success and George (the Golden Fleece having already 150:

tons on board). About 8000 mds. were bought up at Hugli, which, in the opinion of Master, should suffice as ballast for all ships, and were proposed to be sent down to the ships. Master thus wrote in his private Memorandum: “By my being in the Bay this year 1679, the Company’s shipps were dispatched for England, which otherwise they could not have been for want of saltpetre, which not coming from Pattana, was at the utmost time brought up at Hughli, and the goods from all the Factorys were much belated, but furthered by my presence.”

Towards the end of 1682, we read of another interference in the saltpetre trade of the English. A thousand tons of saltpetre arrived from Bengal from Patna but were stopped .... the Governor demanding customs (Rs. 50,000), threatening to sell the saltpetre, and “pay himself or to surprize the factory.”

This treatment meted out to the English in their saltpetre trade was quite different from that shown to the Dutch, as will be apparent from the following entry in Hedges’ Diary, November 17, 1684. “Mr. Derrick Johnson, a Dutch man, formerly employed as skipper for the English in several voyages, told me that .... the Directore was long since advised their Petre Boats were discharged from Pattana and on their way to Hughly,—the Great Mogul having ordered Shaste Chan, Nabob of Decca, not to permit any stop to be put upon the Hollander’s negotiations, for they were very potent at sea, and might be provoked to stop their pilgrims or Haggis going to Mecca, who he desired might goe and returne with greatest freemod”

This shows that (i) the general view that the naval supremacy of the Dutch passed to the English immediately after the Dutch wars in the mid—17th century is not accurate, and that even towards the end of the century, the Dutch were “very potent at sea.” (ii) Aurangzeb’s order to the Dacca Nawab not to interfere with the Dutch trade had a religious motive-safety of the pilgrims to Mecca.

36. Master, II, 322-3 n. 323-4; Master Papers No. 10, in Ibid., I, 115-6.
CHAPTER 3

Indigo as a form of Commercial Agriculture in India during the first half of the Seventeenth Century

1. Importance of Indigo Industry

"The story of the indigo industry is more entertaining historically and more pathetically instructive than that of almost any other Indian agricultural or industrial substance." Indigofera, the dye-yielding species, is one of 300 species of a genus of a plant grown in the tropical and warm temperate areas, of which India at one time had 40. Indigo was produced possibly from species other than the special dye-yielding species.

Indigo was mentioned by the author of the Periplus of the 1st century A.D., by Marco Polo (1298) and the Russian Athanasius Nikitin as being associated respectively with Barbarikon on the Indus, Coilum (Quilon) and Kanbat (Cambay). But it was not referred to by Vasco Da Gama (1498), Varthema (1503) and Barbosa (1516), all of whom visited Gujarat and the west coast of Bombay. Nor was it mentioned by Babur in his Memoirs. During the second half of the 16th century it was mentioned by Garcia de Orta (1563) in western India, by Acosta (1578) in Gujarat, Barrett (1584), Linschoten (1598) in Cambay, Abul Fazl (c. 1590) at Agra.

It would appear that whatever might have been the importance of the manufacture of indigo and the state of its production in ancient and medieval periods, it was from the commercial point of view, comparatively an unimportant industry in the 16th century depending mainly on internal use. Its manufacture, however, rose to almost unprecedented heights as
a result of foreign demand during the first half of the seventeenth century when it became a principal item of international commerce.

Indigo was needed both for internal and external consumption. It was used to dye various kinds of cloths. But it was also used to dye the skin and hair. The refuse of indigo (seet) was often used as manure by cultivators. The indigo-yielding plant (especially the leaf) is rich in nitrogen and also contains a comparatively large amount of mineral matter, while its ash contains rather a high percentage of magnesia. It is, however, not known, whether it was used for all these purposes in the seventeenth century. But it may reasonably be inferred that there was an internal consumption of it, either as a dye or as manure or for bleaching purposes.

Indigo formed the basic material in washing and bleaching ordinary cotton cloths to a pure white colour. Thus cotton cloths were sent from the places of origin to central spots for washing e.g. Agra, Ahmadabad, Masulpattam, and certain places in Bengal, probably Dacca and Qasimbazar. The Mughal emperors maintained Karkhanas or factories of their own for manufacture of articles of different kinds including cotton and silks. Perhaps it was for use in the State owned factories that indigo was seized in 1623 for 'the kinge', i.e. king's use.

The external consumption of indigo was due to its being used as a blue dye in the important woollen industry of Western Europe, as substitute of woad, a plant growing around the Mediterranean. Hence the first European buyers in India eagerly sought indigo. The transition from woad to Indian indigo occurred about the end of the 16th century. The Portuguese carried moderate quantities of indigo from Western India to Lisbon and these were at first chiefly used in the West Mediterranean area. But they also sold them to the dyers of Holland. The rich prospects of this trade led Spain to monopolise it in 1587. The Dutch merchants were anxious to secure a more steady supply of the Indian dye. The Dutch (1601-7) at Surat considered indigo to be:

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1. Watt, Commercial Products of India, 668, 660, 663, 679, 771; Christopher Rawson, Report on Cultivation and Manufacture of Indigo (1st ed.). 7-8 An Indigo crop depleted the soil of much plant food. Ibid.
2. Ball's Tavernier, II. 3; EF, 1622-23. p. 233.
the most important local product and tried to purchase it. Their success threatened to ruin the producers and merchants of woad in Germany, France and England. So import or use of indigo was made a capital offence. But Elizabethan England allowed the use of indigo along with woad. The art of indigo-dying was learnt by England during the reign of James I (1608). It is not, therefore, surprising that early in the 17th century the English East India Company instructed its factors (1605-6) to purchase indigo from Lahar (Lahore), Serchis (Sarkhej) and Belondri (Ballabi, a village 20 miles from Bhavnager). But it was in the account of Finch (1609) that we get ‘the first definite conception of the indigo industry’ in India especially in the Agra-Fatehpur Sikri area. Sir Thomas Roe’s description of indigo as the “prime commodity” indicates its importance in the development of East India Company’s Indian trade. Indigo formed the chief lading of the Hope in 1615. Being in great demand in Europe for dyeing purposes, it was highly prized as an article of export.3

2. Cultivation
Contemporary accounts of foreign travellers and factory correspondence enable us to get a clear picture of the manner of indigo cultivation and manufacture during the period under review.

(i) Sowing: Indigo was sown in the ‘Prime June’ i.e. with the first rain in June, at the rate of 14 or 15 lb of seed to the bigha. With moderate rains, the crop was usually cut in three to four months’ time—say by end of September or early October, (Pelsaert), in August or September after the rains (Finch), when it became fully ripe. Its leaves were round. It could not stand cold. In case of postponement of the harvest, sudden winter would destroy the colour (in manufacture; brown without gloss). At the harvest the plants were cut a hand’s height from the ground, the stumps remaining. Plentiful grass (expensive weeding was necessary to protect the indigo roots and expedite growth) indicates heavy yield in the first crop.

(ii) Kinds: All contemporary sources refer to the three cuttings in two years.

3. Watt, op. cit.; Moreland, Akbar to Aurangzeb, 107-9; EF, 1624 9, XXXV.
Early in the 17th century—in the time of Finch and Pelsaert—the indigo crop was commonly ratooned. The crop once sown, used to remain on the ground for two years without being uprooted or resown. It used to yield annual cuttings, the second giving the best dye. With the extension of irrigation, a gradual change took place in agricultural practice until the crop became seasonal. The most important change was agricultural rather than industrial.

There were three kinds of crops:

(a) The first crop i.e. first year's cuttings (June-October). It was called \textit{Nauti} by Pelsaert, the Dutch factor at Agra,—brown in colour, coarse in quality and easily recognised by sight or touch,—more useful for dyeing woollens and other heavy goods, going further than the second crop or \textit{jarhi} or \textit{Ziarie}. Finch called it 'Notee'—tender, 'a weighty reddish Nill, sinking in water not come to...perfection'. Early factory correspondence mentions it as 'Newty', a good sort. The term was derived from \textit{naudha}, young plant.

(b) The second crop i.e. second year's cuttings (October-August) was called the \textit{jarhi} or \textit{Ziarie}—by Pelsaert, the \textit{Cyeree} by Finch, \textit{Jerry} by Foster. The term was derived from \textit{jarh} or root. The remaining stumps of the first year (i.e. October) sprouted again and were cut early next August. It was superior to the \textit{nauti} in quality,—of violet infusion, and lighter (Pelsaert); 'rich', 'very light and of a perfect violet colour swimming on the water' (Finch); and described as the best indigo (Foster).

To judge indigo, one had to look at it before midday in the sun. If pure, it would glisten like a rainbow,. If sandy or dirty, the adulteration could be detected in the sunlight. Impurities were common, but these were often added wilfully to increase weight or caused by wind, if the soft balls were allowed to dry on sandy soil.

With favourable rains, the \textit{jarhi} plants were luxuriant and three cuttings were made,—early August, early September and in October. Indigo would then be cheap.

(c) Thefinal cutting or the last crop (August-October) called \textit{Katel}—by Pelsaert and Catteld by Finch. The stumps left after the second crop sprouted again and then cut in October. This was very bad, hard, dull, no gloss or colour, like charcoal—'Herb is declining, being a weighty, blackish \textit{Nill},
the worst of the three’ (Finch).

Speaking of these three varieties, Pelsaert wrote that nauti was like a growing lad, the jarhi a vigorous youth, and the Katel, a senile old man. The nauti was far better than the Katel in substance and quality; only a rupee a maund separated the jarhi and the nauti; they were worth double the katel.

About Pelsaert’s time many did not cut the katel, as though the cost of manufacture was the same for all kinds, the yield of katel was barely half that of jarhi (15 or 20 seers for each vat). So the Katel crop was left to yield the seed for the following nauti. This is corroborated by factory correspondence, wherefrom we learn that after the third cutting, the crop was allowed to grow to seed.4

3. Manufacture of Indigo

The accounts of foreign travellers constitute an index to the gradual growth of the industry. A comparison of the accounts of Marco Polo (at Quilon, 1298), Finch (1609), and Pelsaert (1620-6) throws light on the diversification of the manufacturing process.

Marco Polo says: “It is made of a certain herb which is gathered, and (after the roots have been removed) is put into great vessels upon which they pour water and then leave it till the whole of the plant is decomposed. They then put this liquid in the sun, which is tremendously hot there, so that it boils and coagulates and becomes such as we see it. (They then divide it into pieces of four ounces each, and in that form it is exported to our parts)”. The trade evidently declined afterwards.

The different stages of the preparation of the dye fit for the market from the crop in the seventeenth century in the Agra-Biana region are described below. Judging from the details it is reasonable to infer, as has been done by Dr. Habib, that it presupposed some form of co-operative enterprise among the cultivators of the villages.

(i) Wet Leaf or Sock-pit process

(a) Firstly, the cuttings were placed in receptacles. Pelsaert says that the yield of one bigha was put into a put (hole, pool, pit, well or receptacle or vat, 38 ft. in perimeter, about 5-6 ft.

4. Moreland and Geyl, The Remonstrantie of F. Pelsaert, 10-13; Foster, Early Travels in India, 152-3; Mundy, II. 221-3; Letters Received IV. 240-1.
deep). Finch speaks of a long cistern and says that the crop was pressed down with many stones. The *Letters Received* also refer to a cistern of water.

(b) *Secondly*, soaking: All sources agree that the produce was steeped in water in order to enable it to absorb the substance or the dye of the herb. But they differ regarding the period of soaking. The process of steeping lasted for 'certain days' (according to Finch), for 16 or 17 hours (according to Pelsaert) and for 24 hours (according to *Letters Received*).

(c) *Thirdly*, straining or refining: For purposes of refining the water was run down (i) to a lower round *put* (32 ft. in circumference and 6 ft. deep), according to Pelsaert, or (ii) to 'another round cistern, in the midst of which another small cistern or center', according to Finch.

(d) *Fourthly*, beating; to enable the water to absorb the dark blue hue, the indigo was worked continuously back and forward. This was done by two three men (Pelseart); it was beat by 'men' for six hours forcibly with hands till it became blue. (*Letters Received*). According to Finch 'water being thus drawn forth, they labour with great staves, like batter or white starch'.

(e) *Fifthly*, sedimentation: After the water absorbed the colour, it was allowed to stand for 16 hours and the dye settled at the bottom of the round *put* (Pelsaert). According to Finch, after beating, the manufacturers then let it settle, scumming off the clear water on the top; then labouring it afresh, and let it settle again, drawing forth the clear water, doing this often, till nothing but a thick substance remained.

(f) *Sixthly*, drying: After running out the water the indigo was taken out and spread on cotton cloths and made into bales, when firm, as soap (Pelsaert) or spread on cloth and dry in the sun (Finch). According to *Letters Received* drying was done 'by degrees: first in cloths till the water be sunk from it and it be curdled; afterwards they dry it in round gobbets'. According to Finch when the indigo was dried, and became 'a little hardened they take it in their hands and making small balls, lay them on the sand to dry (for any other thing would drink up the colour); this is the cause of the sandy foot'.

(g) *Seventhly*, storage: The bottom of the vat (or the ground under it) was spread with ashes, to help crust formation.
The indigo was put into a tightly closed earthen vessel that it might not become too dry in light or wind; indigo exposed to wind even for an hour will be drier than in the same period of sunshine. The content of each vat (dedera) usually weighed 12-20 seers according to the yield, at the time of sale; but it dried further by five seers in a maund during handling and in the bales.

These methods of manufacture described above were substantially the same as followed when the modern industry flourished.\(^5\)

(b) *Dry Leaf Process of Manufacture*:

As contrasted with the wet leaf or soak-pit manufacturing process referred to by several observers like Finch and Pelsaert in the Agra-Biana region, there was the dry-leaf process. It was found by Linschoten (1598) in Cambay and by Mandelslo in Ahmadabad in Gujrat. (a) According to Linschoten 'annil' or indigo was sown like other herbs and at the end of the season it was 'pulled (out) and dried and then made wet and beaten, and so certain days after dried again and then prepared. (b) According to Linschoten the leaves were first dried in the sun and then the soaking was done. The rest of the process generally conforms to the wet leaf or Agra-Biana process. "The stalks are taken away and the leaves are set adrying in the sun, and that done, they are set asoaking, for four or five days, in a stone-trough, containing about six or seven foot water, which is ever and a non stirred; till such time as the water both suckt out colour and virtue of the herb. That done they let out the water into another trough, where they suffer it to settle for one night. The next day, all the water is taken away, and what is left in the bottom of the trough is strained through a coarse cloth and is set adrying in the sun."\(^6\)

In 1646 the English factors at Surat tried an interesting experiment of manufacturing indigo themselves, evidently with hired labour. They purchased a quantity of indigo leaf and employed an experienced man to manufacture indigo. They sent a sample to the Company in January, 1647. But the cost


\(^6\) Mandelslo, *Travels in Olearius* (1638), pp 83-84. Linschoten, *Voyage to East Indies*, i. 61-2; ii. 91.
was high, Rs. 25 a maund. So they did not continue the scheme but waited for the Company's 'express orders'. Subsequently they seemed to have changed their mind and preferred to continue the process, in order to ensure manufacture of pure indigo and avoid purchasing from the market which was flooded with heavily adulterated indigo at Ahmadabad for the past few years. As regards the cost of production, we are told that Tash, who was in charge of the business, was confident that the cost would not exceed Rs. 19 or 19½ the maund.7

4. Testing of indigo

Pure indigo, it was pointed out by Finch, had four characteristics or qualities: (i) 'a pure grain' (ii) 'a violet colour' (iii) 'gloss in the Sun' and (iv) dryness and lightness.

The purity of the dye could be tested by two processes as described by Garcia de Orta (1563) and Finch (1609):

(i) it would be so light that it may float or 'swim' on water;
(ii) on burning it would cast 'a pure light, violet vapour and leave a few ashes, and 'no sand in the residue'. Mandelslo observes: 'The best indigo is almost of a violet colour, and hath somewhat of its smell, when burned'.8

5. Business Tricks.

The dealers adopted certain business tricks. Adulteration could be made either (i) by mixing the three crops together or (ii) by mixing pure indigo with dirt or sand or earth, and by pouring oil to such adulterated dye to enable it to float in water. The first trick was referred to by Finch and Pelsaert, the latter also prescribing remedies to counteract it. Finch remarks: 'Some deceitfully will take of the herb of all three crops and steep them altogether, hard to be discerned, very knavishly'. Pelsaert not only refers to the trick but also its counterpoise. The Katel was bought from the sellers at half price and powdered with sticks. It was mixed with jarhi and nauti and made into bales. This was to be watched when opening the sacks and in the pots. The man buying in sacks or bales must want powdered katel or inferior nauti. The man buying indigo must see that the top and the bottom were uniform; for jarhi was put on

7. EF., 1646-50, pp. 77-78, 189
8. ETI (Finch), 154. Watt, op. cit.
the top over \textit{nauti}; the top was dry and light and the bottom wet and heavy. One should always possibly open indigo in the sun to weigh, and distinguish the good and the bad and also to lessen the weight,—indigo drying during (i) handling, and (ii) weighing in the sun.

The second trick, viz., mixing the pure indigo with dirt and sand is referred to in the \textit{Letters Received}. According to Mandelslo also the country people used to adulterate the best indigo by mixing 'a certain earth of the same colour; and as the goodness of the drug is discovered by its lightness, they have the cunning to put a little oil into it, to make it swim into the water.'

Adulteration was made not only by the producers but also by the English East India Company's factors. The Company issued orders against such practices. Accordingly the Surat President Breton assured the Company (January, 1647) as follows:

'We have also, according to your instructions, inhibited that ancient custom of mixing sand with the Ahmadabad indigo; so that you will not find any amongst that now sent . . . cannot discover how it was that sand was mixed with the Agra indigo; have given strict orders to prevent a recurrence.

As regards the substitution of whole bales or chests of dirt for indigo, they are hoping to prevent any such abuse by weighing the bales or receipt at Ränder and against at Swally, and by affixing the Company's seal to each'.

6. \textit{Accidents}

Indigo was more liable to fall a victim to accidents of seasons than other crops.

(i) With scanty rains, the \textit{nauti} seed used to wither e.g. Gujrat famine, drought in 1646.

(ii) With excessive rains (e.g. September, 1621) and less sunshine, the plants would decompose or be washed away. There was heavy rain in Biana, 1621, also in 1640.

(iii) Even after a successful \textit{nauti}, bitter cold (in December, January and February) might destroy it.

(iv) Late rains (i.e. with no fall in June or first half of July) would destroy the \textit{jarhi} crop.

9. ETI (Finch), Pelsaert; \textit{Letters Received} IV, 241, Mandelslo; \textit{EF}., 1646-50, pp. 76-78.
(v) Locusts might completely destroy the crops (about June, July or August; as in Biana for three years, (1623-25).

These accidents destroyed the chances of rich merchants and reduced them to poverty. The production in Biana region was reduced from 4000 bales to a little more than 2000 bales.

7. Centres of Production of Indigo

Tavernier says “Indigo comes from different localities of the Empire of the Great Mogul, and in these different localities it is of various qualities, which increase or diminish its price”. In fact during the seventeenth century indigo was widely grown in India viz.,

(A) the Ganga-Jamuna and Chambal area—(i) Agra-Biana area, (ii) The Ganga-Jamuna doab or Aligarh area, (iii) Mewat, (iv) Delhi, (v) Gwalior,

(B) Eastern India—(i) Bihar, (ii) Bengal.

(C) Rajputana-Ajmer area.

(D) Sind - Sehwan.

(E) Western India—Gujrat: (i) Ahmadabad—Sarkhej area (ii) Cambay—Baroda and Broach area.


According to Habib the three principal indigo tracts in Mughal Empire were (i) Bayana-Doab-Mewat, (ii) Sarkhej and (iii) Sehwan.

(A) The Gangetic Plain - (a) Agra-Biana area

The most important centre was the neighbourhood of Agra including Biana. Reference to Agra as an indigo producing area has been made by Abul Fazl, Finch and Roe. Mundy says “The best and richer sort being commonly called by the name of Agra Indigo”. The producing villages in this area could be grouped under five heads : (i) Biana or Bayana, Byana of Mundy, Baniana of Tavernier, south-west of Agra with a radius of 20 miles. It was the main centre of production of indigo in Northern India. All authorities testify to the superior quality of Biana indigo. At Biana the “best indigo in all India is made and hereabouts nothing inferior” (Mundy). The Biana indigo was considered to be the “best exported from India to Europe”.

About 1612 Jourdain found that there were three kinds of indigo of Biana, "commonly called Lahor". (i.e. Lahori) - the best rated at 36, second 30 and the third 28 rupees the great man of 55 (li) allowing them 20% freight, custom and transport from Biana to Surat. Pelsaert (1620-26) found that the Biana indigo was purchased by the Dutch, the Armenians and the Moguls who exported it to Ispahan, whence it was sent to Aleppo.

(ii) Ghanowa or Chanowa of Pelsaert, Cannova of De Laet, Connoway (Khanwa) of Mundy, 20 miles west of Biana (Khanua), with a radius of 10 miles. According to Finch: "Cannowa is a small country town round about which is made very good Nill (nil, indigo) by the reason of the fatness of the soil and the brackishness of the water".

(iii) Bassouwer of Pelsaert, Bashavor [Bisaur] of Mundy (Baseri, 20 miles east by south from Biana), 20 miles east of Biana, with a radius of 12 miles.

(iv) Hindaun of Pelsaert, Hindowne of Mundy, Hindoo or Indota of Tavernier (20 miles from Biana), with a radius of 12 miles. It is also mentioned in the 'Ain i Akbari'

(v) Tora (Toda Bhim, 35 miles west of Biana) with several villages. It produced 200 bales a year (c.1625.)

(vi) Panchoona of Mundy or Patchiona of Pelsaert (Pichaouree of the Indian Atlas).

(b) The Ganga-Jamuna Doab or Aligarh areas: Koil (Aligarh) or Gorsa or Corsa of Tavernier (Khurja, Buland Shahar dt.) The annual output of Koil was 1000 bales. Most of the Koil produce was bought up by Armenian, Lahore and Kabuli merchants. It was good but not so well as that of Biana. Hence it was not purchased by the Dutch or the English. The Dutch restricted their purchases only to Biana. Pelsaert suggested that Koil indigo should be given a trial.

(c) Mewat, 60 miles from Agra, with many villages. It produced 1000 bales or more, but it was inferior and sandy. The price of Mewat indigo (Rs. 20 a maund) was lower than at Biana (Rs. 30) because only one receptacle was used and not two as at Biyana or Corsa.
Very little of Mewat indigo was exported, but it was distributed throughout N. India, where it was not produced.\(^{11}\)

(d) Delhi. The indigo production in the neighbourhood of Delhi has been described in almost identical terms by Bernier and Thevenot. Bernier says: 'The country in the neighbourhood of Delhi is extremely fertile. It produces corn, sugar, anil or indigo'. besides other articles. According to Thevenot the ground about the capital city is very fertile, growing, besides wheat and rice and sugar, "good Indigo, especially towards Chalimar (Shalimar garden near village Haidarpur)."\(^{12}\)

(e) Gwalior, 40 kos distant from Agra on the road to Burhanpur produced 'a bad and base sort of indigo', according to dyers. Its quality differed from that of Biana "whose substance, when extracted from the leaf, not being sufficiently conglutinous to be made into such guttees (cakes or balls), usual in Biana and other places, and continue the same firm when dry, but doth crumble and suddenly break into small pieces, therefore, do the makers incorporate therewith rice water to make it hold together; which is the reason it is so hard and flinty."\(^{13}\)

(B) Eastern India:

(i) Bihar: Sir J. N. Sarkar thinks that there is no information if it was grown in Bihar. But its production in Bihar is referred to by Mundy, who says that indigo was available at Patna though better quality of its was available elsewhere: "for any other of this countries commodities, as raw silk, indigo, Gum lack (lakh, lac) saltpetre" we can have it much better and better cheap elsewhere,"\(^{14}\)

(ii) Bengal: From Tavernier we know that indigo was grown in Bengal and largely exported therefrom. He tells us that the Bengal dye was carried to Masulipatam by the Dutch Co. and that the Bengal (also Gujrat) indigo cost 30% less than the Agra variety. This reference to Bengal indigo is indeed

11. A\textit{in}; Sarkar, II. 194. ETI. 152-4; Pelsaert, 13-15, More names given; Ball's Tavernier II, 8; I. 89; Mundy II. 222; Foster, Jourdain, 217; \textit{D}: Laet, Hoyland & Banerji, 44-45. Purchas, ed. Maclehoose, IV. 44., Habib, Ag-Sys. 43.

12. Bernier, 283; Sen, \textit{Indian Travels of Thevenot and Gemelli-Careri} 68.


very remarkable. For William Hedges does not allude to indigo production in his inspection reports in any of the districts of Hughli, Malda, Dacca, Balasore etc. (1681). We may reasonably infer that indigo cultivation and manufacture (which later on became a very important industry of Bengal did not exist about the end of the 17th century in the districts visited by Hedges.)

(C) Rajputana—Ajmer region:
A kind of ‘base indigo’ was cultivated at Lollsote (Lalsot) and Mozeabad (Mozaabad) which was situated 7 kos. south of Sambhar in the Ajmer province. Peter Mundy tells us (5th March, 1632/3) that four to five hundred mds. of base indigo were produced annually at Mozaabad.

Again, in some of the villages on the Bayana-Merta route Salbancke found ‘store of course (coarse) indico.’

(D) Sind:
Indigo of Sehwan in Sind is considered in many respects to be better than that of Sarkhej (Habib). Two references of the English factors seem to support this view.

(i) “The ‘Scinda’ indigo sent in the Swan was judged to be better than that of Sarkhej, though not so good as the Biana varitey.”

(ii) the indigo of the district round Sehwan was “preferred by these dyers before Ahmadabad, which they say looks well to the eye but in dying is not to be compared to the best of this here (Tutta) . . .”

But this seems to be an overestimate both as regards quality and quantity as the following details will show. In fact the story of tapping Sind as a source of supply of indigo was one of unfulfilled expectations rather than of solid achievement.

The various places in Sind associated with the production of indigo were—Sehwan, Bubak, Sann; and in the upper regions—Derbella, Ckandara and Behrallah.

(i) Sehwan, 84 miles n.n.w. of Kotri, Seahwaun of English factory records. “The chiefest commodity there made and in the adjacent towns is indigo, in form like to that of

15. Ball, II, 8-12, Watt, CPI.
Biana, yet nothing so good, because in the making they are accustomed to mingle sand with it, which not only makes it hard and heavy withal..." The English factors however expected that the indigo might be made "pure and good, as that of Biana, if the merchants there resident would condescend to allow them somewhat more upon the maund.

(ii) Bubak, 9 miles west of Sehwan (Bubecke of factory records) and (iii) Sann, about 30 miles south of Sehwan (perhaps Sann of factory records) were also centres of manufacture of indigo which was transported for sale to Thatta. About its quality we learn: "Indico, not good in appearance, indifferentlie esteemed and is by the Tuttah merchants transported to Barsora (Basra) where it readily vends to great profit; the quantity no doubt may be increased, if the quality cannot be bettered."

The annual outturn was about 2000 mds, the weight being 36 pice to the seer, and 40 pice at Thatta. Nicholas Withington wrote of it: "no city is by general report of greater trade in the Indies than Tutta... indigo coarse not so good as Biana".

The reported annual outturn was not more than 1000 great mds. costing ('new and wet') Rs. 21 and 22 a md. (of 42 pice per seer). The charge of custom to the governor Rs. 4/- a md., to the town, Re. 1/- and freight to Thatta Rs. 1/2.

Urged by the E.I. Company to increase the exports of indigo from Sind the Swally Marine factors endeavoured to procure larger quantities. They authorised Pauncefote to do this by a Commission dated Feb. 15, 1640. But "the excessive rains spoilt the crop and only small parcels were obtainable at Rs. 70 per double md. of Surat (73½ lb.). So they could only hope for a larger amount in 1641.

In 1645 the Swally Marine factors arranged a detailed reconnaissance of the possibilities of indigo supply in the "upper countries of Sehwan and the adjacent places" above Thatta. About four months' effort on the part of Spiller, Nicholas Screvener and a broker ended in frustration. Not only were the expectations of any large supply in the future belied, but only the trifling amount of 6 out of 200 fardles could be procured for that year. This was due to the misgovernment in the country and poverty of the people. We read of "the country and people being very beggarly"; and again,
“the people are so exceedingly oppressed and kept so miserably poor that, notwithstanding the soil is fertile and proper and would produce large quantities of good indigoes, they have neither will nor means to manure and sow the ground, so that the small quantity the country produced not exceeding 400 mds. deuble (which is scarcely sufficient for the expense of those parts), rendered the commodity very dear, far beyond Rs. 40/-, the price we had limited. Yet were there no other buyers than the Tuttha dyers, which paid Rs. 41½, besides Rs. 3 a md. other charges.”

As the indigo producing villages of Derbella and Ckandare (Sikandra) were near the site of the residence of the English factors, it was decided, however, to continue the experiment next year (1646) on the advice of Spiller who suggested the stationing of a man there “to encourage the people by impressing 800 or 1000 Rs. in small sums” and thereby to procure more than 100 fardles at reasonable prices.

Here we get an interesting example of the English E.I.C. playing the role of a capitalist to the poor indigo cultivators of Sind. But though the experiment was ‘full’, it proved to be ‘fruitless’ (To Company Jan 3, 1646). Again, “The indigo procured from Sind has not answered expectations either in goodness or in price; and is moreover scarce”. Spiller and his colleagues showed the perseverance of the spider in holding out “hopes of an improvement”.

In 1645 the competition of the local dyers in Sind, who gave liberal advances to the producers and refused nothing of available supply stood in the way of the success of the English in procuring indigo. But in 1646-47 the prospects looked better, because that competition was absent as the local dyers had unsold stocks, and the English efforts at encouraging manufacture were expected to lead to some recovery. The advances of money given by the English led the people to improve irrigation facilities and indigo cultivation. As soon as the English factors came to Sann on their way to Kandiaro, “all the arbhaubs and indigo makers in that place came to welcome us, much desiring that we would leave a man there, for that they should have half so much again as last year; which they said we could perceive by the addition of new wheels that they had set (upon) the river to bring up water to their grounds”. The English en-
couraged them as much as possible and asked them to improve the quality of indigo.\textsuperscript{17}

(E). \textit{Western India: Gujarat}

Indigo production in Gujarat has been mentioned by a long line of foreign travellers during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries: Athanasins Nikitin (1468), Garcia de Orta (1563), Acosta (1578), Barrett (1584), Linschoten (1598), Francois Pyrand (1601-10), Finch (1608-11), Jourdain (1612), Terry (1622), Mandelslo (1638), Tavernier and Thevenot. Indigo has been called by them as (i) \textit{Anil} (of the Arabs and Turks), or \textit{Annil} or \textit{Nill} (ii) the \textit{gali} and \textit{nil} or Gujarat.

John Jourdain (1612) mentions that the three worst sorts of indigo were found at Serques (Sarkhej), Baradora (Baroda) and Seroll (Sarod) on the south side of the Mahi estuary in Broach district.

(i) at 14\{ Rs. the great man of Agra (55 \textit{li}) allowing
(ii) —12\} 10\% for freight and charges.
(iii) —8\}

Tavernier has referred to the production of indigo in Gujarat—Sarkhej, Ahmedabad, Surat and Broach.\textsuperscript{18}

(i) Ahmedabad—Sarkhej area:

According to Mandelslo (1638) the indigo of Ahmadabad, manufactured at village Chirchees (Sarkhej) by the Dry leaf process, was ‘the best indigo in the world’ and it was known as such. But evidently Mandelslo seemed to have been unacquainted with Biyana indigo, acclaimed universally to have been the finest.

Sarkhej, 6 or 7 miles north-west of Ahmadabad was the centre of the indigo industry in that area. Here the method of manufacture was different from that in Biana, only one vat being used in Sarkhej and not several as in Biana. The place gave its name to the indigo which was called Sarkhej indigo. Finch called it Cickell (i.e. Sarkhej) but he did not find it ‘so good as that of Biana.’ Tavernier mentions that flat indigo (i.e. indigo cakes) was made at Sarques (Sarkhej). Thevenot found that all the indigo sold at Ahmadabad came from Sarkebj.

\textsuperscript{17} EF., 1634-6, 129; 1637-41, 136-7, 274; 1646-50, 12-13, 28-29, 33, 119. Withington in ETI, 218. Arshaubs or \textit{arbab} (Lord or master).

\textsuperscript{18} Watt, \textit{CPI}, Jourdain, 217, 173, 174n; Ball’s Tavernier I. 54; Commissariat; Mandelslo, 15.
During normal years, Sarkhej indigo was procurable in plenty. In November, 1622, it was offered at from Rs. 8-9 a md. but the English factors at Ahmadabad held out for even lower rates. By December, however, they bargained for 2500 mds. at Rs. 8-8½ a md, for there was “plenty to be had.” By January, 1623, they purchased 7000 mds. of Sarkhej indigo and 1000 more at Ahmadabad. A large quantity of loose indigo was available at Sarkhej at Rs. 8½- 8¾ a md. (November, 1623). By December, 1623 Leachland at Ahmadabad agreed for nearly 1200 fardles of indigo and was “in treaty” for 2500 more, and expected samples from Sarkhej by end of January 1624. He bargained for 1600 fardles more at Rs. 42½ a fardle, which was the lowest price obtained. While the English purchased indigo at Cambay, the Dutch could not get it even at Rs. 43½ and they returned from Sarkhej (December 7, 1623) ‘without doing anything, the price having risen to Rs. 10 and 10½ a md. By January, 1628 the samples of Sarkhej indigo were priced at Rs. 14—15 a md. and the rest at about Rs. 75 a fardle of 4 mds. 7 seers together with some old indigo. By January 31, 1628, indigo rose in price. That year the Sarkhej crop was estimated at 8000 mds.

Sarkhej indigo was exported by the English to England. It was also sent to Kuhestek or Kuhistak, a small port on the Persian Coast about 40 miles s.w. of Ormuz. The Dutch also sent it to Holland.19

(ii) Cambay: Cambaia, Khambayat, Kanbat (Ca.nbay) as a centre of indigo production and manufacture has been mentioned by several writers e.g., Athanasius Nikitin (1468) and Barrett (1584). Linschoten (1598) found indigo as growing and being manufactured only in Cambay, whence it was “carried throughout whole world”, being of ‘a costly colour and much carried and trafficked into Portugal’.

This is corroborated by Tavernier, who says: “In the parts adjacent to the city (Cambaya) they make indigo of the same nature as that of Sarquess; and it was famous for traffick at the time when the Portuguese flourished in India”.20

19. Mandelslo, Finch (in ETJ), 174; De Laet, 22 23; Pelsaert, Ball’s Tavernier I. 72; Sen’s Thevenot 16; Moreland II 109; EF. 1622-23, 23., 158, 162, 181, 328-9, 330-1, 331-2; 1624-29, 230, 232.
20. Watt, CPF; pp. 664-5 Ball’s Tavernier, I. 69. Sen’s Thevenot, 18.
(iii) Jambusar, a large village, 8 leagues or about 22 miles from Broach, on the road to Cambay, in Broach district, was formerly a centre of indigo export. It was "famous for its great production of indigo", an industry which flourished here till the end of the 18th century. Jambusar indigo (12 churals, costing 1,132, M and 10½ P.) was included among goods sent to the Red Sea (1619). But it was not found suitable for England not worth the freight and its purchase was "against the Company's express orders." 21

(iv) Dholka was under the jurisdiction of Ahmadabad factory. It was a centre of indigo and dhutis. Of the investment for 1623 the first caravan consisting of 671 bales of indigo and piece goods started on January 21, 1623. The indigo weighed 4,784 mds. and they hoped to raise it to 8000. The price was considered to be reasonable. 22

(v) Rander (Ranel in Portuguese) 2 miles above Surat on the other side of the river, seems to have been the warehouse or godown of the E.I. Co. where the indigo was stored in five houses or godowns. 23

The tradition of indigo manufacture continued in Gujrat. Even as late as late as 1787 Hove gives full particulars of several plantations.

(F) The Deccan—Khandesh, Bijapur and Golkonda:

A coarse, cheap species of the dye was produced in the western border of Khandesh. Brampour (Burhanpur) was reported by Thevenot to bear plenty of rice and indigo.

The Coromandel Coast:

In the beginning of the 17th century, Jourdain found both Bijapur and Golkonda yielding indigo. About Golkonda he says "These ships of Dabhol yearly sally out with very rich commodities as indigo of Golkonda..." 24

Golkonda used to produce indigo in the time of Tavernier.

Sir J.N. Sarkar states that as no indigo was locally grown in Masulipatam, the cotton manufacturers of that region had to depend on Bengal exports of the dye. But we learn from Van den

21. EF., 1618-21, 64n, 291, 310; Commissariat., Mandelso, 15
22. EF., 1622-23, 172, 185, 187.
24. Sen's Thevenot, 101; Ball's Tavernier, I. 1, 42, Jourdain, 198, 199n;
Broecke that the Krishna delta was 'well supplied with the principal dyes, and indigo was grown in the villages near the sea ports on the East coast, and Petapoli itself was noted for the high quality of its Indian madder, or chay-root. Before the Dutch had access to Gujrat or Biana, stress was laid in 1613 on the importance of Masulipatam as a source of supply.

There are several references to indigo of Masulipatam in English factory correspondence of early 17th century. Sir Thomas Roe even suggested the seizure of the Masulipatam indigo which was carried 'to the South' with licences (Cartaz) of the Portuguese so as to forestall the Dutch.

The "indigo of this country" (Masulipatam) was exported to England by the English E.I. Company. The Dutch exported it not only to Holland but 'continually' i.e. frequently, to Bantam. In 1621 the Dutch bought Coromandel indigo at 30 pagodas the 12½ mds. (each md. being of 26 seers). The indigo of Masulipatam was good and "cheaper than the ordinary Sarkhej indigo which has of late years improved in price, while that of Biana has fallen." Moreland has calculated, on the basis of some Dutch records that the cargoes of indigo from Masulipatam varied from 650 to 1000 cwt. not only during 1610-24 but also for many years. During the same period English exports from the East coast were not important. The price of Coromandel indigo was very low. This low grade could be handled commercially owing to low transport changes.25

Indigo was also an important crop in Southern Coromandel.

Malabar Coast:

A brief account of indigo industry of the Malabar coast was given by Rheede (1678).26

Comparative Quality:

The best indigo exported from India to Europe came from the Biana area in Agra province, the second best from Sarkhej

25. Sarkar,
Van den Broecke in Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb, 32n; 110, Arp, B ; EF. 1618-21, 3, 41, 44, 49, 116, 158, 208, 255. ; EF., 1655-60, 103.
T. Raychaudhuri, Jan Company in Coromandel.
26. Watt, CPI.
in Gujrat and the third from Golkonda. The true Biana indigo was the best of its kind due to heavy soiled and brackish water which made indigo easily broken up. Sweet water made indigo hard and coarse. Biana indigo sold at 50% higher than any other variety. Terry observes: “the best sort (of indigo) comes from Biana” and “a coarser sort is made at Cirkeese (Sarkhej) not far from Amadamaz.” Tavernier also says that Hindoos and Baniana made round indigo plants, best of all indigoes and so it was double the price.

English factory correspondence throws ample light on the comparative quality and availability of Agra-Biana and Ahmadabad-Sarkhej indigo. It seems there was some sort of competition between these varieties—in spite of the differences in their price—on account of fluctuations in price due to various factors. Indigo was the most important item among the articles of investment to be purchased from the Agra factory during 1621 (Surat Consultation March 1, 1621). We learn that ‘The whole of Hindustan (Agra-Biana region) produces scarcely 15,000 maunds (of indigo), of which Biana indigo forms only about third’ (Agra to Surat, Nov. 12, 1633). As the price was likely to fall at Agra, the Surat factors enquired from Ahmadabad (March 17, 1619) whether it would not be advisable to buy more at Agra and less at Ahmadabad.

In 1620 the Surat factors, who expected (Feb. 18) to annually export 1000 or 1200 bales of indigo, found the Biana indigo to be ‘cheap(er) for its sort than the Sarkhej’. In fact, notwithstanding its high price and the difficulties of transport over a long distance to Surat, the Biana indigo was much preferred to Sarkhej indigo. In 1624 the E.I. Company ordered that not more than 2/3rds of the indigo shipped should be of the latter kind. Thomas Kerridge, abroad the Jonas at Swally, wrote to the Co. (Nov. 15, 1624) : “The main lading of these ships will be Sarkhej indigo. Requests the Company to reconsider their order that a third of all the indigo sent home should be that of Biana ; the latter is a third dearer than the Sarkhej indigo, while the difference of price in England is small.”

In 1629 (April) the Agra indigo was found to cost the E.I. Company ‘three times as much as the Sarkhej’. So the Surat factors intended to start a fresh investment at Ahmadabad but awaited instructions from England.
The East India Co. reiterated the proportion of Biana and Sarkhej indigo in their instruction to the President and Council at Surat (March 9, 1630): "For indigo, both the Agra and Sarkhej sorts 'are but meane gheeere'. That bought at Ajmer was so reasonable in price that further purchases should be considered... would be glad to have 2000 barrels (of 280 lb.) of Sarkhej indigo, and 1000 of the Agra sort."

The Surat factors (at Swally Marine) wrote to the Co. (April 13, 1630): "The last fleet carried home a greater quantity of Agra indigo than had been sent for many years; this time they have not provided any, 'our ingagements at interest exceeding our hopes of supplies'."

The Biana indigo of 1633 proved to be very bad in England, though it had been procured at 'excessive prices.' The Dutch also had a similar experience as their Sarkhej indigo sold at 40 stivers and the Biana only at 35. Hence the Company preferred Sarkhej to Biana indigo (1634). Commenting on this the Surat factors wrote: "Agra hath proved like that curst cowe... which hath given a good scoop of milk and kickt it down with her heel." (To Co. Dec. 29, 1634).

For a time the dissolution of the Agra factory was seriously considered but the idea was soon given up, as the following will show: "If Ahmadabad be thought fit to be resettled, in expectation of indigo or to accomplish any other investment, if Mr. Fremlen were not heere we know not who would be fitting to undertake it. As for Agra, while the indigo is so dear bought and far fetched, especially when it is required in no greater proportion, we cannot conceive how it should support the expence of a chargeable factory." (Surat to Co. Dec. 29, 1634). ...

"The excessive charge and expence attending the goods provided in Agra, together with the inconvenient transport hither to be laden in season, hath made us often times of opinion to dissolve that factory. Yea, itt hath almost as often been determined yet ever found (as now) new means obliging its continuance. You requiring still one third of that indicoe in proportion of the other of Surquez. We have againe resolved therefore its resettling by sending John Willoughby and Crispin
Blaghen thither to assist therein...”

(8) Marketing and Procurement

(a) Marketing: The question of marketing followed the cultivation and manufacture of indigo. The flourishing cultivators would naturally sell their produce in the market to those who would give them the highest price. But all were not in that happy position. Many had received advances from experienced and ‘substantial Hindu or Moslem’ merchants some months before. Such debtor-cultivators were bound to sell to them and to none else. From his long experience in Agra Pelsaert tells us that the Hindu merchants could extract certain advantages from the peasants in buying, “through generous weighing to which they persuade(d) the peasants by wrangling and cajolery.” This was because “in those days indigo was so plentiful that the peasants were sometimes confounded and the middlemen might have to hold over perhaps 100 bales for want of buyers. “Since however the crop was washed away in 1621, the whole of the produce is marketed promptly, and then there is little or no surplus”.

(b) Procurement

Procurement was an important commercial question facing the prospective buyer. In the first place indigo could be procured directly from the producers in villages. Pelsaert advises purchase from the producing villages and their neighbourhood when the yield was plentiful (i.e. when the jarhi crop suffered no injury and the rains were timely for the nauti.) in which case “one or two experienced men should be sent in the end of August or beginning of September” to Khanua or adjoining villages and to buy whatever is really good.” The English factors at Agra also seemed to have followed the same procedure.

In 1619 they purchased indigo in the aldeas (villages). at Rs. 24 and 25 a md: This in all probability, meant direct purchase from villagers.

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27. Pelsaert, 13 Terry, Finch, ETI 301n. 174, 301 n.
Bull (Hindoo is Hindaun and Baniana is Biana).
EF 1618-21, 85-6 183-4. 235: 1624-29, XXXV, 38, 326; 1630-33, 4, 9, 325, 19, 20, 34 ; 1634-36, 65, 78-79.

In the second place, indigo could be procured indirectly from merchants with or without the help of brokers in the organised market. Pelsaert held that in case of an expected shortage of indigo crop, it was not advisable to purchase from villages but 'to remain quietly' at Khanua and buy only from the (Hindu or Muslim) merchants. He has mentioned two of the 'rich and substantial merchants' of Biyana, viz., Mirza Sadiq and Ghazi Fazil "who sow most of the indigo and who in some seasons have sold to nobody but us (i.e. the Dutch). The price is settled at his house, usually a rupee per md. more than the rate at Ghanowa or in other villages, because the quality is superior, and when the price has been fixed, but not before, anyone can sell to anyone he chooses. This subservience, or respect, is shown to Mirza Sadiq, because he is the oldest (merchant) in Bayana".

The foreign companies had necessarily to depend on brokers and agents in making purchases for their investments in indigo. In 1623, the English factor at Ahmadabad, John Leachland and Gurdas inquired secretly for indigo and came to know of the availability of 3000 fardles at Ahmadabad and Cambay. The broker was described as a 'subtle knave', who demanded Rs. 50 per fardle (of 4 mds. 7 seers) and also told them of the possibility of arrival of funds from Variao to Ahmadabad.29

Apart from the brokers, acting as middlemen or agents, there seemed to have been another class of persons, referred to as 'buyers' in factory correspondence who seemed to have been technical experts of indigo.

Both the Dutch and the English E.I. Co. had their own "buyers" to make purchases on their behalf. The buyers were not always Indians. They had to be careful, test the purity of the indigo, and vouchsafe for it. Nevertheless, these precautions did not prove to be foolproof. Some of the Agra indigo sent in 1644 was "so bad" that the Company returned a sample. The buyer (named Turner) having died, it was sent to Agra "for inquiry and as a warning to the present buyers, who have been earnestly cautioned to be careful in this respect." The Surat factors, however, pleaded that it was impossible for them

29. Pelsaert, 16-17, EF. 1624-29, 246; 1622-23, 328.
to “see all that they buy, it being acquired in many several places, great distance.”

Advances of money were made to the villagers and merchants e.g. at Biana. But the most interesting case of advance seems to be that in Sind, as already noted earlier.

Purchase of indigo by the contending buyers followed close on heels the cutting of the crop. The time of cutting being August and September, the principal season for sale was October and November. But it would have been much more advantageous to the buyers to wait till ‘the fine of December or January’ so that the dye might be dry and disposable. However, owing to the competition of the merchants the English factors could not afford to wait till then, as delay would have exhausted the supply of good indigo (“If we should not buy with the first, it would be impossible to procure any good”). Hence the English factors had necessarily to make purchases early and they urged on the Company to send ‘early advice’ of the Company’s requirements. This early purchase was attended with one great disadvantage. At the time of purchase the indigo was ‘green’ i.e. fresh and not fully dried. But at the time of unloading in England after a long lapse of time, the indigo dried up and considerably declined in weight. Hence the Company used to send frequent complaints of ‘the great want of weight’ to the factors in India. But the latter had to assure the Company that this was but natural and it applied not only to indigo sent to England but also to Persia, Basra &c and the loss and disadvantage was felt not only by the English but also by merchants of other nationalities.30

(c) Financing

Purchases of indigo could be made either in cash or barter.

(i) Cash: Sometimes cash was sent directly from England on ships or funds were obtained by exchange of rials into rupees.

In 1618 John Browne at Ahmadabad tried to procure a good quality of indigo before the ships’ arrival. But the matter was delayed as he had to await a supply of money from the fleet. “The exchange of your ryalls into rupees is of some consequence, partly for the loss of time in attending for their delivery and return of money in Ahamadabad when our business

lies in Serquence (Sarkhej), then the disadvantage in their sale; whereof of either a word.” (Ahmadabad to Co. Feb. 10, 1618).

Funds were also provided for indigo investments by remittance of bills from the central factory as at Surat to subordinate factories like Agra or Ahmadabad (May 29, 1619).

In 1619 the Agra factors invested their entire cash in indigo. Bills of exchange were closed by the Surat factors “to be rescribed” at Ahmadabad and sent to the Agra factors. As the Surat authorities required from Agra ‘a larger stock of indigo than usual’, they enclosed (30 Sept. 1630) a bill of exchange for Rs. 25,000 drawn upon “Vimgee Kica (Bimgee Kuckaw, i.e. Bhimji Kaka) the Vakall, Wail or agent, of the famous Indian merchant-prince Vergce Vora (Virji Vora) described as ‘ancient acquaintance of the Company’, who also gave them a letter of credit for Rs. 25,000 for further supply by Agra upon all occasions. Communicating their desire for purchasing 4000 or 5000 maunds, the Surat factors assured their colleagues at Agra of a regular supply of funds and of the quick dispatch of one or two factors for helping them. The Surat authorities acting on the advice of Ahmadabad factors decided (Oct. 11, 1630) that they would restrict the purchase of Sarkhej indigo to 500 baskets at not more than 16 rupees a mad. This would necessitate increasing the quantity of indigo to be procured at Agra, the funds for which could best be furnished through Ahmadabad by bills of exchange. So they requested Ahmadabad to immediately remit 20,000 rupees or 30,000 if possible to Agra and further supplies of 40,000 or 50,000 every twelve days. The Surat factors wrote to Agra (Nov. 2, 1630): “Refer to their last letter concerning the provision of indigo. As regards funds, in addition to the 50,000 already forwarded, the factors at Ahmadabad have remitted them 20,000 rupees and the enclosed bills, payable by ‘Bimgee Kuckaw’ will provide 30,000 more. Further remittances will be made every eight or ten days until the full amount has been provided. Urge a speedy investment in order that the goods may be down here before the rains”.

Sometimes the cash remittances of the E. I. Company proved inadequate and they had to utilise the proceeds of some imported articles like quicksilver and broadcloth or they had to take recourse to borrowing. “The great quantities of quicksilver brought last year and this, not only on the Company’s-
account but also by individuals, have cloyed all the markets, so that it is not, worth above 3 or 3½ mahmudis per seer. It is therefore, decided to send to Agra funds for the indigo investment in that place, thus obviating the need of borrowing money at interest there. (Surat Consultations, Feb. 10, 1632). In 1634, during the imperial monopoly in indigo, with the price of Biana indigo (Rs. 61 a md.), the Company's cash remittances proved inadequate to purchase 543 bales of indigo they had not only to utilise the proceeds of other imported articles like quicksilver and broadcloth and to charge Rs. 33,000 upon Surat by two bills of exchange at a loss of 8½%.

The absorption of the entire funds of the Company at Agra for joint Anglo-Dutch purchase of indigo compelled the Surat authorities (Feb 6, 1634) to stop the investment at Ahmadabad and other places in the absence of remittance.31

(ii) \( \text{Barter} \) : In 1618 the Agra factors sent 951 fardles of indigo to Surat after procuring them by "barter in cloth of which they had overstock". In January, 1623, the Ahmadabad factors proposed to Surat that Dholka indigo might be purchased at bargain if the Governor could be persuaded to take coral in part payment. In 1629 we read: "Of the lead, part was trucked at Ahmadabad for Sarkhej indigo at Rs. 54 and 55 per fardle of 4 mds. seven seers; the rest was taken by Virji Vora at 7 mahmudis per md. in exchange for pepper at 16 mahmudis per md. 'Hereof 1000 sowses or mds. 12000 will suffice this place yearly" (Surat to Co., April 27, 1629).32

9. Packing:
The question of packing indigo assumed considerable importance in connection with its importance as a principal article of export.

(i) The E. I. Company insisted on knowing the weight of each bale of indigo because the new indigo decreased much in weight. Agra and Ahmadabad factors were censured (1621) by the Company "for not sending home the particular weight of each bale of indigo." As a consequence the Company was assured that "care will be taken at Ahmadabad in packing and receiving indigo", and that twenty eight fardles were sent home

31. \( \text{EF. 1618-21, 7-8, 100, 84 ; 1630-33, 56, 61, 82, 206 ; 1634-36, 70, 11.} \)
32. \( \text{EF. 1618-21, 47 ; 1622-23, 187 ; 1624-29, 334.} \)
of a new packing’ for trial. Details of this new mode are, however, not given. The Ahmadabad factors felt difficulties in packing the indigo and solicited instructions from Surat as to the mode of packing. They also found it difficult to comply with Company’s directions to specify the exact weight of each bale (Oct. 1621).

(ii) The E.I. Company gave strict instructions that no dirt or stones be packed. Thomas Kerridge (abroad the Hart) assured the Company (April 10, 1621) that “they would be careful to see that no dirt or stones be packed in the fardles.”

(iii) Care was also taken of the type of containers of indigo. (a) It was very natural for the Company to insist on strong baskets, because indigo was ‘likely to be spoilt during transport either on land or on sea if it was not packed in strong baskets. We find in a letter of Surat to the Company (Feb. 9 and 15, 1619) : ‘The Ahmadabad factors will be instructed to send the indigo in strong baskets’. (b) Indigo had to be embaled not only in strong baskets but also in square baskets, evidently for facilities of stowage on ships. Square baskets were used by Sarkhej factors (Sept. 1621) Such instructions of the E.I. Co. must have been communicated by Surat to Ahmadabad but somewhat late, as we find the Ahmadabad factors writing to Surat (Nov. 13, 1621): “They cannot now pack their round churls of indigo into square basket for want of time.” It is interesting to read of smuggling of pepper with indigo on the ships. The Surat factors informed the Company (Nov. 7, 1621) that they intended “to shoot the pepper in hould among the round churls of indigo, which for hast (i.e. haste) cannot be packed into square baskets”. In 1623 the Swally Marine factors requested Surat to make an early supply of pepper ‘to shute with the indico’. Another difficulty was that the square baskets were not of uniform size. The Ahmadabad factors informed Surat (Oct. 6, 1921) “The square baskets are not made all of one bigness’, and moreover, ‘all indigo fills not alike; therefore they cannot without more time and help comply with the Company’s directions. They would be glad to know the Surat factors’ opinions in this matter.33

33. EF. 1618-21, 301, 308, 314, 291; 51; 278, 330, 324, 291; 1622-23, 330.
10. Factors influencing Price:

(A) Rainfall: Being an agricultural crop, indigo depended for production on rainfall and any factor affecting rainfall affected its price as well. Thus heavy rains raised the price of indigo in 1621. The Agra factors expressed their apprehension to the Surat authorities (Aug. 22, Sept. 8, 1621) that "indigo will be dear". The rainfall of 1621, being unusually heavy ('unaccustomed'), unprecedented during the last one hundred years, the major part of new indigo crop became drowned and damaged, though the old indigo became 'much improved'. Similarly the Ahmadabad factors informed Surat (Aug. 10, 1622): "Have been endeavouring to procure the goods required: but on account of 'extreme rains' we cannot look upon nil (indigo')".

On the other hand want of rains also caused the price to rise. The Surat factors wrote to the Co. (April 13, 1630): "The want of rains these three passed years (1627-30) hath been also greater cause of its improving in price; half the quantity scarcely made of what usually in former times. This year giveth hopes of a greater abundance..."

In 1648 indigo was reported to be 'both dear and poor' at Agra owing to scanty rain.34

(B) Famine: The famous Gujrat famine 1630—2 adversely affected the indigo manufacture and trade. As early as October, 1630 it was said to have caused 'a great scarcity of indigo'. We learn from a letter of Dec. 9, 1632: "...The town itself and all the country adjoining in a manner unpeopled. So that the times here are so miserable that never in the memory of man any the like famine and mortallity happened. This that was in a manner the garden of the world is now turned into a wilderness, having few or no man left to manure their ground nor to labour in any profession:... Ahmadabad, that yielded 3,000 bales indigo yearly or more, now hardly yields 300; yet a plentiful year for its growth, but few men living to gather it, but lies rotting on the ground."35

(C) Quality: The price of indigo, as of any other commodity, depended on quality. Thus Biana indigo, considered

34. *EF*. 1618-21, 260, 268; 1622-23, 123; 1630-33, 20; 1646-50, 276.
to be the best indigo, also commanded the highest price while Sarkhej indigo cost less. In 1625 the round indigo of Biana cost Rs. 28 to 32 a maund and the flat indigo of Sarkhej only about Rs. 12. So the Swally Marine factors ‘thought it best’ to buy the latter in preference to the latter, because ‘their respective values in England do not at all correspond’. In 1627 while Ahmadabad indigo (old and new) ranged from Rs. 12½ to 15½ the Biana indigo cost from Rs. 35/- to 36½ a md.

Again, new indigo cost more than the old. In 1627 the Surat factors purchased 580 square fardles, the old at Rs. 12½ to 13½ (per maund ?) and the new from 13½ to 15½. They explained to the Company the reason for the rise in price being that last years indigo is better made than any of late years has been\[36\] (D) Manner of Procurement: Indigo purchased in the open market cost more than that for which money had been advanced to the cultivators before. In 1627, 386 bales of Biana indigo were provided at Rs. 35 to 36½ a md. “except a small parcel brought green in the villages ‘by money advanced beforehand’ costing only Rs. 24½.\[37\]

(E) Season: Purchases, if not made in right season, cost the buyer more. From a letter of Surat to the Company (Jan. 4, 1628) we learn that the English purchased 402 round churhes at Rs. 51, the churl (of 4 mds.) and waited ‘too long’ in an endeavour ‘to abate the price (as the Dutch were without money to purchase any) and were compelled to pay Rs. 1 a md. more ‘than they might have done before the rains’\[38\]

(F) Competition among buyers: Trade competition naturally tended to raise the price. A very pointed reference to increased price due to Anglo-Dutch rivalry is found in a letter of Surat to the E.I. Co., Jan. 4, 1628: “They have done their best to bring down the price of Sarkhej indigo, but this will never be effected while both Dutch and English are competing for it.”\[39\]

The price of Sarkhej indigo was expected to rise on arrival of Dutch ships and so the English purchased more indigo at Rs. 10 the maund.

36. _EF._ 1624-29, 63, 208.
37. _Ibid._ 208.
38. _Ibid._
39. _Ibid._
In 1622 its price soared up on a ‘rumour’ i.e. report that the English at Ahmadabad (Aug. 10, 1622) intended to buy indigo costing three or four lakhs of rupees.

The Dutch were reported (by English factors at Agra) to have been buying indigo ‘without fear or wit’ at Rs. 35/- for old and Rs. 33\(\frac{3}{4}\) for new, which was considered by the latter to be “3 or 4 higher than necessary”.

The Agra factors bought more than 400 bales of round indigo but on account of the famine and keen competition among the buyers (‘in regard of the often iterated drought and many greedy buyers’) the price rose to Rs. 38 a md. and even at that rate not much was available in 1630. As they did not expect more than 500 to 600 fardles for export in 1631, they had to make a larger investment in calicoes.

The activities of private traders, which increased the demand of indigo, also caused its price to rise. The unauthorised arrival of Richard Boothby, the English Chief of Baroda, at Ahmadabad and thence at Sarkhej raised the price of indigo “to the great hindrance of the Company’s business”, and his conduct was characterised as ‘mutinous and contentious’ by President Wylde (to Co. April 1, 1930). When Signor Adam Verhoeve, the Dutch chief (at Ahmadabad) left Surat for Ahmadabad, the English President warned the local factor (Mountney) to watch whether the Dutch intended to buy indigo. Thinking Boothby to have been deputed by the English for investment in indigo, the Dutch purchased a large quantity of it. As a result the English also were forced to secure their needs at “the high prices then ruling.”

(G) *Transport* : After procurement and packing comes the question of transport of indigo. The cost of transport raised the price of indigo in the external market.

So far as the English E.I. Co. were concerned, the main problem was to send, besides other goods, the indigo procured inland to Surat for export. Goods were carried in cañillas or caravans, which were carefully guarded. The Ahmadabad—Surat caravan with 450 bales of indigo was guarded by 55 peons. In 1632 Peter Mundy journeyed from Agra to Surat.

40. *EF*. 1618-21, 324; 1622-23, 109; 1624-29, 189; 1630-33, 131
with a _cafila_ (caravan) consisting of 268 camels and 109 carts with a convoy of 170 peons or soldiers, carrying 1493 fardles of indigo and 12 of saltpetre and other goods.

Distance determined the cost of transport or carriage:

(a) Burhanpur—Surat: about 1$\frac{1}{2}$ Mahmudis the great maund, or nearly half a penny per lb.
(b) Agra—Surat: 3$\frac{1}{2}$ mahmudis per camel.
(c) Ahmadabad and Cambay—Surat: 1$\frac{1}{2}$ Mahmudis the small maund, besides 11$\frac{1}{2}$% custom on all goods ‘there passed over the water’.

Inland transport was sometimes affected by political conditions, e.g. rebellions, disturbances etc. A letter of Kerridge to the Company refers to ‘many petty rebellions in this country (10th April, 1621). The uncertainty of succession after Jahangir’s death affected the course of trade. This is referred to in a letter from Agra to Surat (Dec. 31, 1627): “Wrote last on November, 28. Nothing of importance has happened since “all merchandizing being at a stand (still), and who shall reign not yet known: the most likliest thought Choroom (i.e. Khurram). Here are daily divers reports and rumours spread abroad from Lahore but nothing certain”.

Biana indigo amounting to 200 fardles and costing about Rs, 30 md. lay ‘in readiness’ at Agra and could not be transported to Surat ‘until the country is more settled’, (Jan. 1628).

Inland insecurity sometimes affected the fate of the caravans carrying indigo. In 1618 the Agra-Surat _cafila_ (caravan) coming under John Young was waylaid in the area between Hindowa (Hindia) and Naderbray, at a place 22 days’ journey from Surat, situated in the _jagir_ of ‘Shaw Narasaus’ Shah Nawaz Khan (Jahangiri), son of Abdur Rahim Khan i Khanan. The crime was committed, as the English, believed, by some of his servants, under the pretext of realising _rahdarī_ or customary charge for guarding the road, which was not paid when demanded. The English lost 4 or 5 attendants and 14 churls (63 mds.) of Biana indigo costing Rs. 2205 (at Rs. 35 a md.) or Rs. 4,961.8 (at 2$\frac{1}{2}$ M. a rupee). The Surat factors suspected the Baluchi guards thereof of having ‘purloined some of the packages’. The Qazi (of Surat) was unwilling to listen to the evidence of the camelmen and refused to give them “certificates necessary to make a claim for restitution”. They
-expected that the value would be restored by the lord of the place of occurrence if the jagirdar did not object. It seems, however, that there was opposition and no recovery could be made for the 14 chests of indigo by April, 1621. So they tried their best to get satisfaction and the Surat factors decided at a consultation to procure a royal firman.42

(H) Administrative Interference in Indigo Trade:

Moreland pointed out that production and sale of indigo furnished opportunities for administrative exploitation. From English factory correspondence we learn that the Emperor and many high officials of the Mughal government, including governor of a province and his diwan, sometimes engaged in their private trade in indigo. They made heavy or monopoly purchases and endeavoured to sell their own stocks to the English East India Company or sometimes to force it on them or interfered with the normal business activities in the market. Such practices affected the price.

(i) Governor of Ahmadabad: In 1618 the Governor of Ahmadabad demanded a sum of one lakh of rupees before granting permission to start annual manufacture (according to a Dutch factor, quoted by Moreland).

(ii) Governor of Broach: In September, 1621, the Broach factors wanted instructions from Surat about Governor's indigo, because his shiqdar was pressing them for an answer.

They resisted the attempt to force the Governor's indigo upon them. They were told that it was from Sarkhej but the Ahmadabad factors held it to be from Jambusar which was not suitable for England, (To Surat, Oct. 6, 1621).

(iii) Governor of Dholka: The Governor of Dholka was engaged in indigo trade. The Ahmadabad factors, anxious for purchases, went there but could not meet him. His servants did not know if he had an idea of selling his indigo to the English. So they had to tap the open market.

When the English factors at Ahmadabad had weighted 600 mds. of Sarkhej indigo (1622), the Governor of Dholka came and tried to claim purveyance or prior right of selling his own goods before others. He persuaded 'Mohomett Tucke, the

42. EF. 1622-23, 189: 1618-21, 51, 250; 1624-29, 189, 208; 1618-21, pp. 59, 74, 81, 84, 102, 210, 250, 283, 308. Mundy II. 225;
Princes Duan’ i.e. Mahmud Taqi, the diwan of Ahmadabad i.e. of Prince Khurram, then Governor of Gujrat, to prohibit all the merchants of Sarkhej from carrying on any further sale or transport of even the sold quantities. (‘boeth to sell other or to waye that which formerly they had sould’). His object was to compel the English to purchase his own indigo. This led the English to suspend their activities for five or six days. But the merchants of the place made a ‘general complaint’, whereupon the Governor withdrew his ban and granted free sale. So they expected to finish the embaling of 4000 mds. within about three weeks. Though the Governor of Dholka was very anxious that the English should buy his indigo the latter were unwilling to accept his terms, and as Surat did not desire an increased supply, the matter was not pursued. (Ahmadabad to Surat, Dec. 26, 1622). But he begged them to refer to Surat (Jan. 22, 1623). The Ahmadabad factors recommended to Surat (Jan. 26, 1623) that the price of Dholka indigo was reasonable and it would be a good bargain if the Governor would take coral in part payment.

(iv) Prince Khurram, Governor of Gujrat and

(v) Mahmud Taqi, Diwan of Ahmadabad, also carried on their own trade in indigo. At first it was learnt that the Diwan was anxious to sell his 1300 and 1400 churls of indigo on favourable terms. Subsequently the Ahmadabad factors reported to Surat (April 3, 1623) that “the indigo of Mahmud Taqi had been brought here and all dealers warned not to sell till its disposal, but that he had not spoken to them on the subject. They further enquired from Surat (April 5, 1623) the decision of the President and Council of Surat regarding the indigo of Mahmud Taqi, as it might possibly be seized for the ‘king’s use’ and then it would take a long time before it became available for sale. But the Surat factors reminded (March 25, 1623) the Ahmadabad factors of “the Company’s injunctions to buy the better quality only” but suggested that the best way would be to buy loose indigo at Sarkhej, but as the time was short, they should take what had already been fardled. However, they advised the latter not to buy more than 1000 small churls and conclude an agreement, if possible, with Mahmud Taqi to pay him at Surat. The Ahmadabad factors received the instructions from Surat on April 7, 1623, and at once opened negotiations with
Mahmud Taqi. He was willing to sell his own indigo (371 bales) and promised to do the same with the rest which belonged to the Prince ‘when tymes are more quiett’; but he required payment at Ahmadabad and not in Surat. Considering the price charged by the Diwan (Rs. 40 per bale) to be “too dear” the Ahmadabad factors referred the matter to Surat for decision and asked for necessary remittances. Plenty of old indigo was available but the merchants were loath to sell “because of the prohibition”. If they bought any from the latter, they would endeavour to agree for payment at Surat, but at the prevailing rate of exchange (Rs. 41 for 100 mahmudis paid there). By April 17, 1623, the Ahmadabad factors purchased the entire stock of Mahmud Taqi’s indigo at Rs. 36 per bale. But payment had to be held up pending the receipt of Rs. 15,000 from Surat. As Mahmud Taqi pressed for clearance the Ahmadabad factors feared that they might have to borrow it at interest, though only as a last resort.

The payment was cleared by May 2, 1623, after the receipt of the bill for Rs. 4,200 from Surat; for the balance due still one of the factors at Ahmadabad must remain as hostage pending a further remittance. But this partial payment was not followed by the lifting of the embargo. The indigo merchants were still prohibited from dealing, and Md. Taqi would not permit the sale of any or dispose of the Prince’s at present.

(vi) Saif Khan: President Rastell made a bargain with Saif Khan for his indigo at Cambay (1623). It was settled that Leachland, an Ahmadabad factor, would go there to receive it. The Baroda factors, advised by Leachland, saw the Khan and adjusted the matter satisfactorily. Saif Khan pressed for payment.

(vii) Muqarrab Khan, Governor of Agra: Muqarrab Khan, Governor of Gujrat, was transferred first to Bihar and then to Agra. To satisfy the Emperor on his expected arrival there, the Governor wanted the English factors at Agra to supply ‘toys and rarities’. After great deal of effort the Agra factors procured goods worth Rs. 500. But he was never satisfied and imposed an embargo on the entire indigo by monopoly purchase, (‘embargues all the hearbe into his hands or under restraint’). At the same time he declared that he would permit none except the English to purchase it at their prices only if they furnished him with “such
things as were not presents". In other words if Muqarrab Khan was the sole or monopoly purchaser the English would be the sole buyer of indigo. The time for procurement and despatch of the ships was impending but he would not be induced to lift the embargo without the coveted articles. The indigo bargained by the English in November and December could not be purchased even at the approach of February. Meanwhile it was reported that the Governor granted "Asaf Khan's people to buy at ships and Surat and our bullion too in Ahmadabad, if I would have sold on desired conditions."

(viii) Emperor Shahjahan: In 1632-33 Emperor Shahjahan established an imperial monopoly of indigo, which brought business to a standstill. Its working has been discussed by me separately.

(ix) Sind: Cultivation of indigo suffered in Sind due to misgovernment and oppression. This has been explained earlier.

(I). Inland Tolls and Customs:

References to demand of inland tolls during internal transport and of customs at the time of export are very rare. But they must have had a share in influencing the price.

There were certain factors which at first weighed with the English E.I. Co. in preferring Sarkhej indigo to Biana indigo, notwithstanding the undisputedly better quality of the latter. The first was the prime cost of Biana indigo, about three times that of Sarkhej indigo. The second was the high cost of inland transport from Agra to Surat. The third was the price commanded in England. All these factors are clearly brought out in a letter of Surat to the Company (April 27, 1629).

"Of Biana indigo they have this year shipped 1,200 fardles which is a larger proportion than even was sent before. Its high price (Rs. 36 and 37 per md.) and the cost of transport make it very dear, quite treble the cost of Sarkhej indigo, which is now

43. (i) Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb;
(ii) EF, 1618-21, pp. 273, 278, 291, 300.
(iii) EF, 1622-23, pp. 162, 172-3, 185, 187.
(vi) Ibid, pp. 333, 347.
(vii) EF, 1618-19, p. 9.
(viii) Vide ch. 4, Sec. 2, Supra.
(ix) See ante, sec. 7.
much better manufactured than formerly, and cost only Rs. 12 to 16 per md. Unless the yield in England is proportionate, they think it would be well to confine themselves to the Sarkhej variety, which can be more easily brought down to the ships."

11. *Trade Competition and Distribution*

(A) *The Agencies*: During the period under review, indigo was highly prized and became an object of keen competition among merchants of different countries and nationalities. Among the Europeans, there were the English, the Dutch and the Portuguese.

Among the Asiatics, there were the Armenians, the 'Moor merchants',—the Persians and 'Moguls',—and the (Hindu) Baniars &c.

*The Europeans*-(i) *The English*

The E.I. Company's demand of Indian indigo did not shoot up suddenly but it was a matter of gradual and slow development. 'Of exports, indigo which formed the chief lading of the Hope in 1615, maintained its importance throughout this period (1624-9) owing no doubt to the great demand for in Europe for dyeing purposes' (Foster). In fact two opposite tendencies were discernible in contemporary English factory correspondence, the determining factors being the relative preference for cotton goods or indigo, the question of price and profit and the exigencies of the home market.

(a) On the one hand the English factors in India wanted to export indigo from India. Substantial amounts of indigo were despatched from Agra to Surat for export. The Surat factors also approved of such purchases and urged for more and expected (1620) to export 1000 or 1200 bales of indigo annually. Indigo figured prominently in the list of goods to be purchased at Agra and Ahmadabad (Surat Cons. March 1, 1621). In 1630 the total cost of 2000 fardles of Ahmadabad indigo and 500 fardles of Agra indigo was expected to come up to £25,000.

(b) On the other hand, there was lessened demand for export of indigo. The E. I. Company preferred cotton goods to indigo and accordingly instructed Surat to export less indigo. There are several references to this in English factory records.

44. *EF. 1624-29, 335.*
(i) Agra noted (Dec. 1, 1618) the Company’s decision ‘to have less indicoes and more calicoes’.
(ii) Surat to Ahmadabad (Oct. 7, 1619); The Company’s opinion regarding indigo and desire for increase of all linen commodities should be noted.
(iii) Surat to Masulipatam (Oct. 8, 1619): The Company wished for larger linen investments and less indigo.
(iv) Surat to Co. (Nov. 3 and 5, 1619): “Your earnestness for encrease of linen commodities and disesteeme of indico we also apprehend...”
(v) Surat to Agra (Dec. 2, 1620): There would not be much need of factors at Agra, “for the Company have required but a small quantity of indigo, carpets and Samanas’.
(c) In April, 1622, Robert Young at Agra considered that the factory might well be dissolved, for “Agra yields nothing of itself, and indigo, the chief article of merchandise, is now too dear to give much profit”.

However, this pessimistic view did not seem to have carried much weight with Surat. It was decided (Surat Consultation, Sept. 24, 1625) to order Hopkinson to provide 1200 churls (bales) of indigo immediately and to send Rs. 8000 to Agra for purchase of Biana indigo. But as late as November, 1626 the Agra factors were found to have apparently neglected to carry out “the reiterated orders” for supply of indigo. In 1628 the prospect of indigo supply to England was reported by Surat to be slender, on account of the high price of Ahmadabad indigo and risks of transport from Agra.

(d) The prospects brightened up soon. President Wylde wrote to the E.I. Co. (April 13, 1630): “The last fleet carried home a greater quantity of Agra indigo than had been sent for many years.” But the question of price seemed to have acted as a damper. We find Surat warning Ahmadabad: “Will insist no more on the provision of indigo unless it be had good and within the price mentioned” (Oct. 27, 1630), and again, “decline to sanction the purchase of indigo at its present price”.

The E.I. Company’s “Commission enjoining a large investment this year in both sorts of indigo” could not be complied with by Surat in 1630 because of want of rains in Gujrat. So Surat ordered twenty to thirty thousand additional pieces of white calico, “as the scarcity of
Sarkhej indigo necessitated a reduction under that head”. Production fell by about 15-20 per cent. As compared to the normal outturn of four or five thousand fardles, hardly two or three hundred were expected. In the consequential keen competition for this limited amount, the English were at a disadvantage, compared to other merchants. We read in a Surat letter (To Company, Dec. 31, 1630): “And for that of the passed years growth, the many buyers, as well Dutch as Persians, Armenians &c, having furnished themselves with the choicest ware at excessive high rates, there is left but a poor remains of refuse stuff behind, enough only for this country’s service, and yet that not to be purchased under 18 rupees the maund; which therefore we determine not to meddle with, though at farr less rates in respect of its bad condition. In lieu of Sarkhej, they will send an increased quantity of Biana indigo.”

(ii) *The Dutch* were keen rivals of the English for provision of indigo for their respective investments, in Gujrat and Agra regions especially, each trying to steal a march over the other. Standing orders were given by the respective Companies to their factors in India to have a ‘good store’ of indigo. We read in a letter of Swally Marine to the Company (Feb. 14, 1625): “However, in view of the Company’s peremptory order, they would have bought a good store (as the Dutch have done), but their stock of money has been so much exhausted by the payment of their debts that they have judged it advisable to invest the small remainder in calicoes and other goods”.

In 1621 the Ahmadabad factors purchased more than 9000 mds. of indigo ordered as they were anxious ‘to prevent the prevention of our Dutch friends’ i.e. to forestall the Dutch.

It is interesting to read a letter from Ahmadabad to Surat (Dec. 20, 1621) as it throws light on Anglo-Dutch competition in Sarkhej: ‘The Dutch with all their goods having quited (left) Cambayya are com(e) again to Sarkhej, where they begin again

45. Europeans : (i) English : (a) *EF*. 1624-29, XXXV ; 1618-21, pp. 183-4, 235 ; 1630-33, 20;
(b) Cotton preferred to indigo;
*EF*, 1618-21, pp. 46, 126, 127, 137, 214.
(c) Agra;
*EF*, 1622-23, 75 ; 1624-29, pp. 94, 153, 214;
(d) 1630-33, pp. 19, 74, 96 ; 124-5.
to buy indigo new and old at about Rs. 9½ or 9⅔ per md. Ninety
maunds they bought after their arrival the next day and are
now very busy in bespeaking square baskets after our fashion.
They profess to have but 1000 rupees more to bestow, but they
have so often failed of their promise as we dare give no credit
to their words, and we are verily persuaded that though they
buy not much now they intend a very speedy return hither
again, and if they have any means they are likely to sweep the
market clear before them except this factory be supplied in tyme,
whereof you may please seriously to consider.'

In January, 1623, the Dutch were able to buy 500 churls
and were there bargaining for 1000 more. However, they had
to close their investments with 450 churls more.

The English had no faith in the Dutch. A letter from
Ahmadabad to Surat (Feb. 5, 1623) reads: 'If Malik Ambar’s
performance with you depend on the friendship and qaul of the
Dutch, then may we think the finishing of that business is
assuredly doubtful, for so far as we may collect by conference
with them they have no resolution to be at peace with any, if
violence and thieving may produce them profit.' The Dutch
indigo was stopped at the moment of departure because they
had failed to pay ready money for it; but after much wrangling
and on their giving better security, it was allowed to proceed
with the English caravan.'

In Gujrat the Dutch tried to procure indigo in different
places. About December, 1623, they were at Nerriad (Nariad)
and were endeavouring 'to engage house room in 'Drugesera'. This
tended to raise the price. The English factors at Ahmadabad had
to strike a bargain for 1600 fardles at Rs. 42½ a fardle, this being
the lowest price obtained. The Dutch failed to procure it even
on Rs. 43½. They could do nothing except 'to hire our (English)
houses at Sarkhej out of their hands at Rs. 8 a month. The
English factors at Ahmadabad sarcastically noted that they left
twenty fardles of bad indigo for the Dutch to purchase, and
that 'the Dutch were likely to return as light as they came', for
they had been several times to Sarkhej without getting any
supply of indigo and were at a loss what to do (Dec. 1623), the
shipping season being January. Two English merchants went
to Cambay and the rest were engaged in hiring of houses and
repairing the warehouses. [Hutchinson at Ahmadabad informed
Surat (Dec. 19, 1623) that they prevented the Dutch from getting the English house at Sarkhej and "would do their best to disappoint them in other matters."\(^{46}\)

Notwithstanding this Anglo-Dutch rivalry we get some instances of Anglo-Dutch cooperation regarding indigo.

The Dutch and English factors at Ahmadabad "agreed to make no further investment in indigo without the joint approbation of both". The Dutch being desirous of buying some indigo it was agreed 500 or 600 churls would be bought in common, and equally divided (Surat Consultation, Nov. 28, 1625).

At the Sarkhej market (1630) heavy purchases of indigo were made by the 'Moore merchants' for Persia and the Baniyans for resale to the English, the Dutch and the Portuguese. The English factors refrained from buying it for some time. But when there was 'a risk of their not getting any at all', they purchased 1000 fardles of 'the choice and principallest of the last yeares growth.' On getting scent of this the Dutch purchased more than 2000 fardles and even all available balance. So, when the English wanted to purchase 500 fardles, there was nothing left except '400 and odd fardles of coarse and base stuff of four years standing, which also the Portugals have since bought'. After this no indigo was left in Ahmadabad.

After several years' drought, 1630 gave 'hopes of a greater abundance.' Fearing that the Dutch would pounce on the crop, the English ordered 2000 fardles in Gujrat.

But during 1627-28 both the English and the Dutch were eager to purchase the entire stock of 250 fardles of old indigo then available at Agra but both were handicapped by want of funds, the owners demanding ready money. The Dutch had been ordered to buy 1000 fardles. Out of this they purchased 500 only and became heavily indebted. The Dutch were at an advantageous position compared with the English on account of earlier arrival of Dutch ships (with money). So the Agra factors begged:

\(^{46}\) (ii) Dutch Competition, 
*EF*, 1624-29, 63; 1618-21, 329, 348; 1622-23, pp. 185, 187, 190-331-34, 346; Anglo-Dutch Co-operation: 
*Ibid*, 1624-29, 111; competition at Sarkhej: 1630-33, 20; at Agra; 
*Ibid*, 1624-29, 228; 
from Surat (Jan. 21, 1628) a ‘speedy supply of money’ to repay their debts and also to purchase indigo and other goods.

It seems that the Surat factors had some complaints against the factors of Agra, viz., that they did not ‘write quite as often as the Dutch’, that they were less diligent than the Dutch ‘in making advances for indigo and buying what was available’. The Agra factory stoutly denied these charges (March 2, 1628) and observed that ‘the earlier arrival of the Dutch ships gave their factors the advantage, but still they paid dearly for what they procured.’ The relations were so bitter that the Dutch were not on speaking terms with the English.

(iii) The Portuguese: The Portuguese trade in India had evidently declined in the seventeenth century even before the fall of Hughli (1632). Jourdain says in 1611: “Their lading which they carry from Cambaia is all sorts of fine cloth of cotton, much indigo (which is brought from all places to be shipped there as is aforesaid), all kinds of drugs, which are bought in Cambay and many other places of India and sent hither against the time of the year. The country where the meaner sorts of indigo is made is near to Cambay etc.” They purchased some base indigo, four year old, what remained after the English and the Dutch had bought better stuff.46

The Asiatic merchants:

Hence for all practical purposes the English and the Dutch were the principal European competitors for the Indian indigo. But far from being able to monopolise the Indian market, they had to face keen competition from Asiatic merchants, both non-Indian and Indian. The activities of the non-Indian Asiatic merchants,—the Armenians, the Persians, or the Moguls—had, of course, a pronounced effect on the market, as rightly pointed out by Moreland. They not only purchased indigo for Asiatic consumption (e.g. Persia) but also carried it to Eastern Europe, exporting it from Agra via Basra. But Moreland has omitted to mention the part played by the Hindu merchants, the Banians of English factory records.

(iv) The Armenians: The Armenian traders were very actively engaged in the indigo trade and proved to be keen competitors of the Dutch and the English. This is clear from the report of Pelsaert and the English factory correspondence.
Pelsaert writes: "From repeated personal experience there, my opinion is that it is more profitable for the Hon. Company that buyers should keep quiet, than that they should run about the country from one village to another. Goodness knows, the Armenians do quite enough of that, running and racing about like hungry folk, whose greedy eyes show that they are dissatisfied with the meal provided, who take a taste of every dish (and) make the other guests hurry to secure their own portions, but directly they have tasted each course, they are satisfied, and can hold as more. In the indigo market they have just like that, making as if they would buy up the whole stock, rising prices, losing a little themselves, and causing great injury to us and to other buyers who have to purchase large quantities."

(v) 'Moor' merchants: The vital role of the Muslim merchants and the Hindu Baniyas in the indigo market has been forcefully described in contemporary English factory correspondence.

We learn from a letter of Surat to the Company (Dec. 21, 1628): "There is small likelihood of a fall in price, unless the Armenian and Moor merchants forbear their buying for Persia, &c, where it is in much request."

Similarly a Surat letter of April 13, 1630, tells us that any attempt to reduce the price of Sarkhej indigo was not likely to succeed "so long as the Moore merchants buy such large quantities for Persia as they have done of late years, ..." Many merchants coming from Persia on board the English ships, being debarred from purchasing finer goods of the Deccan on account of the wars raging there (e.g. Shahjahan's Deccan wars), purchased 'the whole of last year's crop' (of Gujrat indigo). The price rose to Rs. 18 and 18½ a md. So great was the competition of these Persian merchants that the English factors had little hope of securing any large quantity of the new season's crop even, unless their influx could be checked. Hence the Surat factors suggested to their colleagues in Persia (Oct. 6, 1630) that they should have "some discreet preventions or restraint of passengers" on English ships returning from Persia that year. The general nature of trade was that the Persians and Armenians—transported cotton goods from India on English ships to Gumbroon. From there these were again dispersed and sold to a second set of merchants in Ispahan, Basra, Baghdad. The latter
transported them yet further for a third market at Constantinople and other places. The English factors at Surat suggested to the Company (Dec. 31, 1630) that at least a part, if not the whole of this 'great traffic (thus expensive by land)' should profitably be diverted by sea ('less chargeable conveyance') just as 'great quantities of indigo and calicoes' which used to be transported by the above Asiatic traders overland, had already been transported in the Company's ships to 'those foreign ports'. Thus did the Surat factors propose to eliminate Asiatic competition.

(vi) Hindu merchants: The Surat letter of April 13, 1630, already referred to, has equated the influence of the Hindu merchants with the Moore merchants in raising the price of indigo. But if the latter exported it to Persia, the former used to 'engross' i.e. make large-scale purchases of indigo for reselling it at a profit of the merchants of the three European nations i.e. blackmarketeering: "Banians etc. ingrosse it at first making to resell again unto us, the Dutch and Portugalls".

(B) Specialised demands

At first the different merchants seemed to have certain preferences of their own for the indigo grown in different parts of India. But this preference could not long be maintained. The first European buyers and exporters knew of Indian indigo by two names, Sarkhej (i.e. Gujrat and Ahmadabad indigo) and Lahori (i.e. Agra-Biana indigo, exported overland, the caravans being made up at Lahore, and hence called Lahori at Aleppo).

According to Pelsaert Biana indigo was closely bought up by the Dutch, the Armenians and the Moguls who exported it to Ispahan and thence to Aleppo. But the Dutch bought Gujrat indigo also and further tried to tap other places like the Deccan (1645) and Chittagong (not successfultly). The Asiatic merchants also purchased Gujrat indigo. He further says that the English were not good purchasers of the Biana indigo (i.e. in the 1620's),—due to bad luck, adversity, mismanagement and deterioration of the commercial position,—and that if they did, the price would rise. But this view of Pelsaert is not wholly true. References to purchases of Biana indigo by the English

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Hindu: *EF*, 1630-33, 20.
have been given by the early English travellers and also in the English factory records. Jambusar indigo was not considered suitable for England (Ahmadabad to Surat, Oct. 6, 1621).48

(C) **Countries where Indian indigo was exported.**

(a) **Europe:** Indian indigo was carried to Europe by the English, the Dutch and the Portuguese. Moreland tells us that much of what was sent by the English to London was reexported to Europe, especially Eastern Europe. The Dutch carried it to Amsterdam and thence to Mediterranean regions. The Portuguese imported indigo to Lisbon, for use in West Mediterranean area but it was inferior to Aleppo indigo which determined the price and quality in the London market.

(b) **Asia:**

(i) **To the Levant:** Indian indigo was carried to the Levant from Agra by overland route, and also from Gujrat both by sea and land. This came to compete in the Mediterranean markets with indigo carried from Surat, London and Amsterdam.

(ii) **To Persia, Basra and the Red Sea:** Persia was a principal importer of indigo from India. It was carried there by Armenian and ‘Moor’ merchants (i.e. Moguls or Persians), both by land and sea (on English and Dutch ships), and also by the English factors by sea. The Agra indigo followed the usual overland Agra-Multan-Chotiali-Pishin-Kandahar-Herat-Meshshed route. For the sea-route the Armenian and Moghuls used the ships of the Dutch and the English to Gombroon (Bandar Abbas). In 1628 not less than 1500 bales of Gujrat indigo were laden by them for Persia on these ships.

(The English factors at ‘Kuhestek’ (Kuhistak, a small port on the Persian coast, about 40 miles s. e. of Ormuz) informed the Surat factors (Jan. 24, 1622) that though Biana indigo was “most in favour”, and sold at 560-600 shahis the Sarkhej indigo also sold at 480 shahis the ‘kella’ (Kulah, a man’s load’ of seven ‘mauns shah’).

During the Gujrat famine of 1630-32, dearth of handicraftsmen affected the indigo trade. The factors in Persia were

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therefore, requested by Surat to apply their utmost diligence in procuring (Persian) silk against 1633, as that and Agra indigo were “the only commodities available for relading one of the two ships (Surat to Persia, Jan. 23, 1632).

All commodities suitable for Persia being dear it was decided by Surat (Dec. 6, 1632) to confine their purchases only to as much of indigo as could readily be procured at “easy rates”. Ahmadabad was instructed to buy two or three hundred bales of indigo for Persia. In explaining matters to the Company Surat wrote (Jan. 4, 1633): “The scarcity of Indian commodities prevents them from supplying Persia as they would, most of the coarse goods sent thither last year lie unsold. Intend, however, to furnish the factors with 200 bales of indigo and some fine goods, to help away 280 cloths resent them. These cloths were consigned hither, but the Governor refused to buy them on account of their coarseness.”

It appears that the internal conditions in Persia were not quite favourable for normal business transactions. We learn from a letter from Gomboon to Surat (March 15, 1633): “That Surat has been unable to supply them with goods to the extent ordered by the Co. does not matter in the present state of the market, ‘for tis a badd with us for selling as tis with you for buying’. For their indicco they are offered 75 ‘larrees’ the Surat maund”.

(iii) To Central Asia: Finch says that Koil indigo of a base quality was used in India or “transported for Samarkand, Cascat (Kashgar) and those parts; none passing into Christendom, except mixed with that of Biana”.

(iv) To South East Asia: A very interesting proposal to revive trade with Bantam was made in the letter of Surat to the Company (Dec. 21, 1628): ‘Should the Company determine to revive the trade (with Bantam) it should be advisable, instead of sending rials thither direct, to forward them, in the first instance, to Surat, where they might be invested in goods that would produce 100 per cent profit or more at Bantam. A ship should also be dispeeded direct to Masulipatam (as is done by the Dutch) to purchase goods and then go on to Bantam; ‘for uppon theise two factories will and must your sotherne trade be grounded, if ever you mean to reap profit thereby’. Another convenience would be that letters could be sent overland from
Masulipatam to Surat, giving early intelligence of the Company's plans. 'This the Dutch had this yere, and had prevented us of the Ahmadabad indico, had we not gathered by circumstances from their own discourse of their intents. We gave presente order to your servants in Ahmadabad to go through for the whole parcel of old indico of the last year's growth, which we were ascertained to be extraordinary good and in opinion of some of our people and brokers is little, inferior to that made in Agra.'

(c) To Africa:

A very interesting reference to export of Indian indigo to Congo in Africa by merchants of Sind is found in English factory records—"The merchants of Tutta (i.e. Thattha in Sind) that constantly trade to Congo and Bussara (Basra) do (and that necessarily) provide themselves of indigo and sugar from Agra..." (Surat Consultations. Aug. 22, 1635)⁴⁹

12. Decline of indigo trade: About 1646-47 the demand for Indian indigo in Europe lessened and the price it commanded tended to fall in England, the rates being described as 'despicable'. This led the E.I. Company to reduce its demand and send instructions to India accordingly. So India's indigo trade also tended to decline. The primary cause of this was not reduction in European demand but the competition of the indigo of America and the West Indies and the manufacture of large quantities of indigo in the Barbados and other places. This proved to be cheaper, because it had double advantage of manufacture and distance. Hence large stocks (of Indian indigo) remained unsold in England.

It appears that this decline of indigo trade was not only due to competition of West Indian indigo but also to the heavy adulteration of the Indian indigo exported by the Company and the high prices of the same due to unfavourable seasons. These matters loomed large in the factory correspondence of the period along with this subject of lessened demand, and it may

⁴⁹ Europe, Moreland, op. cit ; Asia : Levant, Ibid, 98, 58 ; Persia etc : EF, 1624-29, 307 ; 1622-23, 23 ; 1630-33, 195, 248, 256, 287 ; Central Asia : Foster, Early Travels in India, 179 ; South East Asia : EF, 1624-29 ; Africa ; EF 1634-36, f30.
be inferred that these also contributed to the decline at least for some time. President Breton informed the Adventurers in the Fourth Joint Stock. (Jan. 31, 1649): "The high price of indigo has induced them to keep the supply low, both this year and last; though that will probably prove an advantage, considering the despicable prices ruling in England. Trust that these will improve as they 'wholly depend upon the goodness of the commodity' and they are confident that the present consignment (as well as that sent in the Eagle) will merit the approbation of the Company."

In January 1648 and 1649 Indian indigo was still in 'mean esteeme' and the rates were despicable in England. In compliance with the Company's wishes the provision had to be reduced accordingly: only 200 bales of Agra-Biana (Rs. 40 a md.), 200 bales of Ahamdabad and 50 bales of Sind indigo were shipped and this amount was the maximum target fixed for the future. For 1650 only 200 bales of Agra indigo were ordered. By 1650 the price of indigo fell further in England—"declined more than 1/3rd of its former price in England;" the price prevailing in the Agra—Biana area in 1649 was Rs. 40-46 a md. even though the quality of indigo was poor; so though the Surat authorities procured 246 bales of Agra indigo they sent only 100 in the Eagle and 100 bales out of 200 bales of Ahmadabad. The Dutch consignments also grew smaller.

There was a similar decline in demand of Indian indigo in Persia, Basra and Mocha a few years before 1647. This naturally reduced supply to those parts and both the English and the Dutch came to be hard hit. Realising the prejudicial nature of their past competitive practices they 'contracted to buy together and share equally' in the Agra-Biana indigo. This Anglo-Dutch joint purchase caused a sharp fall in price, and hit the producers so hard that they discontinued manufacture ("which so impoverished the proprietors that they were much disanimated in the making that specie"). This, however, hit the Dutch so adversely that they gave up the agreement of joint purchase and began separate purchases in 1645. This, in turn, had the effect of immediately raising the prices. In 1646-47, however, the English and the Dutch resumed the joint purchase system. But this time the price rose instead of falling. This
was because the demand of indigo in Persia and Basra revived with the result that there was keen competition among buyers.

To make up for the loss involved in the decline of indigo in which the Company had invested a lot, the Swally Marine factors suggested to the Co. (Jan. 3, 1648) an alternative, viz., trade in Persian silk.

The demand for Indian indigo, however, revived in 1650. The Company informed the Surat President (13th February, 1650) that they had “disposed of all the indigo and would be glad to receive 400 bales of Lahore and 200 of Sarkhej” indigo. Supplies were, again, discouraged in 1651, and the quantity required was very small in 1660.50

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CHAPTER 4

Monopolies

SECTION A.

MONOPOLIES AND MONOPOLISTIC CONTROLS IN MUGHAL INDIA

One aspect of the economic policy of the Mughal Government was the establishment of monopolies and existence of monopolistic controls in certain goods and services. The agencies behind these were either (i) the imperial government or (ii) the provincial governors or local officials.

A. IMPERIAL MONOPOLIES IN INDIGO AND SALTPETRE

1. Motives & Methods:

Imperial monopolies in the nature of general monopolistic developments were established on articles like indigo and saltpetre. Both these articles were in great demand for internal consumption and also eagerly coveted by the European merchants in India. Indigo at first occupied the first place in order of importance among the exports to Europe. Saltpetre, being an essential ingredient of gunpowder, was of great military value, not only for internal use in India, but also as supplying the needs of European nations. Monopolies in these two articles were established by the government for exigencies of state, financial or military. The references so far collected by me relate to the reigns of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb.

The imperial monopoly in indigo seems to have been established as a means to replenish the treasury after the conquest of Ahmandnagar in 1633. Acting on the suggestion of
Mir Musa Muizzulmulk, Governor of Surat, and in imitation of the Persian contracts in silk, Emperor Shah Jahan set up the monopoly in indigo. He made a contract with a bania named Manohar Das Danda, who was granted the sole right of buying all indigo grown in the kingdom, in return for payment of Rs. 11,00,000 in three years.¹

The earliest reference to saltpetre being a state monopoly is in 1636, when it was stated to be "a prohibited commodity,"² The seller had to pay to the king a duty of 13%.³

State control was exercised in three ways:

(a) Claim of purveyance or preemption in control of production, refinement and purchase of saltpetre, either for military or non-military purposes: "It is no currant commodity, nor required by any except the King (Aurangzeb) for his particular occasions, forcing what he hath to be purposely provided; ... Besides it is prohibited to all others to buy and may lawfully be surprised as the King's commodity ... (1666).⁴

Government claimed monopoly of saltpetre for its military needs. In 1629 Shah Jahan forbade saltpetre to be bought at Agra till "he had been supplied with 10,000 mds. of powder ordered to be made there." The necessities of North-West Frontier and Central Asiatic wars (1647-48) led him to strictly prohibit the export of saltpetre and his officers prohibited 'boiling for any but the King's Cirkar' (Sarkar, Government).⁵

(b) The Mughal state also forbade unlicensed purchase and transport of saltpetre in 1628, 1646, 1654, 1655 and 1656.⁶

(c) Occasional revocation of provincial government's orders, as in 1654, the King's Diwan sent an order prohibiting the English, already permitted by Murad, then Governor of Gujarat, from buying or transporting any saltpetre from

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1. *EF*, 1634-36, pp. 69, 70, 72, 7-8; 1630-33, p. 209. See ante ch. 2: Sec. C and post Sec. B for details re: Saltpetre and indigo respectively. There is some unavoidable repetition.
2. Effect of Imperial Monopolies:

The effects of the monopolies may be studied under four heads: production, prices, distribution and organisation.

(i) Effects on production: The axe of the monopoly fell heavily on production: (a) The indigo peasants were not given a fair price for their crop under the monopoly. They left their profession and their fields; production was curtailed and prices tended to soar up.8

(b) In saltpetre also the producers suffered. As the manufacturers did not keep any stock of saltpetre, the production and refining of saltpetre took some time. In contracting with the English factors the manufacturers insisted on such terms as would cover their expenses. The English factors had to suffer troubles to clear the saltpetre from the king’s ministers.

The Mughal Government also farmed the cultivation of indigo and the manufacture of saltpetre to particular persons. To meet the shortage of cultivation, caused by the flight of the regular indigo producers, the Emperor took recourse to farming of cultivation. The English were at first approached to farm the indigo area themselves on the same terms as Monohar Das. But the alien English factors declined for various reasons. Then the Emperor farmed out the land to a Persian noble, Mir Muhammad Amin, Mir Jumla, Shahristani, then Khan-i-Saman of the Empire.9 Similarly as regards saltpetre Mir Musa got such a farm in Gujarat (1646). But the farmer had no right to grant dastaks or licence.

(ii) Effects on Prices: With the curtailment of the area under indigo cultivation as a result of the monopoly, prices tended to soar up. Similarly the price of saltpetre also went up.

(iii) Effects on distribution: By causing the flight of the peasants and consequent decline in production and rise in prices of indigo the monopoly introduced an element of un-

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7. EF, 1951-54, pp. 299-300.
8. EF, 1630-33, p. 325; 1634-36, p. 7.
9. EF, 1630-33, p. 325; 1634-36, pp. 7-8, 72. M.U. III. 413-8; English Tr. II. 117-121.
certainty into the trade, which affected the trade of the European Companies adversely. The future became wholly uncertain. Similarly owing to the monopoly in saltpetre, the Surat factors were not sanguine about the prospects of a supply (1655). So long as the Emperor’s stock of 10,000 double mds. of saltpetre, refined but full of salt remained unsold, the English would not be allowed to purchase any saltpetre in the Empire or to procure the stipulated amounts from the manufacturers. The English factor at Ahmadabad suffered much trouble in the hands of the petulant Diwan, Rahmat Khan.¹⁰

(iv) **Effects on Organization**: Monopoly contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

(a) The imperial monopoly in indigo lasted only for about a year. Its failure was due not only to the decline of cultivation, but to the joint Anglo-Dutch contract of abstinence from purchase. The Governor of Surat, apprehensive of the falling revenues of his region, petitioned to the Emperor to restore freedom of trade in indigo.

(b) The monopoly in saltpetre was at times evaded in actual working. The producers and purchasers, who suffered alike on account of it, naturally tried to get rid of it and the state officers also were sometime seduced by the lure of private gain. English factory records contain numerous instances of the use of bribery and influence in mitigating the rigours of monopoly, in 1628, 1647, 1648, 1655 and 1666. As a positive and more permanent remedy the English factors in Golkonda tried (1667) for the first time to acquire a monopoly of saltpetre trade. In Bijapur they tried to secure a partial exemption from customs on saltpetre by sale of grenades, shells and mortars during Shivaji’s invasion of Bijapur (1660). But the East India Company rejected the monopoly scheme in Golkonda (1668).¹¹

3. **Failure of the Mughal Government**:

From the above facts, gleaned from European factory records, it is abundantly clear that the Mughal Government displayed lamentable weakness in its policy of monopolistic con-

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trols. Apart from the merit or otherwise of the inception of the policy, the implementation part of it left much to be desired. The wealthy and mighty Mughal Emperor failed to implement the indigo monopoly and had to eat the humble pie. He could overcome the recalcitrant attitude of the sturdy peasants and cultivators and remedy the shortage of cultivation by resorting to farming of indigo production. But perhaps neither he nor his principal adviser, Mir Musa Muizzulmulk, anticipated the firm attitude of the English and Dutch factors, who concluded a joint contract in abstaining from purchase of indigo. By faithfully adhering to it and refusing to purchase the indigo at the high monopoly prices, they reduced the customs revenue of Surat and brought down not only its Governor but even the Emperor to their knees. To the Anglo-Dutch co-operation must be added another factor, the power of influence in the then Mughal political system. The personal rivalry between the two officers and the firm influence of one of them over the Emperor were cleverly utilised by the foreign traders to undermine the indigo monopoly and to gain their ends.

In saltpetre also the rigours of the monopoly were evaded by the foreigners,—here, too, by means of bribery and influence. This throws a lurid light on the inner administrative corruption of the Mughal political system. The economic control sought to be established by the Mughal government was undermined from its very inception by deep—seated canker of corruption. The Mughal Government failed to check the corruption and failed to implement the monopoly. In fact the policy of monopoly was doomed from its very inception. The economic policy of the Mughal Government proved to be ultimately uneconomic.

B. LOCAL MONOPOLISTIC CONTROLS

1. Sauda-i-khas:

Besides general imperial monopolies there were local monopolistic controls. Sometimes a provincial governor or his nominee would enter the market as a prospective trader in the sale and purchase of an article. This private trade or Sauda-i-khas of local officials proved to be a great source of extortion. Even the repeated prohibitions of the Emperor were defied.
Producers and customers alike had to bear the oppressive burden of this indirect taxation. Many influential personages adopted this characteristic feature of India’s economic life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Mirza Ishhaq Beg (Governor of Surat), Mir Jumla in the Karnatak and Shuja, Mir Jumla, Shaista Khan and Azim us Shan in Bengal. Instances can be multiplied.

The case of Mirza Ishhaq Beg illustrates the danger of having merchants as Governors. He was not only the Governor of Surat but also the greatest merchant of the place. From the complaints of the Surat factors to Afzal Khan, Diwan of Prince Khurram (1619), we learn that he endeavoured “to depress all others for increase of his own gain, without regard to the Prince’s service and benefit.” He prevented men from selling goods to the English. He also prohibited the English from importing certain commodities, though the customs revenue of Prince Khurram (then Governor of Gujarat) suffered in both cases. He forced them under pain of displeasure to sell their goods to him at his own price, and then paid them at his pleasure. He did them no justice and his servants continually insulted and abused them. Having suffered injuries for three years President Kerridge of Surat, therefore, begged Afzal Khan to represent the matter to the Prince and have their grievances redressed.¹²

The basis of Mir Jumla’s economic system in the Karnatak and Bengal was monopoly. He used to charge monopoly prices and tried to control internal production. He established a monopoly of the trade in all ‘brown’ or unbleached cloth in his ‘new conquests’, and they were sold at 20% profit. Again sale of grain seemed to be a strict monopoly. Paddy and other necessaries coming to Madras through his jurisdiction had to pay customs while paddy was sold to the town people at 25% more than the market price. The English in Madras could not sell anything except the articles purchased from the men of Nawab’s farmer at prices 50% higher than those prevailing in the neighbourhood. As Governor of Bengal (1660-1663), Mir Jumla endeavoured to become the sole stockist of all articles of necessity and then sell them at fanciful prices. In 1660 he offered to

supply the English factors every year as much saltpetre as they would require for his personal profit. Next year (1661) he made an extraordinary levy in Bengal, demanding Rs. 50,000 from the grain merchants of Dacca as something like an excess profits tax of modern times on the pretext that the latter had made a profit of twice the amount due to the continued presence of the Governor’s large camp (on the eve of Kuch Bihar and Assam campaigns). They were coerced to pay Rs. 25,000 in all, while city bankers, forewarned by such severity, paid three lakhs.  

Shaista Khan, as Governor of Bengal, at first abolished the existing trade monopolies and the forbidden abwabs. But after a few years his subordinates were left free by his supine rule to squeeze the people and feed his prodigal luxury by reviving the old methods. “Merchandise was stopped at every outpost and ferry and custom duty charged over and over again in disregard of official permits; cesses (abwabs) abolished by imperial decree, still continued to be realised in practice . . . the Nawab practised a monopoly of the sale of salt, betel-nut and some other prime necessities of life”, also in fodder, bamboos, firewood, thatch, etc. The goods were distributed among the town merchants at 10% to 15% higher than the market price.  

Azim us Shan, Governor of Bengal (1697-1712), also tried to amass money by Sauda-i-khas i.e., establishing a trade monopoly in most necessities of life and in many precious objects, engrossing goods at the places of origin or ports of unloading and forcing them on retail traders at exorbitant prices. Aurangzeb strongly censured him.  

This practice of engrossing articles of internal consumption was resorted to not only in normal times but also during famine times. We have a glaring instance of engrossing the supply of food even during the famous Gujarat famine by the Governor of Surat and one or two moneyed merchants (1632). This doubled the price of wheat at Surat (Rs. 4 the md. of 40 seers)  

as compared to Broach (Rs. 2). As biscuit was needed for the fleet, the Surat authorities directed Messrs. Wyche and Joyce, proceeding to Broach and Baroda (Feb. 18, 1632) to purchase 1000 mds. of wheat and send it down “to keep our bakers in action.” As movements of food grains were controlled during the famine, the Surat authorities proposed to forward “such presents as they desire ... for the Governor and customer, to facilitate the passing of the goods through the Custom house.”

2. Control of Saltpetre Trade by Provincial Governors.

(i) For military purposes: Saltpetre trade was controlled for military purposes not only by Emperor but by the Provincial Governors for their needs as well. It was apprehended that during the Mughal invasion of Golkonda (1656) Aurangzeb, then Victory of the Deccan, might capture saltpetre caravans going via Burhanpur. Murad Bakhsh forcibly seized the saltpetre of the English at Ahmadabad during he War of Succession (1657). Shuja also captured saltpetre for his use in 1660.

(ii) For non-military purposes: Government control over saltpetre was exercised also on religious grounds, i.e. to prevent use of gunpowder against Muslims. In 1646, Aurangzeb, then Governor of Gujarat, prohibited the sale of saltpetre to the English. In 1689 at the request of the Sunni Sultan of Turkey, Aurangzeb forbade the sale of saltpetre to Christians.

(iii) For private gain: Besides seizing saltpetre for local military needs, the Provincial Governors and Diwans also endeavoured to establish their own monopolies in it, sometimes on pretence of imperial needs. During 1660-61, Mirza Lutfullah Beg, Diwan of Patna, attempted to monopolise the sale of saltpetre for the benefit of the imperial revenues.

Shaista Khan, as Governor of Bengal, also tried to monopolise the entire saltpetre trade at Patna (1664) in his own hands and then to sell it to the English and Dutch ‘at his own rates’. He also demanded of the English 20,000 mds. on the pretence of “buying for the king” and of “carrying on the King’s wars” (i.e., Arakan wars).

16. EF, 1630-33, p. 209.
17. EF, 1655-60, pp. 63-4, 120-1, 397.
2. **Official monopoly on Lead:**

There was an official monopoly on lead. This commodity was almost exclusively imported from Europe to India. But the market at Surat was not free. The Mughal Government tried to establish control over it. The local Government usually claimed the right of wholly engrossing it, i.e., buying all that was offered in the town. In 1619 the lead of the English E.I. Company was detained by the customs house officials for two months, which frustrated its sale for the year. The Surat factors were also hampered by the prohibition of its transport to other parts. The Mughal Government was reported to have been exercising greater control over it ("more narrowly looked into"). In November 1621, President Rastell of Surat wrote to the Company: "The sale of our lead was prohibited to all, and restrained only to the Prince's officers, who have long beat upon it, and in September (1621) bought all at 7½ mahmudis'.

During the tenure of Nawab Saif Khan (Jahangir Shahi), Viceroy of Gujarat, the customer of Surat used to engross the entire amount of lead. At the time of his resignation large quantities remained unsold. These were forced on the traders of Ahmadabad. So Surat informed the Company that until this stock was exhausted there was little chance of their selling the imported amount which was 'much more' than what would be sold at Surat in a year.

In 1628 lead was bought by the Governor of Surat for resale. Not more than 12 or 13,000 mds. was expected to sell per annum.

These facts tend to one conclusion that private gain overbore the greater interests of the people and the country.

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20. Surat to Co. (Nov., 1619) *EF*, 1618-21, p. 134. In spite of this embargo Surat requested the E.I. Company to send annually the amount previously advised. Does this imply that the Surat factors hoped to evade the embargo by judicious bribery?


22. Surat to Co. Nov. 29, 1921. *EF*, 1624-29, pp. 157, 152. Safi Khan was dismissed by Shah Jahan "The present Governor, being the lately deceased Prince's servant doth not middle with that or any other commodity." Surat was granted in Jagir to late Prince Parviz. *EF*, 1624-29, p. 152.

SECTION B

THE IMPERIAL MONOPOLY IN INDIGO (1633-35)

1. Introduction

In the Indian markets of the seventeenth century normal commercial transactions were based, as now, on open competition between buyers or sellers. But sometimes official intervention affected the course of markets as well as of trade. Competition gave way to monopoly, co-operation to force. A Governor or his nominee would enter the market as the prospective trader in the sale and purchase of an article. Sometimes such action came to be justified on grounds of exigencies or needs of the state, and foreign merchants did not complain much against such monopolies, e.g., lead, saltpetre, copper etc., though they tried to evade them, as for example in the case of saltpetre. However, they did complain against two other kinds of monopoly, motivated by the profit of the state or its officials. Firstly, there was the practice of "engrossing" or monopolising of staple commodities like foodgrains, cotton goods, spices, indigo etc., in particular areas. Secondly, there was the monopolistic developments of a more general nature. The imperial monopoly in indigo in 1633-35 belonged to the second category of objectionable monopolies. Moreland has devoted barely half a page, besides some incidental references, to this subject. But it is possible to make an analytical study of its origin, working and failure in some detail on the basis of the English and Dutch factory records.¹ Nevertheless the picture obtained is admittedly incomplete in several respects.

¹ e.g. (i) Indigo monopoly by Governor of Ahmadabad in 1647;
   (ii) Spice monopoly in the East Coast;
   (iii) Unbleached cloth monopoly;
   (iv) Piece goods monopoly in Gujrat in 1641;
2. *Origin of the Monopoly*

(i) *Reasons*

Why did the Emperor establish a monopoly in indigo trade? And why in 1633? Had it anything to do with the conquest of Ahmadnagar in June, 1633? Was it intended to replenish the treasury after the war? A definite answer is perhaps not possible. A tentative answer is attempted here.

Indigo was an example of commercialised agriculture of seventeenth century India. Of the various articles of export from India to Europe in the seventeenth century, indigo at first occupied the first place in order of importance. The first European merchants in India, the Portuguese, the Dutch eagerly coveted it. Sir Thomas Roe described indigo as "the prime commodity." Even as late as December, 1634, the English East India Company esteemed Indigo to be "the prime or principal commodity of all others". Indigo trade was not only important but also highly profitable and it may reasonably be inferred that Shahjahan was impelled by the motive of profit in establishing the monopoly. There are certain incidental references in English factory records which seem to point to his financial exhaustion and cupidity.

Had Anglo-Dutch commercial rivalry anything to do with it? Undoubtedly there was a keen competition between the English and the Dutch. Captain Richard Allnutt aboard the *Palsgrave* at Swally informed the Company (Jan. 31, 1634) that he had heard from brokers that the "Hollanders" i.e. the Dutch entered into an agreement with Muizzulmulk (Mir Musa), Governor of Surat, to buy "all the indigo in the country at a certain price, provided that the English should not have any."

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(Contd)

(v) Food supplies engrossed in Surat in 1632, Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, 146-148; for Saltpetre monopoly, ante ch. 2. Section C; *EF*, 1630-33; 1634-36; *Hague Transcripts* and *Dagh Register*.


3. Kings miserableness......

"......the king is so basely covetous that all appearances of profit hoodwinked him so much that he cannot see those inconveniences which go hand in hand therewith" (i.e. monopoly).


But from the letter of Methwold, the Surat President, to the Company (dated Dec. 29, 1634) it appears that his predecessor in office, Joseph Hopkinson, made an "overture" of a contract for indigo in imitation of the contracts in Persia, to Mezer Mulck (i.e. Muizzulmulk), Governor of Surat. Were the English actuated by the same motive of rivalry as the Dutch i.e. excluding the latter from the indigo trade? Perhaps.

In any case it was Muizzulmulk, the Governor of Surat, who was the "first projector of this business to the King". He had experience of monopolising food supplies in wheat at Surat just a year before in 1632 and he now applied it in the case of indigo. Acting on his suggestion and in imitation of the Persian contracts in silk, Emperor Shahjahan set up his monopoly in indigo. As the English factors wrote that the Emperor "took that trade into his own hands, with the idea of forcing all merchants to buy from him at his own price, pay a year in advance and take whatever trash he might please to give them".

(ii) Form of the Monopoly

Did the Emperor step into the trade in person directly? No. He made a contract with a bania, named Manohar Das Danda, who is spoken of in the English factory records as "the prime monopolist". According to its terms, (i) firstly, the bania was granted the sole right of buying all indigo grown in the kingdom in return for payment of Rs. 11,00,000 at the end of three years, i.e. Rs. 2 lakhs a year out of profit or 6 lakhs in three years and Rs. 5 lakhs by way of repayment of a loan: (ii) Secondly, if the merchants refused to purchase from the bania and the indigo remained unsold, he would be exempted

5. *EF*, 1634-36, p. 70. Though Hopkinson (President, Dec. 29, 1634 died about the end of 1633) yielded to this contract shortly before his death, his successor, Methwold stood out against it. (Swally to Co. Jan. 31, 1634), *EF*, 1634-36, p. 7.

6. 'Are informed that wheat may be had at that place (Broach) for 4½ mahmudis or Rs. 2 the maund of 40 seer, while at Surat it continues at double that price, owing to the Governor and one or two moneyed merchants engrossing the supply' (Surat to Brooch & Baroda) Feb. 18, 1632, *EF*, 1630-33, p. 209.


8. His name is given in English factory records variously as Munnomdas Dunda, Munnoardas, Manoardas, which may be equated with Manohar Das Danda.
from making all payments except the debt i. e. he would pay only Rs. 5 lakhs. Commenting on this agreement the English factors at Agra observed that “this is a very good bargain for the contractor, who cannot lose”. They expected him surely “to make a good profit”. Their expectation was perhaps natural, but they proved to be false prophets.

3. Working of the Monopoly

The effects of the monopoly can be conveniently examined under five aspects—on the peasants, on the system of cultivation, on price, on the European companies and on the monopolists themselves. These would roughly describe how the monopoly affected the internal production, the markets, the export trade and help us to understand why it ultimately failed.

(a) Effects on the Peasants

The axe of the monopoly fell heavily on the cultivators consisting of the sturdy and resolute Rajputs, Jats, Ahirs and others. They were not adequately rewarded for their labours and not given a fair price for their crop under the monopoly. They had to leave their profession and their fields. Their plight has been graphically described in the contemporary English factory correspondence. An Agra-Surat letter of Nov. 12, 1633, referred to “the clamour of the people dependent on the cultivation of indigo, roused by the loss of their means of livelihood; for many of the cultivators (being in general a resolute herebrained folk) have already rooted up their plants”. In his letter from Swally to the Company (Jan. 31, 1634), Captain Richard Allnutt aboard the Palsgrave wrote that the monopoly would have ruined the areas producing indigo. As the king took it from the manurers (i.e. cultivators) at his own price and paid them at his own pleasure, the cultivators could not afford to “manure” (i.e. cultivate) the land. Many were “forced to leave the country and

9. These figures of the English factory records is corroborated by Dutch records (1,100,200 and 500 respectively), where, however, the transcribers omits V (for thousand). In one place (No 318) the total amount to be paid to the treasury is, however, mentioned as Rs. 1,000,000. The Dagh Register 1631-34 (p. 326) gives the price of the monopoly as 400,000, EF, 1630-33, p. 324 n, 324-5.
run away to some other place". Production was thus curtailed, and prices tended to soar up.

(b) Farming of Cultivation

To meet the shortage of cultivation, caused by the flight of the regular indigo producers, the Emperor took recourse to farming of cultivation. A proposal came to the English "to farm the indigo area themselves on the same terms" as 'Munnoardas' (Manohar Das). But the alien English factors themselves did not venture on this scheme on account of various difficulties; fear of official exactions, uncertainty of production and impossibility of adopting coercive measures against the peasants. (i) They feared that indigo farming by the English would "certainly be a pretext for exaction". (ii) Uncertainty of production: "in these parts one cannot expect next year half the quantity produced this year". (iii) They were afraid of adopting strong measures against the cultivators. As they wrote, "whatever authority the king may give, it would be impossible for them to deal as rigorously with the people as their fellow countrymen can". Perhaps it was then after the English had declined, that the Emperor farmed out the land to one of his nobles, "Meir Jombelo", a Persian—i.e. Mir Muhammad Amin, Mir Jumla, Shahristani, then Khan-i-Saman. If we believe Methwold, Surat President, though Manohardas was the "prime monopolist", it was Mir Jumla, "High Steward to the King", "who was principally engaged in the project; who did not only cherish but hatch it for his own advantage", because the year before, he had sent for his own account 1200 fardles of indigo into Persia overland. The latter agreed on condition that if the Dutch and the English desisted from purchasing the indigo at his price consecutively for two or three years, the Emperor would bear the loss himself.11


11. *EF*, 1630-33, p. 325; Capt. Allnutt at Swally to the Co., Jan. 31, 1634; *EF*, 1634-36, pp. 7-8, Surat to Co. (Dec. 29, 1634); *EF*, 1634-36, p. 72.

A Sawsid of Isphahan, Mir Muhammad Amin was entitled Mir Jumla under Md. Quli Qub Shah of Golkunda. He subsequently went back to Persia, but returned to become Mir-i-Saman under Jahangir (1620). He was appointed *Mir Bakhshi* (1635) with further honours under Shah Jahan. Died, Aug. 12, 1637. *M.U. III*, 413-8; Eng. Tr. II, 117-121.
(c) Prices

To understand how the monopoly affected prices, it is necessary to know the standard price of indigo. Moreland, after a careful examination of available data (1609-63) has concluded that the standard price of indigo in Gujrat was Rs. 18, notwithstanding natural fluctuations. He has not made a similar analysis with regard to its price at Agra and Biana. This was much higher than that of Gujrat. Some references in the English factory correspondence in 1624 and 1630 show that, generally speaking, Biana indigo was about three times as dear as that of Sarkhej. But there were variations.

The monopoly at once raised the prices, both in the Agra-Biana and Sarkhej areas. The total yearly production of Agra and its neighbourhood was then estimated at about 15,000 maunds, out of which the Biana indigo formed about one-third i.e. 500 mds. So the contractor could easily force up the price especially because the English and the Dutch usually purchased only the Biana variety. Though the indigo produced on the other side of the river (Koria, Koil and Jalali, all in Aligarh tahsil) and other places was not “absolutely useless”, it could not stand comparison with that at Biana and the usual difference in price between the two was Rs. 5 to 6 a md. The Agra factors could not recommend the purchase of indigo at the high monopoly price of Rs. 50/- a md. But they apprehended that the Dutch might ‘steal a march on the English’ (i.e. make purchases) and so asked the Surat factors to take care to prevent such a contingency.

In November, 1633, the prices agreed to by the English and Dutch were—

Biana indigo (old), Rs. 42 \ per Akbari

, , (new), Rs. 38 \ maund (50 lb)

Sarkhej indigo, Rs. 16-18 per Surat md.

The monopoly prices for the two varieties were Rs. 61 and Rs. 27 respectively. In 1634 the English procured from Agra

12. Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb. EF, 1624-29, p. 38; EF, 1630-33, p. 5.

13. In Agra-Surat letter (Nov. 12, 1633) the word “whole of Hindustan” is used. This evidently seems all exaggeration but Foster rightly interprets it to mean the restricted area of the province of Agra and neighbourhood. EF, 1630-33, p. 324-325 n.
543 bales of Biana indigo at Rs. 61 a md. This not only exhausted the entire cash remitted there by exchange, the entire proceeds of the sale of quicksilver and broad-cloth but also caused the Agra factors to charge Rs. 33,000 upon Surat by two bills of exchange at a loss of $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Adding the cost of caravans and customs to it, the Surat factors informed the Company (Dec. 29, 1634) that “the amount of a good ship’s lading was contracted into a few fardles of Biana indigo” (the sort which you forbid, or a least restrain into a small proportion)”. They could only hold out hopes for a better future. They also hoped that in 1635 Sarkhej would furnish “good plenty of excellent good indigo” made this season. That of 1633 was “both little and bad”. The contractor bought the greatest part at Rs. $18\frac{1}{2}$ a md.

By the end of Dec. 1634, the Surat President expected a fall in the price of indigo, for it was said that “Sarkhej and neighbourhood have this year yielded not less than 9000 mds., while, the occasions of this country never required less, in regard of the little cloth made and dyed in these parts”. He has referred to Dutch competition to be the only disturbing factor.14

(d) Effect on the European Companies.

By causing the flight of peasants and consequent decline in production and rise in prices the monopoly introduced an element of uncertainty into the trade, which affected the trade of the European companies adversely. The future became wholly uncertain. But the English factors anticipated nothing but a huge useless waste, “what with king’s miserableness, the Governor’s baseness and the cunning projects of the Dutch... unless the trade grows better when the country is more populated” (i.e. with the return of the cultivators).

Referring to the worsened position of the indigo trade as a result of the monopoly, the Agra factors suggested to the Surat authorities (Nov. 12, 1633) that “the best course would be to covenant with the Dutch to make no purchases during the current year...” In the face of the common danger, the English and the Dutch at Surat should put their heads together to devise a remedy. They could make an agreement for joint

14. EF, 1634-36, pp. 70, 73.
abstention from purchase of indigo. This suspension of their indigo investments would mean loss of customs at Surat. The Governor of Surat would then soon feel the pinch in the loss of this revenue and thereby remedy matters.

The complaint of Agra factors about the Emperor’s “continued resolve to monopolize all indigo” and the apparent unlikelihood of their purchasing indigo at the usual prices were discussed at a consultation by the President and Council at Surat (Nov. 12, 1633).

The point raised therein was “whether it would not be beneficial to the company to contract with the Dutch nation (according to their Governors later proffer) for devising some course, if possible, to draw down the price.” Doubts were expressed about the reliability of the Dutch promises. But finally it was decided to hold a conference with the Dutch “to project and agree upon the best way that may offer the usual benefit of the indigo trade equally and indifferently to the fruition of both companies.”

The conference resulted in a draft agreement:

First, both the Dutch and the English agreed to refrain from buying indigo for the ensuing year (i.e. 1634) anywhere in the Empire except at agreed prices. The English suggested and the Dutch accepted the following tariff:

Biana indigo (old)—Rs. 42
—do— (new)—Rs. 38

Sarkhej indigo —Rs. 16-18 per Surat md.

Apprehensions were expressed about the effect of not purchasing a staple commodity like indigo for a year on the Company’s investment. After discussion it was finally accepted by the English.

(i) The entire funds available for investment would not suffice to pay the debts at Surat (£ 1000,000).

(ii) The Company, having learnt of the sad predicament of India for investment purposes, was not expected to send a large sum.

(iii) Even without indigo, adequate cargo for lading the Company’s ship would be available viz. silk from Persia, goods from Agra and from Sumatra.

(iv) Distracted by the spectre of indebtedness, the Company had forbidden improvident loans beyond £ 20,000. The money saved by abstinence would go to clear the loans.

(v) Accumulated stocks of indigo in England required 'a breathing time for its profitable vend'.

Thus far from hampering the Company's business one-year's abstention might go a long way to weaken the monopoly.

Second, the Anglo-Dutch contract must be kept a secret. The factors of the two companies, buying indigo at or under such prices must outwardly evince mutual strife and competition to disguise their co-operative effort.

Third, the two companies were to equally divide the indigo so obtained at the port and bear the charges of transport. If the amount due was not paid to the purchaser within 20 days of the arrival of indigo at Swally Marine, the whole parcel would belong to the purchasing company.

Fourth, during the period of the contract neither Company was to carry any indigo in their ships for the 'Moors' or others. This was considered very necessary. To make it binding on the Dutch a fine of £ 5,000 was to be imposed for infringement by either party.

The Dutch assured the inviolability of the contract made. One month's notice was to be given of the termination of the contract. At the end of 11 months each side was to inform the other about its continuance or abrogation.

The draft agreement was approved by the Dutch and English Councils except that an oath was substituted for the fine.16

By the 'solemn contract' of Nov. 19, 1633, the English and the Dutch at Surat agreed not to buy indigo priced above a certain level. But the contract miscarried. According to Sir William Foster the prospect of defeating the monopoly by means of this joint abstention was for a time upset by some unfortunate proceedings on the part of the English and the Dutch factors at Agra. With due respect to him it is to be stated that the Agra factors of both the nations, in making purchases of indigo in the local market, were acting in ignorance, of the Surat agreement.

That they should have shown greater discretion in buying indigo at an unheard-of-price is a different matter.

As far as the Dutch were concerned, the chief of their Agra factory, while still unaware of the Surat agreement, made an improvident purchase of a large quantity of Biana indigo (1,500 fardles or 6,000 mds.) at Rs. 61 a md., costing Rs. 3,66,000/- from the monopolist. Aware of the transaction the Dutch authorities at Surat informed the English council of it with 'some show of sorrow', explaining that the purchase had been made on the strength of some earlier orders. According to the terms of the agreement the Dutch offered the English an opportunity to share in the bargain i.e. half of the amount (i.e. 3,000 mds.). But Methwold, the English President and Council at Surat, declined the offer in view of (i) the high price of indigo, (ii) their own lack of funds, (iii) the Company's injunctions not to borrow at interest (unless there was a prospect of early repayment from sale proceeds of English goods) and (iv) the quantity of indigo already sent or being sent home. Moreover, having themselves broken the main article in the contract, the Dutch agreed (Jan. 9/19, 1634) to the English demand of the abrogation of the twelfth clause i.e. release from the obligation not to ship indigo for native traders (to Persia). The Dutch also undertook to direct their Agra factor to annul his bargain, if possible.17

While the English factors at Surat did not share with the Dutch, their counterparts at Agra had, without the knowledge and approval of the former, associated themselves with the Dutch contract with the monopolist. The Surat—Company correspondence seems to make the Agra factors responsible for this and Sir William Foster also considers the latter's action to be unfortunate and improvident. But a careful and critical study of the records would tend to show that the Surat factors were themselves guilty of delay in informing the Agra factors of the Anglo-Dutch contract of Nov. 19, 1633. The latter had no knowledge of this when in their letter of December, 9, 1633 (received at Surat in Feb. 1634) they dilated on "the great inconvenience

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17. Surat consultation, Jan. 1634. EF. 1634-36, pp. 1-2, V; Surat to Co. Jan. 2, 1636, EF. 1634-36. p. 141; Hague Transcripts. Ser. 1, Vol. ix, No. 315; Dagh Register, 1631-34, pp. 326-27. Sir William Foster thinks that apparently the English "were not altogether sorry to think that their rivals had locked up so much capital in indigo bought at an unheard-of-price."
caused to the indigo trade by the Dutch contract with the monopolist”. William Fremlen, the Chief of the English factory at Agra, seemed to have acted in good faith and for procuring investments in season, contracted with the Dutch to take one-third of the quantity purchased from the monopolist bania, Manohar Das, “2000 mds.” Of course, the President and Council at Surat had “expressly prohibited” purchase of any indigo “pending the conclusion of the agreement then in course of negotiation with the Dutch at Surat. The date of this prohibition as given in the letter of Surat to the Company (Feb. 21, 1634) is November, 21, 1633. This date is also given at another place in the same letter. But it is not clear why and how on 21st November the agreement, actually concluded two days before on 19th November, was described by the Surat factors as still “pending”. Calculating the time taken for transport of Agra-Surat messages to be two months (as shown above) the Surat letter of 21st November, 1633, containing the prohibition was expected to reach Agra in January, 1634. To save their own skin the Surat factors threw the blame on Fremlen and his associates at Agra who were accused of sharing with the Dutch “for reasons unknown to Surat”, and expressed their surprise and despair at what Agra had done.

On being asked to explain, the Agra factors admitted “the unfortunate result” of sharing with the Dutch but boldly qualified their explanation by saying that their “error” was due to order from Surat. The latter, however, could not possibly accept this position.18

This account could not be reconciled with the version of the servant of the English at Surat returning from Agra. According to the latter, Fremlen made the purchase improvidently, much against the advice of the English broker, of 3000 (Akbari) mds. of Biana indigo at Rs. 64/- a md.,—the prime cost being Rs. 62, and the charge of collection from the place production being Rs. 2 a md. Assuming the quantity purchased to be 2000 mds., the total cost would be Rs. 1,28,000/-19 besides the

18. The Surat authorities disclaimed all knowledge and responsibility in the matter, except that learnt from “the joint subscription signed by William Fremlen and Salomon Voorknekt.
Surat to Co. Feb. 21, 1634; Dec. 29, 1634. EF. 1634-36, pp. 12, 70.
19. Reckoning Re. 1/- = 2s. 3d., this would amount to £ 14,400.
cost of carriage to Surat, the uncertainty\textsuperscript{20} of its arrival in time before shipping next year, and the interest charges. The Surat authorities felt "so much damaged by this bargain" that they disclaimed and disavowed it, so far as monetary assistance from Surat is concerned." However indignant they might be they could hardly repudiate the bargain. They had to make the best of the bad situation. Allowing the Agra factors to make payment from their own funds, the Surat authorities severely censured Fremlen's action, dissolved the Agra factory, recalled their men therefrom, till "our joint resolution reduced the price of indigo to some more reasonable conditions."

The Surat Council commented that all their actions were "crossed (i.e. nullified) by the proceedings of the Dutch" and that "their inconsiderate act—quite frustrated the possibility of reducing that commodity this year to the desired pitch." Even Sir William Foster says that the hopes of breaking the monopoly were dissipated. Nevertheless the effect of the Anglo-Dutch joint purchase of indigo at the unheard—of monopoly price must not be exaggerated. It was a mere episode whose effect was temporary.

At the beginning of 1634 the Anglo-Dutch agreement regarding abstention from the purchase of indigo, coupled with the indebtedness of the English, the small demand for the imported goods, and the dearness of calicoes, rendered the task of finding a suitable cargo for the England-bound Mary difficult for the Surat President. In February 1634 it was laden chiefly with the indigo and saltpetre purchased at Agra long before the agreement.

Shipments of indigo to England so dwindled by end of December 1634, that Methwold wrote to the Company (Dec. 29, 1634) in a bitter mood, contrasting the earlier period of open trade with the present one of monopoly. "For indigo, 'which you esteem the prime of principal commodity of all others' they can only say that in the little which you will receive now, you will receive too much....." The future was uncertain. He could not foresee where a larger quantity would be available at "such prices and such proportions" as required by the Company.

\textsuperscript{20} Due to the Emperor's journey to Kashmir, for which all camels were requisitioned.
This was because they were not dealing with merchants ('whose profit or occasions will induce them to sell as they see good') but they had "to struggle with monopolists that are backed from the treasury of one of the richest monarchs in the world".

The indigo monopoly and the lack of funds acted as a damper on the English trade. The Surat President wrote to the Company (Jan. 19, 1635) that if by October, the monopoly was not dissolved and suitable funds were not forthcoming, it would be impossible to send a big ship i.e. with adequate goods.  

4. Failure of the Monopoly

The Imperial monopoly in indigo lasted for about a year. Signs of its likely impending dissolution were evident at the end of 1634. If President Methwold is believed, it was "the opinion of all men that the monopoly had failed in the first year of its erection," and the best antidote to it was Anglo-Dutch "abstinence" punctiliously observed. In fact English factory records do not attribute the failure to the decline of cultivation under indigo. Evidently it may be assumed that the farmer, Mir Jumla, was successful in producing indigo with conscript labour or improvised cultivators or any other resources at his disposal. The failure was the result of the joint Anglo-Dutch contract of abstinence from purchase. The Governor of Surat, apprehensive of the falling revenues of his port, petitioned to the Emperor to restore freedom of trade in indigo. The Surat letter of Dec. 29, 1634, tells us that Muizzul mulk "subtly" foresaw the ruin of the entire English trade, depending wholly upon indigo (which was denied to the English), and also the ruin of his port, it the English withdrew from there. So he became "the greatest solicitor" before the king for a "total inlargement or some such relaxation at least" so far as the English and the Dutch were concerned.

Being thus moved, the emperor sent three farmans,—to the Governor of Surat, the English and the Dutch,—all to the same effect. The English and the Dutch were asked to make an

21. Surat to Co. (Feb. 21, 1634), EF. 1624-36, pp. 11-13, V. 1-2, 141
   Clearly this indicated the primacy of indigo trade. Without it, it
   was considered to be unnecessary expense to continue the Agra
   Factory, though cloth investment and sale of quick-silver were there.
   Surat to Co. (Dec. 29, 1634) EF. 1634-36, p. 70, 97.

22. Surat to Co. (Dec. 29, 1634) ; Ibid., pp. 70-1, VII.
agreement with the Governor of Surat for getting their requirements of indigo at Agra (without paying any charge to others). But neither of the two European nations was satisfied. Their grounds of objection were mainly three:

(i) The proposal to buy indigo at such a distance was "most unreasonable"; even "the best survey and trial thereof" was generally inadequate to satisfy the Company as regards the quality.

(ii) Every village yielded different varieties of indigo in considerable amounts. A general agreement regarding the total amount would, in practice, lead to much carelessness and adulteration (stones or dirt coloured blue) in supplying the contract.

(iii) No redress would be possible, "because the king would be a party."

So both the English and the Dutch declined to agree to "such a form of trade". Even the Governor of Surat also appreciated the equity of these objections and again referred the matter to the Emperor. But as he was then on his way to Kashmir any decision was bound to be delayed.

The Dutch and the English then represented their case before Asaf Khan, the Vakil and Afzal Khan, the Diwan-i-Kul, "two of the most eminent and powerful noblemen about the king". The main points of their representation were—

(i) they had enjoyed the liberty of free merchants for almost thirty years under Jahangir and Shahjahan;


Mir Musa and Asaf Khan were "deadly enemies". EF. 1634-36, p. 262.

Afzal Khan 'Allami was originally Shukrullah Shirazi. He was attached to Prince Khurram as his secretary and confidant. After the peace with Rana of Udaipur he was made the Prince's diwan and later given the title of Afzal Khan by Jahangir. Under Shahjahan he was appointed Mir-i-Saman and then Diwan-i-kul (Chief Diwan) (1628-9). He died in January 1639, at Lahore, M. U. Text I. 145-51; Eng. Tr. I, 149-153; EF. 1618-21. p. 36 n.
(ii) they had been permitted in all places to trade with all merchants for all articles, and so

(iii) to them might be restored the freedom of trade in indigo, "the sole merchandize now remaining in...... his dominions which we could return for our country";

(iv) otherwise, they might have to leave the country, in search of a more profitable trade.

In making this representation they were encouraged by the advice that though Manohar Das was the chief monopolist in name, it was Mir Jumla (Mir Muhammad Amin) who was the principal actor. Mir Musa and Asaf Khan were sworn rivals.

Mir Jumla and Asaf Khan also belonged to different court factions. So the latter would be interested in pushing the case of the European merchants, if only to oppose his rival.

In fact the intervention of Asaf Khan proved to be highly effective. The Emperor soon issued another farman "releasing the indigo unto the accustomed liberty." The Governor of Surat went into raptures over it and calling the English to the Shahbundar's house, assured them that as the farman bore the Emperor's writing in the margin, the indigo trade would return to its "pristine condition." But the English, aware of the Emperor's cupidithy, were sceptical and uncertain of the issue.

A few days after the issue of the imperial Farman, the Anglo-Dutch contract expired in November, 1634. However, it was scrupulously observed by both sides till its end. Both the companies favoured its continuance. But the Dutch Director General hesitated to consent in the absence of definite orders from their authorities. Nevertheless he promised that they would not purchase any indigo at such unreasonable prices without special directions. The Dutch seemed to be serious about it; they dissolved all their factories except Surat; even at Surat, in place of the Director General there was only a Chief Merchant together with 7 or 8 persons; they diverted their money and goods to Persia; they publicly declared that though silk purchased with ready money yielded no profit, it was more profitable than trade in Surat.25

If the Dutch diverted their trade from Surat to Persia, the President of the English factory at Surat also decided to proceed to Goa without taking leave from the Governor of Surat with as many members of his Council as possible. But he endeavoured to assure the Governor of Surat, who was evidently perturbed that they were not escaping. The Governor thought of the unkindness of the English, attributing their action to their discontent at the indigo monopoly. So he laboured hard to impress upon the English that it was totally abandoned. Finally he wished the English to return to Surat.

On 14th April, 1635, the English received the imperial farman, dissolving the indigo monopoly. Its sale became once again open to all.

The dissolution of the monopoly was not immediately followed by a fall in prices. High prices lingered still. While old Biana indigo sold at not less than Rs. 50 or 48 per md. the new one at Rs. 40-42. So the English merchants were not encouraged to invest money in it especially as it would be many months before they could send a ship to England. The Surat authorities "awaited both means and instructions from the company, relying upon getting Sarkhej indigo, which was better esteemed, more easily obtained, and cheaper in price." However small quantities of indigo were purchased by Armenians and other merchants for overland transport to Persia, where as report went, it fetched a high price (in 1634) 200 laris the Surat md. Later in 1635 the English made some purchases at Ahmadabad and Agra, But these were characterised by unfriendly rivalry, because their object was to interfere with the Dutch investments.26

On Feb. 22, 1636, the Dutch and the English merchants at Surat were summoned by the Governor to the port (bandar) - "in a full company of the Moors", to hear the contents of two royal farmans—

(a) The first repeated that indigo trade was open to all-comers; it contained "the inlargement of the trade of the indigo, which no man should presume to monopolize or to impose any

exactions thereupon, but that it may be brought (sic) and sold by
every man according to his several occasion”. 27

According to Dutch sources this farman was issued as a
result of complaints made by the Dutch regarding a recent
attempt of Saif Khan to monopolize the stok of indigo in his
district. 28

(b) The second farman ordered that—
(i) Dutch and the English must always keep a deposit of
Rs. 12 lakhs at Surat, 29
(ii) the principals of both nations must always remain in
Surat and must not go aboard their ships at any
time;
(iii) the English and the Dutch must not resort to any
other ports in the Mughal Empire.
(iv) on arrival, their ships must not ride in any other place
except Swally Hole (Swally Marine), where it shall
not be lawful for them to build any frigates.

The second farman evoked strong protests from the
English and the Dutch alike. President Methwold characterised
some of its terms as “ridiculous stuff” which he could not re-
member. In his diary he mentions that even the Governor
was “so much ashamed as to deny the copy” which he demand-
ed. On behalf of the English nation Methwold “utterly rejected
the conditions” and refused to accept any one and “submit to
so much slavery”. He writes further, “I preferred myself a free
man and subject to the King of England, no slave to this, nor
liable to those commands which shall oppose our former privi-
leges; and therefore I required a contradiction to this firman or
leave to depart the country. To conclude, there passed much
dispute, with some anger and threatening words, on both sides,
which the Shahbandar endeavoured to qualify by pretending un-
to me privately that nothing there was intended, but that it was
only formality procured by this Governor from the king for the

27. Methwold’s Diary, 1636, EF. 1634-37, p. 157, XVI, ; Surat to
Ahmadabad, Ibid, pp. 172-173. Date confirmed by Dutch records.
the transactions, see EF. 1634-36, 157 n.
29. Methwold’s Diary, 1636 ; EF. 1634-36, p. 157, XVI.
benefit of his post.” This is corroborated by the Dutch records. When the Dutch also complained to the Governor about this “absurd farman through the Sahbandar, Mirza Mahmud, and the King’s Commissary they got the reply that “it was not meant to interfere with the Dutch, but to restrain the English, who had taken to frequenting the Portuguese settlements with their small vessels and were planning to use them in fetching goods by water from Broach and Cambay, which would injure the customs revenue of Surat. The answer, however, did not reconcile the Dutch to the other restrictions mentioned in the farman, but no attempt was made to enforce them.”

The Surat factors decided to ‘send some person of quality’ to the Emperor to remonstrate against the farman for imposing several restraints on the English, which were tantamount to ‘conditions of captivity’. But they were discreet enough to temporize till their goods were earmarked for England and thereafter they would ‘sue for redress above or enforce it hereabouts’, together with the Dutch, who were also indignant.

30. Ibid., 157-8, Pieterszoon continues “Hereupon the President (Methwold) inveighed not a little against the Governor”. Ibid., 157n.
31. Pieterszoon’s account as quoted in EF. 1634-36. 157 n.
32. Surat to Ahmadabad, Feb. 27, 1636, Ibid., 172-173.
CHAPTER 5

Urbanisation in Medieval India

SECTION A

TOWNS IN MUGHAL INDIA

Students of political history are familiar with the changing vicissitudes of towns and their role in history. Students of art may turn to works of scholars like Fergusson, Cunningham, H.H. Cole, V.A. Smith, Percy Brown and others for the monuments located in towns. But no critical and analytical study of urban centres in Mughal India from the socio-economic point of view has yet been made. ‘The Cities of Gujarashtra, Their Topography and History Illustrated’ . . . (1849) by H.G. Briggs deal with five cities only,—Surat, Cambay, Ahmedabad, Baroda and Broach, based on his tour diary. The ‘Cities of India’ by G. W. Forrest, C.I.E. Ex-Director of Records, Government of India (1903), contains sketches of 15 towns (Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad, Mount Abu & Ajmer, Jeypore, Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur-Sikri, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Benares, Calcutta, Madras, Pondicherry and Cuddalore. But these sketches are written as “labours of love”, for use and entertainment of travellers. The importance of undertaking socio-economic surveys of the urban centres of Mughal India cannot be gainsaid. This is one of the ways of knowing how our forefathers actually lived and thought. Only recently Dr. Abdul Karim in his ‘Dacca the Mughal Capital’ (1964) has described the vicissitudes of Dacca from the administrative and economic points of view during the Mughal period on the basis of records preserved in India Office Library. 

1. This is a part of a paper read at a Seminar in the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla in 1966. Proceedings still unpublished.

(Contd. on next page)
Such a socio-economic survey of towns may be made according to the following tentative categorisation:

(i) The imperial capitals,—Agra, Fatehpur-Sikri & Delhi;
(ii) The provincial capitals viz.,
   (a) Bengal—Rajmahal, Dacca and Murshidabad;
   (b) Bihar—Patna—Azimabad;
   (c) Oudh—Lucknow;
   (d) The Deccan—Hyderabad;
(iii) The three presidency towns—Madras, Bombay & Calcutta;
(iv) Commercial centres and seaports,—
    Thatta, Broach, Cambay, Surat, Goa, Masulipatam, Balasore, Hugli, etc.;
(v) Inland emporiums—Ahmedabad, Baroda, Lahore, etc.;
(vi) Religious centres—Benares, Multan, Puri, etc.

Examples can be multiplied. But sometimes the lines of classification might cross each other. Agra was both a capital and an inland trade centre. Patna, besides being a provincial headquarter, was also an inland mart. Studies of cities may also be made on an individual basis (e.g., taking one town only at a time, like Surat, Agra, Delhi, Patna) or on a regional basis (e.g., cities of a particular region like Gujarat, Bengal). Another way is to study the settlements and towns of a particular European power say the Dutch (e.g., Pulicat, Chinsura, etc.) the French (e.g. Chandernagore, Pondicherry etc.) and the Portuguese (e.g., Goa). A comparative approach will have to be pursued.

The subject of towns in medieval India may be studied according to the following tentative general plan, depending on materials available.

(Contd. from previous page)

Miss D. Devakunjari has written on Madurai Through the Ages (Madras University doctorate thesis). Krishan Lal Sachdeva was enrolled in Agra University for Socio-Economic and Cultural Studies in the History of Delhi (1803-1857). Since this paper was written in 1966, Dr. (Mrs) Hamida Khatoon Naqvi has published her thesis on Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India, 1556–1803. Asia, 1968.

I. Physical aspects
   (a) Geography
   (b) Environs and hinterland
   (c) Town planning

II. Historical aspects
   (a) Growth of the town
   (b) Concomitant factors
   (c) Classification

III. Economic aspects
   A. Towns as Economic centres:
      (i) Towns and the hinterland—inland mart
      (ii) Movement of local trade:
           (a) Inland transport & communications, tolls,
           (b) Fairs and markets,
           (c) Money—finance, exchange and credit.
      (iii) Towns as centres of production:
           (a) Industrial organisation & labour,
           (b) Karkhanas,
           (c) Urban industries,
           (d) Castes and guilds.
      (iv) Towns as centres of International Trade:
           Commodities,
           European Settlements,
           Commercial Communities,
           Merchant—Capitalists,
           Character of international trade,
           Volume of trade.
   B. Natural calamities—catastrophes, social disturbances.

IV. Administrative aspects:
   (a) Urban institutions
   (b) Effect of administration on urban life.

V. Social aspects:
   Standard of life
   Cultural role of cities.

VI. Summary and conclusions.

But this is nothing more than a scaffolding, a mere cross-section of the plan. I make no pretence to finality or exhaustive—
ness and I have depended at places on the researches and judgments of other scholars.

1. Physical Aspects

As in late medieval Europe, the rapid growth of towns, in number, size and wealth, was a striking phenomenon in socio-economic life in Mughal India. Dr. K.M. Ashraf tells us that the peculiar conditions prevailing during the Turko-Afghan period in Hindustan "gave rise to a little urban life in a few big towns which also served as the seat of local or provincial administration. The towns were usually walled and protected and also served as centres of refuge to the neighbouring populace in times of danger and insecurity. In times of peace, they served as centres of distribution of agricultural produce and industrial goods. In general we might say that though the towns led the country in social and intellectual culture, they were not of sufficient economic importance to modify the economic outlook of the people as a whole." A few big cities of Hindustan during this period were Delhi, Gaur, Cambay (Khambayat), Multan, Lahore, Agra, and other religious centres like Mathura, Benares and Ujjain. A few towns were founded by Sultans like Alaeddin, Ghiyasuddin Tughluq and Firuz Tughluq. The provincial kingdoms had their urban centres while in the Deccan were towns like Vijaynagar, Bidar, Gulbarga etc.

But during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a large number of towns grew up in Mughal Empire and the Deccan, some by rise, others by growth from older units. As illustrations of the rise of new towns, we find that a fort was built at Patna by Sher Shah in 1541. Under Akbar, Agra and Lahore forts were built almost about the same time (C. 1565-80), while Fatehpur-Sikri, which became virtually Akbar's capital (1569-86) grew out of a mere village. The Red Fort at Delhi was established during 1639-48 by Shahjahan. Thus towns grew up nestling under these,—the modern city of Patna, the towns of Akbarabad and Lahore and Shahjahanabad. On the other hand Surat and Ahmadabad etc. were examples of development of older towns. These and some other towns came to world-wide-

importance during this period, as controlling international trade. Their wealth and prosperity impressed foreign travellers.

In medieval Europe a town with a population of 20,000 was considered to be a big town. The Mughal Empire under Akbar was stated by Nizamuddin Ahmad to contain 120 big cities and 3,200 qasbas (townships), each an agglomerate of 100—1,000 villages. The largest city in India during the 17th century was Agra. Ralph Fitch (1583-91) found it to be 'a very great city . . . and very populous'. When the court was there its population was estimated at 5 lakhs by J. Xavier (1609) and at 6,60,000 by Manrique (excluding strangers). Even after the court shifted to Delhi, Agra continued to be larger than it. The population of Delhi, though "not as large" as that of Paris, then the largest city in Europe, was considered by Bernier to be "not greatly less". Thus Agra was larger than Paris from the point of view of population. Agra and Lahore appeared to Finch (1608-11) to be larger than London. He is supported by Terry (1616-19) and also by Monserrate (1581) who asserted Lahore to be "second to none either in Asia or in Europe". Coryat (1615) described Lahore to be larger than Agra, and "one of the largest cities of the whole universe", as exceeding Constantinople "in greatness". The subsequent decline of Lahore may be traced in the accounts of Pelsaert and Tavernier. The size of Benares and Patna struck Finch with wonder. The population of Patna was estimated at two lakhs by Manrique. Ahmedabad was described in the Letters Received (1613-15) to be as big as London with its suburbs. Surat appeared to William Finch (1608-11) to be "a citie of good quantitie, with many faire merchants houses therein”. Masulipatam was found by Fryer to contain a population of two lakhs.³

³. Ta'baqat-i Akbari III. 545-6; Xavier in JASB NS. XXIII (1927), p. 121; Early Travels in India by Foster, 17, 20, 23, 133, 137, 161, 173, 177, 182, 206, 243, 292; Manrique II, 140, 152; Bernier, 281-2, 284-5, Ball's Tavernier I, 74, 77, 86; John Marshall in India by S. A. Khan, 152, 153; Letters received II, 28; Fryer, I, 90; Remonstranie of F. Pelsaert; Irfan Habib, Ag. Sys. Mughal India, 74-5.

On 11th December, 1671, Marshall got a written account from the (Patna) Kotwal's chabutra to the effect that during the last 12 months the total number of deaths was 1,03,000 of which 50,000 were Muhammadans and 53,000 Hindus, as recorded in their record books. This suggests that there were arrangements for vital statistics.
Various factors were responsible for this development of towns in Mughal India,—for the transformation of agricultural communities into urban, for the transition from the qaria, and the qasba to the shahar, from the village and township in which land was predominant to the town in which trade was the predominant factor. The process, though slow, was perfectly natural, stimulated by a number of concomitant factors:

(i) Administrative and Military:

The establishment of the Mughal Empire with increasing peace and security, the urban propensities of the ruling classes, the Emperor, the nobles and the courtier class, the increasing opportunities of making a living—all encouraged growing numbers of people to flock to royal camps and nestle under the protection of fort walls. Developments of such a kind occurred at places like Agra, Patna, Lahore and Delhi. The growth of Murshidabad on the site of Muxadabad was due to administrative reasons of a different kind, viz., the ill-will between Azim us Shan, Governor of Bengal and Murshid Quli Khan, Diwan. In the Deccan under Shivaji a large number of forts (240) were built and some of these also grew to be important urban centres.

(ii) Commercial:

After 1498 the Arab domination of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea established at the cost of Indian overseas commercial and colonial activities came to be challenged by the European powers. The Portuguese, the English, the Dutch and others penetrated India through her sea frontier. The history of modern commerce began in India as in Europe. New markets grew for India's raw materials and manufactures. For a time India supplied the whole world in several articles. True, there were traditional seaports like Broach, Surat, Cambay, etc. But it cannot be denied that the exigencies of European commerce and the needs of European factors stimulated the development of these older ports and eventually led to the growth of new seaport towns of Balasore, Madras (1639), Bombay (1687), Hugli,

A crow turned its tail to the city and its head to the village;
[Surely] the crow's tail was better than its head!...
Calcutta (1690). Sometimes the growth of world civilization is said to have passed through three stages, potamic, thalassic and oceanic. In India the growth of commerce may be said to have passed at once from the potamic to the oceanic stage.

(iii) Religious:

There were many traditional religious centres in India like Multan, Benares, Mathura and Allahabad, Tirupati, etc., which continued to flourish during this period. But tombs and dargahs attracted devout men to places like Ajmer.

Sometimes several causes combined to account for their rise and growth. Generally speaking it may be said that whatever the origin of towns, it was trade which guaranteed their continued existence and stimulated their growth. Even the pre-eminently religious centres had their fairs.

This development may be compared with what happened in medieval Europe and England. With regard to the continent Pirenne tells us that the municipality originated in the mercantile settlements or ports in the suburb of some ecclesiastical feudal cities of fortress, in the outer enclosure of some bourg, as a result of revival of commerce. Thus the agricultural interests of the older community were overgrown by increasing number of men specializing in trade. He also says that “there were no unfortified towns in the Middle Ages.”5 But Coulton has shown that many noted English towns had never rudimentary defences such as earthen bank. According to him at Cambridge both the fortress and the town grew out of the bridge over an impassable river and there was “no sudden and artificial creation and no clear differentiation between merchant and agriculturist, such as Pirenne has traced in so many continental cities. Agricultural Cambridge became urban Cambridge by exatly the same slow and irresistible development which has gradually transformed England from country of villages to a country of towns. Almost everywhere we can trace the same causes at work. The original village would find itself in a particularly fortunate position—a natural halting place on a great road held by the bridge or the ford of a river, or a point commanding a pass through the forest or between the hills, or at the gate of a castle or monastery. This

would cause a natural influx of inhabitants...”

As in England, so in India also, natural or strategic or geographical factors sometimes influenced the growth of towns on certain sites or the choice of sites and accounted for the importance of the towns. The incomparable situation of Delhi marked her out to be an imperial metropolis throughout the ages. Like Delhi Agra owed its commercial and strategical importance to its location on the Jamna, as a natural highway of trade with rich deltaic Bengal, and grew to be an emporium and a frontier fortress from the west. Sher Shah transferred the headquarters of Bihar from Bihar Sharif to Patna by considering the utility of the Ganges as a highway of commerce and for defence purposes, as we know from the Tarikh-i-Daud. Madras owed its opulence and fame to its convenient situation on the Coromandel coast as a centre of trade with England, China, Persia and Mocha and not far from the diamond mines of Golconda. It was, as assessed by G.W. Forrest, “inferior to none of the European establishments in India except Goa and Batavia”. Surat on the estuary of the Tapti, was the richest port of the Mughal Empire on the west coast and a centre of European commerce, the “gateway to the holy places of Arabia” for Indian

6. Coulton, Medieval Panorama, 284.

“In the earlier centuries, the distinction between towns and countryside was not great; but the needs of commerce, notably for freedom from tolls and arbitrary exactions and for special laws, courts and administration soon led to insistence by the townsman on autonomy and a fight to keep a similar economy from developing in country villages. Some lords, among them many ecclesiastics, opposed these town development and gave way only to heavy pressure or even force; others, notably the kings, associated themselves with the movements, sold charters for handsome sums, and in the long run profited both financially and politically from their foresight. Often charters were drawn up in limitation of grants to other towns; thus the “Laws of Breteuil”, a small town in Normandy, were widely copied in England. King John’s charter to Gloucester granted in 1200 and confirmed in 1227 and 1328, is illustrative of the privileges which townsman wanted.” Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West, Columbia University Press, 1, 349.

7. On returning from Bengal Sher Shah came to Patna (1541), “then a small town dependent on Bihar, which was the seat of the local Government. He was standing on the bank of the Ganges when after much solid reflection and sage determination, he said to those who were standing by, “If a fort were to be built in this place, the water of the Ganges could never flow far from it, and Patna would become one of the great towns of this country; because this place is situated to the west, on the banks of the Ganges which flows from the north.” (Elliot and Dowson, IV, 477).
Muslim pilgrims. Ajmer occupied a very strategic position controlling a gap in the Aravelli range and so also the shortest and easiest trade route to Ahmadabad.\(^8\) Calcutta (Fort William) was more favourably situated on the Hugli than its Dutch and French rivals at Chinsurah and Chandernagore.

Many towns in India, unlike medieval Europe, were undefended. Bernier tells us that Agra was "without walls". Surat City, close to the fort, was also unwalled and proved to be a rich and defenceless prize to Shivaji during his first attack (1664). Subsequently Aurangzeb had it walled round but this proved no deterrent to the intrepid Maratha (1670).\(^9\)

II: Historical

The historical survey of the urban centres illustrates the process of urbanization, de-urbanization and re-urbanization. This is well-illustrated in cases like Delhi, Agra and Patna, etc. Delhi, 'the Empress of India's cities', marks the site of successive kingdoms and empires. Whatever might have been the origin of Agra in pre-Muslim times, its strategic importance was realised by Sultan Sikandar Lodi, as a buffer against the rebellious vassals from the south and an old village grew to be a subsidiary capital. According to Jahangir it was defended by a very old citadel before Akbar built the fort here. Famous as the imperial metropolis under the Mauryas and the Guptas, Patna (Pataliputra) declined but again revived under the imperial Palas only to decline again, till it was revived by Sher Shah.

III. Economic Aspects

Speaking of medieval Europe, Pirenne observes that between the towns and the country "there was a sharp division of labour, the latter practising agriculture only, the former trade and the manual arts."\(^10\) But with regard to medieval England Coulton holds a diametrically opposed view: "The modern distinction between municipal and village life had

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8. In Madras many Indians sought the protection of the English Fort and so outside it a prosperous settlement grew up known as the Black Town whereas the European quarter was known as the White Town. G W. Forrest, op. cit. ; Love, Vestiges of Old Madras, Vol. I : Sarkar, Shivaji, (1961) 92-97, 170-6 ; Aurangzeb, iii.


comparatively little force in the Middle Ages. The town was often scarcely more than an overgrown village...”

What was the position in medieval India? Dr. K.M. Ashraf thinks that during the Turko-Afghan period this separation did exist in a marked degree. The Mughals, like their Turko-Afghan predecessors, were essentially an urban people in India. Their courtiers, officers and the upper and middle classes of the Muslim population also preferred a town life to village. Hamidud din has hinted in the Alhakam i ‘Alamgiri to this dislike, saying that the tail of a crow which was turned towards a city was better and happier than its head which was turned towards a village. This suggests a distinction between the town and the village in India, unlike medieval England and comparable to the continent of Europe during the Middle Ages. But a hard and a fast line of distinction was perhaps not possible. The villages supplied the sources of revenue as well as food to the town. Further the village also supplied manufactures (e.g., cotton, silk, saltpetre etc.) which were sold in the town markets. Of course, the village lacked the amenities which were available in the towns. The humble village (qaria) was inhabited by cultivators only, without any craftsmen, (except occasionally by scavengers) without any bazar (but only the weekly hat). The next unit was the large village or a small town (qasha) with a predominantly agricultural population but with several craftsmen and some low grade officials. The town (shahar) had a majority of non-agricultural population and regular administrative officers. The difference, if any, was occupational and organisational but it was not fundamental. The Mughal town was an overgrown village. The town was village raised to the third degree. For one thing the towns were like small islands engulfed by the vast expense of the country. For another the exigencies of local trade broke any barrier between the town and the village. As Dr. Irfan Habib says that “local trade largely meant the trade between town and country.”

12. Dr. K.M. Ashraf observes: “the village community determined the economic outlook of the vast majority of the population of Hindustan. Its leading economic feature was production mainly for purposes of local consumption. Industries on a large scale were carried on in a (Contd. on next page)
The provisioning of the towns, the supply of food to the town population was the primary need of urban economy. Next to food were other necessities and luxury goods. While reliable census figures are not always available, it is undeniable that urban population had a high ratio to the total population of the country. With the exception of a few small centres which preserved a semi-rural character which could subsist without outside help, the majority of large towns, the big mercantile centres, the cradle of the middle class, had to get their substantial food supplies from outside,—the surrounding country and commerce.

(a) In the first place, the peasants of the surrounding country constituted the purveyors of the urban population. This tended to break the economic stagnation of the country and forged a link between the peasantry and the nascent cities which was mutually satisfying. The growth of the town and its steadily increasing consumption led the surrounding villages to increase their own surplus production.

The Mughal town government had to regulate the markets and movements of food stuffs, guard against arbitrary rise in prices, and safeguard the interests of the consumer. The exhaustive duties of the Kotwal, described in the Ain-i-Akbari, indicate this spirit of control.13

(b) In the second place, commerce also played its part in provisioning the towns. This required the intervention of merchants, the banjaras, the grain merchants etc.14 During

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few localized areas which were as a rule situated at the mouth of certain navigable rivers through which raw materials could be imported with facility or else in the close vicinity of an area whether raw material was available in sufficient quantities to feed them. Apart from a very few inland centres of other provinces, Bengal and Gujrat, because of their shipping facilities, where the chief industrial provinces which worked certain industries, collected the surplus of finished products from the inland centres of other provinces and exported them abroad. In this manner, while the vast majority occupied itself with agricultural pursuits, a small proportion engaged in trade and industry, and a few rich people lived on commerce with foreign nations.15 (cf. Mahuan in Bengal: JRAS, 1895).

Ashraf, JASB (1935), i, 198; Akham, in Anecdotes of Aurangzeb, op. cit. Sarkar, Mughal Adm, 47, Irfan Habib, Agrarian Sys. of Mughal India, 75.

13. 'Ain, Jarrett and Sarkar, ii, 43-45.
times of scarcity or famine it was on the goods brought by them that the towns had to depend for food. Merchants also brought luxuries, wine and fruits and other articles for the rich sections of the population. Thus foreign merchants came to supply the needs of the urban population. The institution of brokers had its inception in the exigencies of trade, local and international.

The countryside also supplied the towns with raw materials for their manufactures.

Besides being an inland mart, a trade centre for goods produced largely in the hinterland, the towns were also centres of industrial production and centres of international trade.

Moreland has long ago pointed out that there were two forms of industrial organization during Mughal India, the artisan system in which the independent artisan supplied his own capital, however small, his own materials and his own labour in manufacture, and the karkhana system in which the artisans worked to order in state controlled karkhanas or workshops. While the former prevailed generally in the majority of towns and village, the two systems co-existed in some towns where the karkhanas were established, e.g., Delhi, Agra, about which descriptions have been left by Asif in Turko-Afghan period and Abul Fazi and Bernier, during the heyday of the Mughals.

According to Abul Fazl there were in the imperial household "more than a hundred offices and workshops, each resembling a city or rather a little kingdom." Further "the imperial workshops in the towns of Lahore, Agra, Fatehpur, Ahmadabad, Gujrat turned out many masterpieces of workmanship." Bernier found the factories at work within the fortress of Delhi in mid-17th century: "large halls are seen in many places, called karkhanahs or workshops for the artisans, where worked in separate halls embroiderers, goldsmiths, painters, varnishers in lacquer-work, joiners, turners, tailors, shoe-makers, manufacturers of silk, brocade and thus fine muslins of which are made turbans, girdles with golden flowers and drawers worn by females ..." Manucci found state factories not only at Agra, Fatehpur and Ahmadabad but also at Lahore, Burhanpur and Kashmir. These numbered 36 according to Shakir Khan's memoirs in mid-18th century and 69 according to Zawabit-i-
Alamgiri.  
Thus the state i.e., the Crown supplied its own needs and became the principal producer and manufacturer, the chief patron of manufacture of luxury goods, the principal banker and chief trader in the empire.

What was the effect of these karkhanas on urban life and the relations between the village and the town? This requires to be studied in detail. But certain features deserve special mention:

(i) These helped mobility of labour from village to town. Country artisans of proved technical ability were drawn, either voluntarily to the kharkanās or forcibly (as during Aurangzeb’s Deccan viceroyalty, from Masulipatam, famous for calico-printing). Thus occupational specialisation helped the artisan to acquire status.

(ii) They helped organization of exclusive castes and guilds. As Bernier notes, “The embroiderer brings up his son as an embroiderer, the son of a goldsmith becomes a goldsmiths, and a physician of the city educates his son for a physician. No one marries but in his own trade or profession; and this custom is observed almost as rigidly by the Muhammadans as by the Hindus”. The construction of architectural edifices naturally encouraged stone workers, sculptors, carpenters, etc. At the same time this led to a nascent middle class, consisting of such classes as shopkeepers, traders, bankers, brokers, shipbuilders etc. Pelsaert observes that the shopkeeper was held in greater respect than the workman and some of them are well to do but they must not let the fact be seen.”

(iii) The example of the crown infiltrated downwards and tended to diffuse talent. The provincial governors and nobles also encouraged local artisan and workman, either for their own needs or for offering presents to the great. Thus it is not surprising that cotton and silk weaving became widespread in every household and was pursued during the vacation from agriculture.

15. Moreland, *India at the death of Akbar*: ‘Ain, op. cit. i. 12, 87-88; Bernier, 259; *Storia*, ii. 431; Sarkar, *Mughal Adm.* ch. X.
18. *Storia*, ii. 431; Pelsaert; Orme, *Indostan* ii. 4; *Historical Fragments*: etc. 409; Forster, *Journey* etc. i. 1-4; Sarkar, *Mughal Adm.* (1963), 168.
With regard to urban labour in Mughal India it appears from English factory records and accounts of foreign travellers that there was prevalence of begar or forced labour or ill-paid labour. The Patna factor Hughes (1620-1) gave advance of money to the silkwinders to work in the Company’s karkhanas. Possibly they were unwilling and had to be given some material inducements to work there. But there is no hint to their unwillingness in the records. So it may be that the winders insisted on prior payment, in order to save their position by taking advance wages. The Dutch factor at Agra (1620—26), Pelsaert, observes that “there are three classes of people who are indeed nominally free but whose status differs little from voluntary slavery: workman, peons or servants and small shopkeepers. “For the workman again, there were two scourges—low wages and oppression by the governors, the nobles, the Divans, the Kotwals, the Bakhshi and other royal officers. “If any of these wants a workman, the man is not asked if he is willing to come, but is seized in the home or in the street, well beaten if he should raise an objection, and in the evening paid half his wages, or nothing at all.”

Bernier observes: “If the artists and manufacturers were encouraged, the useful and fine arts would flourish; but these unhappy men are condemned, treated with harshness and inadequately remunerated for their labour. The rich will have every article at a cheap rate. When an umara, or mansabdar requires the services of an artisan, he sends to the bazar for him, employing force, if necessary, to make the poor man work; and after the task is finished, the unfeeling lord pays, not according to the value of the labour, but agreeably to his own standard of fair remuneration; the artisan having reason to congratulate himself if the kora (lash) has not been given in part payment... How then can it be expected that any spirit of emulation should animate the artist or manufacturer?... The artists, therefore, who arrive at any eminence in their art are those who are in the service of the king or of some powerful umara, and who work exclusively for their patron.

Bernier’s assertion that agricultural oppression led the—

peasants to migrate to the town and to the camps” indicates that absconding or displaced peasants became wage-labourers, and leaving the villages migrated to towns. In Aurangzeb's revenue regulations of the first decade of his reign also the flight of peasants loomed large.21 Was this increasing flow of peasants responsible for the worsening position of the workers and artisans and growth of servile classes?

“The amount of labour expended in the performance of personal services,” was, according to Moreland “one of the outstanding economic facts of the age of Akbar.”22

The peons or servants were, according to Pelsaert, “exceedingly numerous in this country, for everyone be he mounted soldier, merchant or king’s official, keeps as many servitors as his circumstances permit. Outside they serve for display, continually running before their master’s horse, inside they do all the work of the house.” He further notes “most of the great lords reckon 40 days to the month and pay from 3 to 4 rupees for the period while wages are often left several months in arrears and then paid in worn out clothes or other things. If, however, the master holds office or power, the servants are arrogant, oppressing the innocent and swimming in the strength of the master’s greatness.”23

Speaking of the Medieval Panorama in England, Coulton has described the Guild as a prehistoric, almost pre-human institution. Born of a natural instinct for protection through unity, it was also moulded by external force viz. controlled by lords as a definite body to bargain with.24

21. Sarkar, Mughal Adm. Ch. XI.
22. Moreland, op. cit. 87.

“Within the towns trade and industry were frequently organised by guilds, groups of merchants or craftsmen devoted to the maintenance of monopoly, some protection and assurance of quality for the consumer, regulation of production and common commercial policy, and the provision of social and welfare facilities for their members. The patterns of Guild organisation and control varied greatly, and it is difficult in the present state of research in economic history to speak confidently about their origins of procedures.” Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West, Columbia Press I, 349.

He further says that while the guilds rendered certain advantages in protecting trade in a rude society, settling the qualities of workmanship

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In India also both these forces seem to be at work at least during the Mughal age.

But while medieval England had three distinct types of guilds—the socio-religious (corresponding to modern benefit societies), the Guild Merchant (to ensure mutual protection of members and regulate trade; based on monopoly) and the craft guilds (admitting only special trades like tailors, saddlers, etc.), medieval India seemed to have had only the last two categories of guilds. The craft guilds are referred to by Alberuni and Abul Fazl in very clear terms. Alberuni says: "After the Sudra follow the people called Antyaja, who render various kind of services, who are not reckoned amongst any caste, but only as members of a certain craft or profession. There are eight classes of them who freely intermarry with each other, except the fueller, shoe-maker, and weaver, for no others would condescend to have anything to do with them. These eight guilds are the fueller, shoe-maker, juggler, the basket and shield-maker, the sailor, the fishermen, the hunter of wild animals and birds, and the weaver. The four castes do not live together with them in one and the same place. These guilds live near the village and towns of the four castes but outside them. He also mentions that "the people called Hadi, Dom (Domba), Chandala, and Badhatan are not reckoned amongst any caste of guild. They are occupied with dirty work, like the cleaning of the villages and other services. They are considered as one sole class, and distinguished only by their occupations."[25]

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and possessing great social qualities, they had certain dark features.

(a) Even at the best of times they did not work without considerable friction. The usages of the Gil merchant at Derby (1630) "redound to the injury, oppression and pauperization of the people";

(b) Latter on the system became conservative and caused unspeakable stagnation especially in its absolute forms in France before the Revolution.

(c) the sociability of the guild was "strictly limited: the Guildman loved his friend, but fought his enemy" (ibid., 292).

25. cf. "Despite their concern for monopoly, guilds should not be compared to trade unions; they are rather more like modern trade associations concerned with the position and reputation of their members and which at times have tendencies to set common policies and prices, But guild regulation could not easily prevent a man with capital from grasping opportunities offered by an expanding economy; and indeed in many instances guilds were perverted to serve the interests of more important and wealthy members who were able to seize

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Even after the Muslim conquest of Northern India, the old craft guilds and professional castes continued to function in industry. Babur found the craftsmen of Hindustan organised in rigid and exclusive castes. Abul Fazl mentions among the duties of the Kotwal: "Of every guild of artificers, he should name one as guildmaster and another as broker by whose intelligence the business of purchase and sale should be conducted. From these also he should require frequent reports."26 This would imply that, as in medieval England, the Mughal municipal authorities tried to control the guilds.

Reference to guilds of merchants are fewer. But these seem to have existed among them as well as the banians. This is clearly referred to in a Surat letter of 26 November, 1669. As a protest against Aurangzeb's religious policy carried out by the local Qazi a large number of people, including many chief merchants of Surat, "sensible of their common danger" closed their houses and shops and left the town and proceeded to Broach (after the request of the five principal merchants for protection was shrewdly turned down by Gerald Aungier of Bombay). Notwithstanding the great dislocation of trade and the disadvantages of the civil population, including the Governor, the mercantile community stuck to this hartal (General Strike) according to this communal decision. . . ., "the Bannians having bound themselves under severe penalties not to open any of their shops without order from their Mahager or General Council, there was not any provisions to bee got; the tanksall (i.e. mint) and the customhouse shut; noe money to be procured, so much as for house expences, much less for trade, which was wholly at a stand; and soe it will continue till their return". (According to Edwardes, the word Mahager means mahajan or caste council). This demonstration, which continued from the autumn to Christmas, 1669, proved to be successful. The merchants returned on 20th December, 1669 only after getting 'letters of

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control. As guilds grew more wealthy and elaborate with special uniforms, sumptuous banquets and luxurious guildhalls, they fell away from their original economic purposes into exclusiveness and lethargy. (Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West. Columbia University Press I, 350). Medieval India had no such municipal code.
Sachau, I. ch. ix.

favour from their king and some assurance of their safety and more freedom in their religion.\textsuperscript{27}

Seaports and towns like Surat, Ahmedabad, Cambay, Broach, Baroda, Lahore, Multan, Agra, Patna, Hughli, Calcutta, Masulipatam, Madras etc. grew to be centres of international trade. A few examples are given below.

Early in the 16th century the Portuguese Barbosa (1514) described Surat as “a city of very great trade in all classes of merchandise, a very important seaport yielding a large revenue to the king and frequented by many ships from Malabar and all parts.”\textsuperscript{28} A century later Surat was held to be the key to the Indian trade by the English: “... through the whole Indies their cannot be any place more beneficial for our country than this, being the only key to open all the rich and best trade of the Indies, and for sale of our commodities, especially our cloth, it exceeds all others...”\textsuperscript{29} Again, it was also excellent as entrepot: “...there is not the like in all the Indies for want of our English commodities ... as also for the transporting of goods fit for most parts, to the southwards viz., Achine, Pryaman &c”.\textsuperscript{30} The commercial period of Surat declined with the two sacks of Shivaji and the cession to the E.I.C. in 1668 of Bombay which became their capital and chief seat of their trade (1687).\textsuperscript{31}

The growth of the cosmopolitan port of Hughli was largely due to the encouragement of Murshid Quli Khan. “Ja'far Khan being sensible that the prosperity of Bengal depended upon its advantageous commerce, showed great indulgence to merchants of every description. but was, however, rather partial to the Mughals (i.e., Persians). The encouragement which was given to trade by him, who directed that nothing but the established rate of duties should be exacted, soon made the port of Hughli a place of great importance. Many wealthy merchants who resided there had ships of their own, on which they traded

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} EFI, 1668-9, pp 190-2, 197, 205; My paper ‘A Mercantile strike of 17th century’ in Pr, IHRC (1967).
\item Barbosa,
\item \textsuperscript{29} Aldworth. Biddulph and Withington to E. I. Co. 25.1.1612; Letters Received i, (1602-13).
\item Kerridge to E. I. (12.3.1612), L.R. i, 258.
\item Sarkar, Shivaji. 174.
\end{itemize}
to Arabia, Persia and other countries."  

Kipling's description of "chance-erected" Calcutta is not historically accurate. After its foundation in 1690 its growth was rapid:

"Besides a number of English private merchants licensed by the Company, Calcutta was in a short time peopled by Portuguese, Armenian, Mughal (i.e., Persian) and Hindu merchants, who carried on their commerce under the protection of the English flag; thus the shipping belonging to the port in the course of ten years after the (Surman) embassy, amounted to ten thousand tons, and many individuals amassed fortunes without injuring the Company's trade or incurring the displeasure of the Mughal Government... The inhabitants of Calcutta enjoyed, after the return of the embassy, a degree of freedom and security unknown to the other subjects of the Mughal empire; and that city, in consequence, increased yearly, in extent, beauty and riches."

Among inland commercial emporiums may be mentioned, among others, Ahmadabad, Agra, Lahore and Patna.

Patna was an important meeting place of merchants of different nationalities, for whose convenience there was a cosmopolitan sarai (Saif Khan's Sarai). Here rooms were hired at a monthly rental, whereas sarais in some big towns usually accommodated travellers for the night only. The records of the first half of the 17th century refer to Portuguese, English, 'Mogoles' (Mughals i.e., Persians, Central Asiatic foreigners and N. W. frontier merchants), Pathans, Armenian and Indian merchants including East Bengal traders (Praychaes).

Patna in the 17th century was not only a centre of inter-provincial trade, but of international trade, Asiatic, African and European. It was connected with Agra on the west by river and land routes and so with the general system of overland traffic to Central Asia, Western Asia and Africa (including

32. Salimullah, Tarikh i Bangalah.

In fact Hugli became a Sbia Colony and a centre of Shia theology and Persian culture, before the full growth of Murshidabad. And even afterwards, this cosmopolitan port was preferred to the political capital as a residence, by those Persian emigres who had no employment or family ties to keep them at Murshidabad." Sarkar, Hist. Being. ii. 419.

33. Stewart, quoted in Sarkar, Hist. Being, ii. 418,
Egypt). It lay on the route from Agra to Chatigan (Chatgaon, Chittagong), the port of Bengal, and was connected with other ports of Bengal, like Hughli, Kasimbazar, etc. It also traded with Orissa, including Puri and Balasore. Bowrey did not exaggerate the commercial importance of Patna when he observed: “This is a country of very great Traffick and Commerce, and is really the great Gate that openeth into Bangala and Orixa, and so consequently into most parts of India, viz., from the Northerne kindome or Empires (by land), namely Persia, Carmania (Kirman), Georgia, Tartaria, etc. The commodities of those countries are transported hither by Caaffila, who also export the commodities brought hither by the English and Dutch as also of this kingdom.”

Speaking of medieval Europe, Prienne observes that “only those who are blinded to reality by preconceived theory can deny the importance and influence of commercial capitalism from the beginning of economic renaissance.”

Similarly India’s international trade also may be said to have a capitalistic character. Here, as in Europe, long distance trade produced large fortunes and accumulation of profits was the aim of merchants. These exhibited the acquisitive instinct of man which is expressed in capitalism. Engrossing of articles, cornering of grain etc. working in association or in closed

34. My art. in JBR$S$, March-June, 1948, p. 142; De Laet, (Hoyland & Benerji), 77-8; Storia ii. 83; Bowrey, p. 221. For Praychaes, see my article in $JBR$$S$, March. June, 1948, p. 142.

35. Pirenne, however, cautions that “capitalism and large scale commerce, which was at once its cause and its effect did not appear at the same date in all countries and were not developed everywhere with the same vigour.” (Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe, 163). The precursors of the great merchants of medieval Europe were, like the colonists and free-booters of 17th and 18th century, backed by energy and intelligence and assisted by luck. They did not start their careers with personal fortunes, but had to build up their capital by hiring themselves (as sailors, dockers and assistants in merchant caravans), by credit, as mercenaries using their booty in trade, or by working in association with others. Whatever the means, their rise to riches was rapid. They invested their money in merchandise or traded in money or in land. The new rich formed themselves into closed groups or monopolies. Large scale commerce came to be concentrated in a group of rich men, excluding the “common people” and confining them to small crafts or retail trade. Many rich merchants also carried on retail trade.
commercial groups existed in India as in Europe.\textsuperscript{36} Thus during the 16th and 17th centuries in India we have certain examples of some commercial communities and capitalist merchants, centring in towns or ports and casting their commercial net far and wide.

As instances of the associative commercial communities of India may be noted,—the Gujrat, the Malabar traders and the Dabullers, among others, who came into conflict with the European merchants in the Indian waters, from the Red Sea ports to South-East Asia. Naturally trade rivalry and competition became bitter and prolonged.

The commercial communities of Gujrat, the “Guzarats” of early E.I. Company’s records used to have frequent trading contacts with Socotra, Aden, Mocha, Mogustan (east of Bandar Abbas), Bantam, Priaman, Tiku and Barouse. They are described as enemies of the Portuguese and mentioned along with the “Deccanis, Flemingo (Flemish) and Moors... besides the English” (1614).\textsuperscript{37}

Owing to the conflicts with the Portuguese and the piracy of the latter the trade of the Gujrat with Achin suffered (1615) and the English proposed to step into the vacuum in Gujrat cloth trade: “They would have bought all the goods in the ship but they had no rials. The country gold, being base, is not valuable in any place but there, and for commodities there is none to make any profitable return of, all things being there very dear...”\textsuperscript{38}

Apart from the rivalry of the Gujratis with the Portuguese they also had to face the commercial competition of the English

\textsuperscript{36} “Although masters in the so-called crafts guilds often carried through the whole process of production from the purchase of raw material to the sale of the finished product, it must not be assumed that, at least in large cities, there were no merchant capitalists who could influence both supply and sale and so limit the craftsman’s independence.”

\textit{Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West}. Columbia University Press I, 350).

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Letters Received}, i. 11-14, 49; iv. 279, 287, 332; iii. 121; ii. 87, 97.

The kingdom of Gujrat “for the most part live (d) by the trade of Mocha and other places” (C. 1617) \textit{L.R. VI}. 253.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{L.R}. iii. 123. 126-7.
in the East Indies. Again, the English hoped to dispossess the Gujratis in pepper trade with the East Indies (1616) in case the English were permitted to settle in Tiku by the King of Achin. The Gujratis continued to be great enemies of the English factors at Tiku (1616).

39. "The Guzarats at Achen live very slavish to the King, and yet many of them of great wealth and credit; for in the time of our being there the King caused one of their junks of 500 tons burden with the commanders thereof to attend him his voyage to Malacca, whither he went against the Portingalls with 300 sail of galleys and a hundred thousand men. Twelve of those galleys were very great, having 28 and 30 cars of a side and all things titted very orderly by a Portingall, whom (when they were finished) he cast before an elephant and brake his bones. The Admiral gally had a turret built in the stern covered with plates of massive gold. These Guzarats were great enemies unto us in our business and especially for our settling at Achen, a place which hereofore hath been very profitable unto them, which now they are like utterly to be deprived of." (L.R. III. 227-228).

40. "His drift is that if the Gogeratts' shipping come hither and we remain at Tecoo we shall dispossess them of their wanted relading of pepper by our continual buying it up; also these nobles' profits will be stopped if we trade continually there, according to my former letters; being wont to buy cloth here and send it for those parts, insomuch as I find them opposite to my suit with the King in that behalf, although otherwise more respecting an Englishman than a Fleming here in Portingalls having reported to the King and nobles here both that our King was far greater than their prince and that they stood more in fear of one English ship than five Flemings." (L.R. IV, 72).

41. This is clear from the following reference in the letter of John Millward to the E I.C. Lauz Deo, Tecoo, 21 April, 1616: "We found the Guzaarats here (as at Achen) our most dangerous and malicious enemies. At one time they attempted our lives by posion, but were discovered by one of their own nation; and at last they sought to have routed us from Tecoo by this policy: when they perceived the Hector almost laden and our goods almost gone (until which time they sold us not any pepper, but wrought our restraint of trade by bribing the great men) the chief merchant of their family insinuated himself unto Mr. John Sandcroft that he promised him in private all our best goods to the value of 200 beharrs and at lower prices than had been sold at any time before (strang when the ship wanted not a hundred beharrs of her lading); which promise obtained the Guzarat weighs his pepper, never demanding any goods for it, and having delivered as much or more than Mr. Sandcroft said he had bargained for, he was desired to cease and receive content for his pepper, there being more bought already than the ship would carry by 200 beharrs (the pepper now bought costing more by 50 in the hundred than it would do when the ship was gone), yet still the Guzzuratt pressed to weigh more pepper: which being absolutely denied him he affirmed that Mr. Sandcroft had in private bought 400 beharrs of him, and to confirm the same brought him to ju-tice and demanded his bargain (M.S. barbayne); so that both he and I wanting to do so to perform it, I was enforced to promise payment for 200 beharrs of pepper at Achen at 16 rs. per beharr; to withstanding we had advised the merchants there to invest their money into goods fit for England (Cp. the account given in an
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The rivalry between the English and the Gujratıs at Bantam is referred to in the letter (of John Millward to General Keeling at Bantam) from Tiku 10th Sept, 1616:

"... the coming here of the richest Gozzarattas in Achen, who arrived here the 4th of this month, but cannot learn any certainty of their business, only they are very well provided for trade and suppose they are factors from the king to buy up all the pepper and so divert the trade from this place to Achen..." 42

Then there were also the Malabar traders ("Malabars") and the Dabul traders ("Dabulls") whose ships traded with the Red Sea Ports. Some of the Nakhudas or skippers of these Indian ships had their houses at Mocha (in the Indian parts of the town), which were occasionally the venue of meetings and discussions between them, high Turkish officials and others. Such was Malik Ambar, who used to style himself 'Nakhuda of the great ship (the Muhammadi, capable of carrying 80,000 mds.), captain of Dabul, the port of Bijapur. There was another influential skipper of Malabar at Mocha, referred to in the E.I.C.'s records as "the old Nahuda Mahomet of Cainnор (Cannanore)." 43

During the seventeenth century the foreign companies in India had necessarily to engage the services of influential Indian merchants and brokers in their business operations. Some of these were exceptionally rich and naturally they played a very important, sometimes dominant, part in the commercial life of

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unsigned representation, dated ? ( ) February, 1615-16, in Sumatra Records, Vol. i) Yet did not he absolutely accept of this, but still insisted on goods, thinking to have drawn all out of my hands and so the bill being not there paid but returned to Tec, he demanded to have double his money, thinking to have made us all slaves. But God (who is most powerful when men are most weak) prevented him; for within two days after his house, together with many other of his associates, were burnt down to the ground and all their pepper, to the quantity of 250 beharrs, which they meant vily to have imposed on us, consumed in the fire, and as much more goods as amounted to the value of their pepper; so that the greatest part of their estate remained in our hands for pepper received and not paid for. The premises I hope your worship will think fit to supply this place both with goods and money that so it may be maintained in such reputation as the hope fulness they or both require." (L.R. IV, 92-93), 42

42. L.R. iv (1616), 167.

the country as a whole, besides assisting the foreign companies in their commercial pursuits. Sometimes it is these Indian merchants—Moslems, banias or Chettis,—rather than the Dutch and the English factors who controlled the entire wholesale trade in their respective jurisdictions.

Virji Vora (Baharji Borah), the merchant-prince of Surat, was reputed to be the richest merchants in the world in the first half of the seventeenth century, having agencies at Ahmadabad, Agra, Burhanpur, Golkunda, in Malabar and on the East Coast and trading with Java, Basra and Gombroon. His property was estimated at 80 lakhs rupees and his grand mansion was plundered by Shivaji in 1664, yielding 28 seers of large pearls besides other jewels, rubies, emeralds and an incredible amount of money. Two other rich and eminent merchants of Surat were Haji Said Beg and Haji Qasim. Similarly on the East Coast there was a family or firm of the name Malay centred at Pulicat and having connections as far south as Negapatam.\(^{44}\)

An almost similar but less enviable position was held by Chimcham Khemchand (Shyamchand (?) Khem Chand), a wealthy Hindu broker and merchant of Balasore in the second half of the seventeenth century called in English factory records as the “Chief merchant of Balasore”. Not only did he control the wholesale trade of Balasore but he owned ships with which he traded with Bengal and Even Tennaserim and Siam in S. E. Asia, in which he was probably partnered by another merchant and broker, Chintaman. As a broker, Khemchand acted as a link not only between the producers and artisans of the environs and the hinterland of Balasore and the English E.I. Company. His wealth seemed to have greased and smoothed the way of difficult transactions but it also made him a ‘filled sponge’ as it were, in the hands of avaricious governors, who sometimes tried not only to mulct him of his riches but also to ruin his trade.\(^{45}\)

IV. Effect of Administration on Urban Life

Students of Mughal history are familiar with numerous:

\(^{44}\) Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb ; Sarkar, Shivaji.

instances of complaints of foreign merchants against frequent administrative interference in their trade in different articles. Moreland has observed that saltpetre trade "was subject to frequent interference on the part of the authorities" and that such official interference was one of the difficulties "attending the trade." But we must distinguish between administrative control of the industry and trade for state purposes on the one hand and interference therein on the other, varying according to the influence of personal equation or decline in administration and consequent disorders. Prohibition, if based on a sound and conscious policy, is beneficial to the state and the country, but irrational prohibition guided by nothing but motives of private illicit gains can never be justified. But with regard to saltpetre trade, such was the case in the history of India, wherever we turn,—from Agra to the Carnatic or from Bengal to Gujrat. The remedies were "money", "presents" and "influence". Thus the Bengal factors pressed Surat (April 12, 1666), to quickly send them a large sum of money as this was the "most effectual orator," an instrument of gaining privilege and remedy for the insufferable abuses the Company received.\footnote{Moreland, FAA. 122; my articles in \textit{IHQ}. Dec, 1938, and \textit{J.I.H.} Apr. 1941, Suppl. 31-39. See Ch. 2 ante.}

The necessity of offering presents to the authorities, as a means of strengthening the foundations of trade and securing concessions was pointed out by James Bridgman (in his letter to the Co. Dec. 15, 1650) and by Captain Brookhaven to James Bridgman (December 14, 1650). The latter instructed the Balasore factors that they should keep on good terms with the Governor of Balasore and Hugli and with other friends of the English—and that when the Nawab of Cuttack came to Balasore he should be presented with "some fine cloth to the value of about 10 pounds and a sword blade or two." Bridgman wrote to the Co.: "Presents must be given occasionally to the Prince (i.e., Shah Shuja) and Governors of the towns; and so a few rarities of low price should be furnished for the purposes, such as globes, glasses, multiplying glasses, and four or five good substantial home clocks."\footnote{\textit{EFI.} 1646-50, 333-4, 337-8.}

V. Social and Cultural Aspects

While describing the cultural role of cities, Messrs.
Redfield and Singer speak of three different time perspectives:

(i) long run perspective of human history within which cities remain the symbols and carriers of civilization;
(ii) short run perspective in which the cultural role of particular cities are studied in relation to their hinterland.
(iii) middle run perspective, delimited by the life history of different civilizations within which the cities have developed.48

I think such surveys of the cultural role of cities can be profitably made of some selected towns in India like Delhi, Banaras, Allahabad, Patna, etc. Here anthropology has to work hand in hand with History.

SECTION B

PATNA AND ITS ENVIRONS: AN ECONOMIC STUDY

1. History

From earliest times Patna has had a fairly continuous history as a centre of civilization. With more or less emphasis it continued to be a place of importance. It was an administrative centre, a port-town as well as an inland emporium. Its importance was pointed out by Varthema and Barbosa in early sixteenth century. In the middle of the 16th century when Sher Shah transferred the headquarters of local government from Bihar to Patna (1541), it was known as ‘Pattana’ meaning the “mart”, —a name which shows that it was of some commercial importance. The author of the Tarikh-i-Daudi thus notes Sher

1. Patna has been famous as a centre of civilisation before the pre-Aryan time, though not so ancient as Buxar (56 ft. deep). The University excavations showed remains of pre-Buddhist and pre-Vedic times (about 2000 B.C.), similar to the Mohenjaro excavations. Evidently Patna was one of the principal pre-Aryan cities of the Gangetic valley. Previously Old Rajagrha (Girivraja) was the Magadhan capital and New Rajagragha till 5th century B.C.; Pataliputra was revived as a chief city from the 5th century B.C., soon after which it became the capital.

Like Vaisali and Benares, Pataliputra was a port. The Magadhans built up a naval organisation at Pataliputra to defeat the naval power of Vaisali, which had extensive overland and overseas trade and possessed Ceylon originally. Trade followed as a natural sequel of naval strength. Remnants of jetties and wharves of old Pataliputra as a seaport have recently been discovered from the old bed of the Poonpoon. Early medieval Chinese and Malayan legends, accounts of sailors’ voyages show that ships from Indo-China visited Pataliputra.

The importance of Pataliputra as a land centre followed from the fact of its being a seaport. In the Jatakas, Pataliputra and Nalanda are mentioned as two stopping places on the trade route from Savatthi (Sravasti) is the north to Rajagragha in the southeast. Pataliputra was a main station and a junction in the road system in Maurya times.

Vide my article on the Cotton Trade of Patna in early 17th century, IHQ. XII, 638 ff.
Shah's idea of the utility of the Ganges as a highway of commerce: "If a fort were to be built in this place, the waters of the Ganges could never flow far from it, and Patna would become one of the great towns of the country." Thanks to the services of experienced and skillful carpenters and bricklayers, an exceedingly strong fort was then completed at a cost of about Rs. 5 lakhs. Bihar fell to ruin, while Patna became one of the largest cities of the province. Its rapidly growing commercial importance under the protection of the fort can be realised from the following remark, made 45 years later (1586), by Ralph Fitch. 'England's Pioneer to India and Burma' (1583-91):—

"Patanaw is a very long and great Towne . . . there is a trade of Cotton and cloth of Cotton, much sugar, which they Carrie from hence to Bengal and India, very much Opium and other commodities." In the beginning of the seventeenth century the English Chaplain Edward Terry (1616-19) and the Flemish geographer and a Director of the Dutch East India Company, Johannes De Laet (1631) described Patna as 'a very fertile province'. It is not surprising that the first English factory was started here in 1620 under Robert Hughes and John Parker for purchasing the cheap and excellent local calicoes and working the raw silk (available from Bengal) into suitable skeins.

The liberal Nawab Muqarrab Khan, Governor of Bihar, welcomed these factors and secured a house for them at Alamganj. But the general prospects of trade were considered to be unsatisfactory by the E.I. Company's authorities. A devastating fire at Alamganj (March 24, 1621) and the departure of Muqar-

2. Probably there is an implied sense of seaport trading centre. Cf. the Peninsular seaports with 'Pattana' ending.

Ludovico di Varthema, (Italian traveller 1503-8) represented Patna as one of the first cities he had hitherto seen where he saw the richest merchants. He mentions that the principal exports where cotton and silk stuffs which were woven by men and not women; the country abounded in grain of every kind, sugar, ginger and cotton; and was without doubt, the best place to live in.

Barbosa's [remarks] (c. 1518) have some bearing on Patna. For Sher's idea of the utility of the Ganges as a high way of commerce, Tariikh-i-Doudi, E & D IV. 477-8; Abdul Ali in IHRC 1930, p. 161.

3. Ryley, Ralph Fitch, 109; Foster, Early Travels in India, 23-4; De Laet, 13 Terry described Patna as the 33rd division, one of 37 divisions of Mughal India (E.T.I. 295). For different meanings of the word of 'India', see Moreland, India at the death of Akbar, pp. 1-2. IHQ XII, op. cit., JIH. X, 246, 245; Foster, England's Quest of Eastern Trade, 314-5.
rab, a good and prompt paymaster, the appointment of Prince Parwez as Governor, damped the ardour of the factors, who felt themselves ‘altogether destitute’. The new Governor’s demand of money from “the merchants, brokers, shop-keepers etc. of the city” so troubled them that “none dared be seen to sell a pice worth of goods.” Finally the Patna factory was closed in September, 1621. The records of this First English Commercial Mission to Patna throw much light on the economic life of the town. Sebastian Manrique (1629-43) was struck with surprise at the “enormous quantity and variety of merchadise in the town” of Patna.4

In 1632 another attempt was made by the English to establish a factory at Patna, when the prospects of trade in Gujrat were seriously affected by the devastating Gujrat famine of 1630-1. Peter Mundy wrote of Patna: “It is the greatest mart of all this countrie, from whence they repaire from Bengal that way to the sea-side, and from Indostan and other inland countries round about, plentifull in provisions abounding with sundrie commodities.” Mundy reached Patna in September, 1632, accompanied by an Indian broker, to sell 8 cartloads of barrels of quicksilver, and parcels of vermilion and to invest the proceeds in purchasing suitable articles of trade. This attempt, too, failed after two months.5

Since then there is no evidence of immediate openig up of fresh contact with Patna. But with the restoration of political order under Cromwell after the disorders of the Civil War, an attempt was made to ‘extend and improve’ the English E.I. Co.’s trade in Orissa and Bengal, by profitable investments in some articles, especially saltpetre, silk and sugar.

In the middle of the 17th century Patna rose to world-wide importance as a source of production and supply of sugar and of saltpetre, then in great demand in Europe as the principal ingredient for the manufacture of gunpowder. In 1651 the

4. Requisitioning of houses by Kings, princes, and officials was not unknown in those days and though Jahangir issued an edict against it, the practice continued. Prince Parwez ‘liberally bestowed’ the houses of merchants and others on his own servants. The English factors were displaced and, after wandering for 10 days without any shelter for themselves and their goods during the rainy season were able to secure a house ‘through the help of Mr. Moneye, i.e., by paying a high price or bribe. EF. i. 256, 259; Manrique, ii, 139.

5. Mundy, ii. 157.
English E.I. Company set up a factory at Hugli and a trading agency at Patna. But they had to reckon with the oppression of local officers. In 1657 a permanent factory was established here by the English. It was placed under the Bengal Agency, the other factories being Hugli, the Chief Station, Balasore and Kasimbazar.  

The Dutch established their factory at Patna even earlier than the English. The latter imitated them in their methods and activities, especially with regard to saltpetre trade.

On 24th December, 1657, the committee of the new stock framed its administrative policy, deciding to group all their establishments under the President and Council, with headquarters at Surat, with four branches (the Coromandel Coast, Bengal, Persia, Bantam and Java), each under an Agent and Council. The factories comprising the Bengal Agency were to consist of Hugli (the chief station), Balasore, Patna and Kassimbazar. In 1658 the Patna establishment consisted of: (i) Richard Chamberlain (£40), chief. (ii) William Vasaall, second. (iii) Samuel Bayley, third. (iv) Henry Alworth, fourth. This arrangement was subsequently modified and the establishment consisted of Messrs. Chamberlain, Aldworth, and Pickering.

Pickering was advised by the Masulipatam factor, Johnson (March 8, 1659) to dispatch a vessel, laden with rice, butter, wax and sugar, to relieve Masulipatam, threatened with a famine. Disputes of the English factors with local officers arose over the question of the latter's seizure of saltpetre. The former had also to face the reprisals of the Imperial General, Nawab Mir Jumla, for certain losses caused to him by the East Coast factors. However, Job Charnock, the able chief of the Patna factory (1664-80), succeeded in improving the trade position of the English in Patna. His vigorous superintendence largely accounted for the progress of the saltpetre trade of the English. In 1671, Robert

6. See ante ch. Sec. A.
In their letter of 28th January, 1659, the company gave saltpetre the place of honour among the merchandise to be provided, and decided to send to Patna £5,000 a year for purchasing it. There it could be brought at prices 40 or 50% cheaper than at Hugli, Eph. X. 275.

6a. Its site is now marked by the main building of the Patna College. For the English and Dutch factories at Patna, see ch. 2 ante; Storia II, 83.
Elwes who had been second to Charnock since 1668 was elected factor.

The articles of investment were, embarked in the English factories, and according to the E.I.C.'s orders, sent on board the English ships. These used to leave Balasore Road in December, and after being fully laden with goods at Masulipatam and Fort St. George, started for England towards the end of January. 7

2. Description of the Town

Abul Fazl states that ‘the houses (of Patna) for the most part are roofed with tiles’.

In 1631 De Laet described Patna (Patanow) as “a fine place with broad streets, though the houses are poor, being built of sods,” and again, as “a large town oblong in shape . . . . the houses are of moderate size, mostly built of mud and thatched: but the streets are quite wide.”

In 1663 Manucci found Patna to be “a very large city with bazars, the greater part thatched, inhabited by many merchants”. Tavernier and Bernier visited Patna during the governorship of Lashkar Khan in Bihar (1665-68). They supply valuable details about the administrative divisions of the province, its capital, its governor, its revenues, and some manners and customs of the local people. Bernier says that ‘Patna or Beare’ had 8 Sarkars and 245 Parganas yielding 95 lakhs 80 thousand rupees. In December, 1665, Tavernier found Patna to be “not less than two coss (4 miles) in length.” He considered it to be “the largest town in Bengal and the most famous for its trade,” and “one of the largest towns in India.” “The houses,” he adds, “are not better than in the majority of the other towns of India; and they are nearly all roofed with thatch of bamboo.” Thomas Bowrey (1669-79) describes “Pattana” as “a very large and potent kingdome, but longe since become tributary to the Empirours of Hindustan (or Great Mogol). The Chiefe city whereof is called Pattana, a very large and spacious one indeed and is situate near to the River of Ganges . . . .” Thevenot observes: “Patane is a very large town lying on the west

7. _EF. X_, 142, 189-90, 262. This shows that Patna was then approachable by sea-going vessels along the Ganges.

In 1673 Elwes was appointed head of the Dacca factory and died there in 1675.
side of the Ganges in the country of Patan.” According to the Khulasat ut Tawarikh (1695)—“Patna, the capital of this province is a large town on the bank of the river Ganges. Most of the houses are covered with tiles, which are called Khaprail . . .”

3. Environs

We get some idea of the environs and hinterland of Patna from the accounts of the foreign travellers and merchants of the period. Though it is not possible to locate all the places mentioned by them, it is interesting to find some modern sites existing almost under identical names in the 17th century.

Travertier and John Marshall refer to the eastern and northern environs. Thus John Marshall, in the course of his

8. Ain (J&S) ii.164; De Laet,72,77; Storia; ii.79. Bernier (Const):186,457; Ball’s Tavernier, i. 121-3,258 Tavernier left Patna for Dacca after eight days’ stay (21st-29th December 1665). His description corroborates the description of the factors of the First Commercial Mission to Patna.

Bernier’s estimate comes very near to the full assessment of revenues prepared in 1707 for Bahadur Shah (Rs. 93,50,931) as compared to the standard assessment (Rs. 1,01,79,527). But the last recorded receipts only come up to Rs 57,14,873. (Muntakhabut Tawarikh of Jag Jivan Das). Manucci’s figures (Rs. 1,21,50,000) are greatly exaggerated. Storia, II, 416.

Bowrey (221-2) betrays a lamentable lack of idea of distance, when he says that Patna was “not less than 1,000 or 1,100 miles above the town Hugly.”

Thevenot, Bk. iii, 68: Khulasat in Sarkar, India of Aurangzb, 35.

9. John Marshall, the Company’s Balasore factor, was employed at Patna under Charnock in 1669-71. J.M.I. 77, 125-6. These stations are on E.I.R. main line, their distance (in miles) from Howrah being indicated as follows: Dumrah (275), Mokamah (283), More (287), Pandaraku, Barh (299), Athmal Gola (309), Fatwak (325), Hathida Ghat was connected with Mokamahghat by a branch line. Rani Sarai 11¼ mile west of Barh.

Between Pundaraku and Futwah Marshall’s boat sailed up the Ganges along the following places:

Jangra (? Jahangira), 14 miles.
—Aunichocarra (? Achuarra), 10½ miles.
—Gunspore, 3.3/4 miles—Bidarea (? Bushara) 2½ miles.
—Kani Sarai, 2½ miles—Hansurepore (Ghansurpur) 3.3/4 miles.
—Bunderbunna, 11¼ miles (J.M.I. 77).

Marshall’s route passed through Dumra-Merassee (Maranchi) 2½ miles—Hathidah, 2½ miles—Durriapore (Dariapore), 2½ miles—Mokameh, 4½ miles—More, 2½—Mncksa (Mekea) 2½ miles—Pandaraku 3.3/4 miles. From Ghansurpur Sarai—Jaraspur (Gaiaspur, Ghiyaspur), c. 2 miles—Ruckerpore (Rakunpura) c. 2 miles—Mosingpore (Moshinpur), where Shah Alam was defeated by Major Cailaud, 19th Feb., 1760) 1¼ miles—Biocerpore (Baikatpur) 1¼ mile—Bunderbunder (Bandarbana), 2¼ miles—Syriapore (? Shekhpur), c. ¾ m.—Ryepore (Raipura), c. ¾ m—Dyriapur c. ¾ m.—Fatuha, c. ¾ m.
journeys, from Balasore to Patna (1669-70), from Patna to Hugli (1670-71), and from Rajmahal to Patna (1671) refers to Dumra, Hathdah (as Hatched), More (as Mor and Mahore), Mokameh (as Mokoia or Muckeya), Pundarak (as Punararak and Cundoreck), Barh (as Barr and Bar), Athmal Gola (as Asumalike Surray), Ranisarai (as Raning and Rannicassera), Fatwah (as Footooa), and river Punpun.  

The distinct reference to at least three Golas and four sarais and one chauki (a toll station) suggests that the whole area from Mokameh to Patna was fairly prosperous. Indeed, Barh was a “great town”, having several “stone houses”, the road passing by it was “a very pleasant road.” It contained a Sarai situated to the south of the Patna-Barh road and described by Marshall as “Milkees or Almesman’s house very neat and handsome.” Evidently it refers to a sarai constructed or maintained by a man enjoying Sayurghal or milk or aima land. Futwah was a long town of small houses, at least ½ kos (1.1/8 m.) long and it had a “stone bridge”.  

Baikatpur:  

10. Near Modern Jethuli. Tavernier calls it Pompon Sou, 5 Kos west of Beconcour, i.e., Barh. It crosses the Bankipore road at 10 m. from that town and 5 from Bykatpur (Ball I. 123 and n.) It was an old branch of the Poonpoon, now slited up, marked Little Poonpoon R. on Rennell XV, about 4 m above the main mouth of the Punpun at Futwah where the stone bridge (of Marshall) was situated. It was not the present Punpun which meets the Ganges at Futwah. Marshall, 92n.  

11. Golas:  
(a) Goleighuy (Gola-i-ghi, a gola for ghee ?), 3.3/4 miles west from Mokamah on the Ganges.  
(b) Athmal Gola (Asumlika Surray), 6.3/4 miles west from Barh to be identified with Sautoole, Comertolla or Rennell.  
(c) Sumbarka Gola (the gola of Sumbar, Sombar, i.e., open on Monday?) about 15 miles west from Bath.  

Sarais:  
(a) Sarai at Barh:  
(b) Rani Sarai (Rannicassera). 112 miles west of Barh. Alivardi defeated the Afghans and Marathas at Ranisarai on 18th April, 1748.  
(c) Asmulika Surray, mentioned above.  
(d) Gunsarpore (Ghansurpur) Sarai, 18.3/4 miles west of Barh. Chowkey (7.1/8 miles west from Mokameh), between More and Pandarak.  

12. Marshall, 125, 95, I think this Sarai is to be identified with Sera Beconcour, 15 Kos from Patna, referred to by Tavernier (Ball I, 123).  

13. Marshall, cf. Buchanan’s observations, 1811; “a large town for this country,” “most of the houses clay and a great many tiled”.  

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(Baikunthpur), referred to by Hughes, Parker, Marshall and Tavernier, was an important centre of silk manufacture.

As regards the northern environs of Patna (across the Ganges), John Marshall refers to Hajipur, Sonpor (as Soneigh), Jahanabad (as Jonabad), Nanagur and Singhaya (as Singhee), while Tavernier refers to Singhaya and Chapra.

Hajipur, at the confluence of the Ganges and the Gandak, was about 8 miles from Patna (? by boat) and opposite to Shah Shuja’s garden. Marshall describes it as a ‘great’, ancient and ruined town’, a ‘famous place and the seat of a king.’ The town had a sarai. Grapes were grown here. The English E.I. Company had a ‘house’ here, its rent being Rs. 3½ a month.

Minapore (?Mainapur), near Hajipur, was a pottery centre. A piece of ‘fine earthen ware’, weighing only 1.1/8 oz. Troy could hold 18 oz. (Troy) of water. ‘Finer and lighter’ earthen goods were manufactured at Begumsurray (? Begamsarai).

The King’s Highway connected Hajipur and Nanagur (Nanagarh or Naunagar) about 9 miles S.E. of it and 20 m. distant from Jahanabad. “The (E.I.) Company had a house of their own which stands pleasantly by the Rivers side which comes out of the River Ganges, when Ganges is high but at other times is dry. This Nanagur is a very pleasant place, being situated amongst topes (grove) of trees and the way from thence to Hajipur is very pleasant. Nanagur is also esteemed a very healthful place, being situated up on a hard clay ground.” There generally remained a baniya and sometimes only peons to collect the saltpetre from the petre men.

Jonabad (Jahanabad) was 11 m. distant from Hajipur. The English factory situated at this place was drawn up in 1676.

Like Nanagur and Jahanabd, Singhaya, near Lalganj, on the left bank of the Gandak, also contained a factory for refining saltpetre. The English factors wanted to escape from the demands of the Governor’s officers by living at Singhaya. It was a pleasant but not wholesome place, being situated on saltpetre ground.

Tavernier describes Chapra as a “large village” where the Dutch had its saltpetre refined. Besides them the French and the Portuguese also had its factories here. Indeed Chapra was one of the principal refineries of saltpetre in Bengal.
Peter Mundy (17 Sept., 1632) refers to the western and south-western environs of Patna. The road from Naubatpur (about 13 miles S.W.) to Patna was full of “a million of Mango-trees in plotts and groves” on both sides. There was “noe wast ground all the way, but full of mango trees. Coco-trees, sugar-canews, cotton and graine; Also the rauck of trees, which had lost so many days since appeared now again 3 or 4 Course off.”

4. Manufactures and Trade
The varied industries of Patna in the seventeenth century may be classified under the following heads:

(i) Agricultural: The production of rice & wheat is referred to by Abul Fazl and Khulasat ut Tawarikh. That of sugarcane and cotton is mentioned by some foreign travellers. Patna, according to Fitch, exported its sugar to Bengal and ‘India’. Tavernier refers to considerable trade in ‘moist sugar’ at Patna. John Marshall refers to meagre cultivation of barley. Sarkar Hajipur (opposite Patna) produced not only grapes but also jack fruits (kathal and barhal) in abundance. We have reference to drug traffic in opium at Patna in the time of Akbar while in the seventies of the seventeenth century Patna produced the ‘best opium’. About the same time medicinal drugs of Patna, e.g., turmeric and tincal (tinkal, native borax) were demanded by the surgeons of Fort St. George. So the Company enquired what drugs were procurable at “Patna and the adjacencyes” and in what quantities and at what rates. Turmeric was found to be “commonly much cheaper” at Patna than at Balasore and was intended to complete the tonnage of ships.

(ii) Forest Industries: Early in the seventeenth century Lignum aloes (Aguru), gumlac, and spikenard (an aromatic oil or balsam yielded by an Indian plant) were available at Patna. (a) Lignum aloes was available at Patna in large quantities. The lightest or commonest sort (samaleh) of many kinds and

14. Hajipur Marshall, 128, 141-2, 157-8, 158-9; Minapore: Ibid, 414; Nanagur: Ibid; Master, II. 89; Jahanobad: J.M.I.; Master, ii. 88, 90; Singhiya: Hedges II, 241; Master op.cit; Chapra: Ball I, 121-3; Consul, 440-n; Naubatpur: Mundy ii, 134.

15. Ain (J&S) ii. 151-2, 161; i. 74 (Phillot); Khulasat: Sarkar, India of Aurlinglib, 37-8; Moreland, India at the death of Akbar, 119-20; Barboja: i. 138 Foster, Early Travels in India, 24; Ball’s Tavernier, ii. 23; Marshall, 83, 142.
prices ranged from Rs. 20 a maund (i.e., 8 annas a seer) to Rs. 40 and 50 a seer. A sample sent to Surat (in October 1620) cost Re. 1.5/8 the seer (of 33 pice weight). Next year (August 1621) a sample of Rs. 2-10-0 a seer (of 33 pice weight) was provided, for trial in England, to the total value of nearly Rs. 400.

(b) Fifty maunds of gumlac were purchased by the Patna factors (1620-21) for Persia, the Red Sea and England.

(c) As spikenard was imported from the “north country” in the winter, the English factors could not procure it in September, 1620 and did not expect it for 2 or 3 months.16

*Musk, rhubarb and furs:* Tavernier refers to the trade between Patna and Bhutan via Gorakhpur. The merchants of Bhutan arrived at Patna to sell their musk. During two months’ stay there, he purchased Rs. 26,000 worth of musk, and he remarked that he could have made huge profits if customs had not been imposed on it in India (at Gorakhpur) and in Europe.

The best kind of rhubarb also came from the kingdom of Bhutan. It used to produce the seed yielding warm powder and other kinds of drugs. Beautiful furs were also imported from Bhutan.

Musk, coming from Nepal, was sold at Patna at Rs. 49 a seer (16 pice weight, and 40 pice would have made a great seer of about 31 oz). Bowerey says that both the English and the Dutch exported from Patna large quantities of musk, taken from the musk deer of the locality.17

*Elephant’s Tusk:* Abul Fazl states that ‘good elephants were procurable in plenty’ in Bihar. John Marshall reported that some ‘elephant’s teeth’ (weighing 1 md. 5 sr.—90 Eng. lbs.) was sold in Patna: a tusk, 3 yds. long, and 1/2 yd. wide cost about

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*Gumlac*: EF, i. 270 ; IA. XLIII, 108.  
*Spikenard*: An aromatic oil or balsam yielded by an Indian plant. EF, i. 198 ; IA. XLIII, 76.  
17. *Rhubarb*: Ball, II, 258-9, 259-60, 261-63. “Those who return by Gorakhpur and have an understanding with the custom officer, take from Patna and Dacca coral, yellow amber, tortoise-shell bracelets and others of sea-shells with numerous round and square pieces. 
Rs. 55 or 60 a md. (80 lbs.).\textsuperscript{18}

(iii) Animal Husbandry and Dairy Industries:

Besides the breeding of the usual domesticated animals, there were in Patna little oxen (gaina) which used to draw small coaches, as reported by John Marshall. Ponies used in travel were very small in size.

Milk was both rich in quality and cheap.\textsuperscript{19}

(iv) Mines & Minerals:

(a) Gold: Ralph Fitch states that at Patna the people found gold in the following manner: "They dig deep pits in the earth, and wash the earth in great bottles, and therein they find the gold; and they make the pits round about with brick that the earth fall not in." The account is very vague.\textsuperscript{20}

Borax: John Marshall in his 'Accompt of Pattana' writes: "Tinckall (Tinkal, borax) is produced from the Rajayas country (probably Bihar) from the hills about six days' journey N.W. from Pattana and when brought to Pattana, oyle is put to it to preserve it." In 1676 Patna sent 400 mds. of Tinckall to Fort St. George.\textsuperscript{21}

(c) Saltpetre: The Bihar section of the Indo-Gangetic region, chiefly Patna and Saran, was an important centre for the production of saltpetre.\textsuperscript{22}

(v) Textile Manufactures.

Patna had a flourishing textile trade in cotton and silk goods throughout the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{23}

(vi) Handicrafts

(a) Bonelace: Bobbin lace, a kind of linen thread).—In Dec. 1620, 33 pieces of bone lace were sent by Shek Cassum's (Sheikh Kasim) man. By March, 1621 Hughes at Patna was

\textsuperscript{18} Ain, ii (J&S), 164; Marshall, 413.
\textsuperscript{19} Marshall, 377; Ball's Tavernier ii. 263; Ain (J&S) ii. 164; Khulasat, Sarkar, India of Aurangzib, 38.
\textsuperscript{20} Foster, Early Travels, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{21} Marshall, p 24; Master i. 78.
\textsuperscript{22} For details, ch. 2, sec. A, ante.
\textsuperscript{23} For details, ch. 1, secs. A and B.
able to sell 17 pieces of bone lace to Shekassane (Sheikh Hasan) at Rs. 216. 24

(b) Wood work: Various kinds of boat were manufactured at Patna either for transport, commercial or military purposes. Country-craft, known variously as Pattellas, Boras, purgoes, Palwars, was used for carrying saltpetre from Patna down to Hugli. Local boats (kisti or ghurab also were adapted for military purposes by equipping these with artillery and gunners. 25

(c) Pottery: The Venetian traveller, Manucci, found the city of Patna to be the centre of manufacture of bottles and fine earthen pottery, including ‘cups of clay, finer than glass, lighter than paper and highly scented’. The earthen ware manufactures in general emitted ‘a pleasant odour’ and were ‘so fine’ that they were not ‘thicker than paper’. Such articles were not only used by the nobles, but also sent to the court as ‘a rarity’ and, as curiosities, were ‘carried all over the world.’

Minapure, near Hajipur, was a pottery centre. A piece of ‘fine earthen ware’ weighing only 1 1/8 oz. (Troy) could hold 18 oz. (Troy) of water. ‘Finer and lighter’ earthen goods were manufactured at Begумс Jury (? Begamsarai). 26

(d) Shell goods: Referring to trade between Patna and Tipperah, Tavernier says that Tipperah merchants purchased at Patna coral, yellow amber, tortoise-shell and sea-shell bracelets and other toys. 27

(vii) Miscellaneous articles imported to Patna

Several articles were imported to Patna from other parts of India.

(a) Amber beads: These, imported from Agra, were not greatly esteemed in Patna. All the choice beads were sold to Muqarrab Khan at good rates, but the rest remained unsold for a time, the market price being under Rs. 8 or 9 a seer (of 14 pice). In August 1621 the English factors decided to dispose of them at Patna, rather than carry them back to Agra; there

24. IA. XLIJI, 97, 100.
25. Ain (J&S) ii, 164, 165; Manrique, 137; Aurangnamah, 17-18; My Mr Jumia, 181.
26. Storia ii, 426, 84; Marshall, 414.
27. Ball, ii 273.
were no good prospects in future, the highest rate offered being Rs. 9 a seer; and it would not sell in any large quantity except in small parcels as for as Rs. 100 and 150.28

(b) Saffron was imported to Patna from Kashmir and Nepal, and sold at Rs. 25-30 a seer (of 42 pice—about 2 lb Eng. avoirdupois) or often at dearer rates.29

(c) A variety of coarse and thick cloth, made at Lahore, was sold at Patna at Rs. 5 a piece (of 11 coveredds 18 inches long and 11 coveredds broad), a price dearer than prevailing at Lahore.30

The English imported to Patna early in the 17th century:

(a) Corals: Soon after his arrival at Patna, Hughes realised that the prospects of selling corals at Patna would not be worth transporting them from Surat; it was not vendible in any large quantity and the price could not be ascertained before placing it in the market.

So he placed orders for a small quantity of corals from Surat. Subsequently John Parker made further enquiries re the price of coral and prospects of its sale. The coral merchants said that they never saw unpolished coral brought to Patna. It was not used in burning the dead at Patna as at other places. Again no skilled workmen were available for polishing the coral and cutting it into beads; hence it was not suitable for Patna. Polished coral, in small quantity, would, however, be saleable in Patna, but the price was uncertain. Coral beads were very greatly in demand in Bengal and large quantities could, the English factors held, be sold there, for about 50 or 60,000 rupees: the most common variety, the small beads of 5 grs. at 12 to the rupee, beads of 15 grs. at 7 to the rupee, beads of 20 grs. at 4½ to the rupee.31

(b) Toys: Nawab Muqarrab Khan, Governor of Bihar, shared with the contemporary Mughal aristocracy a great weakness for "fine goods and toys", brought by the English, and the Patna factors frequently supplied many articles to him, viz, (i)-
in October, 1620—broadcloth, kerseys, hides, swords and small wares. Nearly all goods sent from Agra, brocade cloth (red, green, yellow), 2 Bulgar hides (costing Rs. 18), kerseys &c. were sold at a considerable profit, in all Rs. 2,400. Thc 'bone Lace' was so much appreciated by the Governor that he required all the rest. (ii) March, 1621- a heavy tapestry (Rs.300), curtain, large looking glass (Rs. 300), 2 moheras (Mohairs Rs.50) and 280-pice weight of amber beads (Rs. 280), 2 Bulgar hides (Rs. 18). (iii) July, 1621- 3-empty bottles supplied out of Hughes's standish, at the Governor's insistent demand.32

In the sixties and seventies of the 17th century, the English imported to Patna (as well as Orissa and Bengal) "scarlet, broadcloths of divers colours, vermillion, quicksilver, Brimstone, Lead, Copper, Ryals of 8 and Corall." Bowrey, who was "a competent judge of the lucrative nature of Indian trade at that time," spoke of these articles as follows: "All which, although they produce but little per cent, yet they are here as good as ready rupees in procureinge the best of good (s) in the Kingdome without any losse, but rather 15 or 20 per cent gaine, where to bringe Europe vitz. English, Dutch or French coyned moneys, the losse is more than soe much per cent. But the Voyadge homeward doth make sufficient amends."

In their General letter of 24th December, 1675, the Court of Committees of the E. I. Company enquired from the Hugli factors if the Patna factory would be able to sell sufficiently large consignments of "our wollen manufactures" for use in the cold countries extending from Tartary in the north to China in east.33

(c) Lead: The trade in lead, which 'would sell well', was farmed out by the Governor to one person.34

5. Prices:

The following list gives the prices of articles at Patna in 1620 (12th July). The figures within square brackets indicate the prices according to letter of 6th October, 1620.

32. *EF, I. op. cit.; IA. op. cit.; Ball, II. 273.*
33. Bowrey, 232-3 & n.
34. Masrer, ii. 90.
Broadcloth, good red ... Rs. 15 the Jahangir covered (of 40 inches).

Elephant’s tusk, best ... Rs. 80 a md. of 40 srs. (1 Sr. = 33 pice)

Sea morse (walrus) teeth ... Rs. 10 a seer (of 37 pice)

Bulgar hides ... Rs. 18 a pair

Quicksilver ... Rs. 3½ a seer

Vermilion ... Rs. 3.3/4 a seer (of 33 pice?) [Rs. 4.1/8 a seer of 37½ pice]

Lead ... Rs. 9 a maund.

Tin ... Rs. 38 a maund.

Amber beads ... 2, 3, 4 tankes (tango) a rupee. ... [Rs. 10 a seer of 14 pice]

Coral ... No settled price, depending on quality.

Saffron ... Rs. 16 a seer

Swords, knives, fine wares &c.—“no price current” (according to letter of 12 July, 1620). 35

### 6. Finance & Exchange

Some interesting details are available regarding financing of the operations of the English factors and exchange in early 17th century. They depended for funds for the investment on the remittances of the Surat and Agra factors through bills of exchange. Delay in receiving this remittance caused by late arrival of the Red Sea Fleet at Surat, straitened circumstances of Surat authorities themselves and other reasons naturally put the Patna factors to difficulties in purchasing provisions for investment in time and they had to shift for themselves, temporarily at least, by selling goods imported from Agra and making purchases at the Patna markets with these sale proceeds. Moreover, it was always advisable to remit money by the cheapest channel; hence the Surat factors (1652) enquired of those at Agra about the rates of exchange between Agra and Surat, Ahmadabad, Tatta, Burhanpur, Patna and Bengal. The Patna factors, finding the rate of exchange to be prejudicial, advised the Agra factors

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(2 June, 1621) not to make additional remittance till further advice and desisted from drawing bills on Agra. The first supply of money in bills of exchange (5, 000) came by February-March, 1621 and by August, the total amount received was 32,000 besides Rs. 4,000 constituting sale proceeds.\(^{36}\)

The bills of exchange were issued by the Agra factors in the name of well-known shroffs at Patna, viz., Sunder Mydas (Sundar Mayadas), Maun Mackon (Man Mukund or Man Makan), Basesar Mera (Bisheshwar (?) Mehra), Chaunsy Shaw (Chand Sahai Sao). The Patna factors considered the last mentioned to be the "Current dealer of Putana" i.e., the most important shroff of Patna and advised the Agra factor to deal with his son, who was a shroff at Agra for manifest advantages. Again when the Patna-Agra exchange rates became favourable, Hughes took from Man Mukund Shroff (Sarraf) 1,962¼ bright newly coined rupees (nuris) in return of a bill of exchange Hundi) for Rs. 2,000 repayable at 40 days time ('Bandy mudet' = band-i-mudat= term for settlement) at Agra to Cassy (Kasi) and Base-sser (Bisheshwar). This worked at 98 1/8 nuris to 100 hundi rupees and caused a loss of only 1.7/8 per cent.\(^{37}\) Sometimes the Patna factors had to face difficulty in cashing the Agra bills of exchange (28-31 March, 1621). One such bill to the value of Rs. 1, 500 was at first rejected by the Patna Shroffs as it was not written by the Shahu or banker, acceptable to them, but by one Calyane (Kalyan) of Agra (whose credit at Patna had fallen on account of his agent's action in departing to Agra with his goods without payment). Subsequently the local shroffs accepted the bill and the factors in order to avoid quarrels about bonds, took the amount at a discount; the shroffs, however, did not take the bill and waited for advice from Agra, so that they had to dishonour (nakar) it, they might use the Khasnama, letter of introduction or credit of the English for recove-

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36. IA. XLIII (1914), 97, 104, 107-8; EF (1618-21), 257, 259-60; EF (1651-54), 109.

37. I.A. XLIII, 59-100. The nuris was probably the standard of comparison with a bill rupee. Efi. I, 236 and n. The reason for fall in exchange was that Governor Muqarrab Khan, had sent 3 lakhs of rupees to be repaid him in Agra (March, 1621).

Ibid. I have followed Sir R C. Temple in the name of Chaunsy Shaw. Sir William Fosster reads it as Chan psaye and Chumpey Shaw seeks to equate him with Champa Shah (?) EF. I, 198, n
ring their debt from Kalyan.\textsuperscript{38} Hughes suggested that if in future bills were made out at 14 days \textit{barbast} (usage or custom) there would be a saving in the discount of 10\% (\textit{dahyek}), especially if it was sent through an express courier. The Patna-Agra exchange between a \textit{taza sikka} (a newly coined) rupee and the \textit{hundi} (bill of exchange) was Rs. 1.3/4 per cent, and so it would be more profitable to draw on Agra than to await bills therefrom.\textsuperscript{39}

7. \textit{Inland Transport}\textsuperscript{40}

(a) \textit{Patna-Agra}

Carts formed the normal means of transport between Patna and Agra in dry season. The time taken was 35 days and the charge Rs. 1\frac{1}{2} or 1\frac{3}{4} a maund. But during the rainy season, when the roads became impassable for carts and other means of conveyance, oxen were the only means of sending goods. The beginning of October was the earliest time before the carts could again move.\textsuperscript{41}

On October 4, 1620, the Patna factors consigned the investments of that year, well-packed in 26 bales, laden on 4 carts and under the charge of 10 servants who had stipulated to reach Agra within 30 days (by 2nd November). But the charge of transport was somewhat more than the ordinary freight, 2 rupees of the Jahangir Maund.\textsuperscript{42} The factors paid the carters Rs. 153 for 81 maunds; if the latter delivered the goods and the bill to the Agra factors within the allotted time, they would get Rs.8 more; but if they exceeded it, they would forfeit \frac{1}{4} of their freights i.e., they would get at the rate of 1\frac{3}{4} rupees and the factors would insist on redress from the owners and the sureties at Patna. Each servant was paid Rs. 4-4-0 "for their journey" (i.e., incidental

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid}, 101. \textit{Ibid.} thinks that here the \textit{Khasnoma} refers to the farman granted by Jahangir to the English. \textit{EF} I, 247-8.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{EF}. I. 247-8 and notes, 145 n, 253n.

\textsuperscript{40} For transport on rivers and description of boats, see \textit{ante} ch. 2. Sec. B.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{IA}. XLII, 72, 82, 108; \textit{EF} (1618-21), 191.

\textsuperscript{42} The goods were 'fenced with wrappers, cotton wool, waxed cloth and what else requisite for their preservation both by land and sea'. \textit{IA}. XLIII, 83. The Jahangir maund was heavier than the commercial maund, e.g., 62\frac{1}{4} lbs. in Peter Mundy's time. Mundy, II. 237. In September, 1621 the Patna factors had to pay Rs 2\frac{1}{4} a Jahangir Maund, a rate higher than the customary caravan rate (\textit{barbast}). \textit{IA}. XLIII, 109.
expenses). One of them named Dyalla (Dayal) was to have returned with the news of their arrival. He was given Rs. 15 "to defraye the charge of the goods on the wayes". One Abdel Caryme (Abdul Karim) was also sent with the carts but he fell ill at Lakhawar. On the 19th May, 1621, the Patna factors again despatched to Agra the articles of investment in 17 bales weighing 52 mds. at Rs. 1-12½ as a maund, on 2 carts along with a caravan of about 100 carts. Partial advance of Rs. 74½ was paid to the carters, who were to get the balance and Rs. 8 more if they delivered the articles in "safe and good condition". For proper protection of the convoy, Dayal and 6 archer guards were sent along with them and Rs.10 were given to Dayal for the expenses on their journey. The whole Kasila (caravan) carrying goods to Surat was, however, robbed on the way from Agra to Surat in 1621 by the 'Decans Armye' i.e., the Moghal army fighting their forces of Ahmadnagar, and they hoped to get full restitution for the loss.43

(b) Patna to Bhutan:

Tavernier says that it took 3 months for a caravan to reach Bhutan from Patna. It used to leave Patna at the end of December and reach Gorakhpur, the Moghal frontier town at the foot of the hills, on the 8th day. Here the merchants obtained supplies for a part of their journey, because the next 8 or 9 days' march through forests involved considerable hardship to the caravan. Travellers could go from Patna to the foot of the hills in 'Indian carriages' or palanquins but they generally used oxen, camels or the indigenous horses.44

(c) Patna to Nepal:

John Marshall got the following account of the road from Patna to Nepal from his informant 'Jenti Das' (Jinda or Jayant? Das):

Patna to Hajipur, 3 Kos; to Singee (Singhiya), 5 Kos: to Mogullannee Surray (Mughalani Sarai), 8 Kos; to Butsulla

43. IA. XLIII, 77-8, 97, 103, 107: Marshall, 425 (Carriage between Patna and Agra).

The Patna factors entreated the Agra factors to deliver to the wife of Abdul Karim Rs. 4 more.

44. Ball, i. 262.
where was situated the Sundar Ki Sarai, 7 Kos; to Mosser (Mehsi, a great city and the seat of a Nawab), 4 Kos; to Soorgpore (Surajpur), 8 Kos; to Motteharree (Motihari), 7 Kos; to Heatounda (Hataura), at foot of the hills, 8 Kos; then uphill ascent to Khatmandu (Katmandu), Pautund (Patna) or Bautgaurie (Bhatgaon) all near each other, in Nepal (Neopoll or Neckball), 40 Kos; thence to Bauton (Bhutan, Tibet), 250 Kos—Total 340 Kos.45

(d) Animals:

There were in Patna little oxen (gaina) to draw coaches, (27 inches high at the shoulder and 36 inches long). Driven by one man, an ox could draw such a coach 20 to 30 days together at the rate of 20 or 25 miles a day. The best sort of such oxen could be purchased at 4 or 5 rupees a pair.

Horses (ponies) used in travel were “by nature so small that when a man is upon them his feet nearly touch the ground, but they are otherwise strong and all go at an amble, doing up to 20 leagues at a stretch, and eating and drinking but little.” Some of them cost 200 ecus—£45. Tavernier considered this to be “a very high price for a country pony now a days”46.

(e) Human carriers:

When hills were steep, neither horses nor palanquins could be used. “All passengers of quality” were carried in a kind of hammock by six men on their shoulders, the charge being only 4 annas or ¼ rupee a passenger.

It is interesting to note that English merchants travelling up-country used to adopt the dress of an Indian Muslim for enjoying greater comfort and being less conspicuous than in European dress. While preparing for his journey from Rajmahal to Patna, Job Charnock (2nd Feb., 1659) “for the quick dispatch of his-

45. Marshall, 161. It is possible to locate Hajipur, Singhiya (near Lalganj) Mehsi, Surajpur, Motihari, Hataura, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon in the Survey of India maps of Bihar and Orissa and India Atlas sheets 102-103. Bhatgaon is 7 m. east of Patan. The modern western road from Hajipur to Katmandu follows the old route at many points.
46. Marshall, 377; Ball, 1, 162. These were known as the Khunt. See Bloehman Ain-i-Akbari.
voyage, is now cutting of his haire, and intends to enter into the Moores fashion this day."47

(f) Postal messages:
Usually it took a fortnight for letters to come from Patna to Agra in dry season and an interval of 24 days was considered unusual. During rainy season, however, even an express messenger took 24 days to come from Agra to Patna. Letters from Surat came to Patna via Agra in about 45-60 days. Besides private messengers and servants there must have been some professional messengers who could be hired, as we find the Patna factors engaging a "bazaar cossid" (Kasid, messenger). Bills of exchange were sometimes brought to Patna in 11 days by ‘express’ messengers of Agra factory, one of whom was named ‘Guar Shaw’.48

8. Natural Calamities—Fire, Storm and Famine.

(a) Fire:
Alamganj, the western suburb of Patna City, was consumed by a disastrous fire during noon of Saturday, 24 March, 1621. Fanned by a strong andhi (gale), the fire spread from the outskirts to the centre of the mahalla, where the English factors’ abode lay. The buildings being all covered with thatched roof, the fire speedily devastated the area, and the assistance of nearly 100 workmen of the English factory was of no avail against its fury. Conveying some of the Company’s goods by a back lane to a neighbouring stone house, Hughes could hardly save his own chamber. The fire spread eastwards almost to the fringe of the Patna City but there went out, leaving behind “little save ruins of old walls”, and taking a toll of more than 300 men, women and children. The factors observed: “The infinite losses of all men by this disaster are almost incredible to be reported”.49

47. Marshall, 163; Letter of Henry Aldworth (Rajmahal, Feb. 1, 1659) EF, 1655-60.
49. EF (1618-21), 246-8.
(b) Storm:

In 1667 a violent storm swept over Patna and “rolled the houses of that great city into heaps and blew down both the English and Dutch houses there.”

(c) Famine—Its Causes:

Four years later Patna and its environs were desolated by a terrible famine (Oct. 1670—Nov., 1671) which affected the area from near Allahabad to Rajmahal. A graphic account of it has been left by Thomas Bowrey and John Marshall, the E.I. Company’s Balasore factor, then at Patna. From their remarks it appears that the famine was not due so much to failure of crops as to administrative malpractices, so that in a sense it was a man-made famine.

Though the previous year was dry, there were large quantities of rice in these parts. Evidently the available stocks were withheld and the markets were controlled by the officials. While Marshall attributes the famine principally to the Nawab’s ‘roguery’, Bowrey accuses ‘the Nawab’s chief wife’ of what would be called blackmarketing and racketeering in modern times,—of having “several very large store-houses full of grain” and refusing to sell them “unless they would give the weight of silver in one scale of its weight of rice or wheat in the other.” The ryotwari system having progressively dwindled from the beginning of Jahangir’s reign the ryots of the village could hardly have anything like their own grain stores and they had now become dependent on the accumulations of officials and even their wives.

Famine Prices:

Hence a great scarcity befell the land which, Bowrey laments, was very fertile and supplied grain to such a plentiful country as Bengal. The price of fine rice at Patna rose from Rs. 4 a maund (towards the end of May, 1671) to Rs. 5.5 (23rd July) and Rs. 5-11-0 (8th August). Towards the end of May (23rd), 1671, coarse rice and wheat sold at Rs.2½ a maund, barley


51. Bowrey says (226) that rice sold at one rupee a seer (cf 27 oz.). This seems to be an exaggeration.
at Rs.2 a maund, beef at Rs.1½ a md., oil at Rs.7 a maund (of 80 lbs. Eng. avoir); 4½ mds. of firewood could be bought at Re.1, 5 hens or 8 chickens at Re.1. At times it so happened that no rice or bread was available in the market with the result that there was a ‘terrible cry of poor’ in the bazaar.

Famine Casualties:

Want of food drove a few to desperation. On 7th August, 1671, 2 merchants of Patna committed suicide by jumping into a common well. Thousands perished in streets and open fields. During 14 months (ending on 6th November, 1671) altogether 1,35,400 men died at Patna and its suburbs. Only 1,800 out of 4,000 houses in Hajipur were inhabited and out of them many persons died. On his return from Singhiya to Patna (June 19), Marshall saw on the sandy bank, midway between the city and the river, about 32 or 33 corpses all lying within 10 yards.

In May, 1671, Marshall also found the whole area from Mokameh to Patna to be devastated by the famine. For 13½ miles to Dumra he saw a large number of corpses by the river side (20 May, 1671), passed by 4 or 5 corpses along the road to Barh (21st May). Fine rice was sold there at famine prices—5 pice a seer (& 33½ pice per rupee). The “poor starved people” were making “a sad noise” at a sarai and Marshall feared that “they would pull all his things out of his palanquin”. He noticed 5 or 6 corpses on the road to Ghansurpur. Rice was being sold at 3 pice a seer (33 pice—a rupee). For nearly 6 miles up to Baikatpur Marshall saw 27 or 28 corpses and portions of corpses on the road. Near Ranisarai he found (?) ducks eating the corpses in a branch of the river. At Baikatpur rice sold at 4½ pice a seer (and 60 pice of new sort, to the rupee). On 23rd May, 1671, Marshall saw, while passing through Patna several corpses lying on the highway and many in the bazaar, 9 in “one

52. On the 11th December, 1671, Marshall got a written account from the Kotwal’s Chabutra to the effect that during the last 12 months the total number of deaths was 1,03,000 of which 50,000 were Muhammadans and 53,000 Hindus, as recorded in their record books. This shows that there must have been arrangements for vital statistics. Elsewhere the number was given as 90,720.

53. This throws light on the course of the Ganges at that time.
gate house". The daily death roll mounted from 100 persons towards the end of May to 250 or 300 about 23rd July and 8th August, 1671. The Kotwal (of Patna) caused all corpses to be thrown into the Ganges every morning.

Migration and Voluntary Enslavement:

The harassed and suffering populace could think of only two means of escape from this intolerable position, — migration and enslavement. Marshall says that 'the poor emigrated from Patna to Dacca for victuals'. Altogether 1,50,000 men left the town. Goaded by hunger, "many", says Bowrey, "gladly sold their children for a handful of rice". Ordinary slaves could be purchased (June 19, 1671) at 4 as. or 5 as. while good ones at Rs. 1. Marshall also cites several cases of voluntary enslavement. (a) On 21st May, 1671, at Barh (?) Marshall was offered a 12 year old boy by his parents as a slave at 8 as., a price agreeable to the boy himself. But Marshall declined to purchase him, as the father was aged 80 and a sheikh gave him, 4 pice and sent him away. (b) On 22nd May, 1671, at Gunsarsore (Ghansurpur) Sarai, about 12 miles west of Athmalgola, John Marshall purchased a slave named Branchee (? Baranasi ? Birinchi) from the latter's elder brother Banisee (Bansi). "I agreed", he writes, "for 8 annas but gave 1 rupee for him" and also gave 4 pice worth sweatmeats as was customary in purchase of slaves, 2 pice to the landlord of the sarai and 1 pice to the barber for shaving his head. (c) On 31st May, 1671, he bought at Patna a Brahmin slave boy for 4 rupees, named Mangah (Manga) 7 or 8 years old, then 43" high; his father named "Jankee" (Janaki) was dead, his mother named "Dowkee" (Devaki or Dukhi) was alive. Marshall renamed the boy 'Abraham'.

Effect on Standard of Life:

The diet of the famine—stricken slaves had to be regulated with care. If those extremely emaciated consumed slightly more than the average dose of food (rice, flesh, butter or meat), their faces, hands and feet swelled. So they had to be given only 2 meals each of $\frac{1}{2}$ sr. rice, as compared to 2 meals each of $\frac{1}{3}$ sr. rice given to ordinary slaves.

Emaciated workmen were unable to bear the strain of hard.
labour which they were sometimes obliged to undergo for their livelihood and collapsed. Probably this is the implication of a quaint observation of Marshall; "Such was the laziness of workmen in the time of famine that in the time of making one Cosmere boat for the Company, six of the carpenters died of famine".

9. Patna as a centre of trade:

Patna was an important meeting place of merchants of different nationalities, for whose convenience there was a cosmopolitan Sarai (Saif Khan's Sarai). Here rooms were hired at a monthly rental, whereas sarais in big towns usually accommodated travellers for the night only. The records of the first half of the 17th century refer of Portuguese, English, 'Mongoles' (Mughal, i.e., Persians, Central Asiatic foreigners and N.W. Frontier merchants), Pathan, Armenian and Indian merchants including East Bengal traders (Praychaes). The earliest English factors at Patna found that the Portuguese were already in possession of the field, and observed (November, 30, 1620): "The Portingalls of late years have had a trade here in Puttana". Every year their frigates came from Malacca and Cochin to their two ports, Hugli and Pipli, where they had been licensed by Jahangir to inhabit, and thence they came up to Patna, laden with tin, spices, china wares, and returned with ambati calicoes, khassa (muslin), all sorts of thin cloth (dyed red for the specific purpose of selling them in the south), silk and coarse Jaunpur carpets. It took 5 or 6 days to come down from Patna, and about double the time to sail up. This trade must have been adversely affected by their expulsion from Bengal in c. 1632.

The Pathan traders brought Sahans from Lower Bengal. The Armenians penetrated into the interior of India in this period. The Dutch factor Pelsaert (1620-6) noticed Armenian merchants at Lahore together with Aleppo merchants, while the English traveller, Peter Mundy found (1632) the Armenians at Patna. Tavernier met four Armenian merchants coming from Danzig at Patna and they were going to Bhutan to sell images of yellow amber. Manucci saw at Patna one Armenian friend of his, named Cojah Safar (Khwajah Safar) of Agra, bring a bill of

54. IA. XLIII, 73,83, EF. I, 191-6, 213-4; Mundy, II, 362, 366. For explanation of Mongoles and Praychaes, see ante ch. I.
exchange for Rs. 25,000 on a local shroff. The latter had became bankrupt. So the Armenian, by his dissimulation, was able to secure cloth worth Rs. 30,000 from the local merchants. But, instead of paying them he declared himself insolvent and, having bribed the judge with Rs. 5,000 was able to secure payment for his original bill and proceeded to Surat. "The Judge declared that the merchants must take the bill of exchange—being fellow citizens of the Sarraf. It was unreasonable that a stranger should suffer in a foreign country." Armenian merchants and others who travelled in the countries from Tartary to China and carried on musk trade, annually passed through Patna to Hugli.

It is thus clear that Patna in the 17th century was not only a centre of inter-provincial trade, but of inter-national trade, Asiatic, African and European. It was connected with Agra on the west by river and land routes and so with the general system of over-land traffic to Central Asia, Western Asia and Africa (including Egypt). It lay on the route from Agra to Chatigan (Chatgaon, Chittagong), the port of Bengal and was connected with other ports of Bengal, like Hugli, Kasimbazar, etc. It also traded with Orissa, including Puri and Balasore. Bowrey did not exaggerate the commercial importance of Patna when he observed: "This is a Countrey of very great Traffick and Commerce, and is really the great Gate that Openeth into Bengal and Orixa, and soe consequently into most parts of India, vizt., from the Northerne Kingdoms or Empires (by land), namely Persia, Carmania (Kirman), Georgia, Tartaria, etc. The commodities of those countries are transported hither by Caffila, who alsoe Export the commodities brought by the English and Dutch as alsoe of this Kingdome."

10. Patna as a Cultural Centre.

The long and variegated history of Patna will supply ample materials of study to the urban geographers, sociologists and ecologists in assessing its cultural role. Patna has had a fairly continuous history as centre of civilization and economic

55. Jahangir's India, 30: Mundy, II, 159; Ball, Soria, II. 84.
56. Master, i. 310.
57. Bowrey, 221.
58. See Sec. A. ante V.
importance from earliest time. It was a pre-Aryan site perhaps contemporaneous with Mohenjodaro (c. 3000 B.C.). Situated in Magadh it was a centre of non-Aryan people, the Kikatas, in the Gangetic valley outside the pale of orthodox Brahmanism. It revived after the 5th century B.C. when Pataliputra succeeded Rajgriha as the capital of Magadh and soon grew to be the metropolis of the first Indian Empire. On account of its clashes with Vaishali, it had to develop as a naval centre. It was also a port, having relations with S.E. Asia. It was, at the same time, an inland trade centre. From here radiated the missions of Asoka, preaching far and wide the ideals of ‘Dhamma’ of international peace, of religious toleration and of social welfare. It witnessed the alternate waves of Buddhism and Brahmanical reactions. Near it flourished the famous seats of learning at Nalanda and Oddantapuri. With the declines of the Guptas as an imperial power, Bihar lost its independence and Pataliputra ceased to be the metropolis of India. It revived again under the imperial Palas of Bengal and Bihar, but suffered a set back when Bihar Sharif became the headquarters of the Turkish rulers. Its glories revived, thanks to the foresight of Sher Shah who transferred the capital of Bihar from the town of Bihar to Patna (Pattana, a mart), which again rose to prominence. Thus was laid the foundation of the modern Patna City where Sher built an exceedingly strong fort on the bank of the Ganges at a cost of five lakhs.

Under the Mughals it was the provincial headquarters of Suba Bihar. Known as Azimabad in later Mughal period it grew into an important centre of intellectual, literary and artistic development. Its art traditions came to be nurtured by the Patna School of art.

The city of Patna had considerable economic importance too. Its trade and manufactures, principal of which were cotton, silk, sugar and saltpetre, accounted for its world-wide importance in the 17th century. It was then an important meeting place of merchants of different nationalities as explained earlier.

In the British period Bankipur became the civil station with court buildings, educational and cultural institutions. Still later the New Capital area has grown up functioning as the administrative hub of the entire State of Bihar.

Patna has thus played an important role in the trans-
formation of more or less integrated traditional life of the community. As a centre of culture, it has illustrated varying but significant culture patterns, being a meeting place of non-Aryan culture, of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, and lastly western influences. It has acted as an administrative and military headquarters of successive imperial and provincial organizations. It has served as an ecclesiastical or religious, educational artistic and literary centre. It has thus been a 'political-religious' or 'political-intellectual' centre, as urban centres usually were in ancient civilisations. It has been a commercial town, an economic centre, as urban centres are in the modern world. During its long history there have been numerous clashes and commotions. It is, however, to be emphasized that all its different patterns of its activities and functions were integrated in a common life. It may not be far from truth to say that the "little traditions" of its local non-urban culture became transformed, as anthropologists say, into "great traditions". It has been a cauldron when cultures have been fused together. It has been a radiating centre in diffusing culture to different places. The process has erected a change in the "content and integration of ideas, interests and ideals". The cultural role of Patna may thus be said to be both orthogenetic and heterogenetic,—orthogenetic, because religious, philosophical, literary and other developments are the outgrowths of the traditional elements and represent a synthesis—heterogenetic, because it has been a place of differing traditions, a centre of heresy, heterodoxy and dissent, of interruption and destruction of ancient tradition.

It will be clear from the above that the history of Patna illustrates the long run perspective as the symbol and carrier of civilization. It also offers materials for studying, in the short-run perspective, of its cultural role in relation to its local hinterland. It also illustrates the middle run perspective delimited by the life history of the civilization within which it has developed. It affords good scope for empirical, ethnographic, sociological and geographical research. It also indicates the changing role of the city of Patna with reference to the processes of urbanization, de-urbanization and re-urbanization throughout its history. It has played an important role in the development, decline and transformation of culture in its different aspects, activities and
influences—religious, educational, artistic, administrative, military, economic or financial.
CHAPTER 6

Aspects of Indian Mercantile
Marine in the Seventeenth Century

SECTION A

INDIAN MERCHANT SHIPS AND THEIR
SKIPPERS IN THE RED SEA PORTS, 1611

India's maritime contact with the Red Sea was of long-
standing antiquity. At the end of the 15th century the route
from the Persian Gulf to the Near East became unsafe on
account of the Turkish seizure of it. The Red Sea route
through Egypt was also liable to vexatious interference by the
Egyptian government. Even in 1609 Englishmen found Aden
to be "a place of garrison rather than of trade," and its Turkish
governor to be "both rapacious and treacherous". The Basha¹
of Yemen did not allow the English to establish a factory
at Mocha in the Red Sea without sanction from Constantin-
ople.² Mocha's³ importance as a commercial centre was not
only due to the pilgrim traffic, and the influx of Egyptian
merchants who purchased eastern products in return for gold
and silver, but also to the fact that the Red Sea was the main.

1. Jaffar Basha, Vizier and Viceroy of the Province.
2. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*; Foster, *England's Quest of
   Eastern Trade*, 189, 289; *Letters Received*, Vol. I. 129.
3. Also called Moho, Mocca. The English, however, advised their
countrymen to 'shum the Red Sea' (1611) (as 'neither at Aden nor
Moho nor any port under the Turkish tyranny in the Red Sea, there
is not any trade for you') and to prefer the Assab road in the bay of
outlet of the maritime activity of Gujrat traders of Diu and Cambay, and it was at the same time frequented largely by merchant and pilgrim ships from the Sind port of Lahari Bandar, the Mughal imperial port of Surat, the Bijapur (Konkan) port of Dabhol and the Malabar or Vijayanagar ports of Cannanore and Cochin.

The activities of the Indian ships, belonging to various Indian States commanding the sea coast, in the Indian waters, i.e., from the Cope of Good Hope and Madagascar to the East Indies and the Far East and their fate in the impact of the new conditions created by the advent, first of the Portuguese and subsequently of Dutch and the English traders have not been adequately studied by scholars, 4 who have dealt with the period from the point of view of the European nations’ quest of the Eastern trade. An attempt has been made here to study, on the basis of the English E.I. Company’s records, the activities of the Indian skippers and the fate of the Indian ships in the Red Sea Ports during 1611.

In the course of the Sixth voyage of the E.I. Company to the East, Sir Henry Middleton, the ‘General’, aboard the Trades Increase, was attacked at Mocha with some of his followers after an initial welcome, and imprisoned for nearly 6 months (Dec. 1610—May 10, 1611) by its Governor, Regib Aga (Rajab Agha) and sent to the Basha at Sana 5. On 10th May, 1611, Middleton escaped with some others of his party and reached the Darling. But Middleton had to leave behind “30 men of best quality” as pledges of good behaviour till the arrival of the Indian ships, which would be secure from any wrong inflicted by the English. 5

The first reaction of the other members of Middleton’s party was to avenge the Turks by attempting to dislocate their trade in the Red Sea. Captain Nicholas Downton (in charge of the Peppercorn) and his colleagues, wanted to make a show of

4. F.C. Danvers, The Portuguese in India, 2 vols (1894); Macpherson; Bruce, Annals of Commerce; Foster, England’s Quest of Eastern Trade, &c.

5. L.R.I. 1602-13 Intro; 129-30 (details). The Great Turk had ordered that the Basha might give license to Christians to come there but must capture their ships, kill the crew and confiscate their goods, because the place was so near Mecca. Ibid, 129.
force by preventing at Bab el Mandeb the Indian ships from reaching the Red Sea in the beginning of 1611. This course was decided upon after careful consideration of probable gains and losses and of possible reactions to Englishmen elsewhere. Captain Nicholas Downton, Giles Thornton and Hugh Frayne wrote to Middleton (30.1.11) that “the show thereof might turn you to good, since the damage they might receive that way by us might divers times double the hope or gain they may receive by all your captivities.” Evidently the Turks were then deriving considerable profit from the trade carried on by the Indian ships. Though the English, advised by Sir Henry, did not actually resort to the blockade, they held (30th Jan., 1611) that “the safe passage in of the Indian ships” would conduce to the “especiall good of the Turks who might work us very much mischief.”

Regib Aga (Rajab Agha), the Governor of Mocha, did not want the English to come to Mocha road, on the ground that the ships of India dare (d) not come where the English were staying. The English also apprehended (9th March, 1611) that the arrival of the Indian ships, together with the ships and galleys from Mecca were expected to strengthen the hands of the Turkish Governor who would then be emboldened to use Sir Henry Middleton “at his pleasure and like a Judas to embrace you with a kiss and for the lucre of money to betray you again.”

Not only were the Indian ships considered by the English to bring vast wealth and resources to the Turkish authorities, we find the Nakhudas or Skippers or masters of Indian vessels playing the role of mediators or intermediaries between the Turkish officers and the Englishmen. Again it was through these Nakhudas that an active correspondence passed between Middleton, the General of the Sixth Voyage of E.I.C. and the other Englishmen during and after the period of his detention on shore.

The escape of Sir Henry Middleton caused a flutter in

7. Formerly Governor of Aden about 1609.

*L.R.* I 55. The English, howevr, forcd to get information of their men and business at Surat’ only from Indian ships.
the minds of the Governor of Mocha and of the Indian merchants of Dabhol and Malabar, then at the port. They all apprehended some acts of reprisal from the English ‘General’. The Turkish Governor was in a curious fix, pursuing a policy of force without sufficient naval strength, while the Indian skippers and merchants dreaded the naval might of the English. A policy of appeasement and of gaining time was the inevitable result of the situation. Two Indian Skippers (Nahudas or Nakhudas) of ‘the Dabulls’ and of ‘the Malabars’ interceded with the Governor of Mocha on behalf of some imprisoned English subordinates of Middleton including Lawrence, Femell and John Williams, and secured his ruling that none of these Englishmen would be “put into irons” or “otherwise wronged” and that they would only be confined to the house till the formal permission for their release came from the Basha within a fortnight (from 11th May, 1611). The Malabar Nakhuda even conveyed a letter of the imprisoned Lawrence Femell to Sir Henry Middleton (13th May), and persuaded the latter “to hold good quarter with the Turks,” i.e. not to resort to any act of revenge, for the above period. The Nakhuda also promised to fulfil certain conditions suggested by Middleton regarding restoration of captured articles of the English and was rewarded by the latter with “a good sword blade in part of recompense.”

At the same time presents and provisions poured into the hands of Femell, so that the latter might persuade Middleton (through correspondence) to remain quiet. From the crew of the Dabhol ship came much needed provisions, while the Malabar Nakhuda sent some gold coins with a corge of fidkeaes. The Governor of Mocha and the Nakhudas of Dabhol and of Malabar, all agreed to write (on 14th May) to the Basha, pleading for the release of the English prisoners, then guarded in their own house by a dozen soldiers, and sent them comfortable messages, assuring them freedom after the receipt of the reply from the Basha. Femell requested Middle-

8. L.R. I. 58-9., 89-90, 92
9. Viz. two sheep, one large basket of rice, another of bread, with a pan of butter and some green ginger.
10. A bale of 20 pieces of a variety of cotton cloth.
ton to send him some fresh wine, and 30 rials of eight through a trustworthy messenger "abroad the great Dabull's ships" and entreated him 'to grant the request of the Aga'. Thus the Indian ships rendered considerable service to the Englishmen in several ways.

In Mochā there was an Indian town. The Indians built for themselves "a petty town of slight cabins, along the strand." 11 Some of the Nakhudas had their own houses at Mocha, which were occasionally the venue of meetings and discussions between them, high Turkish officials and others. Such was Malik Ambar, who used to style himself 'Nakhuda of the great ship,' captain of Dabul, the port of Bijapur. He was 30 years old and should be distinguished from the Abyssinian Prime Minister of Ahmadnagar of the same name. This great ship of Dabhul was christened the Muhammadi, and was capable of carrying 4,000 Khandies 12 of goods. On 13th May night, an important meeting was held at his house to discuss the terms mentioned in Middleton's letter. It was presented by Lawrence Femell before the Nahuda and the Emir Dakar. It was settled that the Nahuda and Shermale, the Shabhunder of Mocha, would work out the conditions of Middleton's capitulation with the Agha, Governor of Mocha. 13

Besides the Skipper of the ship of Dabhol in Bijapur, there was another influential skipper of Vijayanagar (Malabar) at Mocha, referred to in the E. I. Company's records as "the old Nahuda Mahomet of Cainnor" (Cannanore). He had rendered the party of Femell considerable services at the time of Middleton's escape and interceded on behalf of the English with the Basha. So Femell besought Middleton to use the Malabar Skipper, deputed to settle conditions of capitulation, "with all tenderness" and to arrange with him to get back the anchors in five days, so that the presence of two more English vessels in the Mocha road would inspire the local authorities and the Indians with greater awe of the English than before. Rajab Agha, the Governor of Mocha, promised to Middleton

12. A South Indian weight, generally equal to 20 maunds.
13. L.R. I. 95. For details of Malik Ambar and his ship, vide Portuguese records i JBRS XXX 111,32.
(15th May) to agree to the terms suggested by Nakhuda Mahommet, as he was the accredited spokesman of the Turkish authorities.

In spite of the friction between the English and the Turkish authorities the relations between the English and the Indian ships were, on the whole, outwardly at least, cordial. Thus Middleton asked (15th May) Femell to recommended him to Nakhuda Mahomed and Nakhuda Malik Ambar, thank the latter for the presents brought by his Kaihos, and request the Governor of Mocha to grant the Indian Merchants and masters, complete freedom to come to Middleton's ships. Indeed, it was from these Indians that the English could expect information of the progress which their predecessors, like William Hollings, Jourdain and Sharpeigh, were making with regard to development of trade in the main land of India, particularly at Surat and Cambay.

On the other hand, Malik Ambar, the captain of Dabhol, in his turn, showed a friendly disposition to the English, by supplying them daily rations, albeit without meat. In partial recompense, Middleton sent a good sword blade for Malik Ambar and another for his Kahi, and still considered himself to be indebted to the Bijapuri captain. Subsequently Malik Amber, too, thanked Middleton for the presents and avowed his readiness to requite his courtesy on any later occasion, if demanded. What had been sent by him to Middleton and the Englishmen ashore was, Malik Ambar professed, "not with expectation of recompense," but in token of his goodwill and love towards them. Malik Ambar also expressed the hope that the Basha's order of release of Englishmen would come in eight

'And looke what the Nahuda Mahomet (for he is the man that must deal for us) doth say, I will consent unto.' Ibid 99-100. The Nahuda, along with the governor and the Shahbunder wrote to the Basha to restore the Pinnace captured by the Turks for the grand Seignor or Vizier, to Middleton. Ibid.


17. Femell and Williams gratefully acknowledged the gift to Middleton (18th May, 1611); "Every day we receive kindness from Meleck Ambar Nahuda of the great ship, in the quality that they ordinarily feedeth upon, we mean rice, but no flesh therewith." L.R.I. 108, 109.
days’ time. He volunteered to carry any letter which Middleton might send “to any part of India.” He also invited Middleton to Dabhol, assuring him that his “entertainment would be very friendly and embracement of trade gratefully accepted.” The true reason of this offer of the Bijapuri captain is not probably disclosed in the E.I. Company’s records. It is true Malik Ambar is said to have only expected “a safe passage” for himself in the hands of the Englishmen on his way back.” Was this dallying of the Bijapuri Captain with the English intended to offset the Portuguese-Vijayanagar alliance and thereby reduce the political importance of the Portuguese in the West Coast of India and to win over the English to stand by the side of Bijapur, if need be, especially because of the apprehension that the friction between the Portuguese and the Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar might spread to Bijapur as well?

But this friendly attitude of the English towards the Indian ships was more apparent than real. In the first place, it did not stand in the way of Sir Henry’s holding a threat to burn the Indian ships, when he was dissatisfied with the negative reply of the Governor of Mocha on the question of the release of the Englishmen. Reprisal, followed by a dislocation of the trade of Mocha was, to the English, the only means of bringing the Turks on their knees. On 16th May, Middleton wrote, “I will not forbear to burn the India ships which are my friends, rather than I will lose the benefit of revenge upon so vile a traitor.” He even withdrew his request, previously made, of allowing “the Nahudas and other my friends” to come aboard his own ships, so as not to remain under any sense of obligation to the Governor. Middleton, however, refrained from reprisals “at the entreaty of the Shahbunder and Nakhuda Mohomet”. Indeed, the issue seemed to depend wholly on “the promise and determination of the Nahuda.” The Governor, gave out that any breach of peace by Middleton, involving the burning of

18. Ibid., 113. Very likely it was in pursuance of this invitation that in 1612, Sir Henry Middleton’s ships touched at Dabhol. He was requested to initiate a regular trade. But in spite of occasional discussions of the advisability of opening a factory, nothing took place, “as the perennial warfare with the Portuguese rendered ventures in that direction unsafe for any but a strong fleet.” Foster, England’s Quest of Eastern Trade, 317-18.

the Indian ships, would be immaterial to his government, as it would only injure "the friends". But this was evidently a bluff, as future events showed. Further, the delay in the arrival of ships from the Gujrat port, Diu, caused a steep rise in the price of articles from India at Mocha. The Aga also wanted to keep the question of access of the Indian Nakhudas to Middleton to be undecided, depending on Middleton's own conduct. As a matter of fact the Shahbunder and Nakhuda Mahomenet and even Lawrence Femell himself desired Middleton to wait patiently till the expiry of the limited period.

Secondly, Femell objected to Middleton's advice to borrow some money from Nakhuda Mahomet, considering it to be "a discredit to borrow money" from Indians and resolved to keep himself out of debt in any eventuality.

Thirdly, Sir Henry Middleton seized, on 18th May, 1611, the ship of Diu, together with its crew and goods, and some other ships from Malabar and Dabhol, as a security for the release of the imprisoned Englishmen. He was resolved to so tighten the blockade as not to allow any unloading of ships and to permit a single person to go ashore, even if starvation stared the crew in the face on the sea. Thus "the Malabar master and owner of the small ship that rideth next the shore" were not permitted to haul their ships ashore, though the Dabull ship was permitted to ballast. But he promised not to inflict any injury on either the ship or the crew. He would also not allow any Englishman to enter the ship. His sole objective was to bring her under complete command of his own ship for purposes of effective blockade.

This blockade of the Indian ships seemed to cause a serious dislocation of the trade interests of the port. Rajab Agha, the Governor of Mocha, had to swallow his previous bluff, and to relent at this pressure. On 19th May he requested Middleton to permit the unloading of the ships and especially of a ship of Diu, 'appertaining' to the business of Shermale, the Shahbunder, that was expected to arrive from the Babel Mandab at Mocha on the 20th. In case of non-compliance, the Governor would inform the Basha. But Middleton steadily refused to-

permit unloading of any goods till the release of the Englishmen and retained the Diu ship in his own keeping. The Shahbunder, anxious to know his own business affairs, implored Middleton (20th May, 1611) to allow at least "some of my people come ashore, and offered him 10 Moraes of rice as a sign of goodwill." He was especially anxious to contact a Gujarati youth and Femell forwarded his request to Middleton, a request that was reported by the Aga also. But Middleton would not release him till the release of the Englishmen. These details show that the Turks were utterly weak in naval power and that the Indian ships had no convoy or military protection against hostile attack on the sea.

Fourthly, Nakhuda Mahomet lost the confidence of the English. About 20th May, the Turkish authorities imprisoned and enchained Femell and his party. The latter at first believed that this was due to the alarm raised by Nakhuda Mohomet that Sir Henry Middleton would not only demand the release of Femell and his men but also the restitution of all goods. But Sir Henry denied to have said so and assured Femell (21 May) that he was not "so indiscreet to reveal my designs to any Indian whatsoever." Subsequently, after his chains were removed, Femell learnt that the Shahbunder did not want him to disclose to Middleton the fact of the enchaining and attributed it to the news of approach, during night, of a boat, evidently suspected by the towns men to be a reprisal boat of Middleton. Femell, therefore, suspected the Nakhuda to be a double-dealer, who was responsible for his own imprisonment. Later still (22 May) Femell could not decide the Nakhuda or the Shahbunder who was more honest, and began to suspect the Shahbunder also. The Shahbunder had arranged the detention of the Englishmen till the arrival of the Indian ships, and when Middleton seized the ship of Diu, connected with the Shahbunder, the latter, who was at the Agha's house,

21. Ibid., 114, 116. Middleton's letter, a reply to Regib Aga's letter of 19th is dated 18th May, 1611. This is evidently a mistake. A mora was a measure used in sale of paddy on the West Coast of India.

22. Ibid., 120, 121, 122. From Femell's letter of 23rd May, 1611, it appears that the father of the Guj. youth, 'an old decrepit man' came to him enquiring about his son's release. Ibid., 122.
was reported to have given “Money to have it (enchaining) done.” Femell was therefore at a loss to understand which of the three causes, alleged to be responsible for the enchaining of the English, was “the efficient cause” i.e., true cause. But he was definite that Malik Ambar “did speak most earnestly and boldly in our cause.” 23 Evidently there was some intrigue between the Shahbunder and Nakhuda Mohomet. Middleton swore vengeance on the Nakhudas whom he suspected to neglect him, stating (21 May), “I hope to requite them and make them know their errors too late, for I find no man to stir in my business but the Shahbunder and all the rest sit still.” 24

Middleton was also sceptical of Malik Ambar's attitude. To Lawrence Femell's assurance that Malik Ambar had spoken “most earnestly and boldly” in favour of the imprisoned Englishmen, Middleton replied (22 May, 1611): ‘If Meleck Ambar be kind to you now, it is more for fear than love, for I, when I was ashore, could receive none at his hands.”

At the same time there was a growing realisation on the part of the Englishmen of the Sixth Voyage, then at Mocha, that if they were to prosecute their trade successfully, they must, in view of the uncertainty of establishing trade in the west coast of India, “make friends at other places.” The Portuguese maritime supremacy and the danger of rivalry with them was a factor that must be reckoned with. “If the Portingals seek to work us out we must endeavour to keep ourselves in; the beginning is the worst,” wrote Femell to Middleton (22 May). Moreover, from information trickling from the Indian merchants and skippers, they came to know of the difficulties of establishing trade at Cambay and Surat on account of the vacillating policy of Jahangir and the caprices of his Governors. 25

23. L.R. I. 116-117, 117-118, 119-20. It is clear that the Turkish prison restrictions did not prevent correspondence between the prisoners and their outside friends.

24. L.R. I. 117. Middleton regarded both Nakhuda Mahomet and the Shahbunder to be alike, refuting Femell's allegation that he condemned the former and excused the latter, but held that it would not be proper to indict the Shahbunder, who “was never but kind to us”, without substantial proof. Ibid., 121.

25. Ibid, 120, 121, 116-118, 120, (Femell's letter), 123, 157-60
Further, the commodities which the English had brought for India would not be suitable for or vendible in "any other place but the coast of Mallabar." But direct trade relation with the Vijayanagar Empire in the Malabar coast would be impossible on account of the treaty of 1547 between that Empire and the Portuguese. Hence the only hope for the English lay in taking "perfect intelligence of the entrance of Dabull," the port of Bijapur, so that they might establish overland trade with Vijayanagar through Bijapur. This necessitated that the "Dabull men" must be completely won over. Hence Lawrence Femell and John Williams requested Sir Henry Middleton (22 May, 1611) to send a compass for the "Malum of the great Dabull's ship;" in case Middleton was unwilling to "bestow a compass upon him" i.e. as a gift, Femell requested his superior to "sell us a compass which in the end shall not be lost." Middledemurred, saying that he had not brought any compass for sale but finally sent one in the hope of eventual advantage, adding: "The last news of Surat hath afforded you a reason why you should give it, for before you wrote me none."  

The Indian Nakhudas also played an important part in the final release of the Englishmen, imprisoned by the Turkish authorities at Mocha. The Basha at Sana sent letters to the Governor, to Nakhuda Mahomet, to the Shahbunder and the merchants for the release. It was settled that Nakhuda Mahomet should go to Middleton on 25 May and take from him and his crew a signed guarantee ("a writing under your hand and seal") to the effect that they would not do "harm to any ships whatsoever in this Sea." Then the Shahbunder and the Nakhuda would "become pledges," i.e. stand as surety for the English. The Nakhuda of the ship of Dabhol (i.e. Malik Ambar) had the courage to denounce the conduct of the Turkish authorities and incurred the Governor's displeasure. Middleton was informed that "the Governor and Nahuda of the Dabull

26. L R. I. 119-20. I am indebted to Dr. Moraes for giving me the interesting information that the compasses of the Europeans were superior to those used by the Arabs and others in the Indian waters.

27. Ibid, 121. The Malum, approached by Femell, promised to furnish Middleton with a good leadstone in return for his money, Ibid, 124.
are at difference, the Nahuda telling him plainly of his injurious dealing towards us." The Governor refused to permit Malik Ambar "to send a boat aboard to see what his ships" wanted. So Femell requested Middleton to lend a boat for the purpose, in order to gratify Malik Ambar.

Nakhuda Mahomet promised to Middleton that the entire party of the imprisoned Englishmen with all their belongings, and the pinnace with all its articles would be restored to Middleton on 26th May, besides articles of personal use "save the main bulk of our goods." If the Aga would not restore as many goods as demanded by the English, the Nakhuda himself would. On 26th May, Middleton sent a written note to Rajab Agha, through Femell, that if all the "Englishmen, the pinnace, and all ships and men were restored, he would bind himself "not to meddle with any ships" in the Red Sea.28

A cipher correspondence on Middleton's letter of 25th May contains the following with regard to Indian ships. I have given a tentative clue within brackets where possible:

This day being 28th May is 226th day. The ships of Dabull (Dabhol) 305 or 300 (expected to leave Mocha on 15th or 10th August).

Mallebarrs (Malabar) 295 or 300 (expected to leave on 5th or 10th August).

Ships of Dewe (Diu), 305 (expected to leave on 15th August).

To go 310 (leave Mocha by 20th August) is very late and doubtful to attain the coast of India, the best time is 300 (10th August) to attain the coast of India. After 270 days (11th July) begin the buying and selling. The coast of India 330 or 332. (The English hoped to reach it by 9th or 11th September).

The Storm of Ofante doth begin and endureth 2 or 3 days.

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28. Ibid., 124-6., 128
The ships of Dew (Diu) 130 or 135 each from Sinda (Indus R.) or 70, 80, 90 (? not clear).29


Middleton, in his settlement talks with Nakhu'da Mahomet had informed him that he would depart within 48 hours of completing his necessary purchases of provisions for his ships. As a matter of fact, Middleton's fleet left Mocha on August 9, (i.e. one day earlier) and anchored in the road south of the bar of Surat on Sept. 26, (i.e. about a fortnight behind schedule). L.R I. 125.xxxiii.

Ofante or Elephant, a term used by the Portuguese to indicate violent storms at the end or according to some, beginning of the monsoon.
SECTION B

THE RAPE OF INDIAN SHIPS IN THE INDIAN WATERS, 1612

1. Policy of Reprisal Decided by the English and its Advantages

After blockading Mocha (May 14—June 19, 1611) and exacting some compensation from the Turks, Sir Henry Middleton, the General of the Sixth Voyage of the English E. I. C., sailed towards India and reached the bar of Surat on 26th September, 1611. Battling against Portuguese rivalry and resistance, denied trade privileges by the Mughals and finally ordered by Mukarrab Khan, Governor of Cambay to leave the place, Middleton sailed from Surat on February 11, 1612. Since journey to Bantam was not permitted by the monsoon, he decided to return to the Red Sea, and avenge himself on those powers that had injured the Turks, the Mughals, and the Portuguese.¹

This policy is set forth in detail by Nicholas Downton (Feb, 1612). "Our best way", he concluded, "is to lie in the way of the Red Sea", where the English would find not only "Ships of Surat and Cambaya with divers others, the subject of the great Mogul but also men of Diu subject to the Portugals." The capture of these ships would not only injure the Mughals and the Portuguese, but also "be no small disturbance to the Turks at Mocha, for though there were no goods of theirs thereon, the loss of customs would 'greatly pinch & vex them or

“spoil the Turks’ scale” at Aden & Mocha. While admitting that this would “be thought a great scandal to our nation over all India, amongst those which are Mussulmen”, Downton expected that the “rumour” (of scandal) would be “appeased” by the policy of the English of avenging themselves only on the wrong-doers, and of allowing the ships of powers, which did not “harm” the English, like those of Dabhol, Malabar and other places, to pass, unmolested on condition of their leaving Mocha and going to Jedda, the authorities of which had not “wronged” the English. This course would also warm the Mughals and others that had abused the English that “Our nation is not to be so coarsely used,” and that if any power would wrong the English, the latter also would “right ourselves on their ships and goods.” So reprisal would compel them to duly honour and respect the English. Grant of trade privileges was the only sure means of securing the friendship of the English. Downton felt that as the Mughals had denied the English trade privileges under the influence of the Portuguese, the Mughals “should not be threatened but also pinched.”

The Mughals could be made to yield only by threat of force of fear of harm.

Middleton’s fleet reached Dabhol on the 16th February, 1612. Its Governor, learning that his men had met Middleton’s party last year at Mocha, tried to satisfy the English, as it would be otherwise dangerous to the outgoing mercantile marine of Dabhol. Here Middleton’s party captured two ships, viz., (i) a Cochin ship, the St. Nicholas, laden principally with dried cocoanuts, and bound for Chaul, and (ii) a frigate of Chaul, bound for Ormuz. After seizing some “bales of raw silk with other things of small value” from the former and some bags of

2. No. 82, ‘Nicholas Downton, his opinion, what fit to be done for the time, next ensuing, Written in the Road of Dabul, Feb. 24th 1611. L. R. I. 155—161. It was written aborad the Peppercorn and finished 26th Feb. Ibid. 161.

3. “.........for they being a proud braggart people longer than they be kept in awe (as it were with a whip) they will insult over and despise all others, but to them which they know can do them harm, they will be ready to kiss their shoe. And if God permit we take more from them than will heal the Company of their loss, and they (English) return them the overplus in other goods, they (English) shall not only win their (Mughals) love, but also gain the reputation to be just men”. Ibid. 161.
rice as provision from the latter, the English "dismissed" them.

Leaving Dabhol on 5th March, Middleton’s fleet returned to the Straits of Bab-el Mandeb, “to intercept” all ships entering the Red Sea. By this means (i) the English wanted to extract satisfaction from the Turks of Mocha for all wrongs done to them. (ii) They wanted the shippers and merchants of Cambay, Surat and other Mughal subjects to inform their Emperor that “the subjects of the king of England” were loath to “put up with so great abuses unavenged”. The English would either capture the goods of Indian ships as a compensation for their losses in India or at least exchange English merchandise for Indian goods valued at prices prevailing in India, (iii) They also wanted to seize the ships of “the Portugals’ town” of Diu and their goods “towards the righting of ourselves against the Portugals.”

2. **Indian Ships intercepted at Aden and the Straits**

Accordingly Middleton instructed the *Peppercorn* (under Downton) to remain at Aden (till the end of April) so as to “intercept" or divert the ships of “all nations, both friends & foes,” coming there to the Straits of the Bab-el-Mandeb where Middleton (the *Trades Increase* and the *Darling*) would lie in ambush for intercepting them.

Probably some of the Indian merchants and skippers were forewarned of this impending danger. Two very rich and large junks were found by Edmond Camden of the Eighth Voyage unloading their goods at Mocha with great expedition only four days before the arrival of Middleton at the Straits.

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4. *L.R. I. 176, 177.*

Danvers, in his introduction (*Ibid, XXXIV*) says that both the ships belonged to Cochin & were bound for Chaul; the articles seized are also mentioned differently.

The English further wanted to rescue an English ship supposed to be at the Straits. So Middleton sent the *Darling* in advance to Socotra to search the missing ship or get news of any Englishmen and instructed her to meet him either at Mount Fellix or at 8 leagues short of Aden. *Ibid.* p. 162, Richard Cocks informed Sir Thomas Smith, Governor of E.I.C. (12 Jan. 1613) that since the ‘Staying’ of the ships might involve complications, Middleton wanted Englishmen of the Eighth voyage to leave the neighbourhood with their goods, *L.R.I. 219.*


Besides diverting two Malabar ships from Aden towards the Babel Mandeb, Downton intercepted several Indian vessels in the Straits and seized their merchandise.

April 9, 1612: (i) Morning—a ship of Larree (Lahari Bandar), having many passengers, bound for Mocha. Downton's merchants searched her and found thereon "divers packs and fardles" of cloth, seeds, various sorts of leather, several jars of butter and of oil (for cooking and burning). Downton 'resolved to take out of her' those packs of Indian cloth which might be of use to the English and some butter and oil for their own needs, before sending her to Mocha.

(ii) 3 P.M.—Downton descried a ship of 200 tons, followed by

(iii) "a huge sail" whose main yard was 43 or 44 yards long. Downton at first took her to be the Great Remee (Reheme i.e. Rahimi of Surat), belonging to Akbar's wife, and carrying nearly 1500 passengers and pilgrims to Mocha or Jedda, the port of Mecca. She was the principal target of English reprisal, as her capture would bring home to the Mughal Emperor the impatience of 'the subjects of the king of England' at the dishonour to their king and wrongs inflicted on themselves.

Leaving five armed guards to hold the Sind vessel, Downton gave chase to the big ship, which, on closer view, was discerned to be not the Rahimi of Surat, but the Mamodie (Muhammad) of Dabhol. Dabhol being a friendly power, she could not be intercepted. Nevertheless Downton wanted to attack her for what he considered to be pride or insolence of her Captain (Malik Ambar) in visiting his General Middleton neither at Mocha Road nor at Dahhol. As Downton's vessel was unable to catch the faster ship of Dabhol, he fired a shot at her.

Towards evening Downton took the other ship to belong to Diu but her crew gave out she was 'Ruperil', the cotton ship of Cutsnagana, not far from the Rio de Zinda. From her Downton carried away several packs of cotton wool, and of

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7. The port town of the Indus. Is this "the ship of Pourtmean near to Zinda"? The list of articles indicates the exports of Sind to Arabia and thus the nature of Indo-Arabian trade. See Ibid. 162, 178.
cloth, some butter and oil. Then he caused the two ships to “edge up” with him “into the shoaled waters on the Arabian Coast.”

On 10th and 11th May Downton took out of the Lahari ship 66 fardles of Indian cloth but as they were found to be unnecessary, these were returned, together with part of their butter and oil. Only 8 corge of common baftas was detained, in exchange partly of 270 iron bill hooks and partly of cash. Subsequently the passengers and pilgrims of the cotton ship were put into the other Indian ships, which tried their best to hasten to Mocha.

While Downton was thus using the Indian ships at his pleasure at Aden, Middleton, at Asabb on the Abyssinian coast came to have “at (his) command all the desired ships of India”, numbering eleven, viz.,

(i) the Remee (the Rahimi), 1500 tons
(ii) the Hasanee (the Harsonee), of 600 tons
(iii) the Mamadea (the Mohamadee), of 450 tons
(iv) the Salamatie (the Sullamettee), of 450 or 460 tons
(v) the Cadereee, of 200 tons
(vi) the Agancany of 208 tons, of the Shahbunder’s
(vii viii, ix) 3 ships of Malabar
(X) the Caudree. 400 tons of Debull (Dabhol)
(xi) ‘a great ship of Cannanor’.


9. Before the departure of the ships, a jelba, belonging to Benderzeade a town 4 games wasiward from Bender Caser, 6 leagues west from Munt Fellick (Mount Felix ?), carrying mats for Mocha, informed Downton that Middleton was at Assab ( ). Downton seized many jelbas laden with mats of different towns on the Abyssinian coast out of which he took “72 goodly Barbary sheep, with great rumps, for which he gave 72 coarse duties worth 18 or 20 per piece.”

10. Ibid, 164, 179. On p. 179 we read of a ship of Carapatane ?) See also Ibid, 220. Exchange of visits seemed to have taken place between Middleton and Saris and the King of Raheita.
3. Sir Henry Middleton Finds a Co-sharer in Captain Saris

But Middleton had to meet a co-sharer in his plunder of the Indian ships in Captain Saris of the Eighth Voyage of the E.I. Company, whose ‘pride, turbulent and cross dealing’ has been represented by Downton to be as injurious to Middleton as ‘the cruelties and disasters imposed on him by the Turks’. On April 18, 1612, the two English Captains entered into a contract on the following terms:—(a) “it was agreed to put off all our English commodities and such Indian wares (suitable for use of Englishmen) as by mutual consent of certain of the merchants of both sides”, (b) “of all things had by this forcible trading”, Middleton was to have 2/3 part for the sixth voyage and Saris 1/3 part for the eighth voyage. Settlement with the Turks was not included, as they had ‘prejudiced’ the sixth and not the eighth voyage. But Saris agreed not to hinder Middleton in forcing “satisfaction (by the release of those ships) from the Turks.”

Thereupon Saris departed for Mocha, Middleton continuing to intercept all incoming ships. But soon the two captains came to loggersheads over the sharing of the spoils. Saris would not allow Middleton to take satisfaction from the Turks, in which he would have no share, but would allow his rival “to ransom the Indian ships” at as high rates as possible and to raise anything from the Indians of which he would get a third share. On the other hand Middleton would have what he demanded from the Turks or nothing at all. He held that it would be “punishment enough” for the Turks to seize the goods of Indian ships and give in exchange thereof English merchandise and thereby deprive them of about half of the customs. This would also enable Middleton to dispose of the English goods, which it was difficult to vend elsewhere. At the same time Middleton held that the ‘forcible exchanging of English goods


12. The English would “gain by our goods so much in the hundred as the Indians would gain by their goods at Swally Strand, without any adventure by Sea”. Since the English had gone to India to purchase these goods but could not, so they would exchange their own merchandise for Indian articles valuing the latter at their price, in India and paying only 10% more to cover transit customs and other charges. Ibid. 179.

13. Ibid. 164—5, 179, 220.
for Indian goods would be a sufficient punishment for the
Indians for the wrongs inflicted by them on the 6th Voyage.
Again, restitution from the Turks was not possible without
release of the Indian ships. But even if he released them, Saris
"would rummage all the ships to the keel" and take one-third
at his pleasure alike from those inflicting damages on Middleton
(e.g. Gujrat ships) and from Middleton's friends (e.g. Dabhol
and Malabar ships).\(^{14}\)

This dispute tended to spoil the prospects of Middleton's
securing compensation from the Turks.\(^{15}\) The latter tried to
turn this dispute to their best advantage and even accentuate
them. Moreover they naturally endeavoured to raise as much
customs from Indian ships as possible as contributing to the
compensation money.

On 23rd May the party of Middleton seized a large
quantity of goods on the Agamcany (Azamkhani) of Diu, a
ship of the Shahbunder of the Banyans of Mocha. The latter
thereupon promised at Assab to Saris that he would get 50
thousand rials of eight, if Middleton got from the Turks one
hundred thousand rials from the Turks after the bringing over
of the Indian ships to Mocha. On 9th June the Turks and the
Shahbunder departed for Mocha, after having visited Middleton
and informed him that since his demand was heavy, they would
await "the Basha's further pleasure". The Shahbunder also
added that "whenever he brought all the ships over to Moho
(Mocha), he need not but doubt but a composition would
presently be made and money would have had at an instant."\(^{16}\)

\(^{14}\) Another point of dispute was that Saris objected to Middleton's
terming Indians vessels 'ships' and preferred to call them 'junks, as
the ships of China were termed at Bantam. Downton criticised this
"as if a huge galley, galloon, Argosy or Carrack might not......be
called a ship." This throws interesting light on the size of Indian
ships.

\(^{15}\) Ibid I, 166-67, 169-70, 227-8. For this purpose Middleton "stayed"
detained both the people of Dabhol and Malabar. Saris would not
permit those detained after the conclusion of the contract, to depart.
He would permit only those who clamoured to depart after finishing
their business, and return to India that year i.e in August. (Ibid, 170).

\(^{16}\) Ibid I, 167, 168, 171. Saris caused his men to search the "Jelba
or Barque" of the Turks and the Shahbunder to the Keel (Ibid, 169.) He
even endeavoured to interrupt all boats coming to or going from
Middleton and threatened to burn some of the ships in the road. He
was, however, pacified by the Shahbunder (Ibid 171-2).
This would throw light on the nature and opulence of the Indo-
Arabian trade of the period.

4. Method of Plundering Indian Ships

The method of plunder of the Indian ships was described by Downton. The ‘daily employment’ of his men consisted in

(i) searching all Indian ships one after another, and
(ii) sending therefrom indigo or packs of such cloths suitable for use in England to their own ships, for counting and division between Middleton and Saris according to contract,
(iii) forcibly exchanging English goods in lieu thereof at rates fixed by the English on consideration of the value of the English goods in India and of that of Indian goods together with transit charges. The Mughal Government and the Indian States must bear a responsibility in the matter for their failure to provide armed convoys for their merchant ships. At the same time the Turkish Government failed to protect the incoming ships in the Red Sea. Middleton himself held that he had “sufficiently vexed” the Indians “by taking their best goods at our town price”, which was not half the value they would have got in the Red Sea ports. At the same time Middleton never expected the Turks to pay him compensation unless the Indian ships were released,—as the Turks would recover in their customs whatever had been

17. Cf. ‘..........our English goods delivered in lieu thereof, though with no willingness by the Indians received, but have it they must, at such rates as we had agreed upon; for some things that we might gain 50 per 100 and for other things less according to the value and esteem thereof in their country, which was done in regard partly of the long way we had bought it for them, and were in their country to sell it, and could not be permitted, as also for that they would gain by us 50 per cent of their cloth as Swally Strang at their own doors without any adventure by Sea or else we should not have it) and we gave them for their commodities ten per cent more than it cost in their country where we had been to buy it and could not be suffered, and for such things as came from far in the country that cost more the carriage, they had 20 per cent more than it cost, it lieu of the charges; and by this way we put off all the remains of our goods brought out of England, exchanging it only for Indian wares, without disbursing of any money”. Ibid, I. 169. Moreland has not mentioned this point among the various methods, followed by the Europeans for provision of purchasing power. (From Akbar to Aurangzeb.)
paid by them. The messengers returning from the Basha to Mocha were sent over to Assab to discuss the terms of settlement with Aga Mamee (Mammy), Captain of the Mocha galleys (who had come from the Governor of Mocha to Middleton) and Shermale, the Shahbunder of the Banyans. They urged upon the English to abate their demand of 100,000 rials but offered nothing in return. They wanted to hold a conference with "the Nahudas and Principals of all the Indian ships," probably,—as Downton conjectured,—to raise some revenue on their goods for satisfaction of the English, or "to confer about their customs and raise somewhat therein towards the payment." But no agreement was arrived at during 8 days' stay.

All these negotiations and delays were extremely sickening to the Indian skippers who wanted to return to India in time after completing their business as quickly as possible, so as not to lose another year. The Nahuda of the Rahimi bound for Jedda, preferred to be personally maltreated to returning to Mocha and was willing to deliver any goods on his ship at any price demanded by the English,—even at a low price,—so that he might be freed and proceed on his journey. All Indian ships had directions to start by July 10.

The Indian ships were guarded by Downton and the men of Middleton on the Mocha road in the hope of getting compensation from the Turks. But the latter, seeing all the ships on the road and even some Indians permitted to land, refused to pay any compensation to the English for wrongs inflicted on them in "another man's government." (Mughals?), and accused the English of having subjected the Indians to unjust extortions. Middleton replied that the only means of

19. Ibid. 170-83. The Aga of Mocha and Mammy Captain, an Italian renegade, wrote to Middleton (28 June 1612) that they could not make peace with Middleton on account of Saris's false demands. Ibid, 196.

Middleton asked Downton to bring the Rahimi, then at a neighbouring island, and to restore the captured 'goods and packs' to the Lahari Bandar ship, as they were unfit for English consumption. The latter lost only some jars of butter and of lamp oil and a small quantity of sugar and green ginger.
doing some harm to the Turks by forcing money from them was by causing loss and misery to the Indians, and so he had no other way to "craze" the Turks but by carrying all the Indian ships away out of this sea.  

5. Ransom and Release of the Indian Ships

Meanwhile the English were carrying on secret manoeuvres regarding the ransom money to be paid for the release of all Gujrat and Diu ships. Difficulties arose over agreeing on the sums to be paid by every ship. Even Downton admitted that this developed into "a most troublesome and heart-renting business," on account of (i) the outcries of the poor people, (ii) their difficulty in getting money, caused by the haste of the English (iii) and the high rate of interest charged by the Turks in giving them money.

On 25th July, a meeting was held on board the Muhammadi, the ship of Dabhol, between Middleton and the Indian Skippers successively to decide the ransom of each Indian ship, "to set down at what rates every ship should be taxed to pay for freedom". (i) the Great Remee (Rahimi) 1500 tons) : Nahuda Meer Mohomet Tikke (Taqi ?) Sherrife, was the first to be called. He was asked to pay 30,000 rials, as the tonnage of his ship equalled the total tonnage of 4 other ships, from which 50,000 rials were expected. He agreed, "after many pitiful looks and grievous faces", to pay 15,000 within 4 days. But the amount was to be kept secret to enable him to raise it easily.

(ii) the Hassania (600 tons), 10,000 rials,

(iii) the Salamatie (450 tons), 8000 rials,
(admitted by Downton to be disproportionate to the ransom of No. 1).

(iv) the Caudree (200 tons), 5000 rials,

(v) the Mamodie (150 tons), 2000 rials.

The Captain of the last four ships, reluctant to pay the exorbitant ransom, enquired about the sum fixed for the Rahimi but the English did not disclose it. Thereupon they were grant-

Ibid. 185. On 18th July, the Ruperil the cotton ship of Cutsnagana once seized by Downton and subsequently isolated by a storm, came to the Mocha road and she was saved from attack by Turkish Jeibas or lighters by Downton's artillery fire. Ibid, 185—6.
21. The Turks granted this after "much ado and great whining".
ed time in which they could sound their creditors and have an idea of the amount they could raise among themselves.  

But all this labour was in vain. Captain Saris had a wrangle with Middleton on 26th on board his own ship (the Clove), willingly released the Caudree of Dabhol entering the Mocha road to deliver her goods, and plainly informed Middleton that he would not be satisfied with anything less than 50,000 rials. So Middleton commanded Downton to negotiate with the Indian Skippers and raise the ransom money as high as possible "without unreasonable cruelty" on them. But Downton could not ignore the sum fixed for the Rahimi in any new fixation.

Without consulting the Indian Skippers Downton fixed the target at 33,500 rials on 26th July. But on the pressure of Captain Saris's two agents (Captain Towerson and Mr. Cox) on the 27th Downton handed them a note of fixation for 40,000 rials.

In the meantime the Captain and merchants of the Hassania met Middleton and, on knowing that the matter was settled by others, refused to go away "till the composition was made." As it was impossible to get them down without "violent cruelty", Middleton sent for Downton and Towerson. They came together with Cox, carrying Saris's message that the ransom as fixed by Downton and Towerson (i.e. 40,000 rials) should not be altered. Middleton wondered how Downton could make a settlement without the parties concerned.

A tripartite meeting was held in Middleton's cabin between Captains Downton, Sharpeigh and Hawkins, the agents of Saris (Towerson and Cox) and the Indians. Middleton was not present. Against the English demand of 10,000 rials, the Indians offered only 4,000 vowing that they would not go out of the ship till they had made the agreement. So they lay on the half-deck all night and the next morning also. At last, about noon, after a "world of wearisome clamours" the bargain was struck at 8000 rials. Some merchants agreed to pay their share of the ransom in 8 days and others to pay as they could procure their

22. Ibid, 186 — 7,228.
23. (a) The Rahimi, 15000 ; the Hassania, 6000 ; the Salamatie, 6000 ; the Caudree, 3000 ; the Mamodie, 1500. (b) Finally, 15,000, 10,000, 8,000, 5,000, 2,000. respectively Ibid, 187—9.
share. The Indians were so completely under the control of the English that the latter could see that enough goods remained as security for their money.

As regards the Salamatie the English stuck to 8,000 rials but her captain and merchants successively offered 2000, 3000, 4000; and finally the ransom was fixed at 6000, payable as in the previous case. On the 20th July the Captain and merchants of the Caudree compounded for 2000 rials and those of the Mamodie for 1000.

By 10th or 11th August, the Indian merchants and Skippers, while resenting the payment very much, paid the entire ransom money, of which Middleton got 1/3rd and Saris 1/4th. The reason given by Downton about the resentment is revealing and throws considerable light on the attitude of the Turks towards the Indians and nature of the fleecing of the Indian ships by the English. "As the Indians, but only for serving their turns, are most hateful to Turks, so they make no conscience how on all advantages they exact upon them when of necessity they must be beholden to them, so that instead of recovering restitution from the Turks for the wrongs, done us, we made them an extraordinary fruitful harvest, and our wrongs remain still uprighted from them."25

But even all this did not complete the store of misery of the Indian ships. Unable to get any spare cable from Saris, Middleton and Downton, to meet their urgent needs, "peeled the Indian ships of all that possibly we could, of their best cables". But they proved to be "of small force and less continuance" in English ships.

6. Reaction in India

The news of the fate of the Indian ships in the Red Sea reached Surat in September, 1612. A Mughal ship of Surat just returning from Mocha, gave out (24th Sept.) that

24. When Dowton explained how this was done, Middleton said something, but the text is damaged.

25. Ibid. 188-90.

The English factors had "to make even reckonings with the Crannies or Purser's of every ship" and to pay for goods received by exchanging English wares. Ibid. Saris sailed away from Mocha Road on 12th August; Middleton, after finishing some business with Indian Nakhudas on 14th, started on 15th and passed through the Straits of Babel Mandeb on 16th. Ibid 191—2.
Sir Henry Middleton, along with three or four ships, had captured several Indian ships and compelled them to deliver their goods to him at rates dictated by him and also seized many other goods without anything in return. Several Englishmen (Thomas Aldworth, William Biddulph and Nicholas Withington), then trading with the mainland remained doubtful of what might befall them and their goods, for there was "a general murmuring in the city about this news". But they found "the people very reasonable". Influential men, who came to those Englishmen assured them that the news need not disturb them and that in spite of the injury done by Middleton to the Indian ships, they would continue to show "honest respect" to the Englishmen.26 This is a curious but sad commentary on the naval weakness of the Mughals.

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CHAPTER 7

A Mercantile Strike of the 17th Century

The value of the European factory records to the student of economic history hardly needs any reemphasis. But perhaps these have not yet been adequately laid under contribution with reference to the reconstruction of social history of our country. It is true that the European factors primarily looked at events with an eye to business. But it is also true that whatever forces or influences affected business interests of the Europeans found detailed mention in their accounts. Naturally among these sometime were social factors. This brief chapter seeks to cull a few facts from English factory records of the 17th century which throw light on structure, functions and social inter-relationships and also their economic repercussions.

Today we are quite familiar with general strikes or hartals and their effects. These are protest or resistance movements on the part of the community against certain administrative policies and orders or political developments. But in a broad sense these are manifestations of a deep social maladjustment. Three hundred years ago we have a reference in English factory records of 1669 to a partial strike or hartaI among the banias or merchants of Surat, indicating a protest of the local mercantile community against the social policy of the Mughal state.

One record in question refers to the conversion of a Hindu bania to Islam by the Qazi of Surat, the concerted desertion of the place by the leading local merchants (banias) as decided in

their Council, and the ultimate issue of favourable imperial orders giving assurance against a possible repetition of such a conversion.

To understand this development it is necessary to refer to Aurangzeb’s policy. It is well-known that Aurangzeb issued orders for destruction of Hindu temples and suppression of Hindu teachings in April 1669 and that he tried to put economic pressure on the Hindus and offered rewards for conversions. But we do not know much from Persian histories about the social classes among whom conversions were sought to be made. A Bombay letter to Surat dated 6th October 1668 refers to a determined effort for converting the banias of Surat to Islam. We learn from it that Bhimji Parekh, a very influential broker of the English East India Company at Surat, was one of the banias thus threatened. We are told that Bhimji, who was “useful and serviceable to the Company, ascertaining their rights and other privileges and immunities”, had created many enemies and that but for the “protection” of the Company others would “spitefully use him”. What follows thereafter is very significant. “Besides, the persecution of the Banias for the conversion of them to the Mahomedan religion is so cruel and grievous to them that they are in perpetual fears and would run, if they knew where.” Scared by such fears, Bhimji is stated to have petitioned to the English for grant of some land in Bombay: “Soe much ground uppon Bombay as may be sufficient to build him houses and for outhouses for him and his familye (for they are somewhat numerous) to retire to, that he and his (sic.) may live under your shadow and protection for ever.” It is thus clear that Parekh wanted to escape from the Mughal port of Surat where he was threatened to the English Settlement at Bombay.

The practical application of Aurangzeb’s orders depended

2. Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Aurangzib, III. Chs. 34, 35, Sri Ram Sharma, Religious Policy of Mughal Emperors, Ch. 5.

Bhimji Parak (Parekh), the English East India Company’s broker at Surat. On the basis of a Surat letter to the Company (9 January, 1671), Foster states that Bhimji offered to defray the wages of a printer to be sent to Bombay to put “some of the ancient Brahminy writings in print”, and one was sent out accordingly three years later. In July 1683, the Company resolved to present to Bhimji a medal and chain of gold, to the value of £150 in recognition of his services. Ibid., 85n.
on the initiative and activity of the local officers. A Surat letter of 26 November 1669 informs us that the Qazi of Surat, prompted by Aurangzeb's aforesaid orders, initiated a policy of persecution, which scared away the principal local Hindu inhabitants to seek refuge in Bombay. The Surat factors described this as "an unexpected overture", which was likely "to put all into confusion and for the present did put a stop on all trade."

The aforesaid Surat letter continues: "You have in formerly advised what unsufferable tyranny of the Bannians endured in Surat by the force exercised by these lordly Moors on account of their religion; the sweetness of which the Cozzy and other officers finding, by the large incomes paid by the Bannians to redeem their places of idolatrous worship secure their covetous avenge with that frequency and furious zeale that the general body of the Bannians began to groan under their affliction and to take up resolves of flying the country."

This throws light on some very important social aspects of the policy of persecution, and at the same time reveals the extent of administrative corruption, which also is a social phenomenon in a wide sense of the term. The first duty of the officers concerned was to enforce the order for temple destruction strictly. But these unprincipled and greedy officers of the Mughal empire instead of doing so, used it as a lever for their own selfish and private gain. This they could do, because the Hindus, in order to protect their temples and places of worship, offered heavy bribes to the officers. This merely encouraged the officers to be more and more exacting till a stage was reached when the "general body" of the Hindu bania found the extortion to be unbearable and sought means of relief by flight.

Further we are told that a nephew of an old shroff of the East India Company, Tulcidas Parrack (Tulsidas Parekh) was "among others inveigled and turned Moor", i.e. converted to Islam. This was described as "a great heart breaking to your Bannian servants and some dishonour to your house."

Subsequently about 20 September 1969 "a Persian scrivan

4. Sharma, op. cit.
5. Tulsidas was a creditor of the East India Company and also of the Company's officers like President Wyche & Bornford for their private trade. EF (1668-69), 21 & 32, Foster thinks that he was the father of Bhimji and Kalyan Parekh [Ibid.], 85n.
(writer Port escrivao), who formerly had relation to your family, was forcibly circumcised for no other reason but that five years past he had eaten part of a watermelon which the Cozzy had eaten of, which argument, it seems, for want of better served the Cozzys turne, but the poor Bannian, as "tis said killed himselfe for greife." This impiled that the Hindu bania, then a Persian writer, had, had perhaps (in 1664) partaken of a water-melon eaten by a Qazi but then it did not cause any flutter. After five years (i.e. evidently after Aurangzeb's order of 1669), it was used by the Qazi as an argument for conversion, as a result of which the bania committed suicide.

This "violent action" made the banias "realise their common danger" and they decided to leave the town. Before doing so, however, "five of the most eminent banians, under Bimgee Parrack" (Bhimji Parekh), the chief broker of the East India Company, as the representative of all other banias, approached Gerald Aungier of Bombay early on 22nd September 1969, for eventual protection in the island of Bombay, by "declaring, with all symptoms of an enflamed passion (i.e., in excitement and agitation) their miserable condition, imploring his assistance and protection in case they did or could fly thither." In other words the Hindu banias of Surat in the Mughal empire, thus reduced to dire straits, sought asylum in Bombay, then under the English (cf. the asylum which the inhabitants of Calcutta sought in Fort William in the time of Sirajuddaulah).

The advice of Gerald Aungier was highly diplomatic and business-like, seeking to avoid friction with the Mughals, but still encouraging the banias to come to Bombay for its development, while trying to avoid giving the impression that the English were protecting refugees from Surat. "Gerald Aungier was somewhat surprised at the motion wherein though he saw a great advantage might accrue to your island, yet the present conjecture did not appear safe to enter on such an action, in regard you had above 1,200 tuns of goods here in your severall factorys, all which would have bin embargued, your ships loose their voyages and lye on demurrage, and your island Bombay would have become an eyesore to this King, against whose vast forces it would be impossible to defend ourselves, in regard of its naked and weake condition at present. Wherefore," after
many obliging expressions of comfort and assurance of our friendship he told them that, your ships not being yet arrived, we were in an ill posture to engage in such a great designe, nor was Bombay as yet fortified—sufficiently to protect them against the fury of so great a prince, wherefore he advised them to convey themselves at present towards Ahmadavad, and from thence make their generall humble requests to the King, who would certainly ease their present burthen in some degree, though they must never expect to be safe in this country and hereafter, as occasion offered, they might with more ease and security convey their estates and families to Bombay by degrees, where they might assure themselves of all favour, friendship, freedom in their religion, and encouragement in their trade, as they could in reason expect from us."

The banians accepted the advice of Gerald Aungier. On 23rd and 24th September 1669, there was an exodus of all banias 8,000 in number ("all the heads of the Bannian families, of what condition so ever") from Surat towards Broach, their families remaining "under charge of their brothers and next of kinn."

What was the effect of this exodus of the merchants? The sequel was a tug-of-war between the Qazi and the governor. The Qazi was extremely annoyed "charging the Governor in the King's name" to prevent the merchants from flight. On the other hand the Governor, who was favourably disposed towards them, informed the Qazi they were "the King's subjects and may travel in his country where they please". The Qazi adopted terror tactics, threatening to "pull down all their remaining churches" (temples) and "circumcise the most principal" of the banias if they did not return.

On the other hand the banias, like dogs at bay, also adopted a very stiff attitude. "Grown hardy by often sufferings" they defied him, telling him that they would seek justice from the King. Written efforts at a settlement between the Qazi and the banias were made but these failed.

Thereupon the banias, "increasing daily in number", left Surat and came to Broach. We are told that they remained

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6. Ghiyasuddin Khan (written Gatty Okan in English factory records). Governor of Surat, was succeeded by Zainul abedin Khan about 1668. EF 1668-9 114n; Bomb Gaz. ii 91n In 1669 the Governor was Roshan Zamir, EF (1668-9) pp, 181-3, 190, 197-9, 203, 205 & 207.
“under safe protection” there and that they were “much courted by the Great Governour” of Ahmedabad (described as “the Lieutenant-Generall of this province”) to settle there. But they were eager to return “to Surat to their trade and families”, if they were assured of “reasonable security”.

Each side made several “addresses” (i.e. representations) to the King, stating its own case and accusing the other. But we are told that the case was “not yet determined at court.”

Notwithstanding the great dislocation of trade and the disadvantages of the civil population, including the Governor, the mercantile community stuck to this hortal or strike according to their communal decision. The effects of the hortal are very interesting reading. The inhabitants of Surat “suffered great want”, on account of the exodus, decreed by the collective body of the banias (or merchants). These had “bound themselves under severe penalties not to open any of their shops without order from their Mahager or General council”. About the form which this hortal took we are told that (i) no provisions were available in the market, (ii) the mint (tanksall) and custom house were shut, (iii) no money could be procured “for house expenses and much less for trade”, (iv) trade was completely at a standstill, i.e. dislocated. The duration of this mercantile strike was expected to last so long as the banias did not return.

Contemporaries seem to have taken a grave view of the consequences of this hortal. Let the Surat factors themselves speak: “Even since the flight of the Banians the trade of Surat hath suffered great obstruction, and it is the opinion of many wise men that it will prove of fatal consequence, to the utter ruine of it, in case the King doth not take some effectual healing order for the making up this breach. For most of the sheriffs and moneyd men doe thinke of calling in their stocks and (according to the custome of this country) burying the greatest part under ground; so the bulke of trade, which is maintained and carried on chiefly on credit, must necessarily fall.”

About the effects of this dislocation on the East India Company's trade we are supplied with interesting details. The local Surat factors, showed great foresight in looking much ahead of the immediate events, as well as great devotion to the interests of the Company. They considered the potentialities of the then situation and the probable effects of the ruin of the Mughal port of Surat on the growth of the English Settlement of Bombay where the Presidency might be transferred. At the same time they were cautious enough to understand that this development or "design" was likely not only to startle the Mughal Emperor and the Governor of Surat but also cause a reaction leading to obstruction to the Company's trade. In that case the Company must try to find out alternative sources of supply, particularly at Bombay, Carwar and Billiapatan. The factors advised that when arrangements for transfer of the East India Company's administrative and business centre at Surat to Bombay were completed (when "our design is ripe"), the Company should order the transfer. They believed that till then the Company's affairs must suffer from "an unnecessary and unreasonable discomposure", on account of "the jealousy of these people before we are in a good condition to defend ourselves."  

The dispute between the Surat authorities and the *banias* dragged on from autumn till almost the end of December 1669. The demonstration proved to be successful. By 20th December the *banias* returned to Surat after getting "letters of favour" from the Emperor and "some assurance of their safety, and more freedom in their religion". This caused "great satisfaction" to the governor, the general body of officers and the citizens.  

This record appears to be highly significant in the socio-economic and administrative history of the period. Firstly, in this clash between the administrator and the merchants, arising from religion, the sympathies of the East India Company's factors were on the side of the *banias*. This is indicated clearly by the very long account of the incident given and by the use of

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8. Ibid., 197-8.
9. Ibid., 205.
expressions like "lordly Moors", and the "sweetness of religion," etc. Secondly, the events appear to have caused a great stir in the socio-political life of the period. The Qazi and the governor of Surat did not see eye to eye with each other on this point, and ultimately the Emperor had to interfere and issue favourable orders assuring non-recurrence of such an incident. Thirdly, this record throws light on the structure of guilds in medieval India. Medieval England had three distinct types of guilds, the socio-religious guild (corresponding to modern benefit societies), the Guild Merchant (to ensure mutual protection of members and regulate trade) and the craft guilds in special trades.\textsuperscript{10} Medieval India seems to have had only the last two categories of guilds. The crafts guilds are referred to by Alberuni, Babur and Abdul Fazl in very clear terms.\textsuperscript{11} But references to guilds of merchants are fewer. This record of 1669 shows the existence of such a guild among the \textit{banias} of Surat. Fourthly, the fact that as many as 8,000 \textit{banias} joined in the exodus and strike illustrates not only the commercial importance of Surat in those days and the internal solidarity among them but also the gravity of the danger of losing their religion. Lastly, comes the question of the attitude of Aurangzeb. If Aurangzeb was the author of the

\textsuperscript{10} Coulton \textit{Medieval Panorama}, 290. See ch. 5 Sec. A ante.

\textsuperscript{11} Alberuni (ch. ix) says: After the Sudra follows the people called \textit{Antinya}, who render various kinds of services, who are not reckoned amongst any caste, but only as members of a certain craft or profession. There are eight classes of them who freely intermarry with each other, except the fuller, shoe-maker, and weaver, for no others would condescend to have anything to do with them. These eight guilds are the fuller, shoe-maker, juggler, the basket and shield-maker, the sailor, the fisherman, the hunter of wild animals and birds, and the weaver. The four castes do not live together with them in one and the same place. These guilds live near the village and towns of the four castes but outside them." He also mentions that "the people called Hadi, Dom (Domba), Chandaia, and Badhatan are not reckoned amongst any caste or guild. They are occupied with dirty work, like the cleaning of the villages and other services. They are considered as one sole class, and distinguished only by their occupations."

Even after the Muslim conquest of Northern India the old craft guilds and professional castes continued to function in industry. Babur found the craftsmen of Hindustan organized in rigid and exclusive castes. Abul Fazl mentions among the duties of the Kotwals: "Of every guild of artificers, he should name one as guildmaster and another as broker by whose intelligence the business of purchase and sale should be conducted. From these also he should require frequent reports." This would imply that as in medieval England, the Mughal municipal authorities tried to control the guilds.
design of conversion of the Surat banias, the letter indicates a relaxation of his inexorable attitude. But perhaps the policy of their conversion started with the Qazi of Surat, who seemed to have done it on his own authority. The record, however, is silent on the sequel.
CHAPTER 8

Aspects of Economic Life in Medieval Bihar and Bengal

SECTION A

BIHAR'S OLD INDUSTRIES

The contributions of Bihar, as a centre of political development and of culture in its manifold aspects, to Indian History in particular and to Asiatic and world history in general, are fairly well-known. She played also a vital role in India's, nay world's economy. The common man of Bihar,—the industrious cultivator, the tardy weaver, the poor artisan, the patient potter and the diligent handicraftsman—all made their respective contributions, though silently and unostentatiously, to the fulfilment of the material needs of men in different countries. Medieval Bihar did constitute a link in India's economic and commercial contact with the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. An attempt has been made here to describe as far as possible, in the present state of knowledge and within the limitations of time and space, some of Bihar's old industries during the medieval period, the 16th and 17th centuries, in relation to India's general economic organisation during that period,—on the basis of the accounts of foreign travellers, merchants and agents and the European factory records, supplemented by incidental references in Persian historical works.

The 16th and 17th centuries constituted an important period in India's economic history. Internally the period witnessed the establishment and expansion of Mughal rule in India, on the ruins of the Delhi Sultanate and after the brief spell of an Indo-Moselm Afghan revival. Externally India felt the impact of her contact with the European mercantile nations,
at first the Portuguese and then the Dutch, the English, the Danes and the French. Historically, therefore, the seeds of the economic transition of India, noticeable in full swing in the 18th and 19th centuries, were already sown during the period under review. It was in the 17th century in particular that Bihar gained world-wide importance for abundantly supplying to European traders articles like sugar and saltpetre, the production of which was whipped up as result of foreign reconnaissance, access and demand.

The descriptions of several regions of Bihar in general and of Patna in particular left by Persian works like the Ain-i-Akbari, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, the Aurangnamah, Khulasat ut Tawarikh, and by European travellers and merchants of different nationalities,—the Portuguese Duarte Barbosa and Sebastian Manrique, the Italian Varthema, the Englishmen Ralph Fitch, Edward Terry, Hughes and Parker, Peter Mundy and John Marshall, the Dutch Pelsaert, the Flemish De Laet, the French Bernier and Tavernier, and the Venetian Manucci and others,—all indicate that Bihar was noted for its widespread and varied manufacturing activities.

The industries of Bihar during this period may broadly be classified under several categories:

1. Agricultural production
2. Forest products
3. Animal husbandry
4. Dairy industries
5. Mines and Minerals
6. Textile manufactures
7. Handicrafts.

During the last three or four centuries several old industries of Bihar have decayed or died out, some new industries have cropped up. It is not possible at present to strike a balance sheet and estimate whether on the whole Bihar has gained or lost industrially. Nevertheless a study of the original sources of the period under review clearly shows that there has been a decline in the quality and quantity of several articles of production.

1. Agricultural Production

Agriculture was then, as now, the principal industry of
Bihar. Abul Fazl found agriculture flourishing “in high degree” in Bihar. Rice, wheat, sugarcane and cotton were the chief staples. Abul Fazl especially refers to the cultivation of rice, “which for its quality and quantity was rarely to be equalled”.

This is corroborated by the Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh, written by Sujan Singh a hundred years later, which makes special mention of the Shali rice as unparalleled for goodness and excellence.¹

Bengal not only fed the Delhi and Agra region with wheat and rice, as Sir Thomas Roe informs us, but also supplied wheat, rice and sugar to “India” (i.e., the west coast of India). The late Mr. Moreland² considered, and rightly so, that this wheat really referred to Bihar wheat, a fact which is corroborated by the references to Bihar wheat by Dr. Hamilton-Buchanan.³

The abundance and high quality of sugar-cane are mentioned by Abul Fazl and by Sujan Singh⁴, while export of sugar is referred to by many foreigners. Speaking of Bengal Barbosa, the early 16th century Portuguese Writer observes: “White sugar of very good quality is made in this city, but they do not know how to join it to make loaves, and so they pack it up in powder in stuff covered over with raw hide well sewn up. They load many ships with it, and export it for sale to all parts. And when these merchants were accustomed to go freely and without dread to the parts of Malabar and Cambay with their ships, quintal of this sugar was worth two ducats and a half in Malabar”.⁵ It is very likely that much of this sugar came from Patna. Ralph Fitch found that the sugar of Patna was carried to Bengal and “India”.⁶ In the days of Tavernier, there was “a great traffic” in Moist Sugar at Patna, Hugli, Dacca and other places. It was exported from Bengal.⁷

Among pulses, Abul Fazl refers to the cultivation of Kisari (Khesari)⁸, resembling matar (peas) consumed by the

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1. Ain (Jarret and Sarkar) II. 151; KT in Sarkar’s India of Aurangzib, 38.
2. India at the death of Akbar, 119-20.
5. Barbosa. ii. 146-7.
7. Ball, II. 23.
poor but it was unwholesome. This is also mentioned by Buchanan in early 19th century. In Sarkar Champaran the seed of vetch (mash) was thrown on un-ploughed soil and it grew without labour or tilling.

The cultivation of barley at Patna is referred to by John Marshall. It was then “very scarce”. A local Hindu brought to him (14 Sept. 1670) some barley which had grown 11 inches during 10 days and he distributed it, in accordance with the local custom, in the hope that the harvest would be plentiful.

Pan (betel leaf), especially the maghi variety, delicate and beautiful in colour, thin in texture, flawless, without craks (be-farm), fragrant and pleasant to taste was then grown in Bihar.

Fruits were grown “in great plenty”. Sarkar Hajipur was noted for its abundant growth of Kathal (jack-fruit) and Barhal. The former then used to “attain such a size that a man can with difficulty carry one,” some times a yard long and half a yard broad. Grapes were also grown in Hajipur. In Sarkar Tirhut delightful groves of orange trees used to extend to a distance of 30 miles. Tut, a sort of “mulberry” about 3 inches long and about as thick at the great end as a man’s little finger”, and “a very sweet and pleasant fruit” was grown in Shah Shuja’s garden at Rajmahal. Bhagalpur and its environs had “abundance of Toddy (tar) trees and gardens of Mango trees”. In Barari there was “a good garden of Mango trees set all in rows in squares very handsomely”.

Among spices, long pepper grew wild in the forests of Champaran. Abul Fazi states that it was priced at 16 dams-

9. Buchanan
10. Ain II. 152; KT Sarkar, 37.
11. Marshall, ed. by Dr. S. A. Khan, p. 83.
13. Ain II. 164; KT. Barhal is a kind of small round fruit (Artocarpus-variety) doubtfully distinguished as lacucha.
16. Ain. II, 165. Barbosa mentions that ginger, oranges and lemons and other fruits were preserved.
18 Ibid, 121-2.
a seer\textsuperscript{20}.

Among drugs, Ralph Fitch refers to a considerable opium trade in Patna during the reign of Akbar. This continued throughout the 17th century and John Marshall, the Balasore factor, was definitely of the opinion that the “best opium comes from near Pattana and that from Monghyr is not nigh so good”\textsuperscript{21} The opium industry of Bihar rose to unprecedented heights in the 19th century as a result of the penetration of China by the Europeans.

Medicinal drugs were required by the surgeons of Fort St. George in the seventies of the seventeenth century, especially Turmeric and Tincal\textsuperscript{22} (tinkal, native borax). Turmeric was found to be ‘commonly much cheaper at Patna than at Balasore and was intended to complete to tonnage of ships’. In 1676 Patna sent to Hugli 1800 maunds of Turmeric (and 400 maunds of tincal) the maximum that could be expected that year. In 1679 Patna despatched to Hughli drugs worth Rs. 120-I for use at Fort St. George\textsuperscript{23}.

There was little indigo production in Bihar in the 16th and 17th centuries. The development of indigo cultivation by European methods in Bihar was of comparatively recent origin, it being started by Francois Grand, first Collector of Tirhut in 1785.

2. Forest Industries

\textit{Lignum aloes (Aguru)} was available in large quantities at Patna\textsuperscript{24}.

\textit{Gum lac} was purchased by the Patna factors (1620-21) for Persia, the Red Sea and England.

\textit{Spikenard}, an aromatic oil or balsam yielded by a plant, was imported to Patna from the ‘north country’ in winter.

Besides musk brought from Bhutan and Nepal to Patna,

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20. \textit{Ain I.} 67.
22. \textit{See, ante.}
23. \textit{Muster}, I. 308, 310, 316, 331; II. 64, 70, 253, 322.
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musk, taken from the musk-deer of the locality was available at Patna. It was exported in large quantities by the English and the Dutch.

Abul Fazl states that good elephants were procurable in plenty in Bihar.  

3. Animal Husbandry

Bihar produced, we learn from Abul Fazl and Khulasat 'a fine species of the goat of Barbary breed', which was castrated. Such goats were so fat that they were 'unable to walk' and were 'carried in litters'. The price per head of the first kind of Barbary goat was only Re. 1/- and of the second sort was 12 annas. The buffaloes of Tirhut were so savage that they would attack a tiger.

There were in Patna little oxen (gaina) to draw coaches -(27 inches high at the shoulder and 36 inches long). Driven by one man, an ox could draw such a coach 20 to 30 days together at the rate of 20 or 25 miles a day. The best sort of such oxen could be purchased at 4 or 5 rupees a pair.

Horses (ponies) used in travel were by nature so small that when a man was upon them his feet nearly touched the ground, but they were otherwise strong and 'all used to go at an amble, doing up to 20 leagues at a stretch, and eating and drinking but little'. Some of them cost £45, a very high price for a country pony.

The cattle of Purnea formed an important article of livestock and were sent to Bengal as carriage bullocks. But the Purnea bullocks came from further west.

4. Dairy Industries

Milk was described by Abul Fazl to be 'rich in quality and cheap'. Tirhut was especially famous for its milk curd,

25. Ain. II, 164-5, KT. in Sarkar, 38, 37 ; Ain. I. 66 ; goat meat sold at 54 dams. a man (ibid).
27. Ball, II, 263.
which used to keep for a pretty long time without any change. Superstition may have its value in the national dietary economy. There was a superstitious dread among the goalas of Tirthut that some mysterious accidents would befall them if they sold milk adulterated with water. We want this superstition to start again and spread now. Milk sold at 25 dams (10 as.), to a man and curd at 18 dams (7 as.) to 1 man. Early in 19th century buffalo butter of Purnea was used by the local men and a large quantity of ghee was exported.

5. Mines and Minerals

(i) Gold: Ralph Fitch states that at Patna the people found gold in the following manner: 'They dig deep pits in the earth, and wash the earth in great bottles, and therein they find the gold; and they make the pits round about with brick that the earth fall not in'.

(ii) Diamond mining was carried on in the seventeenth century. Jahangir writes in his memoirs that during the 12th year of his reign Ibrahim Khan Fath-Jang, the Governor of Bihar, sent him nine diamonds from the state mine there and from the collections of the zamindars of Bihar, one of which weighed 14.1/2 tanks and was valued at Rs. 100,000.

Tavernier refers to diamond mining at Soumelpore, in Lohardaga district of Chota Nagpur. Diamond was found in the sand of river Koel near that large town. Re: the manner in which diamonds were worked, Tavernier notes: 'After the great rains are over, i.e., usually in the month of December, the diamond seekers await the conclusions of the month of January, when the rivers becomes low, because at the time in many parts, it is not more than two feet deep, and much of the sand is left uncovered. Towards the end of January or commencement of February, from the town of Soumelpour and also from another

30. For one year, acc. to Abul Fazl (Ain. II, one month acc. to KT. in Sarkar, 37.
34. Foster. Early Travels in India.
town which is 20 coss higher up the same river, and from some small villages on the plain, about 8,000 persons of both sexes and of all ages capable of working assemble.\textsuperscript{36}

(iii) Borax: John Marshall in his ‘Accompt of Pattana’ writes: ‘Tincall (Tinkal, borax) is procured from the Rajayases country (probably Bihar) from the hills about six days’ journey N.W. from Pattana and when brought to Pattana, oyle is put to it to preserve it’. In 1676 Patna sent 400 mds. of Tincall to Fort St. George.\textsuperscript{37}

(iv) Saltpetre: The Bihar section of the Indo-Gangetic region chiefly Patna and Saran, was an important centre for the production of saltpetre. Curiously enough, Bihar came to acquire prominence only in the second half of the 17th century. If Patna were the principal centre of supply of saltpetre from neighbouring parts, Hughli, Balasore and Pipli were the chief ports for its export.\textsuperscript{38}

6. Textile Manufactures: Cotton and Silk

Patna was famous not only for the production of raw cotton and manufacture and supply of cotton cloths, but also for being an important centre of silk trade.\textsuperscript{32}

The cotton manufactures of Patna, already described as existing during the early part of the seventeenth century was quite flourishing in the time of Manucci. He observed that ‘fine white cloth’ was manufactured at Patna and was ‘very plentiful’ in the province of Bihar or Patna.\textsuperscript{40}

In the sixties and seventies of the 17th century Patna imported (a) from Kasimbazar, ‘sundry sorts of raw and wrought silk, fine shashes (turban cloth) and stripes interwoven with gold and silver.

(b) from Hughli and Balasore ‘Sana (sanah or salu, a cheap fine cloth, generally red), Gingham (an old English term for a cotton stuff woven with dyed cotton yarn), oramalls-(rumals handkerchiefs), cotton yarn.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{36} Ball, II. 84-6, 89.
\textsuperscript{37} Marshall 38; Master, i. 76.
\textsuperscript{38} See ch. 9 ante. for details.
\textsuperscript{39} See ch. 1 ante. for details.
\textsuperscript{40} Storia ii, 82, 426.
\textsuperscript{41} See Ch. I, Sec. B ante.
7. Handicrafts

(i) Paper: The manufacture of good paper is referred to by Abul Fazl and Khulasat ut Tawarikh. Buchanan has left an account of the method of manufacture of paper in early 19th century.

(ii) Stone Industries: Abul Fazl writes that 'in the Sarkar of Bihar, near the village of Rajgir is a quarry of stone resembling marble, of which ornaments are made'. The author of Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh, however, mentions that near Gaya there was a quarry of stone resembling marble, and that ornaments were made of it. Precious stones were brought to Gaya from foreign ports and a constant traffic was carried on.

The blackstone masnad of the Nawab Nazims of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, was made at Monghyr by Khwaja Nagar of Bokhara in 1052/1643.

(iii) Wood-work: Manufacture of Boats: Abul Fazl observed that boats were procurable in plenty and that the province furnished 100 boats. At Rajmahal port Manrique found over 2000 boats assembled from surrounding districts. There were various types of boats which were either utilised for purpose of war or trade. Daud Khan Quraishi, Governor of Bihar (1659-63), purchased during Mir Jumla’s war with Shuja, several boats (kisti or ghurab) from the local majhis (boatmen) and equipped them with artillery and gunners and crossed the Ganges with a bridge of boats. Usually saltpetre was carried from Patna down to Hugli or Balasore or Pipli in various types of country-craft known as Pattellas, Boras, Purgoes, Palwars etc. and partly also in sloops and pinnaces maintained by the English and Dutch companies on the river.

(a) Pattellas were exceedingly strong, 'very flat and burthensome' boats that used to come down from Patna with

42. Ain. ii. 164; KT (Sarkar), 35. For soap manufacture in Bihar in early 19th century, see Bouchanan ‘Paina soap is used all over Bengal’.
43. Ain. II, 164.
44. KT in Sarkar, 35.
45. Monghyr Dt. Gaz.
47. Manrique, p 135.
saltpetre or other goods.

(b) A Boora (bhar or bora derived from Bhada or lighters) was 'a very floaty light boat', rowing with 20 or 30 oars and carrying saltpetre and other goods from Hughli downwards. Some traded to Dacca with salt and also served as tow boats for ships bound up and down the river.

(c) a Purgoo, probably frigate written in Persian firkat or firgat, was used mostly between Hughli, Pipli and Balasore. Alexander Hamilton (1688-1723) observed that the Hughli-Patna saltpetre boats were over 50 yards long, 5 yards broad and 2.1/2 deep and had a capacity of over 200 tons.

(d) Pulwars (Palwar, a river boat) were small boats of about 12 or 15 tons some times conveying saltpetre from Patna down the river.

The necessities of saltpetre trade served as an incentive to boat construction under the patronage of the E.I. Company and also determined the type of inland and coastal boat craft. The superiority of the Dutch Company to the English in the amount of water transport business the former were doing between Patna and Hughli is referred to in the letter of Henry Aldworth at Patna to Agent Trevisa (July 12, 1666). Aldworth promised to despatch 15,000 maunds of saltpetre to Hughli soon after receiving Mir Jumla's dustuck, while the Dutch had 9 patellas of saltpetre with about 25—26,000 maunds lying in Punpun 8 miles south of Patna on the river Punpun ready to start with dustucks in 3 or 4 days.

(iv) Pottery: The Venetian traveller, Manucci, found the city of Patna to be the centre of manufacture of bottles and fine earthen pottery, including 'cups of clay, finer than glass, lighter than paper and highly scented'. The earthenware manufactures in general emitted 'a pleasant odour' and were 'so fine' that they were not only used by the nobles, but also sent to the court as 'a rarity' and, as curiosities, were 'carried all over the world'.

Minapore, near Hajipur, was a pottery centre. A piece of 'fine earthen ware' weighing only 1.1/8 oz. (Troy) could hold 18 oz: (Troy) of water, 'Finer and lighter' earthen goods were manufactured at Begumssuray (? Begamsarai).

49. Storia, II, 426, 84.
(v) Glass: Abul Fazl states that Gilt glass was manufactured in Bihar. Buchanan noted that there were 320 families of glass-workers (churisaz) in Bihar in early 19th century.

(vi) Shell goods: Tipperah merchants purchased at Patna tortoise shell and sea-shell bracelets and other toys (besides coral and amber goods).

(vii) Bows and arrows, (viii) Tobacco pipe: John Marshall found Bhagalpur to be a market for bows and arrows and also ‘neat hubble bubbles’ (hooka, huqqah).

(ix) Bamboo Lathis: John Marshall found Catchagola (Kacchagola, Katgola) near Gurguttee (Ghoraghat) a market for ‘Lattees’ (lathis); 4 big lathis could be purchased for a pice (1/28 Rupee). But these were not ‘of so good cast as the lathis of Patna, for the former would ‘never be red through never so much rubbed with oyle’.

The above survey throws interesting light on the principal industries and some handicrafts in medieval Bihar.

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51. Ain. II. 164, KT in Sarkar, 38.
52. Ball. II. 273.
53. Marshall, 121; See Hobson Jobson, under Hubble-bubble, and hooka, pp. 322, 326.
SECTION B

CUSTOMS HOUSES (CHAUKIS) IN BENGAL AND BIHAR IN 1670-71.

Inland transit duties constituted a traditional source of revenue during Mughal India. Occasionally these were remitted by Emperors. But such concessions were not permanent. The late Mr. Moreland discussed the effects of these dues on the economic life of the country.¹ In this chapter an attempt has been made to study the location and working of the Customs-houses (Chaukis) both on land and river routes in Bengal and Bihar, from the travel-diary of John Marshall, 1669-72.

John Marshall, the author of ‘Notes and Observations on East Indies’ and long known as “the earliest Englishmen who really studied Indian antiquities,” was a factor of the English E.I. Company at various places in India, like Madras, Balasore and Patna. He was an acute observer and the notes left by him in the course of his journeys in Orissa, Bengal and Bihar throw a flood of light on the economic history of the country.

(A) Bengal

The following Chaukis are mentioned by Marshall in Bengal:

(1) About 24 miles north of Hughli town, on the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi (Hughli) R. was Cohandarea (? Cushadanga of Rennell)², “a great town in extent”, a market for “mulmulls for Nainoes” (malmaul and nain-sukh), muslins of varying thickness. Here (30 March, 1670) the Choukeedar (Chaukidar,

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3. Rennell, 1774 (near Gocalgunge. Rennell, 1778, I )
watchman) came to know what we (Marshall and his men) were. He asked for buxis (bakhshis)\(^4\).

(2) About 37 miles north of Hughli, on the western bank of the Bhagirathi (Hughli) R. was Murghapore (Mirzapur of Rennell and Mirzapoor of Indian Atlas 120). “Here a Choukidar desired buxis”\(^4\).

(3) About 4 miles, north of Nadia, on the eastern bank of the river Jellinghi was Panuella. “Here a Choukidar asked for buxis”\(^5\).

(4) About 50 miles north of Nadia, on the eastern bank of the River Jellinghi was Gopalpore (Gopalpur). “Here a Choukidar asked us whence we came & ca.”\(^6\).

(5) About 24 miles north of Gopalpur, on the western bank of the Jalanghi was Guyghat (Gaighat, cattle ford). “Here a Choukedar demanded to see our Dustick (dastak, pass, permit), soe wee shewed him Shasti Cauns Phirwanna (Shaista Khan’s parwana) and gave him one Rupee. This is a great towne which paites to the Nabob 18,000 Rupees per annum.”\(^8\)

(6) Nuddadpore (Naudapara?) on the western bank of the Culcully R, a stream joining the Ganges and the Jalanghi, about 20 miles north of Guyghat. “Here a Chowkeedar came to us and wee gave him 1 Rupee and I knife worth 1/3 Rupee.”\(^9\)

(7) Dougatchee (Dogachi) on the eastern bank of the Ganges, about 16 miles north of Downapore (Downapour of Rennell); “here a surray (sarai) and Chowkee”\(^10\).

(8) Bulgutta (Bolghata), on the right bank of the Bhagirathi, was “a great towne, where formerly (there was) a Chowkee”\(^11\).

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4. JMI, 66. Rennell, 1878. I.
5. 31 March, 1670 JMI p. 66.
6. 2 April, 1670 JMI p. 67.
7. 3rd April, 1670. JMI 67-68.
9. The ruins of this ‘great towne’ are indicated by an extensive area of buildings near Jagobandhupur shown in ol Survey Sheet of 1833-55. JMI. 8sn.
10. 4 April, 1670. JMI. p. 68. Rennell, 6.
11. 7 April, 1670. JMI. p. 69
12. 23 Sept. 1670. JMI p. 100.
(9) "A great (i.e. important) Chaukidar" was stationed at Woodowa (Udhuanaala) and Puttowra (Patthaura, Patura), on opposite sides of the river Ganges in Marshall's time, to watch that no goods were carried from Rajmahal to Cassimbazar without a dastak or pass,—either on land or on river.

Marshall writes about the Chaukidar: "Hee would have had something of mee; but by reason hee told me it was a custome for Englishmen that travelled that way to give him something, and that if I would not hee would stop what goods came that way. Therefore I would give him nothing, because I would break that custom and extortion".\(^{12}\)

This is a revealing observation which shows (i) the corruption of the Chaukidars, who expected some tips, (ii) the continual evasion of the customs regulations by the English merchants and (iii) the illicit trade carried on by the latter.

(B) Bihar.

The following customs-stations in Bihar are mentioned by Marshall.

1. Rajmahal: On 20th Sept. 1670, Marshall reached Rajmahal harbour and thence rowed to Rajmahal and arrived at the English factory there. Here he found a Vakil (Agent) sent there by Mr. March, Chief of Cassimbazar (1669-71). Next day the dastaks were secured by him.\(^{13}\)

2. Burjungall or Bar Jangal: The town of Bar Jangal situated close by the Ganges was 1 mile from the bottom of the hill, on the top of which there was a stone house (masjid). On 11th April, 1670, Marshall describes it as a "great Chowkee" (Chauki) i.e. a very big customs station. Here was "a great gate through which none can pass by land unexamined." A Chowkeedar intercepted Marshall and his party, whereupon the latter showed their dustick (dastak) or permit taken at Rajmahal. The Chowkidar demanded 6 pice from Marshall who paid the amount.\(^{14}\)

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14. 11 April, 1670. JMI. p. 72.

The word, also written Burra Jungall or Bara Jangal, literally means great goods or waste: cf. Bourgengel of Broucke's map. It is to be identified with Kajangala of Hiuen Tsang's itinerary and Barkankal or Bar Jangal of Aurangnama of 'Haqiri'.
On 14th May, 1671, Marshall writes of Barjangal: "None can pass from Rajmahal by land towards Pattana but through this town where every person receives a Champ (Chhap), a seal impression, (a stamp) upon a cloth before can pass but may without a chaup (stamp) pass from Pattana to Rajmahal."\(^{15}\)

On 15th May, 1671 Marshall started from the Sarai but was intercepted at the Gate by the peons of Nawab Shaista Khan (Governor of Bengal, 1664-77) in whose jagir it was situated. He had to go to the Chowkee. He again went to the Sarai and sent the dastak, taken at Rajmahal, to the Governor (of the Chauki). The latter kept it for about an hour after which 24 Chops (stamps)\(^{16}\) were put on the handkerchief of one of the peons as follows:—

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Peon</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Kahars</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Coolies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(with 2 doolies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Guncarrier</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Cook</td>
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Marshall gave to "the Jemmedar (Jamadar, here Customs Officer) who brought the Champ and to the Governor, 1 rupee and to their servants 1 rupee." It may be noted that on a previous journey there was no difficulty about Customs and Marshall paid only 6 pice.

When Marshall again went to the gate of the Sarai, he was again stopped by the same peons who would not allow him to pass unless he paid something. So he sent his stamped "clout" (cloth) to the Governor who returned it to Marshall through a Muhammadan who asked him not to be angry. Marshall's reply and the sequel may better be stated in his own words: "I told him I was not (angry), but was resolved, if I stayed there a month, I would not give the Peons who stopped

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16. The *Chaup* is the impression of a seal rubbed over with red stuff.
mee one cowry, because they told mee except I would, I should not pass. So the Moore gave him the Chopped clout and desired mee not to take notice of any abuse, for it was the Peons fault; so because hee was so civill being a person of quality, I told him, if hee would send his servant with mee to the Doolies gone before, in which was my knives, I would send him one. Hee sent his servant, who went about 3 Course before (and) overtook the Doolies. when sent him a hornshafterd knife, and gave the servant I pice for his pains.”

(3) Dellegola : Two miles east of Gorre or Garhi i.e. Teliagarhi was Dellegola, was a Chauki. Probably it which became diluviated since Marshall's time.18

(4) Teliagarhi had a sarai called by Marshall Garhi Sarai. There was evidently a Chauki here as he writes: “At this place expected to be asked for my Chopt Clout.” But none demand ed it of him.19

(5) Pirpainti : The town of “Pente” (Pirpainti) was a centre of collection of river customs. Marshall writes: “Here the Merbaar (Mîr Bahr, Custom or harbour master) came from the other side to us, and desired something of us, but demanded not anything nor asked us for our Dustick (destak)”.20

(6) Opposite Caushdee, about 16 miles west of Pirpainti was a Chauki, which was avoided by Marshall: he writes of it: “which wee spoke not with”)21

(7) At the Chauki of Agalpore (either Bhagalpur or Agarpur of Survey Sheets), 4 miles from Barraddee (Barari), a Chaukidar was paid 1 tuaka (taka) or 2 pice (paisa).22

(8) Bohay Surray (Bāhā Chauki) was about 24 miles west of Monghyr.23

(9) Two miles from Mor (More near Mokameh) was a Chowkey (Chauki) or toll station.24

Expecation or demand of bakhsis or tips seems to have

17. 15 May, 1671. JMI. pp. 118-119.
18. 12 April, 1670. JMI. p. 72.
21. 13 April, 1670. JMI. p 73.
22. 14 April, 1670. JMI. p. 74.
23. 19 May, 1671. JMI p. 124.
24. 19 April, 1670. JMI. p. 77.
been the most characteristic phenomenon in these Chaukis. At
most places we read of Choukidars demanding tips, without at
all caring, it would seem, to inspect the dastaks or passes or
stamped cloths (as at Cohandarea or Cushadanga, Murghhapore
or Mirzapur, Panuella in Bengal and the Mir Bahr at Pirpainti
in Bihar). At some places the Chowkidar made enquiries re:
the party or the dastak (e.g. at Gopalpore, or Gopalpur,
Gyghat or Gaighat in Bengal). Sometimes the peons of the
Chaukis harassed the travellers, by disallowing them to pass in
spite of their possessing permits and stamped cloths, unless they
paid tips, as at Barjangal near Rajmahal and at Udhuanala and
Pathura (Patura) on the Ganges.
CHAPTER 9

Aspects of Economic Life
in Medieval Orissa

SECTION A

MEDIEVAL ORISSA’S SEAPORTS:
BALASORE

1. History

The seventeenth century has been rightly described as “a most important period in the annals” of Orissa. Internally it witnessed the expansion of the Mughal province of Orissa and the impress of administrative experiments and measures introduced by the Mughals. Externally it was a period of momentous changes in her relations with European mercantile nations, marked by the gradual decline of the Portuguese and the increasing commercial penetration of the country by the Danes, the English and the Dutch. The European factory records and the accounts and diaries of European travellers, Agents and factors yield valuable information regarding the economic conditions of Orissa. An attempt has been made here to bring out the economic importance of Balasore in the 17th Century on the basis the above-mentioned source.

Balasore grew to prominence as a manufacturing and commercial centre and as a seaport from the thirties of the 17th Century. The destruction of the Portuguese Settlement of Hughli in 1632 attracted the Dutch and the English to open trade northwards. At the same time the growing scarcity of cloth at Masulipatam on account of the famous and widespread Gujarat famine of 1630-1 necessitated opening of new centre of trade and the advance of the English from the East Coast up the Bay of Bengal. Ralph Cartwright, the leader of the English.
-expedition sent by John Norris, English Agent at Masulipatam, was granted freedom of trade in May 1633 by the Mughal Governor of Orissa, Agha Muhammad Zaman of Tehran. Equipped with a “parwana to trade free of all customs or duties, and to build houses or ships”, the English merchants, Cartwright and Thomas Colley, returned from Cuttack to Hariharpur and started building a factory there (May, 1633). Leaving Colley in charge of it, Cartwright went to Balasore (June 16) and established a factory there also, at the invitation of Mir Qasim, the Governor of the district

Though the goods from Bengal could be secured in Orissa without the oppression and extortion of the Portuguese to be faced in Hughli, it would be a mistake to think that Portuguese rivalry was totally absent in Orissa. In July 1635 Thomas Colley at Hariharpur expressed his apprehension to Cartwright at Balasore that the English had no chance of establishing themselves at Hughli (where some Portuguese prisoners of war had embraced Islam and were rewarded by Shahjahan) and at Pipli (which was ‘an ancient rendezvous’ of the Portuguese). Some Portuguese of Pipli complained before the Nawab (i.e. Governor of Orissa) that the English wanted to drive them out of the port and the English had to defend themselves by observing that what they really wanted was not Pipli but Balasore and Harispur. The English factors early realised that for reaping the advantages of Orissan trade they must maintain an armed fleet at Balasore and other places.

The importance of Balasore grew as a result of the expulsion of the Portuguese from Hijili by the Mughals in 1636 and the consequent decay of trade at Pipli and other neighbouring places. The sitting up of the river Alanka and the Patna reduced the advantages of Harishpur harbour in comparison with the Road of Balasore. It also increased the difficulties of transporting down to the sea cotton manufactures of Hariharpur

2. DSM. II. 84.
3. EF. 1630—33. p. 309.
which could be brought to Balasore on land without much difficulty.⁴

In spite of these advantages of Balasore, the result of the efforts of the English there during the first decade were not very encouraging. Besides the oppression of the Portuguese there were other adverse forces working against the English and contributing to the decay of their settlements in Orissa, viz., the bad climate of the locality, the ravages of the Arrakanese pirates and, worse still, the opposition of the Dutch. The English also had their own internal weakness, namely, lack of funds and want of active servants, which naturally hampered their trade in these parts. There was even some talk of giving up Balasore. But this was opposed by Francis Day who, even during his short experience there (Aug. 13,—Nov. 3, 1642) was convinced that Balasore (with adjacent places) should never be given up. First, the country had immense possibilities. “It was,” he advised the E. I. Company, “noe such dispisable place as is voted, it being an opulent Kingdome.” Secondly, the heavy expenditure already incurred by the Company in gaining the privileges of customs free trade would be wasted in case of closing of the Balasore factory.⁵

In 1634 the Dutch authorities at Batavia endeavoured to trade with Hughli, but as the experiment was not successful, they decided in 1636 to move down to Pipli. Subsequently they left their factory at Pipli, demolished their house there and built a new one at Balasore, ‘a handsome square building.’ The area in which it was situated was rented by private individuals but later on it was leased by the English. The Dutch were permitted to trade in Hughli, Pipli and Balasore by the firman of Aurangzeb (Oct. 1662).

In 1676 Balasore was one of the six factories of the Dutch in Bengal, the other five being Hughli (Chinsura), Cassimbazar, Patna, Dacca and Malda. The Chief of the Dutch Factory of Balasore then was Vankewell. The Dutch had their flag-staff and flag at the factory.⁶

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4. Clavell’s Accoimt of the Trade of Ballasore, in Diaries of Streynsham Master II.
5. Wilson, op cit. 18—21. EF.
The town of Balasore, formerly called 'Baneswar', was situated on the river of Balasore (Burabalang) about 16 miles from the sea-coast. It was described by John Marshall (1669) as "a very great stragling town but scarce a house in it but dirt and thatcht ones." He also found that it used to become very dirty in the rainy season, from May to October, but subsequently it became very pleasant, having several "very handsome" mango gardens about a mile off. The houses of the town were very much shaken by an earthquake taking place about 5 a.m. on August 26, 1976.\footnote{7}

The European quarters at Balasore were situated at 'Dummadapore' (\textsuperscript{*} Damodarpur), probably an old suburb of the town, not traceable now. Here were situated the English and the Dutch factories and the houses of Englishmen, Dutchmen and the majority of those of the Portuguese.\footnote{8}

\textit{The English Factory}, established in 1633, stood a little way from the river side.\footnote{9} Captain Brookhaven instructed James Bridgman (Dec. 14, 1650) that "the Company must not be put to unnecessary expenses by building or repairing houses or by keeping many servants. All matters of importance should be made known to the whole staff." The Balasore factors and their servant "Narrand" (Narayan or Narendra) were also advised to procure a donation of a piece of land, situated to the west of the Dutch factory and extending down to the river and the small creek, so that if the Company wanted to extend their trade here, they might build "a mansion house and a house" for refining saltpetre near the river. On acquisition the ground should be bounded by a trench, dug at a cost of 5 or 6 rupees. The factory building was partially rebuilt in 1659 at a cost of Rs. 1,000. The Dutch writer Schouten described it as a 'fine' factory.\footnote{10}

The organisation and control of the English factory was

\footnotesize{7. The old name of the place, acc. to Marshall, was 'Banagur.' \textit{JMI.} 61, 62, 167. This tends to corroborate that the place was Baneswar.

\textit{DSM. I.} 300.


10. \textit{EF.} 1646—50 pp. 333—4 ; 1655-60,297. This gives an idea of cheap labour there. Schouten, quoted in Bowrey 162 n.}
changed from time to time. In 1637 Balasore and Hariharpur the two settlements 'in the Bay' were under John Yard, and these were under Gerald Pinston at Masulipatam, Agent in charge of the Coast factories. In 1650 James Bridgman was appointed Chief of all the factors in Bengal.

In 1652 Paul Waldegrave, Edward Stephens and William Pitt were in charge of Balasore and Hughli. In 1655 Balasore was under the jurisdiction of the President at Fort St. George. In December, 1657 it was placed under the Bengal Agency under the general subordination of the Surat President and Council. In 1658, the original arrangements was that Thomas Hopkins would be Chief (£ 40); Walter Rogers Second (£ 30), William Daniel third (£ 30), but actually Balasore was put under Ken, Sheldon and Cutler. Trevisa, the Agent designate of Bengal, arrived at Balasore on 23 August, 1659, and did not proceed to Hughli, his headquarters until November.

Balasore was made distinct from Hughli and formed a separate factory.11

2. Manufactures and Trade of Balasore and Adjacent Places

Balasore was an emporium of Cotton Yarn, Cotton and Tassar manufactures of the interior hinterland and surrounding places. Most prominent among the centres, arranged in order of quality of goods manufactured were Suro, (Soro), Harrapore (Hariharpur) and Mohunpore (Mohanpur), all specialising in the manufacture of Samnoes. Clavell writes in his Account of Balasore that the weavers of Suro used to live in the "Skirts of Balasore". Sir R. C. Temple, the editor of the Diaries of Streynsham Master, expresses doubt on this, saying that Suro can hardly be called outskirts of Balasore. But does not Clavell's account imply that there was mobility of artisans and the weavers of Suro also arranged for disposal of their goods at Balasore by having a colony of theirs in the Suburbs of that town? Or it might be that the relative distance between the two places was less than what it is now.

Hariharpur was an important centre of manufacture of Samnoes and Cassayes (Khasa). Within a month of the establish-

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ments of the English factory in June, 1633, Colley purchased nearly 4,000 pieces of cloth. In 1642 some Sannoes and Cassaes were being procured here for Europe, but more could not be secured owing to late and violent rains. The Hariharpur manufactures could be easily transported on land to Balasore.

Again Balasore was near the country of the Raja of Tillbri-chrumbung (Tribikarmbanj i.e. Mayurbhanj) where,—as Walter Clavell wrote in 1676,—the best quality and the largest quantity of Tester (tassar) or herba "was procurable. Further, "Ginghams, Herba Taffatyas, Herba Lungees (lungi or loin cloth) and other sorts of Herba goods," manufactured in neighbouring places could be easily brought there. Another natural advantage of Balasore was that the waters of "Casharry" (Kāsiāri in Midnapore dt.) within two days' journey from Balasore, could be used to give "the most lasting dye" to the textile manufactures of the neighbourhood.

12. Master, II. 86; Suro or Soro (Soohroh) in Balasore district (Lat 21°16' Long 36° 49') is now a station on S.E. Rly, midway between Balasore and Bhadrak 20 miles from Balasore. In the 17th Century it was on the frontier of Bhadrak (Sarkar, Studies in Mughal India, 228, 229: Muraqaat-i-Hassan, 41, 59).

Harrapore (Hariharpur) near modern Jagatsimhapur, a town in the Mahanadi delta, about halfway between Cuttack and Harishpur Garh, a port at which the English landed.

Probably Mohanpur in Midnapur dt. Lat. 21° 50' Long 87° 24'.

13. Master, II. 84. The economic importance of Hariharpur depended not only on its being a centre of supply of cloth to the English but also on the fact that it was a market for sale of some articles brought by the English. About July 1633 it was deserted on account of "deepness of winter" (? intensity of rainy season). Yet one merchant agreed to purchase lead from Colley at Rs. 11 a maund. About 50 pieces of gold were sold at Rs. 10—6½ as. a price certified by experienced Shroffs to be a fair price. A merchant purchasing it earlier from Cartwright at the rate of Rs. 10—10 as, returned with great lamentation for his loss. (EF. 1630—33. XXXI, 307—308, 307n, 320, 329: 1642-6. p. 65).

The Hariharpur factory was probably withdrawn on Aug. 31, 1642, as its accounts closed on that date. (EF. 1642-45. p. 126). In Oct. 1640 the Masulipatam factors refer to orders sent to Yard to buy or freight a small vessel and come away as speedily as possible but no permanent closing of the factory was then contemplated. As a matter of fact goods and a chest of treasure were sent in two Danish vessels and part of the consignment (6 pieces of broad cloth) safely reached the Hariharpur factory from Manikapatam. (EF. 1637—41. p. 263). Sir William Foster suggests that the piecegoods might have been provided in Nov. 1642 through a native broker. EF. 1642-45 p. 65.

The following varieties of cheap, but well-made cotton manufactures were available at Balasore. In 1644 the Surat authorities wrote to the Company that they had asked the Balasore factors to invest money in “Ginghams, Sannas, Cossaes, and humanoes proper for England, intended to be sent unto you as a testimony of what cheap and well-made cloth those parts affords.”  

1. Sanas or Sanahs, ‘a kind of fine white cotton goods’ (Sānu).  

Luiller says ‘Balasore is a place celebrated for trade in fine white calicoes called Sanas’. Sir Richard Carnac Temple thought that the Sanah of the 17th Century “exists as Salu, a cheap, fine cloth, generally red, in common use in Bengal”. But this seems imporable as the one is white and the other red. Can Sana be Sahan of Pelsaert?

In 1679 the contracted articles for investment included 10,000 pieces Sannoes whitened and cured, 30 coveds long, 2 coveds broad at following rates.  

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>1679</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Suro (Soro) Sannoes—</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Head No. A. at 74\frac{1}{6}</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belly No. B. at 69\frac{1}{3}</td>
<td>Rs. per corge. 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot No. C. at 64\frac{1}{6}</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
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</table>

| **Herapore (Hariharpur) Sannoes** | |
| Head No. A at 67\frac{1}{6} | 82 |
| Belly No. B at 62\frac{1}{6} | Rs. per corge. 79 |
| Foot No. 6 at 37\frac{1}{6} | 76 |

| **Mohunpore (Mohanpur) Sannoes—** | |
| Head No. A at 59\frac{8}{12} | 72 |
| Belly No. B at 54\frac{8}{12} | Rs. per corge. 68 |
| Foot No. C at 49\frac{8}{12} | 65 |

15. EF. 1642—45. p. 207.
16. Wilson, I. Index. EF. 1655—60. 188n.
2. Gingham, an Indian cotton cloth. The term, probably of Indo-European origin, denoted "a stuff made of cotton yarn dyed before being woven". The Orissan variety of gingham was superior to the Bengal variety available at Hughli, as Bridgman sending a bale of the latter to the Company in 1650 did not recommend it.

3. Orammalls, or Rumal, handkerchief. In 1679 Casharee (Kasiari) Romalls (rumals) were offered by the Balasore merchants at Rs. 5 a piece, as compared to Rs. 5½ in 1678. They also offered to supply to the English in 1679 'Rhad nagar' (Radhanagar) Romalls at Rs. 4½ a piece, though they cost Rs. 4-10-0.

4. Cossaes or Khassa—a fine, thin cloth.

5. Mullmull or malmal—a kind of muslin.

6. Humhum or hammam—a thick stout cloth used for wrappers.

7. Gurras.\(^\text{18}\)

8. Neelaes (or Nillaes Nillees) or Nila; a kind of blue cloth; it was provided at Balasore by merchants in 1676.—400 corge, roughly estimated at Rs 36,000. In 1679 the E.I.C.'s investment included 10,000, pieces Nillaes, 20 coveds long and 2 coveds broad.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1679</th>
<th>Price in 1676.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head No. A. at 80</td>
<td>Rs. per Corge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belly No. B. at 75</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head No. A at 70</td>
<td>Rs. per Corge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belly No. B at 64</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot No. C at 57½</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Company's letter to Hughli, 1675, orders were placed for "8,000 Nillaes, all of the best sorts; Livelyest and pleasantest Coullers are most desirable with us, the Courser Sorts not in request." For 1677, 10,000 Nilas were ordered. The E.I.C.

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18. Hobson-Jobson 375 b-376 a ; 707a, b : Bowrey, op. cit., 133n ; EF. 1646—50 pp. 337—8; Master II. 363. 279. 237; Radhanagar is in Midnapur Dt.
gave the following directions about Nila (3rd Jan. 1678—9) for the factors to observe: "We find the Nillaes that are most vendible are the sort that are finest and most Glossy and stript with the lightest Colours, as hair colour, sky colour and the like; but those that are Red and Tauny ground, striped with Black, are not vendible here. The High Agent advised Edwards at Balasore (1 Oct. 1679): "The Nillees (Nila) let be of the same ground, warp and woof, as formerly, only endeavour what you can that they be of lively colours according to the Honourable Company's orders."

Of the Miscellaneous goods produced in Orissa, may be mentioned:

Sticklack (lac in a crude form). Turmerick, Saltpetre and Rice.

3. Internal and Coastal Trade

Orissa had trade relations with Bihar, Bengal and Golkonda:

(a) There was regular supply of Orissan cloth goods from Balasore to Patna in the 17th Century. In the thirties of that century Peter Mundy noted that the following varieties of piece goods of Orissa were available at Patna in Bihar.

(i) Ckassaeas (Khassa)—a fine and thin cloth, thicker than the Sonargaon variety: Size 16, 17, 18 coveds long and 1 broad.

(ii) Ambarees (Ambari, amari, a turban, or the canopy of an elephant howda) and Chareconnaes, (Charkhana, chequered muslin) linen striped with white silk; 16 coveds long, 1 broad.

(iii) Hamaones (hamnam, a thick stout cloth used for wrappers), linen, 11 coveds long 1 1/2 broad. Forty years later Thomas Bowrey observed that the various cotton manufactures of Balasore like Sanas, Gingham, Orammals, and cotton yarn and other goods were sent to Patna.

Balasore also sent to Patna articles imported by the


The Dutch exported Nila from Hughli, Ibid, 83.

20. Master II. 70, 279. EF. 1651—55, p. 95, 271, 47.

Netlum in charge of Balasore was joined by Richard Hudson, sent to Bengalah in July 1647 in the Farewell with 6000 rials of eight to buy cotton goods and rice. EF. 1646—50, 166,XXIX.
English, like broadcloth and lead, which could not be disposed of there.

(b) The close connection between Balasore and Hughli necessitated constant coastal trade between the two places. Owing to difficulties of navigation on the Hughli, goods were usually brought down from Bengal in small ships and transhipped at Pipli and Balasore. The English E.I. Company employed many sloops in carrying goods, unloaded from their ships in Balasore Road to Hughli.

About 1650 the following articles came from Hughli to Balasore, as we know from the letter of James Bridgman (aboard the Lioness) to the Company (Dec. 15, 1650): raw silk, saltpetre, sugar, dry ginger. Hughli could also supply bees-wax, long pepper, civet, rice, butter, oil and wheat, "all at about half the price of other places."

(c) Balasore had trade relations with Dacca also.

In 1676 Clavell suggested that the Balasore factory and Hughli could be helped considerably if Patna, Kassimbazar and Dacca took a portion of English goods suitable to their funds, and that this would also help forming an idea of the direct trade of those places.

(d) In March, 1634 the Thomas (purchased from the Governor of Balasore) sailed towards Masulipatam filled with sugar, rice, and other provisions. Caught in the monsoon she hurriedly reached within 15 or 16 leagues of it. She was unloaded and part of the goods was brought to Masulipatam on boats and the rest (177 fardles of sugar) was put a small pinnace, the Queda, borrowed from the Danes. She was drowned on April 24, 1634 with loss of the entire sugar, (approximately worth 4,000 pagodas) besides 3 Danes, one Englishman and one Indian.

In March 1638 (?) the Masulipatam factors Thomas Clark and Richard Hudson advised John Yard of Balasore that freight goods belonging to Mirza Taqi, Dabir of Golkonda, should be sent there. 21

21. Mundy, 154-5 ; Bowrey, 231—2 ; EF. 1646-50.

Marshall (p. 101) left Hugli on 16 Oct.4.a.m.1670 and reached Balasore Road. 22nd Oct. 5. p.m. on the Madras Pinnacle. See also, Master, 11. 65—67, 67—8, 87 ; EF 1634—36. p. 43 ; 1637—42. pp. 65, 66.
4. **Foreign Trade of Balasore.**

(a) **Trade with Europe.** Judged by the activities of the European factors, the English, the Danes, the Dutch and the Portuguese, the available figures of sums used in investment by the English, and the nature and sale of goods imported from Europe, the foreign trade of Orissa, as conducted through Balasore, was not insignificant. She traded with Europe and Persia.

The commodities imported by the English into Orissa, Bengal and Patna, through Balasore, were (i) Broadcloth of various colours (ii) Scarlet (iii) Rials of eight, (iv) Copper (v) Quicksilver (vi) Lead, (vii) Vermilion (viii) Coral (ix) Glasses (x) Knives (xi) Brimstone. All these articles were not, however, in demand in Orissa. Some of them were transported to Bengal and Patna. In 1634, finding no hope of selling broad cloth and lead near the sea-side, the Balasore factor sent these to Patna, at a distance of one month’s journey. In 1650 James Bridgman (aboard the Lioness) at Balasore expected that Bengal would vend yearly 30 or 40 broadcloths, half of them red and the rest green, besides 100 pigs of lead, if private trade was prevented. But he observed that quicksilver, vermilion and red lead were not then in demand. Some of the imports were again either sold or bartered by the English for procuring goods for Persia.

The articles of Bengal and Orissa exported from Balasore were (i) local products and cotton manufactures of Balasore and neighbouring centres in Orissa and (ii) goods procured from Bengal (including Hughli and Patna).

The general practice of shipment to England was that cotton goods and cotton yarn from Hughli and Balasore were embaled in factories, and according to the E.I. C’s order, the various articles were loaded on the English ships coming yearly and anchoring in Balasore Road. From there these used to sail in November or December for Masulipatam and Fort St. George and after being finally laded and prepared there set out on the voyage to England about the end of January.

The value of goods brought from Balasore during 1642—43 was as follows:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Name of ship</th>
<th>For which Account</th>
<th>Value of Cargo</th>
<th>Fright goods worth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 7-17</td>
<td>Masulipatam</td>
<td>The Advice</td>
<td>Joint—Stock.</td>
<td>Rs. 5333-12</td>
<td>Rs. 486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 1-9</td>
<td>Do.</td>
<td>The Hopewell</td>
<td>General—Voyage. (invoice)</td>
<td>Rs. 6345 (also passengers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 25</td>
<td>Do.</td>
<td>The Do</td>
<td>4,857-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 18 (via Hariharpur)</td>
<td>Endeavour Joint Stock</td>
<td>209-12</td>
<td>Rs. 735</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1643</td>
<td>Masulipatam, Hopewell</td>
<td>The Hopewell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The factor in charge had to be responsible for the quality of goods sent to England. But it was easy for him to shift his responsibility to others. In 1650, William Netlam was required to explain the deficiencies in several bales of cloth sent by the Bonito. Netlam’s explanation was that “the cloth as bought was put into the warehouse, the key of which was kept by Leaver, whose servant assisted Netlam in sorting and packing each bale. Leaver will doubtless corroborate this and must be held responsible. Mr. James Birkdale (the master of the Bonito) can also confirm these statements.”

(b) Persian trade:—There was an active trade between Bengal (and Orissa) and Persia through Balasore. The English E. I. Company’s factors used to utilise the ocean-going ships coming from England during their enforced idleness on voyages to and from Persia, carrying articles of Indian merchants in return for freight and investing the proceeds in goods suitable for Persia.

In 1642–43 the English factors of Balasore sold or bartered their glasses, knives, lead, broadcloth etc. for sugar, ‘gurras’ sannoes, cassaees, iron and ginghams, all except the last being intended for Persia. They were promised by “the natives” sufficient freight to fill both the Hopewell and the Endeavour for Persia though Francis Day doubted this at least as regards the latter vessel. Any money received on that account was to be invested in goods suitable for Persia, “for to carry rupees to Mesulapatam there would be too great loss.”

In 1644 the Surat factors sent to the Balasore factors one chest of rials with orders to provide for Persia 150 bales of

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sugar, 10 or 12 bales of gurras, and the same quantity of coarse Sannas.

The Dutch also had trade relations with Persia. In April, 1653, two Dutch ships from Balasore left Surat for Basra and Gombroon. 23

Various factors influenced the nature of the E. I. C's trade at Balasore, some of which were general and operative elsewhere in India, but others were peculiar to Balasore. The first problem was that of finance. As elsewhere, the English merchants had to solve the problem of provision of purchasing power in the markets of Balasore and its adjacent places. They were not supplied regularly with funds by the authorities at Surat or Fort St. George, and even when money was sent it was not sufficient. Local borrowing in the Orissan markets was expensive, the rate of interest being high. The factors had to procure articles for the Europe as well as Persia investment, by sale or barter of the goods imported, as in 1642-43. On account of lack of funds timely purchase of necessary goods in advance of the shipping season could not be made at the cheapest markets, and the factors could not deal directly with the producers and weavers but had to contract with the town merchants. The Company suffered financial loss as a result of this arrangement.

Hence, the English factors concerned urged on the Company, the over-mastering need of supply of funds, sufficient in amount and well in advance of the shipping season, for reasons of economy and early purchases. In November 1642 Francis Day suggested to the Company that nothing could be done to improve the prospects of trade at Balasore without doubling the supply of funds. In 1650 James Bridgman (aboard the Lioness) explained to the Company (Dec. 15) that the prospects of trade at Balasore depended on sufficient stock of funds.

"Raw silk is better and cheaper than formerly, as the Hugli invoice will show; but it is desirable to buy in February or March, when the price is only 85 or 90 rupees per maund, at which rate 200 or 300 bales might be procured. In shipping time silk is very scarce and dear. Saltpetre is plentifull, and costs at Patna only one rupee per maund, though customs and freights raise the price at Hugli to 1½ rupees. That bought here-

for the Lioness cost about 2½ rupees a Md.; and besides this when buying at port, they are obliged to take any trash they can get, at whatever price the seller demands. Sugar can be brought in February or March for 7½ or 8 rupees the bale, but in the monsoon time costs 11 or 12. Thus in all things about 50 per cent could be saved if they had a stock of money beforehand; while borrowing entails a cost of interest for 3 per cent per month. Plenty of dry ginger is brought from Patna, and fetches 2½ or 3 rupees per maund at Hugli; the Dutch buy quantities for Europe.”

(ii) Secondly, efficient, hardworking and honest personnel was an indispensable condition for successful prosecution of trade. Balasore suffered from want of such personnel. The English merchants ‘preferred their own interests to those of the Company’. Many of them were engaged in private trade of their own. In 1633 Colley at Haripurne deplored that “the fallsity and desayfullness” of their “new employed servants” was such that they did not dare to trust them even for 10 rupees.” Without suitable men it was not possible to explore the potentialities of trade in the interior. Francis Day suggested (Nov. 1642) the necessity of having two or three active servants who knew how to use the money to best advantage.

(iii) Thirdly, the system of contracting was another problem. Down to the seventies of the 17th Century the English factors in Balasore, owing to difficulty in disposing of imported articles like broadcloth, and lead and to lack of funds, could not deal directly with the producers in securing articles for their investment, but contracted with the town merchants. From Clavell’s Account of 1676 we learn that on the arrival of the ships from England, the factors used to give the merchants half in money and half in goods and the latter contracted with them to supply the local products in October according to agreed musters or samples. The factors could “make such abatements”

24. EF. 1642—46. pp. 65—66. Cf. the following;—
“Calicoes cannot be obtained at the Coast good and cheap unless funds are forthcoming to buy them before the ship arrives. As for purchasing coloured gingham in Bengal the only person available there is one William Netlam....but now unfit to make transactions. The coast should be supplied yearly with £20,000 for investment for these parts.” (Letter to Co. Jan. 11, 1650).
EF. 1645—50. p. 337—8. Italics mine;
as they considered reasonable. But generally the goods were supplied too late to allow the abatements to be made and the accounts to be adjusted before the departure of the ships. Hence the articles were invoiced home at the contracted price and “the merchants were credited at the adjustment of accounts for the price concluded on and the difference carried to profit and loss.” The Company admitted that this system was causing loss, as all the white cloth procured at Balasore was 25 or 30 per cent dearer than that at the coast. Clavell, therefore, suggested that:

(a) if the difficulty re: sale of imported goods was for ever removed (and also the fear of want of a farman), direct dealing with the producers would be more advantageous than the system of contracting with merchants. The Company could send its own servants to Mucktapore, Harrapore, Mohunpore to make ready purchases of local manufactures and to Danton and Jaleshwar for the manufactures of Oremara and Kasiari.

(b) In case of death or removal of Chimchand (Khemchand) the Co’s Hindu broker, the Company might deal with the weavers of Suro in the same way as with those of Kassim-bazar or as Khemchand then dealt with them. Balasore, being made a distinct factory would have more leisure now to attend to such business. So an experiment should be made by advancing money to weavers of Suro for Sunnoes.

(c) Further, after the next private consultation (maniriy, mantari) of Feb. 1677, some persons should be sent to Mucktapore and others to Hariharpur “to inquire into the nature of the trade of those parts.”

(iv) Attitude of the Governor:—The prospects of trade greatly depended on the attitude of the Governor.

25. These places are respectively Matkudpur in Midnapur, Hariharpur, and probably Mohunpur in Midnapur dt. (Lat. 21° 50′, Long 87° 29′).

26. Danton (Lat. 21° 58′, Long 87° 20′) in Midnapur dt. on the main road bet. Balasore and Midnapur. Here ‘oftaes’, (aftaba, brass ewers) and “Chellomaches” (Chilamchi, basins) and other brasswares were manufactured. (JML. 63, 85 n.).

Jellasore (Jaleshwar), SW. of Danton in Balasore dt. (Lat. 21° 44′ Long 87° 15′).

Oremara, either Ulma or Midnapur dt. or Urmullah in Balasore dt. Cashary or Kasiari.

27 Master, II. 86—7.
The war between the Danes and the Mughals in Bengal hampered the prospects of trade of the English and the Dutch at Balasore. In 1647, the English factors, Hudson and his party, buying cotton goods and rice at Balasore, were at first well received. But subsequently they were attacked by the Mughals. The reasons were as follows:—About 1642, owing to the non-arrival of Danish ships, the Governor of Balasore demolished their factory and seized their goods. In 1647 the Danes tried to settle their long-standing grievances against the authorities by force. A Danish fleet of 5 ships captured a Moorish ship laden with 8 elephants. At the request of Governor Malik Beg, the English twice attempted to persuade the Danes to release the junk but in vain. The English were told that they would have to compensate the damage inflicted by their co-religionists. The English were required to meet a Mughal Captain and 500 cavaliers carrying a letter from the Governor 4 or 5 miles out of the town. This they refused, as it was a new custom, whereupon it was brought to the English factory. It contained “an imperious command” for the English to stay. The factors refused to obey and boarding their vessel, prepared to depart. The Mughal coastal batteries opened fire on the English, whose guns responded effectively and they made “warmed work,” for 3 or 4 hours. But presumably a peace was patched up with the English.

The Dutch also had to suffer: their business transactions were stopped till the first week of December. They practically extracted licence from the local authorities by making a show of force—by landing 60 men and 10 pieces of ordnance and mounting the latter on their house and bankshall, and keeping one of the three ships stationed at Pipli to scour the river always, “going down the ebb and up with the flood.”

The necessity of offering presents to the authorities, as a means of strengthening the foundations of trade and securing

concessions was pointed out by James Bridgman (in his letter to the Co. Dec. 15, 1650) and by Captain Brookhaven to James Bridgman, Dec. 14, 1650. The latter instructed the Balasore factors that they should keep on good terms with the Governor of Balasore and Hugli and with other friends of the English and that when the Nawab of Cuttack came to Balasore he should be presented with "some fine cloth to the value of about 10 pounds and a swordblade or two." Bridgman wrote to Co. "Presents must be given occasionally to the Prince (i.e. Shah Shuja) and Governors of the towns; and so a few rarities of low price should be furnished for the purpose, such as globes, glasses, multiplying glasses, and four or five good substantial house clocks."

When Clavell suggested direct dealing with weavers in place of contracting with merchants and despatch of Co's servants to Hariparpur and Mucktapore, he expected that by then it would be known whether Nawab Shahista Khan's son Buzurg Ummad Khan (from Dacca), or Malik Kasim or Raja Man Singh would come to Cuttack as Governor of Orissa. Clavell had "great hopes of a successful beginning of the alteration of this trade" in case Man Singh came. Governor Boremull (Puran Mal or Bahar), was Clavell's "peculiar friend", and the latter began to bring in goods in the Company's name (as usual in Hugli) with success. But this was interrupted in 1672 by Malik Kasim and during his tenure of office Clavell never repeated it. As regards dealing with one or more merchants, Clavell held that no definite rule can be laid down but such matters should be decided by the Chief and his Council "according as the times and Government will bear it." 29

(v) An armed convoy; For reasons of security and of checking piracy, Bridgman suggested to the Co. (Dec. 15, 1650) that a small vessel of 30 or 40 tons, with 6 or 8 guns, would be very useful for carrying goods to Balasore and convoying other vessels. 30

(vi) Undesirable practices in business:

The English E.I. Company's trade in broadcloth and lead

29. *EF.* 1646—50, pp. 333—4, 337—8; Master, II. 87.
resulted, as we know from Clavell's account of 1676, in some undesirable practices and corruption on the part of the Co.'s factors, the merchants and the Government Officers. (a) Though there was no demand for broadcloth in Balasore, the Company continued to send large quantities of it ordering the factors to sell as much as possible of the manufactures of England. This obliged the latter to continue the system of barter i.e. exchange broadcloth for local products. The merchants, who took it from the English, used to sell it at "under-rates" either to Mughal officers at Cuttack, the capital of Orissa or to the armies that came to Cuttack at the time of change of a Governor in whose train there were merchants moving under protection with their goods, buying and selling without paying customs. (b) The transport of lead to "the Rajaes countryes" (? Northern Circars & Orissa Chiefships) was forbidden by the Governors on the pretext that the rajas must not be supplied with articles of warfare, but really to make an illegal gain of 8 annas on every maund of lead so transported with connivance.

(c) The merchants took recourse to another trick in disposing of lead and broadcloth—"to allow the kings officers soe much per cent for taking of their goods on the kings accompt, and taking Cowries in lieu thereof." The English factors were also prepared to follow this trick, but the officers were afraid to have such dealings with them lest they might disclose them in case of any difference, whereas there was no such danger from the Hindu natives."

31. Trade Privileges of the English in Balasore Part.

In the Diary of Streynsham Master there is "An Attestation given by the Customers and Brokers of Balasore concerning the English priviledges in the Import and Export of their Goods and Disposing of them in that port." From this it appears that the commercial privileges of the English at Balasore were questioned about 1670 and the Mughal Customs Officers wanted to open and search the bales of goods of the English either out of motives of illegal gain or because they suspected some underhand dealings on the part of the English. So the latter secured this attestation which runs as follows:—"Given 27 : day of 3rd month in 1081 A.H. (July 1670) by Bunwalled (? Banmali)

31. Master, II. 85-86.
as the substitute of Rajeeb Ray Conoongvoy (Rajib Rai Kanungo) or Chief Customer (Customs Officer) of Orissa and Debaullsdas (Debal Das) Substitute of Kissindew' (Kishn Dev), Chief farmer of said Province and (torn), Chowdry (Chaudhari, Dt. Revenue Officer), and Ancoor Mehtur and Kiss Mehtur (Ankur Mehta and Kishn Mehta) (torn), under Customers, alsoe- Sebram Cullaun (Sibram Kalyan) and Sebram Coor (Sibram Kuar or Sur), broakers of the Port Towne of Ballasore, Sheweth-(1) that the English for many years have used this port of Ballasore, and (2) that they have all along used to unlode their goods from aboard their ships in the Roade and to send them on Purgoes (arges) to their Factory in this place without being opened or Searcht by any Officer) or person in Govt. whatsoever; but as soone as they have unladed their ships and got their goods ashoare into their Factory as aforesaid, they are accustomed to give notice that their goods are all safe ashore. (3) And whenever the Merchants of this Port bought any of those goods of the English they always carry along with them one of the Governours servants, who wrote down the Particulars of said (goods), but if (4) the English were minded to send any of those goods to Hugliy or any other place by land or by sea, without Disposeing of them in this place, they sent one of their Servants to give the Officers or persons in Govt. notice of it, on which they went away as they came in, without being opened or Searcht or particulars taken by any one. This has all along bin the customs of the English in their importing and exporting: their goods into or from this Port ever since they have traded in these parts. In testimony wee the abovesaid persons, have hereunto sett our hands the day and yeare above written etc."32

Private Trade at Balasore

The prosecution of private trade by the factors of European Companies was a characteristic feature of commercial life in those days. Its volume was great, involving considerable loss to the Companies concerned and immense profit to the private traders. Balasore was no exception to this practice.

A graphic account of private trade carried on by some English factors has been left by Andrew Trumball. Sailing from

32. Master, II. 887-8. Figures in brackets given by me.
England in 1641 (31st Dec.) the *Hopewell* reached Madraspatam on July 4, 1642, and Masulipatam on 24th. After unloading portions of her cargo in both the places, she arrived at Balasore on Aug. 14, 1642 and unloaded the rest of goods from England and cloves (not belonging to the Company, embarked at Masulipatam). They stayed there 3½ months at a cost of £180 a month. Francis Day agreed to carry freight goods and passengers to Masulipatam and Persia against the advice of Trumball at the following rates:

- Balasore—Masulipatam: 16 passengers—Rs. 15 per head
- Balasore—Persia: 35 passengers—Rs. 40 per head
- 76 bales of cloth at a freight of Rs. 15 a md. (of 64 lb.).
- 355 bales of sugar at a freight of Rs. 7 a md. (of 128 lb.)

They also embarked 113 bales of calicoes (at a freight of Rs. 15 a md.) possibly on joint account of Messrs. Day, Peniston, Winter and Greenwill and only 700 bales of Sugar and 34 Calicoes for the Company. Day arranged to load “provisions” for the Persians in hampers, bales, chests and fardles, for which no freight was paid to the Company, but he himself received many gifts from them and 60 bales of the Company's cinnamon had to be left behind. Only Rs. 6,345 was credited to the Company’s account out of the freight money of Rs. 17,854. He charged Rs. 1,400 for the ship’s provisions during his stay at Balasore, though “by the estimation of all men that knows the place he could not spend above 60 rupees per month...a beefe being constantly brought there for one rupee or one and a half at the most, and all other provisions accordingly as cheap”.

In 1646, Thomas Clarke, the E.I.C’s quandom factor was at Balasore with one of the ships of Courteen’s Association, the *Rebecca* coming from Achin, with instruction to settle a factory there and then to proceed with freight goods to Persia.

There were some Englishmen residing at Balasore who were engaged in private contraband trade. Two small ships belonging to Richard Hastings (Hastingh of Dutch records), a pilot of a Bengal junk and resident of Balasore, were seized near Negapatam because they were carrying ammunition to Jafnapatam during the siege of Ceylon.
The Governor of Balasore carried on private trade of his own.  

*Currency at Balasore.*

The nature of E. I. Company's trade at Balasore was largely determined by the prevailing currency. Orissa being a poor country, money was scarce, and, as Abul Fazl informs us, "Money transactions are in *Kauris* which is a small white shell generally divided down the middle it is found in the sea shore". John Marshall of the 17th Century, giving further details observes that these "are little shell (s) which in England are called current (shell currency). They are taken at the Maldive Islands from the Rock and buried untill all their fish is gon out of them and then sold. Some are sent for England to the Company, to be sent to Guiney, where they are of great value".

In the first half of the 17th century also *Cowries* formed the usual means of exchange, the 'common pay', as Clavell wrote. Under the circumstances trade was at first carried on by the English factors by barter i.e. exchange of goods: subsequently in the interloping period i.e. from 1630 onwards, owing to keen competition among the factors of different interloping Companies, trade was carried on partly by barter and partly by money. By the middle of the seventeenth century the trade of Balasore came to be carried on in money. Capt. Brookhaven instructed the Coast factors (Dec. 14, 1650) that "the trade of Balasore being now carried on in rupees morees", they must continue their operations "in the same specie".

The establishment of a mint by the English at Balasore (Nov. 1658) resulted in raising the price of silver. The factors observed: "This doth somewhat advance the price of Silver in reference to sale; so that now a piece of eight will yield (if it be weighty) rupees Chellena (Chalani current) two and one anna." When in 1660 the Governor of Balasore threatened to close the Mint and prevent coining money by the English, the Company

33. *EF.* 1642-45, 72 (details of the disposal of goods in Persia on p. 73); 1646-50, p. 69; 1655-60, p. 177n.; Master, II. 65.
34. *Ait* (Jarrett and Sarkar) II. 138., See Revenue Regulations of Aurangzeb in *Studies in Mughal India;* Marshall, 415-6, 419; Vide Clavell's *Account of Ballasore.* The E.I.C. 'found a formidable rival in the ships sent out by Sir William Courteen, Master II. 85 and n.
advised its factors (in their letter of 22nd Feb. received in August, 1660) that they might complain to the Prince (i.e. Shah Shuja) if complaint was of any avail, otherwise they must submit.

John Marshall (c. 1670) found that the Currency at Balasore consisted of (i) Silver rupees (ii) ana, 16 anas being equal to a rupee, but it was "rare" (i.e. very scarce) (iii) Cowries (Kauri), forming 'small money'. Probably the perennial scarcity of coins accounted for the higher rate of exchange in Balasore as compared to other places. The rupee was "valued here in the Company's bookes at 2s. 6d. per piece, but in no other place valued at more than 2s. 3d." Eighty Cowries always constituted a pond (pan) but the value of Cowries in relation to rupees varied according to the availability or scarcity of the former, (36 to 40 to a rupee). 35

**Balasore as Seaport**

The economic importance of Balasore in the 17th Century was due not only to its being (i) a source of supply of cotton manufactures which could be exported abroad, especially to Europe and Persia, (ii) a market for sale of goods imported from Europe, but also to its being (iii) invaluable as a seaport. The Dutch writer Schouten spoke well of it as a harbour:

"Bellesoor is five leagues to the west of the river of Pipley. Most of the English ships come to anchor here, where there is a fine factory....The harbour is an admirable one the Cape of Palmiris protecting it from the boisterous southern winds and consequent tempests. When the weather is clear, the English vessels at anchor in this harbour and ours in Pipely harbour can see each other". So long as the English had no settlement or factory in Bengal, their ships had of necessity to depend on Balasore as port. It had, of course, several disadvantages. "Sea Ports", observes Thomas Bowrey, "this Kingdome affor-

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35. *EF*. 1646-50. op. 333-4, 'Yule was puzzled by the term 'rupees morcees' and could only suggest that a round rupee was meant, as distinguished from a square. This seems unlikely'. Foster in *Ibid*, n. 1. *EF*. 1650-60: pp. 192, 407-8; Marshall, *Op. Cit.* This does not agree with the calculation given by Abul Fazl. "Four Kauris make a ganda. five gandas a budi, four budis a pan, sixteen or acc. to some twenty pan a Khawan (Kahon) and ten Kahon a rupee." *Ain*. II. 138-39. This makes 1 pan equal to 80 Kauries but 12800 or 16000 Kauries equal to a rupee.
deth only one, and that none to be admired, affording not water enough for a ship of 200 tunns in burden to goe into the river, and to ride out is very unnecessary and dangerous, by reason, it is not better then a very very wild open bay that extendeth it selfe from Point Conjugauiere to Palmeris.” This is borne out by Alexander Hamilton (1727); “The Seashore of Balasore being very low, and the Depths of Water very graduall from the strand, make ships in Ballasore Road keep a good Distance from the shore; for in 4 or 5 Fathoms they ride 3 leagues off.” Thus big ocean-going ships could not sail up to Balasore town and had to halt at the Balasore Road, 2½ leagues from the shore. From there men and cargoes intended for Orissa were transported in “purgoes” and sloops. Further, the bar of Balasore at 1 mile from the shore was “a very dangerous place to sail over, being very narrow, and being very great seas.”

Yet even after the subsequent establishment of English factory at Hughli and development of Hughli and Cassimbazar as sources of supply of merchandise of E.I. Co’s trade, Balasore retained its importance as a Seaport. Thus in the seventies of the 17th Century, Balasore constituted one of the three “most important English settlements in the Bay,”—Hughli and Cassimbazar for making sales and investments, and Balasore for loading and unloading the “Europe” ships for Bengal (& Orissa). Ocean-going ships could not, with safety, go up the Ganges to Hughli, on account of difficulties of navigation and had necessarily to halt at Balasore Road, and articles were transhipped to Hughli on small sloops and pinnaces. But this naturally proved to be very expensive. Though E.I. Company ordered the ocean-going ship, the Lioness, to go to Hughli, the Fort St. George factors decided that such an attempt would be extremely hazardous and she should not go further than Balasore Road, whence Captain Brookhaven and his merchants were to go to Hughli on a freighted vessel. It was in 1660 that

36. Schouten ii, 159 f, quoted in Bowrey. 152; Bowrey 152; Hamilton, i, 397. “Purgoe” is described by John Marshall as ‘a great boat of 10 or 15 tunns with their heads very low and sterns very high.’ Marshall 61. Landing took place at the Point of Sand at the river’s mouth. Master II. 67. On Aug. 25 1676, the Johanna’s long boat sank here and on being salvaged it was broken to pieces. J. 300.

experimental trips up the river Hughli by ocean-going vessels were sanctioned by the English E.I. Company.

*Balasore as Ship-building and repairing centre:*

In the 17th Century Balasore was an important ship-building and repairing centre with suitable dockyards, which seemed to have developed further after the advent of the English. In the thirties the English factor Bruton described it as "Bollasorye, a sea-town where shipping was built". In 1634 the Governor of Balasore sold a small unfinished ship of his of about 100 tunns to the E.I.C's servants. The latter completed her construction as quickly as possible, and christened her the *Thomas*. In 1638 the Masulipatam factors (Thomas Clerk and Richard Hudson) instructed Thomas Godfrey, Master of the *Coaster* to proceed to Balasore for re-fitting the ship. They also advised John Yard, the Balasore factor to bring her over to the bar of Balasore and place her in a "Convenient dock for trimming" and to supply the Master with necessary requisites and the crew with good lodging and diet. Robert Seaton, in charge of the accompanying ship, the *Unity*, manned by 15 'blacks', was to be employed in providing timber. If possible a large mast was to be sent to Masulipatam with the *Coaster*. After completion of her repairs, Godfrey was to build a deck on the *Unity*. These operations were expected to be over in about eight months' time (Feb.—Oct.). In 1644 the *Endeavour*, coming from Fort St. George "lost an anchor, beat off her rudder, and some of her sheathing," while passing the bar at Balasore where, it was expected that these damages could be easily repaired. In 1650—1 Captain Durson repaired his damaged *Loyalty* here. But she was totally wrecked by striking a second time in the Balasore bar. So he built a ship of 200 tunns "in partnership with a Moor of Balasore," so as to trade from port to port until his employers sent out another ship to fetch him home along with his goods. In 1676, the Ketches of the English E.I.C. the *Arrival* and *Ganges*, damaged by a storm, were "new masted and rigged" at Balasore and then returned to Hugli (Nov. 27, 29). 38

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38. Wilson I. 9, 12; *EF.* 1634-6. p. 43; 1637-41. p. 51; 1642-45. p. 207; 1651-54. pp. 100, 47, 92; *M.ister,* II. 64, 65.
SECTION B

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY HINDU MERCHANT AND BROKER OF BALASORE

During the seventeenth century the foreign companies in India had necessarily to engage the services of Indian brokers in their business operations. Some of these were influential merchants on their own account and were exceptionally rich and naturally they played a very important, sometimes dominant, part in the commercial life of the country as a whole, besides assisting the foreign companies in their commercial pursuits. Sometimes it is these Indian merchants—Moslem, bania or Chettis—rather than the Dutch and the English factors who controlled the entire wholesale trade in their respective jurisdictions. Virji Vora (Baharji Borah), the merchant-prince of Surat, was reputed to be the richest merchant in the world in the first half of the seventeenth century, having agencies at Ahmadabad, Agra, Burhanpur, Golconda, in Malabar and on the East Coast and trading with Java, Basra and Gombroon. Similarly in the East Coast there was a family or firm of the name Malay centred at Pulpicat and having connections as far south as Negapatam.

An almost similar but less enviable position was held by Khemchand, a Hindu broker and merchant of Balasore in the second half of the seventeenth century. Balasore at that time occupied a position of pre-eminence in the Bay of Bengal, being the seat of the Chief of an English factory and his Council. In the English factory records he is referred to as Chimcham Khemchand, either separately or sometimes along with Chintamund (Chintaman or Chintamani) and some other merchants. Khemchand and Chintaman acted as brokers of the English at
Balasore for many years. But Khemchand was the more important of the two, judging from the frequent notices made regarding him in the factory records, and he was called the “Cheife merchant of Balasore”. In 1669 Khemchand entered into a contract with the English to supply goods to them at Balasore. In Oct. 1670, however, the Hughli factors complained to the Court of Directors: “The Cotton Yarne and Gingham...we have endeavoured this year to redress by drawing their provision out of Chim Chams hands whom we find not fitting to be much longer employed in your business, having been so much exalted by former chiefes who were partakers with him”. Nevertheless, in 1671 and 1672, Khemchand continued to be the “chief merchant at Balasore.” When Nawab Safi Khan, Governor of Orissa, was succeeded by Safshikan Khan in Dec. 1671, the English naturally tried to secure a parwana from the latter regarding their trade privileges. Walter Clavell, the Bay Chief on his way to Hughli, gave a peshkash to the new Nawab; but entrusted the task of securing the parwana to Joseph Hall, in charge of Balasore factory during Clavell’s absence. The parwana was procured through the intervention of the Governor of Balasore; Boremul (possibly Khwaja Bhor Mal, referred to in Alamgirnama as Puran Mal). During this transaction, three factory brokers and “merchants,” Heereehurne (Haricharan), Chimcham (Khemchand) the chief-broker and merchant of the English at Balasore, and Jurradge Shaw (Suraj Shah) accompanied Boremul together with some gifts (2 cases of wine) for the Nawab, the Nawab’s Diwan and other officers which “smoothed the way”.

Of his wealth we can form an idea from the following facts. The new Nawab (called faujdar in factory records), Safshikan Khan, demanded Rs. 30,000 from Khemchand but for his inability to do so on demand he was imprisoned at Cuttack. He returned to Balasore (2 May, 1672) only after giving security for his paying Rs. 10,000 in 17 days and 20,000 in three months. The English factors however wrote: “Chim cham notwithstanding his present troubles he hath estate sufficient to Indemnify our masters and all others which is sufficient.”

2. Spelt as Henry Charnock.
for our proceeding in delivering him this day his share of the 25000 rupees being Rs. 7500". Khemchand was similarly mulcted of Rs. 50,000 by Nawab Rashid Khan in 1674. When Malik Kasim became Governor (i.e. havaladar) of Balasore the English factors regarded him with suspicion as he had already earned a notoriety at Hughli. The Bay Chief (Walter Clavell) and the Council feared that he would trouble the merchants of the place, Chimcham (Khemchand), Roojiram (Rajaram), Callian (Kalyan) Ray, Ram Narain (Narayan) and Gangaram, and force them to wind up their business so that trade would be shifted to Hughli from Balasore.4

In 1673 trade at Balasore was at low ebb. A famine was raging, the government officers were making exactions: the Anglo-Dutch war was dislocating trade and the cash position of the English was very weak. Khemchand was unwilling to purchase the articles of investment of the English without advance of ready money. "Chimcham keeps aloof off and seeing we have no money to advance he is unwilling to take off our goods." Large quantities of broadcloth imported from England lay unsold. Khemchand had Rs. 30,000 worth of broadcloth with him. Similarly lead also could not be sold -owing to the fact that Emperor Aurangzeb and Nawab Shaista Khan of Bengal, being jealous of the Orissa Rajas and Jamadars (subordinate officers) had prohibited sale of lead and other military stores like brimstone or iron guns except to themselves or without their permission. A portion of the unsold quantities of the Company's lead and broadcloth were bartered to Khemchand and other merchants for gingham and other Calicoes, but this caused a financial loss costing about 20% more than ready sale.

In Dec. 1673, Hall, the Balasore factor, was instructed by the Hughli factors that Malik Kasim, the Governor, must pay cash for guns purchased from the Company or that Khemchand should buy them for him in order to avoid difficulties in financial adjustments. Khemchand could have as many as he wanted at eight rupees a maund, but another would-be buyer, Raja Mansing, for whom Khemchand was acting as broker, would have to pay nine rupees a maund.5

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4. Ibid., 377. 5. Ibid. 365.
The credit and influence of Khemchand as a merchant in investment matters and in general was very high. On 30th and 31st August, 1676, Streynsham Master called for the local merchants including Khemchand, their chief, for consultation regarding the investment for that year. They were indifferent whether they dealt with the Company or not, “as they were usually compelled to take broadcloth and lead as part payment, but these could not be easily disposed of. Subsequently the merchants agreed to supply the cloth required at the prices of two previous years and to take half the purchase-money in Europe goods”. Khemchand was ordered to stand security for those whose credit was not high. In 1678 Khemchand and Chintaman refused, to the surprise of the Company’s factors, to stand security for those who supplied goods of the investment. In November, 1678 Khemchand and his fellow merchants secured permission to build a warehouse in the English factory at Balasore “at their own charge”. It was to be used exclusively for the Company’s goods; if, however, it was used for other purposes, the authorities at Hughli were to be informed and their permission was to be taken. In 1679, in a dispute with the Dutch over a house and a piece of land in Balasore, Mr. Edwardes, the local factor, was “to gett the Conges (Kanun-goes) chaup (Chap, stamp) if necessary through the intervention of Khemchand or Cullean (Kalyan) Ray”. In April, 1685 Khemchand and Chintaman Shah were employed by the E. I. Company as their merchants to “cleere for pease sake” (inter-vene in an affair) with the Mughal government.

In spite of growing friction between Khemchand and the E. I. Company’s factors due to financial reasons, the former could impose his own terms on the Company in 1682. “We understand,” they wrote, “Chimcham is mighty hasty and declares if he may not receive they wrote imprest in proportion to his late title of Chiefe merchant that he will none”.

Khemchand had commercial relations with the Indian Archipelago. In March, 1680 a ship of his came to Balasore from Tenasserim with elephants. In this connection it may be pointed out that the King of Siam sent his factor to Balasore in 1672 to trade in elephants and lead. This illustrates Orissa’s

maritime contact with South-east Asia during the period under review.

A gomosta (agent) of his purchased sometime before 1684 huge quantities of Cosses (Cassa, muslin) at Dacca to "the great prejudice of the Company's affairs." The Company regarded this as a violation of the bond. Consequently the Balasore Agent was ordered not to "encourage such villains in making preparations for Interlopers they having engaged by promise and bond to the contrary".

As early as July, 1680 Chintaman was severely reprimanded by the Hugli authorities for "boggling" about a debt he owed to the Company. In 1681 the Hugli Council refused to give Chintaman Shah any share in the Investment because of his private engagements with Nawab Rasheed Khan (sometime Governor of Orissa, 1674). However Khemchand supplied his associate with the proceeds of his own share hoping that the Bay Chief and the Council would pardon him on his representation and continue to employ him as before. In 1685 Chintaman Shah was indebted to the E.I. Company. Having little hopes of recovering the whole amount, the Company thought of attaching and seizing his ships at sea by way of part recovery. When a ship owned jointly by Chintaman and Khemchand arrived in the Balasore Road, it was seized by Captain John Nicholson (16 November, 1686.). Probably Khemchand was already dead by this time and there are no further references to him in the factory records, though the debt of his poorer partner is referred to as late as 1695.7

Khemchand appears to us to be an influential and wealthy merchant and broker of Balasore, the accepted leader or 'chief' and the accredited spokesman and representative of the entire mercantile community of the place. A shrewd and tactful business magnate, he knew his trade well. Not only did he control the wholesale trade of Balasore but he owned ships with which he traded with Bengal and even Tonnserim in South-East Asia, in which he was probably partnered by another merchant and broker, Chintaman. As a broker, Khemchand acted as a link not only between the producers and artisans of the environs and the hinterland of Balasore and the English.

E. I. Company but also between some local Rajas and would-be purchasers and the E. I. Company. Though not always very scrupulous in his relations with the E. I. Company he was nevertheless invaluable to the latter. His influence and intervention were solicited by them in their needs and troubles e.g. procuring a parwana from the Nawab, settling a land dispute with the Dutch, and restoring good relations with the Mughal government. His wealth seemed to have greased and smoothed the way of difficult transactions, but it also made him a 'filled sponge', as it were, in the hands of avaricious governors who sometimes tried not only to mulct him of his riches but also to ruin his trade. His relations with the E. I. C. became strained mainly for financial reasons, including his help to his poorer partner, Chintaman, but the records are abruptly silent regarding the end of this distinguished Hindu broker of Balasore of the second half of the seventeenth century.
SECTION C

ORISSA GOVERNORS AND THE TRADE OF BALASORE (1670-74)

An attempt has been made here on the basis of the European factory records and the accounts and Diaries of European travellers, agents and factors to throw light on the trade of Balasore during 1670-74 with special reference to the factors which affected it.

During this period Balasore enjoyed predominance among the English factories on the Bay of Bengal, being the seat of the Chief and his Council. Even though Hughli was a ‘more convenient trade centre’ than Balasore, owing to dangers of navigation in the estuary of the Ganges, direct shipping to Hughli was not considered feasible by the English East India Company and hence the Bay Council divided its time between Balasore and Hughli. The experiment of shifting the seat of the Bay Council to Hughli (Feb.—Sept. 1670) proved a failure.

The trade of Balasore depended to a large extent on the privileges granted by the Mughal Emperors and Governors, the personal attitudes and predilections of Nawab Shaista Khan, Governor of Bengal, and the English Governor of Balasore. On June 19, 1672, John Smith at Dacca received two parwanas from Shaista Khan, ‘one for establishing free trade, the other for friendship’. “The first and more important of these confirmed the exemption from customs, throughout Bengal and Orissa, of all goods imported and exported by the English Company, ordered help to be given in the recovery of their debts. free passage of boats owned or hired by them, and prohibited all impediment or hindrance to their trade.” This was on the basis of the farmans of Shahjahan, the nishan of Shuja and the parwana of Mir Jumla.

The Bay Chief, Walter Clavell, and his Council were bitter in their condemnation of the ‘regency’ (i.e. the rule) of Shaista Khan for the decline of their trade. Farmans, nishans and parwanas apart, the smooth prosecution of trade depended to a
large extent on administrative stability. Frequent changes in governorships of Orissa and their short tenures proved to be prejudicial to trade. "Governor followed governor in rapid succession and each in turn fell under the displeasure of the Bengal ruler, and each in turn followed the same practice of squeezing as much as possible out of the country and remitting as little as he dared to his master". The English factory records supply us with the names of some of the Governors of Orissa who influenced the destinies of the province during the period under review. They supplement the History of Bengal (vol. II, ed. by Sir. J.N. Sarkar) as regards dates and names and also correct it at some places.

Besides frequent changes of Governors, another factor which caused uncertainty in commerce was the transfer of jurisdictions over Balasore from Orissa to Bengal and vice versa. Again, it was customary for a new Governor to renew the existing privileges. But the business of renewal was usually a troublesome affair. The business operations of both the English and the Dutch factors in and around Balasore were impeded by the various exactions of the Mughal Officers, and by their interference with trade in general and free passage of merchandise in particular.

Safi Khan, Governor of Orissa, earned a bad name for creating difficulties in the country adjoining Balasore. In 1673, the exactions and harassment of local Mughal governors continued to hinder trading operations. The Balasore correspondence gives a very interesting example of a governorship on sale.

The attitude of friendliness shown by Malik Kasim on his arrival at Balasore was suspected because of his past record at Hughli, and the apprehensions of the European factors and the local merchants came to be justified by his actions. Hence the prospects of trade became so uncertain that the two English ships that had come that year would never return and that during his governorship no nation could feel secure about the safety of their ships. To escape from the intolerable situation created by Malik Kasim, the English factors at Balasore tried their best "to procure other aspirants for the governorship", viz., (1) Muhammad Raza and (2) Boremul. It is clear (a) that foreign merchants could intervene not only in politics but also in matters of administrative appointments and had their umo-
axes to grind, and (b) that complaints would not become effective unless backed by bribes. These revealing observations of the English factors throw a searchlight on some of the dark features of the outwardly grand administration of Shaista Khan in Bengal.

So the English factors at Balasore adopted security measures for their goods. But subsequently Elwes was ordered to abandon his effort when it was known that even the Surat President had failed to secure the Emperor’s order prohibiting the Dutch from indulging in measures of hostility against the English on the Indian coasts.

Governor Malik Kasim used his authority and influence in a matter prejudicial to the interests of the English (1673). Thus he earned a very bad name for himself and his credit sank low among businessmen.

Balasore was a convenient halting station for loading and unloading of ships. These used to come during July and September and unload themselves. Then being loaded with articles of investment they used to sail in December. Besides Hughli-Balasore coastal trade there was also Masulipatam-Balasore and Madras-Balasore coastal trade. The chief articles of trade in Balasore were:

(a) Exports: Saltpetre, taffetas, raw silk, sannoes, cotton yarn, turmeric, tincall and dussuttee or coarse sail cloth. Of these saltpetre was the most important single item, the total quantity sent from Hughli in 1671 being 9365 bags.

(b) Imports: lead, broadcloth, quicksilver, vermillion, copper, alum and brimstone.

The prospects of trade were variable in different years depending on various uncertain factors. Finance was one of the eternal stumbling blocks for the Company’s factors at Balasore and others factories as well. So the English factors could purchase articles for their investment only by selling or exchanging broadcloth and other goods, as notwithstanding the difficulty about the requisite cash for purchases no reduction in investment was to take place at Balasore. Natural calamities like floods and famines, sometimes added to the difficulties caused by lack of adequate finances.

The market for sale of the articles imported by the English was generally dull during the period. (1) Broadcloth hardly
commanded any sale. Usually a change of governorship meant a good sale of cloth, but even the arrival of the new Governor, Safshikan Khan (in place of Saifi Khan) in 1671 did not lead to the expected improvement in trade. In 1674 the 'parsimonious nature' of the Mughal officials was also cited by the factors to account for lack of demand of English goods at Balasore.

(2) Lead too, remained unsold, in 1672 and that sold in 1671 lay in the factory, the merchant not carrying them to avoid paying duty, because of two reasons: (a) the attempt of Emperor Aurangzib and Shaista Khan, Nawab of Bengal, to become the sole stockist, i.e., monopoly purchaser of lead and other military stores; (b) Japanese ban on export of silver by the Dutch. Thus the demand for lead, being melted with silver in the mint at Rajmahal, also fell in 1674. Now it came to be used mainly for the manufacture of red lead, so it became very cheap. But quicksilver, vermilion, copper and brimstone were still in great demand.

The state of the market at Balasore and the accumulation of unsold stock in the Company's warehouses proved to be quite a problem to the local factors and they adopted various experiments to deal with it. The glut in the market and the feverish anxiety to dispose them off caused some abuse of trade privileges enjoyed by the Company and its servants in Bengal. Here it will not be out of place to add that the private trade carried on by the Company's factors greatly injured the interests of the Company.

The Anglo-Dutch rivalry was another impediment to furtherance of trade. The outbreak of war affected the rate of exchange. Again, reasons of security demanded that the six English ships should sail together, which meant delay. Thus the Dutch disturbed the trade of the English in 1674. The general glut in the market in that year increased as the goods captured by the Dutch on ships at the battle of Petapoli were not only insultingly shown in court as trophies in war but also sold cheaply, which greatly reduced the prices of corresponding English goods. Later the news of peace changed the situation.

In contrast to all these sickening details, by way of relief, there were some noteworthy features during these five eventful years.
(i) The establishment of a Dyeing industry at Kasimbazar by the English. The Balasore correspondence throws light on the efforts made by the English E.I. Company's dyers to dye cloth at Kasimbazar. Though these were not considered as good as those of France and Italy, orders for Indian black taffeta were given if they were cheap. But a good and cheap method could not be devised, hence it was discontinued. In November, however, orders of the Company were received to provide as many black taffetas as possible. So in March, 1674, on the arrival of Report Cole from Masulipatam a dye-house was built at Kasimbazar. Efforts were made to secure some additional dyeing materials from Persia and England. Two dyers, John Smith (from England) and James Harding (from Madras) also came down to Kasimbazar to assist the dye-house there.

(ii) Trade relations of Balasore with Siam. It is interesting to find that the King of Siam had his factors at Balasore for commercial purposes. The English factors, however, state that Emperor Aurangzeb and Shaista Khan quarrelled with him for selling an elephant to a local Raja. The Siamese factor had a large stock of unsold lead.

The French at Balasore

A few details of the activities of the French at Balasore are available. In 1673 a French sloop driven away from Masulipatam, reached Hughli and was saved by the Governor (of Balasore) from impending capture by the Dutch. Subsequently another French ship, the Flamand, arrived at Balasore and her commander was well received and made much of by the Governor of Balasore, but the same could not save her from being captured by the Dutch. During the Anglo-Dutch war many Frenchmen joined the service of the English E.I. Company, but were later discharged. After the conclusion of peace between the English and the Dutch the French tried to regain their ship, the Flamand, and carried their case to the Dacca Government. But ultimately the vessel was kept by the Dutch "after some trouble and payment to the Nawab and other officials". The French, however, were assuaged with 'good words' and granted freedom to build factories and carry on trade in Bengal. So they constructed a "small house" near the Dutch factory in Hughli (possibly at Chandernagar) but they soon after left the place and
in 1676 it was in the possession of the Dutch.

The Danes at Balasore

The relations between the Danes and the Mughal were hostile since 1640. In July, 1674, the Danes seized four Bengal vessels but two large Danish ships were cast away on the Coromandel coast. Peace was made at the end of the year. Neither party claimed any damages. The Danes were allowed freedom of trade without paying customs and a site to build a factory at Balasore, as well as Rs. 3,000 to help to build it. But the term were not fulfilled and the Danes remained dissatisfied.
CHAPTER 10

THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF THE
MUGHAL EMPIRE AFTER
AURANGZEB'S DEATH.

1. Introduction

The eighteenth century in India constituted a seminal age. For India, as for Europe, it was the grave of one epoch and the cradle of another. It witnessed the rapid political disintegration of the empire of the Great Mughals which had united the greater part of India under one rule, evolved a stable administrative system and encouraged cultural developments in different fields. It had reached its greatest expansion under Aurangzeb but its decadence had already crept in even before he had closed his eyes. True, dissolution did not come immediately after his death. But there was none who could then avert that headlong and inevitable decline. The decline of the monarchy, the repeated wars and struggles for the throne, the bitter party conflicts and rivalries, intrigues, murders and bloodshed, the decline of the peerage and corresponding administrative and military decline, the foreign invasions, the upsurge of the Hindu powers,—the Marathas, the Rajputs, the Sikhs, the Jats and the Bundelas, the rise of independent states in Oudh, Bengal and the Deccan—and, above all, the intervention of the various European Companies and the quickly succeeding political revolutions completely disintegrated the old order in government and administration and made the century a highly complex, tragic and dark age. The Maratha bid for an all-India hegemony and the French bid for supremacy failed, and ultimately the British succeeded in laying the foundations of a new political power by ousting all rivals, Indian and European. Out of the ruins of the old administrative order grew up the foundations of a political system of a new type.

The century which gave a new turn to India's political destiny also witnessed far-reaching and weighty transformations in her economic life, plunging the people of India and more
especially of Bengal into the whirlpool of a mal-adjusted transition. India also felt the political and economic impacts of the pregnant movements of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution which unleashed influences revolutionising political and social and human relations. The end of the eighteenth century in India witnessed the faint glimmer of a new dawn in the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, which started a cultural renaissance, enriching the life of India in manifold ways.

There are standard works on the political history of India in the eighteenth century as also on the economic history of India in the second half of the eighteenth century. But the economic position of the Mughal Empire after 1707 i.e., the first half of the eighteenth century as such has not been adequately treated for the whole of India. In fact it is a neglected

1. The subject has been discussed by scholars like R. C. Dutt (India under early British Rule), Balkrishna (Commercial Relations between India and England, 1601-1757), R. K. Mukherji (Economic History of India, 1600-1800), J. C. Sinha, (Economic Annals of Bengal), S. Bhattacharyya (E. I. C. and the Economy of Bengal, 1704-46), K.K. Dutta (Survey of India's Social Life and Economic Conditions in 18th century, 1707-1813; Alivardi and His Times; Studies in Bengal Subah, Vol. I); N.K. Sinha, (Economic History of Bengal, 3 vols). My indebtedness to them in the preparation of this essay has been considerable. But here the period has been studied from a new angle, namely, its relation with the previous and the subsequent periods, i.e., the second half of the seventeenth and of the eighteenth century respectively. The following categories of original sources throw light on the subject. See Bibliography for details:


(c) Records: Before 1748: Letters to and from the Court of Directors (in typescript, National Archives) (not yet utilised by me). After
chapter in the economic history of India.

With the decline of the Mughal central government and the rise of independent local dynasties in Oudh, Bengal and the Deccan, the effective hold of the empire came to be circumscribed within a small area round the capital, the Delhi and Agra region. This chapter is not, however, a survey of the economic position of the Empire within this circumscribed area only. It is an essay at reviewing certain aspects of the economic conditions of pre-Plassey India as a whole i.e., during the first half of the eighteenth century (C. 1707-57). The picture is plainly checkered, and imperfect; it is checkered because what is true of one region is not always true of another and no uniform description will cover the vast expanse of this sub-continent. It is incomplete because full details of all areas are not available or worked out. It is untrue to say that the economic decline of India set in immediately after Aurangzeb’s death. True, signs of political and economic decadence had crept in even before he closed his eyes. But the age-long economic system could withstand them for nearly fifty years more. Generally speaking, the half-century following Aurangzeb’s death was, in many aspects, a continuation of the economic traditions and tendencies prevailing in the half-century preceding it. In fine the first half of the eighteenth century had a mixed economic legacy, consisting of some good and some pernicious features.

2. Revenue and Finance

Adequate financial resources constitute a source of stability


(d) Reports, Diaries etc.: (i) Firminger, Fifth Rep. rt, (ii) James Grant, Political Survey of Northern Circars. Transmitted by the Bengal Govt. to the Court of Directors in 1786. (iii) Buchanan, afterwards Hamilton (Francis), A journey from Madras through... Mysore, Canara and Malabar..., (iv) The Private Diary of A.R. Pillai, Dubash to J. F. Dupleix. Edited by Sir J. F. Price, vols. 1-3 (1904-14); Vols. 4-9 (1916-1924).

of a state. Progressive weakening of these was a major keynote in the economic condition of the Empire after the death of Aurangzeb. It was not, however, a new development. Signs of economic strain had started already under Shahjahan. The splendid facade of the opulence and magnificence of Shahjahan’s reign concealed a ‘crumbling interior’. The crushing burdens of Shahjahan’s fatuous wars and buildings and of the long wars of 50 years of Aurangzeb’s reign had already taxed the resources of the empire. By taking out the accumulated treasures of his forefathers Aurangzeb exhausted the reserves of the empire and the government faced bankruptcy. Reckless promises of grants of money and command remained unredeemed. Even with the expansion of the empire, there was insufficiency of land for the jagirs needed to meet the demands of the inflated army. 2

The situation was virtually the same under Aurangzeb’s successors. The competition between the different claimants to the throne in the repeated wars of succession led them to make lavish gifts to soldiers and nobles and thereby to pay their adherents. This led to the dwindling of treasury reserves.

Contemporary writers like Khafi Khan and Bhimsen have referred to Bahadur Shah’s reckless grant of jagirs, promotions and rewards (‘khans in every house and Rais in every Bazar’). These threatened either to make the mansabs meaningless (as means for maintaining the required quota were lacking) or to begin the dangerous process of frittering away khalsa lands. Even clerks secured high mansabs, comments Bhimsen. Aurangzeb’s diwan Inayetullah cried out in despair: “How can a limited figure (of land) be made to equal an unlimited one (officers’ contingents)”. An alarmed and strict Arz i-mukarrar (Ikhlas Khan) bewailed to Bahadur Shah’s Wazir (Munim Khan) that owing to the unwise prodigality of the Emperor even the whole world would be insufficient for rewarding his favourites with jagirs, and suggested an enquiry into the suitability of the appointees.

2. EF (1655-60), Intro; Sakrena, Shahjahan; Sarker, Aurangzib, V. ch. 62.
But who would bell the cat? That unpalatable task was entrusted to historian Md. Saqi Mustaid Khan. But checking and certifying all applications before the Arz-i-mukarrar forwarded them to the Wazir was a—time absorbing process. So the two leading queens and persons near the Emperor began to circumvent it by securing the royal signature even before the enquiry. The revenue department did not heed such (irregular) grants. The King instructed mutasuddis to do what was proper without heeding his signature, which lost its value. A strange spectacle indeed.

The mansabdars had to face great difficulties in maintaining the fixed number of animals. The income of jagirs, lying deserted and uncultivated, was uncertain. There was a scramble for jagirs: ‘one pomegranate among a hundred sick’ as Khafi Khan puts it. To remedy the situation Munim Khan made the upkeep of the animals a central responsibility and relieved the mansabdars altogether from its burden. But this increased the central responsibility and in view of Bahadur’s over—generousness in granting jagirs it was doubtful if the lands released by the nobles could be kept as khalsa. The burden on the imperial treasury grew. The accumulated treasures of previous generations amounting to 13 crores coined and uncoined gold and silver stocked in Agra fort in 1707 came to be exhausted by 1712. “The income of the Empire during his (Bahadur Shah’s) reign was insufficient to meet the expenses, and consequently there was great parsimony shown in the government establishments, but specially in the royal household, so much so that money was received everyday from the treasury of Prince Azimus-Shan to keep things going.” (KK). The salary of the artillery men in the royal retinue (wala-shahis) was six months in arrears. The reforms of Munim Khan failed to remedy the situation. Thus Bahadur Shah’s reign witnessed a grave deterioration in the financial situation and accentuated the crisis of the Jagirdari system.

3. Bhimsen 167a; Harcharandas 17; Khafi Khan, 628-30, 602-3, 683. Akhbarat. (26-10-1711);
Irvine, Later Mughals, i. 138-39; Army of the Indian Mughals, 22; Sitish Chandra, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, Ch. 2. The comparative revenue figures of the Mughal Government were as follows:
i. 1594 (Ain) Rs. 13, 21, 36, 831 (15 subah
The situation worsened under Jahandar Shah. The established rules of business were disregarded. *Ijarah* (revenue-farming) even of *khalsa* lands, became universal. (Warid,). The Government came to deal with revenue—farmers, officials and middlemen. The latter were free to collect what they could from the peasant, leading to rackrent and oppression of the people. With dwindling actual revenues there was a widening difference between the real and paper income of *jagirs*. The *mansabdari* system ultimately broke down.

Zulfiqar Khan went further than Munim Khan, by forbidding grant of sanads and increments in rank to a mansabdar before verification of his claims, by compelling the mansabdars to maintain their fixed quota of troops and by enforcing the regulations regarding the musters (*Akhbarat*). But these rules also were disregarded and royal favourites got liberal grants and mansabs.

The factious divisions in the Court encouraged Zamindars and unruly elements to withhold revenue. The Marathas began to realise practically half the revenues of the Deccan. Around Agra and Lahore the Jats and the Sikhs created disturbances.4

Administration deteriorated further under Farrukhsiyar. Ratan Chand, the diwan of Abdullah, grew so influential in the revenue department as to nullify the *Diwan-i-Khalsa* and *Diwan-i-Tan*. By leasing the revenues of *khalsa* and *jagir* lands to the highest bidders he amassed a huge profit for his master but the revenue of the state from both kinds of lands declined. A newly appointed *amil* had to give a contract or lease in writing to Abdullah who realised the money from the person’s banker. As the practice was destructive of the prosperity of the district Farrukhsiyar wanted Abdullah to abandon it and

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ii. 1648 (Badshahnamah) Rs. 21,15,00,000/- (19 subahs)
iii. 1695 (Khulasat ut Tawarikh) Rs. 20,12,76,425 (17 subahs)
iv. 1700 (Dastur ul amal ?) Rs. 33,68,16,584 (20 subahs)
v. 1707 (Ramusio) Rs. 29,77,876 (20 subahs)
vi. 1720 (? Chahar Gulshan) Rs. 29,40,76,776 (19 subahs omitting Orissa).

The estimates of Thomas are based more on external testimony than on state documents. Sarkar, *India of Aurangzib*.

4. Warid (AUL) 6; *Akhbarat* (32.2.1712; 4.7.1712); as given in Satish Chandra, ch. 3.
to make all appointments amani, involving complete accounting for gross receipts and expenses and for the resulting balance. But in vain.

The widening gulf between the real and paper income of the jagirs increased the hardship of the jagirdars and worsened the administrative and financial organisation. Successive attempts at reform proved abortive. With a view to their partial relief, Lutfullah Khan, Diwan-i-Tan, began to grant cash stipends instead of jagirs to smaller mansabdars of ranks varying between 50 and 1000. But the very low amount and irregular payment of the stipends led many to discontinue maintaining any suwars and to send false reports in collusion with the mutasaddis.

To improve the financial position of the empire, which had worsened due to revenue farming, growing lawlessness and administrative laxity, Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri, Diwan-i-Tan, began a thorough investigation (1717) into the titles to mansabs, calculation of salaries and yield of jagirs of subordinate officials, Hindu or Hindustani (Indian Muslim), courtiers and imperial favourites. "Hindus, eunuchs and Kashmirians, by craft, cheating and oppression, had got possession of mansabs (beyond their deserts) and accumulated in their hands the most profitable (Sair hasil) jagirs, with the result that there was a scarcity of jagirs for the others".

After his return to Delhi in 1723 the Nizam submitted a scheme of reform, viz.

(i) appointment of only fit nobles and soldiers;
(ii) discontinuance of farming of khalisah lands;
(iii) redistribution of jagirs and resumption of khalisah lands (given in jagirs).
(iv) prohibition of bribe taking and
(v) re-levy of the jazya.

But it could not be implemented.

All this produced a great socio-economic transformation. While bribe-giving and bribe-taking flourished from top to bottom in an ever-increasing degree in the guise of presents and peshkash, reflecting the depths of administrative degradation, nepotism and favouritism sapped the foundations of financial stability. "None, except, Barhas and banias", says Khafi Khan, "found any favour under Ratan Chand", who, in the words
of the contemporary Khushal Khan, "replaced the principles of kingship by the principles of shopkeeping", i.e., put everything on sale. Courtiers and royal favourites grabbed the most profitable and easily manageable jagirs. Even khalisah lands were given away as assignments. Men of low ranks whether of the Diwani or the Bakhshi or the Khan-i Samani office had become mansabdars and obtained jagirs. People belonging to old families had been reduced to the dust". Farming of revenue (ijarah) resulted in rack-renting, impoverishment of the peasantry and fall in revenue. The realisation of land revenue, never a peaceful affair, became more and more a kind of military operation during which villages were devastated and large number of peasants were massacred. There was no money to pay the soldiers and many mansabdars on cash salaries, unable to maintain themselves and their contingents, took to trade and other professions. New social classes began to grow,—bankers, contractors and revenue agents. Old nobles of ancient families came to be overshadowed by these new social classes and began to spend their time in poverty and unemployment. "The nobility of every province carried on their existence in disgrace and disgust" as Khafi Khan writes. 5

The economic impoverishment of the Empire due to internal causes was aggravated by the foreign invasions. Nadir's annexation of the trans-Indus provinces and the whole of Afghanistan, followed soon by the loss of the Punjab, was a crippling blow to the already dwindling resources of the Empire. Further he plundered the treasure of the richest empire in Asia, as well as men and animals. Estimates differ. But Sir Jadunath Sarkar estimated the indemnity at 15 krores of rupees in cash besides jewellery, rich clothing and furniture with 50 krores more, besides the Kohinoor and Peacock throne.

While the Emperor and the nobles were being squeezed of their wealth, the starving general public did not escape and had to pay even during famine. A contribution of one half of their property was fixed on all the well-to-do citizens and a total of 2 krores (according to Shakir and Anandram, more acceptable; 4 krores according to Hanway) was ordered to be

5. Khafi Khan, 773, 775, 902, 947; Kamwar, 405; Yahya, 123b; Khushal, 339, 102; Akbarat (17.4.1713): Ibratnamah 70a; Warid 8-9; Siyar, 458; Irvine, I. 335-6; Satish Chandra, Ch 5, 7.
raised from this source. Anandram was assessed 5 lakhs and he has left a graphic amount of the method of extortion (Irvine, II, 372-3). The city was divided into 5 sections and lists of different mahallas with names of inhabitants and the individual amounts were given to five nobles of both governments as collectors—the Nizam, Wazir, Azimullah Khan, Sarbuland Khan and Murtaza Khan—to save the people from ruin. The assessment was made in the law court in the presence of the public. After the assessment pressure was put to pay; delay or objection led to insult or torture; floors of houses were dug up in search of buried treasure. No barbarities were left unpractised. Many committed suicide.

The drain in one invasion of Nadir was continued by Ahmad Shah Abdali in his subsequent invasions (1747-1770).

The loss of important strategic and rich territories, the Chahar Mahals (Gujarat, Aurangabad, Pasrur and Sialkot) with a revenue of 14 lakhs (during the second invasion, 1749-50) the the conquest of the Punjab, Multan and Kashmir (3rd invasion, 1751-2 and the annexation of Sarhind (4th invasion, 1756-7) meant not only a political amputation but also inflicted an economic drain, weakening the resources of the empire and whetting the appetite and ambition of the invader.

This was swelled by the drain of treasure, cash and materials. In January, 1757 Delhi, the capital of the Indian continent, was without a single defender and it fell a victim to an epidemic of lawlessness and was subjected to merciless plunder. The squeezing of Delhi was "methodical official spoliation as distinct from unauthorised occasional looting." Imad-ul-Mulk Wazir was disgraced for not handing over gold and jewels; Intizam-ud-daulah, ex-Wazir, was asked to produce one crore of rupees on threat of being put to pillory. Highly overawed, he said that the buried treasure of his father (Wazir Qamruddin) was known to Sholapuri Begam (daughter-in-law of one grand wazir, widow of another and mother of a third), totalling 16 lakhs in coins, besides golden, silver and gem-studded vessels, which were found under the floor. No noble was spared spoliation. The Mughlani Begum "acted as informer" and rose very high in Abdali's favour (regarded as his son and then entitled Sultan Mirza). In a house to house levy the Delhi populace were deprived of all their riches and men and
women were tortured to death. Hiranand Johri, prince of jewellers, was reduced to beggary. The enormous booty taken has been differently valued by contemporary reporters at 3, 4, 9 and even 12 krores of rupees and required a huge transport. (Fall, II, 127-30).  

3. Agriculture

The agrarian structure of the Mughal Empire had been under a heavy strain long before the death of Aurangzeb. High assessment in Khalisah lands, more oppression in jagir lands, the flight of peasants and decline in cultivation were some of the tendencies revealed by Aurangzeb's revenue regulations even during the first decade of his reign. The appalling economic drain of Aurangzeb's ceaseless Deccan warfare was paralleled by destruction of forests, trees and grass, extinction of herds of cattle and ruin of pastoral tribes and peasants. Desolation overtook the prosperous E. Karnatak and Madras coast, Khandesh, Berar and Konkan where ordinarily grain was remarkably cheap. Regular armies apart, the cultivators were oppressed by the tail of the Mughal army and the brigands in the trail of the Maratha army as well as by the land stewards of rival jagirdars. Bengal, however, enjoyed comparative peace and stable government under Murshid Quli and his successors.  

As in the previous period agriculture continued to be the "most important element" in the life of the people during the first half of the 18th century. What Milburn wrote in 1813 may be equally applicable to this period. "Agriculture is conducted in India with the most frugal simplicity. The necessaries of life are cheaper than in any other commercial country, and cheaper in Bengal than in any other province of India". In fact Bengal with her fertile soil and navigable rivers, seemed, according to Dow (c. 1770), to be 'marked out by the hand of nature as the most advantageous region of the earth for


7. Maasir i Alamgiri (Eng. Tr.) 414 ; Storia, IV. 252, 96 ; Bhimsen ii, 114a, 136b ; Madras F. R ; Revenue Regulations of Aurangzib in Sarkar, Mughal Administration (5th ed.) ; Sarkar, Aurangzib, V. Ch. 62 ; History of Bengal II, ch. XXI ; Karim, Murshid Quli Khan and his Times.
agriculture'.

There was localisation of crops to a large extent, as well as internal distribution. Rice and sugar were cultivated in Bengal and Bihar and transported to other parts. Indigo, which was produced extensively in the Agra-Gujrat region and Central India, was also grown in Bengal and Bihar in 18th century. Cotton was grown in the Upper provinces with its favourable soil; poppy in Bihar, Banaras and Ramghur; jute in Bengal and North Bihar; mulberry and hemp in Bengal. Of these cotton indigo, sugar and opium represented what may be described as commercialised agriculture.

Nevertheless, it is significant that as in the 17th century, so in the first half of the 18th century also, the condition of the cultivators was none too good. Lacking initiative and spirit of enterprise, unable to adapt new methods for improving their condition, lacking adequate capital and subject to heavy incidence of rent and perpetually indebted, they had no power of resistance against natural calamities like famines, floods and droughts (cf. famine of 1770).

4. Industries

As in agriculture so in the field of industrial organisation the first half of the 18th century exhibited certain features characteristic of the 17th century.

In the first place there were extensive and varied manufacturers,—cotton and silk textiles and indigo, sugar, opium, saltpetre, salt, jute etc., metallic industries like manufactures of iron, glass, arms etc. and minor industries like construction of boats, manufacture of ice, oils, drugs, perfumes, etc.

The premier industries were the cotton and silk manufactures, organised on domestic basis like most others. "On the coast of Coromandel and in the province of Bengal, when at some distance from the high road or a principal town, it is difficult to find a village in which every man, woman or child is not employed in making a piece of cloth" (Orme, Hist. Frag). In fact every weaver's house looked like a workshop and there

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8 Milburn, Oriental Commerce, II. 270; Dow, Hindostan, I.cxxxvi.
9 Orme, Indoston II, Sec the first, p. 4; Moreland and Geyl, Th Remonstrantie of Francesco Pelsaert, 10-18.
was hardly any village without such weaving centres.\textsuperscript{10}

In the second place there was coordination between agriculture and industries: the "vacation from agriculture" enabled "a much greater number of the inhabitants than can be spared in others, at leisure to apply themselves to the loom, so that more cotton and silk are manufactured in Bengal than in thrice the same extent of country throughout the empire and consequently at much cheaper rates" (Orme).\textsuperscript{11}

Thirdly, specialisation in different handicrafts and resultant proficiency of the respective craftsmen. Bernier's observations regarding rigid adherence to one's hereditary profession are echoed by Stavorinus: "Artificers confine themselves to one single work . . . . a goldsmith will not work in silver, nor a silversmith in gold. In the aurungs or looms, a weaver will only weave one single sort of stuff during the whole life unless he be compelled to take another in hand."\textsuperscript{12}

Fourthly, the karkhanas or manufactories maintained by the Great Mughals at important places for supplying their needs or those of official aristocracy seemed to have lingered up till the middle of the eighteenth century. What Abul Fazl and Bernier have said about these are faintly echoed by Foster: "The Native Princes, and chiefs of various description, the retainers of numerous dependents, afforded a constant employment to a vast number of indigenous manufactures, who supplied their masters with gold and silver stuffs, curiously flowered, plain muslins and diversity of beautiful silks and other articles of Asiatic luxury".\textsuperscript{13}

These disappeared gradually.

Weavers were not wholly concentrated in European settlements, though the Europeans were the chief buyers of cloths woven by them. The Court of Directors, as also its servants in Bengal, tried to encourage weavers to reside under their protection within the bounds of Calcutta (From Court: 31-1-1755: 11-2-1756).\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{10} K. K. Dutta, Bengal Subah I. 431-6; Orme, Historical Fragments. 409.

\textsuperscript{11} Orme, Indostan, II. 4.

\textsuperscript{12} Bernier (Constable), 259: Stavorinus, Voyage to the East Indies, I. 411, 474.

\textsuperscript{13} Ain i Akbari (Philott) i. 12; Bernier, 258-9; Foster, Journey. . . I. 4.

\textsuperscript{14} N. K. Sinha, I. 157,
Commanding a world-wide market, Indian textiles (cotton and silk manufactures) maintained their reputation throughout the first half of the eighteenth century as in the seventeenth. Centres of textile industry were scattered widely in different parts of the country, viz.,

(i) *Surat* manufactured “finest Indian brocades, the richest stuffs of all kinds, calicoes and muslins”.  

(ii) *Ahmadabad* manufactured “brocades of gold and silver, carpets with flowers of gold, though not so good as the Persian velvets, satins and taffetas of all colours, stuffs of silk linen and cotton”. It was the emporium of “people of all nations” and of “all kinds of mercantile goods throughout Asia”. Raynal found “the printed calicoes” of Ahmadabad to be as “fine and durable” as those of the Coromandel coast and consumed in Java, Sumatra and the Molucca islands, Persia, Turkey and Europe. 

(iii) Burhanpur (in Khandesh).

(iv) Chanderi (in Malwa).

(v) The East Coast: “In regard to manufactures, the staple produce of the country worked from cotton is of two different sorts and fineness. Plain long cloth, so valuable at foreign markets, is chiefly wrought in the island of Nagaur (?) and its vicinity, where the manufactures have always found a sure asylum from the ravages of war: it forms the groundwork of the best printed calicoes in Europe, and of the inimitable painted ones called palampores in the districts of Masulipatam. The coarser plain cloths made to the north and south of the Godavari or coloured with chayroot...are equally articles in vast demand abroad, or for interior consumption. But the muslins of Chicacole; the beautiful woollen carpets of Ellore and silks of Burrampore in Jehapoor (?) wrought from raw materials imported from Bengal or China are rather objects of curiosity and meriting encouragement”. Vizagapatam produced large

quantities of piecegoods.  

(vi) **Mysore**: The manufactures of Bangalore in the time of Haidar Ali were numerous” (according to Buchanan) and of several varieties, e.g., thin white muslins with silk borders, plain green muslins with silk borders, and coloured striped muslins with silk borders &c.” The weavers of this place seemed to him “to be a very ingenious class of men, and with proper encouragement to be capable of making very rich, fine, elegant cloths of any kind that may be in demand”. At the time of Buchanan’s survey (1800-1805) there were 459 looms in the districts of Coimbatore, and fine cloths of several species were manufactured there.  

(vii) The Uttar Pradesh: (Jaunpur, Benares &c): The calicoes of Awadh commanded a ready market in London during the first half of the 17th century. The English E.I.C. established a factory at Lucknow in 1640 for supply of cotton pieces known as *derribauds* (woven at Daryabad near Bara Banki), *Kerriabauds* (woven at Khairabad etc.), *echbaryes* (favoured by Akbar). The Company also purchased calicoes called *mercoolis* manufactured on a large scale in Western Awadh. The industry continued to flourish in the period under review. Khairabad and Daryabad remained centres of manufacture of calico, chintz and *gazi* (white coarse cloth like *khaddar*). The province of Banares manufactured excellent *chintz*.

Shahzadpur in Allahabad was famous for its chintz and coarse cotton cloths and some time before our period it supplied tents, canopies and screens to the Mughal Emperors. The latter industry, however, declined during the 18th century.

The “making of chintz appears to be an original art of India long since invented, and brought to so great a pitch of

17. James Grant, *Political Survey of the Northern Circars, Transmitted by the Bengal Govt. to the Court of Directors*, 1786, quoted in Firminger, *Fifth Report*, III. 8; Milburn, *Oriental Commerce*, II. 90.

In the Deccan trade was almost at a standstill from c. 1680. Arts, Crafts and industries practically died out in the prevailing insecurity. The Mughal-Maratha conflict in the Karnatak (1650-8) so unsettled the weavers coast that the English could not get enough goods for export. (Aurangzib, V. 363-5). About the beginning of the 18th century the old Madras industry of painting calicoes or manufacturing chintz was decaying through want of a market. Love, *Vestiges of Madras*, II. 43.

excellence, that the ingenuity of artists in Europe has hitherto added little improvement, but in the superior elegance of the patterns”. (Ward).19

(viii) Bihar had a tradition of cotton manufacture in the seventeenth century. It continued in the 18th also and did not die out in early 19th century.

According to Stavorinus “printed cottons, commonly called chintzes (chhits) were “not manufactured” in Bengal “except near Patna and were called “Patna chintzes”. Cotton cloths, and carpets of various patterns, such as satronchi, dulica and galica were manufactured in different parts of Bihar (Vijayram).20

(ix) Orissa was noted for manufacture of cloth.21

(x) Bengal “produced cloth of all kinds, most beautiful muslins, silk, raw or worked” (Hill). (a) Bengal’s cloth manufacture, the vast quantity and superb quality of which were so eloquently described by seventeenth century foreign travellers like Pelsaert and Bernier and European factors, were found by Pattullo even about 1772 to possess a peculiar quality of their own which “no nation on the globe can either equal or rival”. Both Holwell and Stavorinus have referred to the weaving manufactories being “dispersed throughout the country”, each district of Bengal specialising in the manufacture of a distinct type of cloth, fit for particular markets of the world.

The premier position in Bengal was held by Dacca, with its vast trade in cotton cloths ranging from delicate muslins (so fine that a 20 yards piece could be enclosed in a common packet tobacco-box) to coarse thick wrappers. Europeans wondered at the ‘extra-ordinary niceness’ of these manufactures done with a few ‘trifling’ and ‘humble’ tools. The cloths were classified in the Company’s factory as “ordinary, fine, superfine, and fine superfine”. Dacca was also famous for her embroidery and flowering works. Abbe de Guyon (1744) found the Dacca embroideries in gold, silver or silk and embroidered neckcloths and fine muslins to be the best and finest seen in France.

19. Srivstava, First Two Nawabos of Oudh; Ward; From Akbar to Aurangzeb, 127-8; Moreland.


To feed the numerous looms with their prodigious output, raw cotton had to be imported from Bombay and Surat, Nagpur, Mirzapur and Farukkabad, as a supplement to that produced in large quantities in Dacca and other parts of Bengal.  

Silk: Records of the English E.I.C. contain copious references regarding the purchase of silk by them at Cassimbazar. During the 17th century India and specially Bengal had a highly developed silk industry. The silk manufacturers were cheap and yet of good quality. Hence these were exported to England (by the East India Co.) and also to the Asiatic markets. The Company’s trade in Bengal silk showed increase after the establishment of English factories at Malda and Cassimbazar. Bernier (1666), Tavernier (1666) and Streynsham Master (1675-80) referred to the silk weaving industry of Cassimbazar. According to Grose Cassimbazar supplied in mid-18th century 22,000 bales of silk a year, each bale weighing 100 lbs. i.e., 22,00,000 lbs. A few years later Rennell found it to be ‘the general market for Bengal silk’ and a centre of manufacture of ‘a great quantity of silk’, which was ‘circulated throughout greater part of Asia, while 3,00,000 or 4,00,000 lbs weight of its unwrought silk’ was ‘consumed in the European manufactures’. The manufacturers of Bengal (cotton, silk etc.) were transported to remotest parts of India.

Outside Bengal Aurangabad was reputed for manufacture of mixed silk and cotton brocaded cloths, and Gujrat for silk manufactures.

Of the various articles of export from India to Europe in the 17th century indigo at first occupied the first place in order of importance. For the English E.I. Company it was the ‘prime-
commodity’ (in the words of Sir Thomas Roe) of export to England. But its export gradually declined owing to the competition of West Indian indigo and ceased altogether from 1724. However, after the discontinuance of indigo production by the British colonies in the West Indies about the middle of the 18th century, England got the supply from America. When this source dried up with the American War of Independence, England’s demand of Indian Indigo revived, leading to its large-scale cultivation and manufacture by the European planters.24

Down to the first decade of the 19th century (c.1813) the manufacture of sugar ranked as the third industry after cotton and silk in Bengal. Sugar manufactured in Bengal and Bihar by the indigenous process of manufacture was so large that after meeting the needs of local consumption it was also exported to Europe, Africa, America and some Asiatic countries. About 1756 the annual export of sugar from Bengal amounted to 50,000 mds., yielding a profit of about 50%. The total foreign exchange earned in 20 years was Rs. 60,00,000 (Milburn. II, 270). (This gives the price of Rs. 6 a md.)25

Manufacture of saltpetre continued to be one of the principal industries of India during the period under review. Being an ingredient for the manufacture of gunpowder it was highly prized by the European traders during the 18th century wars. Bihar retained its primacy as a source of its large-scale supply.26

The cultivation of opium was neither encouraged nor restricted by the Mughals. But the enormous profits of the suppliers of opium to the European traders (in Chinsura, Chandernagore and Calcutta) taught them that they also could raise revenue out of this trade and they granted monopoly of purchase of opium

24. Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzib, 100-118; Milburn, II. 213-4; J.C. Sinha, 178; N.K. Sinha I. 198, 206.

25. Stavorinus, I. 129-30; Ward, I. 83-85; Milburn, II. 270. (petition of Calcutta merchants to Govt. 1776).

26. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, The Saltpetre Industry and Trade of India in the 17th century, JBORS, (1937, 1939; IHQ. 1938; JIH, 1941); Buchana, Journey. II. 316; N.K. Sinha, I. Ch. X, 212 ff; Patna was the chief centre for its distribution, though for its manufacture and collection the Europeans had factories at some other places in Bihar, much as Singbia, (near Lalganj in the Hajipur Sub-division), Chapra, Chowndey, and Fatwa. The purchases were made through contracts with merchants like Omichand, Dipchand and Khawaja Wajid; Dutta, Fort William-India House Correspondence, I. Xlii, 93; Survey etc. 93.
to a favoured person or persons in return for an annual sum. Such a monopoly existed in Patna and its neighbourhood in the 17th century. Evidently it died out during 1739-67 but the tradition lingered, and the European traders could not at first break through the practical monopolistic control of the ‘ring of rich opium dealers’ of Patna and deal directly with poppy cultivation. The export trade in opium to Ceylon, Malacca Straits, and the Malay Archipelago was controlled by the Dutch. It was only after 1757 that the English E.I.C. came to enjoy the monopoly in opium trade i.e. since 1761, and they threw this trade in the hands of their servants at the Patna factory in 1765. Opium monopoly was “a principal branch of the E.I.C.’s territorial revenue in India”. 27

5. European trading Companies

It was in the field of commercial policy that the Mughal Empire displayed complete bankruptcy of economic wisdom. The most important event in the history of the E.I. Co. in the 18th century before Plassey, the farman of Farrukhisiyar in 1717, might be termed the Magna Carta of the English trade in India. But by giving unqualified rights of trade to the English in Bengal denied to other merchants, Indian or foreign, by virtually conferring extra—territorial privileges, affecting the Mughal sovereignty, it paved the way for the establishment of commercial and political supremacy of the English in India. The continuance of duty—free trade in Bengal and Gujrat on an annual payment of Rs. 3,000/- was a huge loss of revenue of the government, and its subsequent evasion through abuse of dastaks augmented the loss and introduced additional troubles.

Though guilty of successful defiance of the farman, in some respects, the Bengal Nawab, Murshid Quli, was certainly shrewder and wiser than the Emperor or his wazir (Abdullah Khan) in as much as the former realised that acknowledgment of concessions and privileges like the possession of 38 riparian villages and use of the mint would make the English too strong...
in the country. 28

The first half of the 18th century marked the increasing pre-eminence of one European power, the English, in the commercial sphere and the growing elimination of the competition of their rivals.

(a) The decline of Portuguese continued after the sack of Hughli in 1632. “Their trade was not worth mentioning” (Clavell to Master 15.12.1676). In the first half of the 18th century they lost all political importance, having scattered settlements but no organised factories. Many eeked out their living by serving as soldiers in the Mughal or E.I.C.’s army.

(b) The decline of the Dutch, the most formidable opponents of the English in the first half of the 17th century, began in the second half. In the eighteenth century they lost their position as a political and commercial power in India as a whole and especially Bengal, notwithstanding the payment of high dividends and apparently prosperous Bengal trade in the thirties of the 18th century. True, the farman of 1717 enabled the English to outstrip them, but the Dutch had to thank themselves for this: the ignorance, lack of imagination and adaptability of their Directors; their complex organisation and financial structure at home; their bad diplomacy, all stood in the way of securing advantages commensurate with their expenditure as nazrana of Rs. 51,32,000/- (besides usual customs duties at 2½%) during 1676—1760, while their preoccupations with trade in Indonesia, Cochin, Travancore, Malabar and Ceylon prevented them from pursuing their interests in Bengal effectively. Nevertheless, they retained their lead in opium export.

(c) Though more aggressive than the Dutch, the French were decidedly inferior to the English in position. However, they improved their position during the first 40 years of the 18th century. A Mughal parwana of 1722 equated them with the Dutch (by reducing the duty from 3½ to 2½%) while the Nawab’s parwana of 1737 conferred certain currency privileges, by which they could use the mint to coin Arcot rupees on the same terms as the Dutch on payment of Rs. 50,000/. Dupleix as Governor

of Chandernagore (1732-42), developed Bengal's Asiatic trade, —with Mocha, Manila, Achin, Pegu, Canton and Persia and created a mercantile marine of 15 or 20 vessels at Chandernagore. But even by 1742 the French lagged behind the English in Bengal.

(d) Owing to a dispute with Nawab Murshid Quli in 1714 the Danes had to abandon their factories, but came back to Serampore in 1755 with the permission of Alivardi.

(e) The Ostend Co. was formally established in August 1723 by Emperor Charles VI of Austria authorising the Flemish merchants to trade in the East Indies. Thanks to the permission of Murshid Quli, who was opposed to exclusive influence of any foreign power and desirous of having a competitive market for the European settlements in Bengal, the Company built factories at Bankibazar on the eastern bank of the Hugli and at Kasimbazar, then the most important commercial centre in Bengal. But its career was short-lived and its importance in the economic and political history of Bengal ended by 1734.29

6. Commerce

Pre-Plassey India had active internal and inter—provincial trade as well as profitable external commerce (with Asia, Africa and Europe).

(a) Asiatic and African trade:

Bombay was an important mart of India. It had trade relations with—(i) Basra, Muscat,Ormuz and other ports in the Persian Gulf, (ii) Arabia, (iii) China, (iv) Java, Malacca & Sumatra, (v) Madagascar, Comorro Islands, Mozambique and other ports of East Africa. This valuable trade was carried on by ships owned by European and Indian merchants, settled at Bombay, irrespective of the E.I.C.s trade.30

Bengal, with her natural advantages,—luxuriant soil, genial climate and industry of the people, and the facility of cheap water transport,—was remarkable for her external and inland commerce as in the past. Bernier vividly described the

29. Sukumar Bhattacharya, Ch. 3; N.K.Sinha I. Ch. 2, 3, 4; K.K. Dutta, The Duch in Bengal and Bihar, 1740-1825.
30. Forbes, Oriental Memoirs, I. 96,153-4; Bombay in the days of Queen Anne.
flourishing commerce of Bengal in rice, sugar, cotton cloths and silk stuffs, a century before Plassey i.e., in mid—17th century. The balance of trade was in her favour in the pre-Plassey period: Bengal was “the sink where gold and silver disappeared without the least prospect of return” (Dow). “The immense commerce of Bengal”, was “the central point to which the riches of India were attracted... Specie flowed in by thousand channels... the Gulfs (of Mocha and Persia) poured in their treasures into this river (The Ganges)” (Verelst).

The exports of Bengal were carried to different countries in Asia and Africa: (i) the Laccadive and Maldives islands, (ii) almost all eastern countries of Asia,—China, Pegu, Manilla, Malaya and Philippine islands, (iii) Gulf of Persia and the Red Sea, (iv) the coast of Africa, and (v) Tibet. To Bengal flocked annually numerous Persians, Abyssinians, Arabs, Chinese, Turks, Moors, Jews, Georgians, Armenians and some other Asiatic merchants for her manufactures and agricultural products,—‘with what they could not well be without’; —cotton and silk manufactures, raw silk, foodstuffs (rice, wheat and sugar), opium and spices (ginger, turmeric, long pepper &c.). Just before 1756 Bengal’s annual export of sugar was about 50,000 mds. yielding a profit of 50%. Subsequently wheat was discouraged to help the corn trade of the Cape of Good Hope. 31

(b) Inter-provincial Trade

The vitality of the inter-provincial trade of India and especially of Bengal till mid—18th century has been universally testified to by all contemporary and later writers, Holwell, Vansittart, Verelst, Bolts, Orme and others.

“The varied and extensive commerce which exists in Indostan, both by sea and land is more than can be imagined by those who are unacquainted with the multiplicity and value of the productions of this wealthy empire, the high roads are full of caravans; the navigable rivers of boats; the sea coasts of barques; and ships with the richest cargoes make voyages

from one part of the kingdom to another". (Orme). Bengal was frequented annually by a variety of merchants "such as Kashmirians, Multanis, Pathans, Sheikhs, Sannyasis, Poggyahs (Puggiah merchants from Delhi and Agra), Bhutias and many others...in cafelas or large parties of many thousands, together with troops of oxen, for the transport of goods from different parts of Hindustan" (Bolts). The Kashmiri merchants used to advance money to the *molunghess* of Sunderbans for working saltpans, and to trade with Tibet through agents in Bengal. A trade between Bengal and Nepal was carried on by Kashmiri and Armenian traders (KT). The cheap salt of Bengal was carried to Nepal, Assam and also to Benares and Mirzapur and and thence to Bundelkhand and Malwa. Verelst ascribed the prosperity of Bengal before Plassey to three things,—cheapness quality and the prodigious traffic of her manufactures. Besides the large investments of the different European nations, the Bengal raw silk, cloths, etc., to a vast amount were dispersed to the West and North inland as far as Gujrat, Lahore, and even Ispahan" (To Court, 5.4.1769). 32

(c) *Indian Merchants*

The seventeenth century tradition of individual merchants like Virji Vora (Baharji Borah) of Surat and Malaya of the East coast controlling the wholesale trade of particular regions seemed to have been kept up during the first half of the 18th century. Indians continued to participate as investors and carriers of the then flourishing external and internal trade of India. In the East Coast there were, among others, merchants like Kanakaraya Mudali, Ananda Ranga Pillai, Seshachala Chetty and others. Merchants from Bengal used to visit various places in Northern India—Kashmir, the Punjab, Gujrat, Malabar and the Coromandel Coast, Assam and Cachar. In Bihar the Europeans made their purchases of saltpetrs through contracts with merchants like Omichand, Dipchand and Khwaja Wajid. Some Indian merchants and bankers played an active part in politics as well,—Jagat Seths and Umichand in Bengal and Arjunji

32. Orme, *Fragments*, 442; Polts, *Considerations on Indian Affairs*, 20, 21, 200, 197; Verelst; Holwell; Van-ëttart. II; 347, 164-68: Khulasat ut Taw-rikh; Dow. I, ciii-ciii: Malet (Pr. I.H.R C.XI); N.K. Sinha, I.101-3; *Original Papers relating to the disturbances. in Bengal*, form 1759-63, i. 229-312.
Nathaji in Western India.  

(d) Armenian Traders.

A very important role was played by the Armenian traders in the Asiatic and inland trade of India and in the economic history of Bengal in the 17th and 18th centuries in India. Their main articles of trade were cotton piece goods and raw silk on which they paid 3½% customs to the Mughal government. A parwana of the Nawab of Bengal to the English of 1749 described them as "the kingdom's benefactors, their imports and exports are an advantage to all men". But they depended on the English, Dutch, French on Danish ships for their trade. By middle of the 18th century their Surat-Hugli trade declined.

7. Pre-Plassey epoch, a foreshow of the Post-Plassey period.

Economically the first half of the eighteenth century, while a continuation of the seventeenth, was brighter than, but in several respects a presage or foreshow of, the post-Plassey period or second half of the eighteenth century. The half-century intervening between the death of Aurangzeb and Plassey exhibited certain aspects of the economic history of India which were accentuated in the half-century following Plassey and became specially characteristic of it.

(i) Economic Drain: It is well known that there was a drain of wealth from India to England in the second half of the eighteenth century not only from Bengal, but from Bombay and Madras as well. Its amount has been differently estimated by different writers. Its sources were numerous. In the first half of the eighteenth century there was also economic drain from India to outside, though its sources were not so diversified and so exhausting as in the latter half. The wealth extorted by Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah from the Emperor, his nobles, the commercial classes and the citizens of Delhi represented a big

33. The Private diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, vols. I-IX, passim; Fort William-India House Correspondence, I. xlii.

drain on the resources of the country. It crippled the power and authority of the Emperor who was left with no cash reserve for an emergency and also adversely affected the position of Delhi as one of the commercial marts of Northern India.  

(ii) Private Trade: Private trade of the English East India Company's constituted a pernicious malady in post-Plassey India. But it was not at all a new growth. In fact, apart from the private trade of Indians, governors and officials etc., private trade was of the European traders a prevailing economic malaise in India's trade,—foreign (European & Asiatic), coastal and inland, —in the 17th century as well. During the first half of the 18th century the subtle distinction between the Company's goods and the goods of their servants involved in the practical working of the firman of 1717, though not grasped by the moles of Delhi, was quite patent to the astute and alert Murshid Quli and also Shujauddin in Bengal. As the legal wig of the dastak was increasingly used by the Co.'s servants to cover surreptitiously even their inland private trade, troubles began from Avilardri onwards. The adoption of the agency system in place of the dadni system (1753) facilitated the invasion of inland trade and hence of the Co.'s investment as well by their servants. The lure of private gain overbore national differences and forged a liaison between the Englishmen and Frenchmen. Non-payment of duties to the "country" government by them, trafficking in dastaks, and the participation of Indian merchants in this clandestine trade, involving a serious loss of revenue, were fully rampant even before 1757. The scruple of the Court of Directors that the country government would regard them as 'strangers, to honour and gratitude' (23-3-1759), must have appeared strange indeed in the atmosphere of naked scramble for richness and 'scandalous prostitution' of dastaks after Plassey.  

(iii) Economic decline: It is generally believed that Plassey unleashed the forces of the economic decline of India;

35. R.C. Dutt, I. ch. 23; N.K. Sinha I. Ch. XI; K.K. Dutta, Survey, Ch. 6.  
that unlimited political power of the British in India joined to the expansive economic developments in Britain and the limitless economic ambition of the industrial and commercial classes in Britain in the age of the Industrial Revolution encompassed the economic ruin of India, and that the E.I.C.'s servants, *gomostas* and agents contributed to the decline of Bengal's agriculture, industries and trade. But Bengal was not the whole of India. A dispassionate study will show that the seeds of economic decline were not sown after 1757 but had already begun to sprout even before 1757 and in some respects even before 1658. Behind the evident signs of industrial and commercial prosperity of India in the first half of the 18th century, lurked several deep shadows, the cumulative effect of which was to darken the prospects of the post-Plassey period and accelerate the economic decline of India.

(a) *British Commercial Policy*:

As regards the anti-Indian trend of the British commercial policy which constitutes the theme of the Dutt-Hamilton controversy, it is to be noted that the object of British commercial policy from the beginning of the 18th century was the protection of the textile industries of Britain against foreign competition: The Act of 1700 prohibited the use in Great Britain of silk goods of Bengal and Persia, China and the East Indies and painted calicoes. It was effective from 29th September, 1701 but it did not stop export of manufactured silk to England. It was not applicable to muslins proper and white calicoes, which were subjected to an import duty of 15% ad valorem. But these continued to be imported and then locally printed. So the Act of 1720 prohibited the use of printed calicoes, whether printed in England or elsewhere. Additional duties were imposed in 1747, 1759 and 1765 on Indian cotton goods. By 1765 Indian silk and cotton manufactures paid an import duty of nearly 45%. Thus the anti-Indian trend of British commercial policy had begun quite early in the 18th century.37

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"The restriction on the import of Indian cotton and silk piecegoods did..."
(b) The Oppression of the E.I.C.'s servants and agents:

The Oppressive conduct of the E.I.C.'s servants and gomostas which had begun before 1757 and reached unprecedented limits after it was a factor but not the factor in causing the ruin of Bengal's industries. By their unjust and cruel treatment of the indigenous weavers, manufacturers and traders, already afflicted by various other maladies, the E.I.C.'s servants and agents only worsened the situation and hastened the destruction of manufactures. But this alone was not responsible for the decline.

(c) Political disorders of early 18th century:

The political disintegration of the empire cast its shadow on the economic vitality of India. The Punjab was distracted by the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali and the conflict between Abdalis, Marathas, Sikhs and Adina. Malwa and Gujrat were similarly distracted by the Maratha-Mughal and Maratha-Nizam conflicts. The internal trade of Bengal tended to become stagnant. The gradual overshadowing of the imperial authority in Delhi, the rise of independent kingdoms and the growing insecurity due to political disorders affected India's inland or interprovincial trade. The easy and uninterrupted flow of goods throughout the empire with comparative safety came to an end with the framing of distinct transit and customs laws in each kingdom and the imposition of heavy duties on passing goods. This affected Bengal's commerce with upper Hindustan and tended to limit it to Oudh and Assam.

But the Mughal Empire took some time to die. Even after its virtual collapse (1739-59) the 'Mughal tradition' lingered. The economic needs of the decaying court of Delhi and its minia-

(Contd. from previous page)

not, however, greatly affect these industries in Bengal. England was then but one of the many markets of India; and further, the English traders still continued to import Indian cotton and silk goods for re-exportation to other countries, till the high tariffs of the closing years of the 18th century and the early years of the 19th century, the continental system of Napoleon and the Industrial Revolution in the west virtually stopped their importation into Great Britain and the continent. But the import of raw silk by the English Co. was encouraged as it was needed in abundance for the growing silk manufactures of England." K.K. Dutta, Fort William-India House Correspondence xii-xliii.

38. Bolts, 206.
ture replicas, the courts of the succession states of the Ruhelas, Oudh, Hyderabad and Bengal etc. continued to be met, intermittently though, by the cotton and silk goods of Bengal. Before 1757 manufactures and trade were still free from undue oppression and restrictions. Bolts observes: "in the time of the Mogul Government and even in that of the Nabab, Alivardi Khan, the weavers manufactured their goods freely and without oppression...it was then a common practice for reputable families of the Tanty or weaver caste, to employ their own capitals in manufacturing goods, which they sold freely on their own accounts". Even his critic, Verelst, corroborated him in his despatches: "Vast variety and abundance of the produce of the lands and the Excellency of the manufactures of the inhabitants"; their "Superior cheapness and quality; and "general opulence". (Letter to Court, 5.4 1769).39

(d) Maratha ascendancy:

The effects of the Maratha ascendancy came to be felt in two ways. On the one hand, the Maratha invasions caused a huge drain of wealth of Bengal, insecurity of person and property, compelling the people, weavers and husbandmen to desert their homes, aurungs (looms) and fields (and seek refuge east of the River Padma), decrease in the quality and deterioration in quality of manufactures, dislocation of agriculture, rise of prices of articles of common consumption of raw silk and of manufactured goods—cotton and silk. But the influence of these disturbances must not be exaggerated. The dislocation of Bengal's economy due to Maratha invasions was temporary and it was on the western side of the Ganges. On the other hand in certain other parts of India, where the Marathas dominated, the 'Maratha tradition' gradually supplanted the 'Mughal tradition', and this contributed to "the dropping commercial state of the provinces of Hindostan. (Progs. Bd., of Trade, 3.5.1791).40


40. K.K. Dutta. Alivardi and his times: "The Mughals magnificent and ostentations required every article of luxury. Towns and cities grew out of this spirit. The Marathas were adverse from these costly modes of expense. Towns and cities were shrouding fast into ruin. In this cause may be tracked . . . . the dropping commercial state of the provinces of Hindostan". (Progs. bd. of Trade, 3 May, 1791). See N.K. Sinha, I. 110.
(e) *Political disorders in Asia*:

Besides these internal factors the political disorders in different Asiatic states,—the anarchy and ceaseless civil wars in Persia (after 1747), Georgia and Armenia, the decline of the Turkish empire and the disturbances in countries bordering the Red Sea, the rebellions of Egypt and Baghdad,—also contributed to the decline of India’s Asiatic and African trade,—the caravan trade from Suez to Cairo (the emporium of Bengal goods) and the trade with Syria.41

This brief review clearly demonstrates that it is untrue to say that the economic decline of India had set in immediately after Aurangzeb’s death. True, the signs of political and economic decadence had crept in even before he closed his eyes. But the age-long economic system could withstand them for nearly 50 years more. There was a rapid change for the worse after 1757. The political revolutions in Bengal came to be followed by the ‘dominance of the privileged British private traders’, the ‘overgrown influence’ of the English E.I. Company and its servants, agents, gomostas, the oppression of the peasants and artisans, the decline in agriculture and industries, the decline in all the three branches of trade,—internal, interprovincial (inland and coastal) and Asiatic,—the currency muddle and the economic drain. These and other factors as explained above combined to eat up her economic vitals and the situation was certainly aggravated in the second half of the 18th century.

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41. Dow, *Hindostan*, I. cviv-cxvi
CHAPTER 10

Recent Trends And Suggestions

Importance of socio-economic history

The last fifty years or so have witnessed a major change in the direction and methodology (form, technique and scope) of medieval Indian historiography, viz., an increasing interest in socio-economic, religious and cultural history of medieval India. That history is no longer to be confined to political history, story of kings and wars, but has to be a story of the people as well, has now become almost an axiom. But this conception has not grown in a day. True, the idea that society is an organic unit was known to Arab historians, especially Ibn Khaldun. Long before Montesquieu and Buckle, the medieval historian, Ibn Khaldun, had stressed the importance of social environment in the study of history. But his words of wisdom were wasted on medieval Indo-Muslim historians. History came to be regarded by medieval Muslim historians as something emanating from divine inspiration or flowing from the throne.

We now realise the interrelation of political, social and economic history. Political events grow out of social conditions. The social scene grows out of economic conditions. So without social history political history become unintelligible and economic history barren. Social history becomes important as a link between economic and political history. This realisation of the need of social studies dawned on Indian writers on medieval India nearly a century after the west. The delay was partly due to the British origins of medieval Indian historiography. Following the lead of the early British historians of our country, who themselves followed the line of least resistance in drawing upon the ready-made history of the medieval Indo-Muslim chroniclers, our scholars, too, concentrated on political history with little reference to the social environment.
Meanwhile historiography in western countries was being cultivated on entirely different lines. Lord Acton (1834-1902) in England and Berr (1863-1954) in France emphasized the urgency of historical synthesis. Robinson (1863-1936) and Beard (1874-1948) respectively formulated the principles of New History and Historical Relativism in America. Friedrich Meinecke (1862-1954) pointed out the problems of historiocism, while J. Huizinga (1872-1945) emphasized historical conceptualization. G. Unwin (1870-1925) and Sir John Clapham (1873-1946) urged the importance of Economic History, while Charles Cochran (b. 1902) and Richard Hofstadter (b. 1916) showed the interrelation between History and Social Sciences. Sir Lewis Namier emphasized the relation between History and Political Culture and Jacques Martin Barzun (1907) showed the importance of cultural history as a synthesis. In such a background the emphasis on studying and writing on socio-economic aspects of medieval India cannot be exaggerated. But mere polemics would not suffice. We have now to devise measures to redress the balance of the old state of affairs.

This is also necessary from another angle. In a dynamic age of conscious national awakening and regeneration, of conservation of national heritage and constructive advance, the Muse of History is no longer satisfied with mere political affairs but demands from its votaries due study of social, cultural and economic conditions of the country. Reconstruction of our history, therefore, requires, besides an objective and rational attitude, unbiased by any pseudo-national, chauvinistic, parochial or partisan sentiments, a re-orientation of outlook on the part of the historian, a change in emphasis and in interpretation of the facts of history. The historian cannot rest satisfied with merely dilating on the glamour of kings and courts, or magnifying the clatter of arms in the camps of contending armies or judging the situations created by diplomatic intrigues of political juntas or party coteries to a nicety. He must also probe into the working of the mind and the manus of the common man and recount the story of his weal and woe as well.

The interest in the study of socio-economic aspects of medieval India, the growth of which is very much posterior to that in political history or biographical studies, may be of two
kinds: first, exclusive study of socio-economic subjects; second, interlinking of such studies inter se and with political aspects. Of these again, the latter is a more fruitful tendency but it has not yet developed completely.

The social historian (economic included) has to select his theme out of as large a number of subjects—the household and family life, social life, group life, economic life, the human and economic relations of different classes to one another,—production (agricultural and industrial), consumption and distribution, the conditions of labour and leisure, and the culture of the age as expressed in the everchanging forms in religion, literature, learning and thought, music, art and literature. Herein lies the positive value and special domain of social history. This list is certainly by no means exhaustive and the discerning eye of the keen researcher will enable him to launch out into fresh fields and pastures new, and he may ultimately develop into becoming a cultural historian.

After the two volumes of Edward Thomas (Coins of the Pathan King of Delhi, 1871, and Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire in India from A.D. 1593 to 1707, 1871) there is a long gap of nearly fifty years before any book on economic aspects of the history of the period was produced. True, some very important articles were published by H. Yule ("The Geography of Ibn Batuta’s Travels. Medieval Ports of West and South India", 1A, Vol. 3, 1874) and G. Phillips ("The Seaports of India and Ceylon, Described by Chinese Voyagers of the 15th Century," Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Shanghai, Vol. 20, 1886 and "Mahuan’s Account of the Kingdom of Bengal," JRAS, 1895). Jadunath Sarkar’s The India of Aurangzib (Topography, Statistics & Roads Compared with the India of Akbar, (Calcutta, 1901) supplies numerous valuable economic details but does not strictly constitute economic history. He was the first Indian scholar to study the subject with reference to Persian sources. J.N. Das Gupta wrote India in the 17th Century (Calcutta, 1917). If C.J. Hamilton traced the Trade Relations between England and India 1600-1896 (Calcutta, 1919), H.G. Rawlinson traced ‘British beginnings in Western India 1579-1657 : An Account of the Early day of the British Factory of Surat (Oxford, 1920). Shafat Ahmad Khan discussed the East India Trade in the 17th Century in

During the last decade or so a few useful books on economic history of medieval India have been published. Some of these are on an all-India plane and others on a regional plane. In the former category we have Irfan Habib’s Agrarian System of Mughal India (1963), an outstanding book on economic history of the period. In his Twilight of the Sultanate. A Political, Social and Cultural History of the Sultanate of Delhi (1398-1526,...1963. K.S. Lal has thrown some light on economic aspects as well. Mention may also be made of P.N. Chopra, Some Aspects of social Life During the Mughal Age (1526-1707), (Jaipur, 1963) and Some Aspects of Society and Culture During the Mughal Age (1526-1707) (Agra, 1963), S.S. Kulasreshta, The Development of Trade and Industry under the Mughals, 1526-1707 A.D., Allahabad, 1964 and L. Hutchinson, European Freebooters in Mughal India. London, 1964, K.N. Chaudhuri. The English E.I. Company—The study of an Early Joint Stock Company 1600-1640 (N.Y. 1965), Dr. Mrs. Anjali Chatterjee, Bengal in the Reign of Aurangzib (1658-1707), Calcutta, 1967.

Several distinguished Soviet Indologists have made their contributions to the economic history of India during the period under review, which are in Russian. However, there is an English translation of the work of A.I. Chicherov, India : Economic Development in the 16th-18th centuries : Outline History of Crafts & Trade, Moscow, 1971. All these do not and cannot
fill up all possible avenues of research during this period. Moreover these are not of uniform academic standard.

On all-India basis work may profitably be done on the following subjects:

(i) Economic condition in Northern/Southern India during the Turko-Afghan period.—Dr. K.M. Ashraf’s admirable work (*Life and conditions of the People of Hindustan* 1200-1550 A.D.) excludes,—as he himself acknowledges,—“all references to civil administration, land revenue, army, transport, education, development of literature or even religious life.” His treatment of the economic aspects of the period is, therefore, not as comprehensive or thorough as one would have liked. The chapter on Economic condition (XVIII) by Dr. U.N. Ghosal in *The Delhi Sultanate* (in *The History and Culture of the Indian People* Vol. VI. 1960) indicates the possibility of writing a detailed economic history of the period on the basis of all classes of known sources. This must also include the hitherto unutilised *malfuzat* or religious literature of the period.

(ii) A study of society, economic ecoditions and culture in Mughal India on the lines of Kunwar Ashraf’s similar work in the Turko-Afghan period, including a survey of Hindu-Muslim relations. In fact I would draw the pointed attention of scholars and research workers of the period to the imperative necessity of writing a correct and comprehensive economic history of Mughal India.

Broadly speaking, the two companion volumes of the late W.H. Moreland, written respectively in 1920 and 1923 represent even now the last word on Indian economic history of this period. With all deference to Moreland’s scholarship and research acumen, it has to be admitted that his approach is not always dispassionate. In the preface to *India at the death of Akbar*, he admits that he has tried to state the past in terms of the more familiar present and that in giving numerical estimates he is ‘not so sanguine as to hope’ that he has escaped all ‘the dangers attendant on this form of political arithmetic.’ In fact Moreland’s thesis was to prove certain points of view. Secondly the scope of the two works is limited; they come down to 1658 only. The economic development of the whole momentous reign of Aurangzeb of 50 years, marked by significant developments, — the greatest extension of Mughal empire, the rise of the
Marathas, the long Deccan wars, the consequent beginnings of administrative decline, the growing interest of foreign merchants' territorial settlements (e.g., the Dutch in Malabar, the English in Bombay, the French in Pondicherry) have been left untouched.

Thirdly, the sources utilised by him were also limited. He himself admits that his two works were sketches rather than definitive treatises or finished pictures, because he had not utilised the records of the Portuguese administration and the Jesuits, the vernacular literatures and the collections in Indian libraries. In 1923 he observed, 'There is still a wide scope for research in the history of this period, not only among the Dutch records, but in literature which is within the reach of Indian students and which they are in the best position to interpret.' Since then fresh materials have been discovered in the light of which even Dr. R.K. Mukherji's economic survey of the period (1600-1800) needs revision. Irfan Habib's outstanding work on the *Agrarian System of Mughal India* has corrected many aspects of Moreland's *Agrarian system of Muslim India* (Turko-Afghans and the Mughals). Habib's work has also indicated lines of further research in this respect. But Moreland's call has not yet been answered. The preparation of a comprehensive and objective study of the economic conditions of India during 16th, 17th and 18th centuries (roughly c. 1498-1757) is highly desirable not only for a critical and objective study of the period but also in the formulation of economic planning for free India, and should no longer remain the despair of Indian scholarship.

It is, however, extremely doubtful if such a work can be written at the present time and at the present state of medieval Indian scholarship by the unassisted efforts of one single scholar circumscribed in various ways in our universities, unless he is specially commissioned to do it. In that case and alternatively, different aspects of economic life may be treated separately by individual scholars, viz.,

(iii) Industrial history of the Mughal period.
(iv) Position of labour, agricultural and industrial.
(v) India’s Commercial Activities and Organisation.
(vi) Indian Shipping.
(vii) Position and Activities of Indian Merchants.
(viii) Influence of the Industrial Revolution on India’s economy.
The writer has been engaged on certain aspects of economic life in India. On the all-India plane work is in progress on the following topics:

(i) Economic Organisation in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

(ii) Industry & Trade in Mughal India, e.g., cotton, salt-petre, indigo, etc.

(iii) Private Trade in 17th-18th century India down to A.D. 1757.

(iv) Monopolies and Monopolistic Controls in Mughal India.

(v) Economic Conditions in India during the first half of the 18th century.

(vi) Towns in Mughal India.

The immense possibilities of these subjects may be clear from the various chapters of the present work.

Research may also be carried on a regional basis, i.e., by selecting subjects limited to a particular region like Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Gujarat etc. In fact the task of reconstruction of the history of the country on sound lines cannot be adequately performed without intensive regional or local investigations of materials relating to different spheres—political, military, social-economic and the cultural. Indeed, the preparation of a comprehensive economic history of India and that of regional and local histories should proceed simultaneously on parallel lines.

Valuable work has already been done in this field. Though some useful books with a regional bias and throwing light on economic conditions have been written towards the end of the nineteenth century, these cannot strictly be regarded as falling under economic history as such. Mention may be made of S. Milley, *Canara, Past & Present* (Mangalore, 1844); W. Logan, *Malabar, Canara, Past and Present* (Mangalore, 1884); *Malabar, 2 vols.* (Madras, 1887); J. Biddulph, *The Pirates of Malabar and an Englishman in India 200 years Ago* (Lond., 1907). The works of K.M. Panikkar *Malabar and the Portuguese* (1500-1663), Bombay 1929 and *Malabar and the Dutch, Being the History of Fall of the Nayer Power in Malabar*, Bombay, 1931 as well as T.K.G. Panikkar (*Malabar and Iris Folk. A Systematic Description of the Social Customs and Institutions of Malabar*, Madras 1929) throw valuable light on


To take a few examples of regional studies:

(i) The writer is collecting materials for Economic life i
Bihar from 13th to mid-18th century.

(ii) One of his research students has recently been awarded doctorate degree of Jadavpur University for his thesis on Economic History of Medieval Orissa.

(iii) Dr. Tapan Kumar Roychaudhuri’s Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir needs to be followed up. (iv) Economic History of Bengal or of other States. (v) In the Deccan, the study of socio-economic conditions, the state of religion and culture, in the five offshoots of the Bahmanide Kingdom and also in the various succession states (Kingdoms and petty principalities) of the crumbling empire of Vijayanagar. (vi) European settlements on the East and the West Coasts or inland ones or in different parts of Northern India. These lists are by no means exhaustive.

Decline in Medieval Indian Historical scholarship

While there is a plethora of subjects, there is paucity of workers with sustained interest. It is rather unfortunate that when the need is so urgent and the prospects of successful research quite bright, we should suffer from what may be called a decline in scholarship in Medieval Indian History. I have no intention to be pessimistic or presumptuous, and I say this with all humility. This decline is confirmed by statistics—the barometer of conferences—by making an analysis of the number of papers on different periods of Indian History and also of the number of papers on the socio-economic or cultural history of this period, submitted in the various sessions of Indian History Congress, Oriental Conference and Indian Historical Records Commission. To the partition of India and the dearth of scholarship in Persian, which may partly account for this decline, may be added the gapng void which is difficult to be filled caused by the passing away of the ranks of the giants of old, the veterans in the field—Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Sir Shafaat Ahmed Khan, Rev. Father Heras,1 Diwan Bahadur Krishna—swami Aiyanagar and others. Their mantle has now fallen on us and we have to step into the gap and repair the breach. True, there are many scholars in the field, some with established repu—

1. Heras however had dropped out of the ranks long before soon after the publication of his magnus opus, The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagar, Vol I, in 1928.
tation and others seeking recognition. But the hard fact remains: that, for various reasons, Medieval Indian History is now a less frequented path of research as compared to what it was a few years ago, say during the inter-war years or as compared to ancient and modern periods of Indian History. Even among the existing scholars attention is devoted more to political aspects than to social and economic aspects. So the study of socio-economic history is still a rarer phenomenon in the historiography of this period.

It is, however, a happy sign, a promising feature that among the scholars enrolled for research degrees in History (1956-60) in the three older Universities—Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay whose names are published in the Quarterly Review of Historical Studies (Vol. 1, No. 1) issued by the Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, mention was made of 9 scholars in Calcutta University and an equal number in Delhi University who are working on different aspects of socio-economic history of this period. No scholar was then reported to be working on this subject in the University of Bombay. In the younger universities such as Ranchi University 4 scholars then working on Medieval India. Some more must also be working in other Universities by now. In the Jadavpur University a few scholars have recently been registered for Ph.D. degree under my guidance in the following subjects relating to economic history of medieval India: Seaports and towns in medieval Bengal; Textile Industry & Trade in Eastern India; Anglo-Mughal Commercial Relations till A.D. 1717; Corruption in Public Life in Medieval India; and Aspects of Economic Life in Medieval Bengal. It remains to be seen how many of these stand the test of time and efficiency.

Ways of Approach

Such being the position, what would be the ways of our approach to the problem of writing on the socio-economic problems of the period? How will the work be undertaken? What will be the modus operandi? I think the problem is to be tackled on two planes and from four angles in each plane. The two planes are respectively the all-India plane and the regional plane. In each plane, again, the work of research would involve four processes:
(i) Access to sources and their evaluation.
(ii) Collection of materials.
(iii) Systematisation or marshalling of facts.
(iv) Discovery of their interrelation and final interpretation.

Hence it is clear that considerable spade work has to be done before the final stage of interpretation can be reached. It goes without saying that unless the previous stages are gone through the final stage may not be reached at all. Each stage is equally important as it is a stepping-stone to the next. The interpretation would be premature unless it rests on the hard bedrock of facts. Interpretation is the apex but no stage is insignificant.

**Difficulties and Problems**

The research worker has to face lions on his path. But patience, perseverance and industry will ultimately lead him out of the woods. The difficulties may relate to (A) Sources and (B) the question of equipment and opportunities of the scholar.

**A) Sources**

**Nature and extent of the available materials:** The study of socio-economic conditions of medieval period, as of any other period, is limited by the nature and extent of the available materials. But the problem is certainly more acute in the medieval period than in the modern period, where there is a wider variety of sources. The standard sources may not yield the information required to complete the picture.

Hence, in making a broad distinction between major and minor sources, it is neither safe nor desirable completely to ignore the latter. True, there may be bulky contemporary source which yield—let alone a rich harvest—almost next to nothing even after hours of plodding search, on a particular topic. But even then the source has to be waded through. The value of a few incidental references which may be available, irrespective of the fact that they are contradictory or corroborative cannot be gainsaid. For, to the social historian, a single incidental reference may reveal a vista of new lines of enquiry. Hence no contemporary source is to be treated as minor. No detail is too trivial to be omitted in assessing or evaluating a source. The social historian wants to feel the reality of life in the past to behold his ancestors, living and moving (in form, colour, gesture, passion and thought) before his mind’s eye.
is this imaginative appeal of history which invests the smallest real fact so unearthed with priceless value, with poetry and romance.

Cultural history in the widest sense of the term has to be studied making a synthetic and critical use of all available sources so that an integrated and (as far as possible) complete picture is obtained without which interpretation is apt to be lop-sided.

Besides the standard political histories or chronicles, administrative manuals (dastur-ul amals), gazetteers, letters, archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics, foreign travellers’ accounts and factory records, where available, have to be studied, due emphasis being placed on folk literature and ballads of the people, which throw valuable light on social and cultural life of the people:

Search for sources: Valuable source materials,—records, farmans, sanads, chronicles, correspondence, bayaz or scrapbooks and coins, inscriptions and monuments, lie hidden or uncared for in every nook and corner throughout this vast country and await the eager and discerning eyes of the researcher. There are also private, sometimes unknown, libraries and collections lying in danger at any moment of being disposed of as waste paper. Hence intensive regional surveys or records of all kinds—manuscripts, monuments (temples, khanqas, churches, cemeteries), epigraphs and coins should be undertaken under the auspices of Universities and Colleges and recently established Indian Council of Historical Research and Centre for Study of Social Sciences and research scholarships endowed, reconnaissance and exploratory excursions organised and records studied or acquired to save valuable treasures from destruction by the ravages of time, climate, insects, pests and last but not the least, the vandalism of men. Special mention may be made of the study of records of temples, mosques and khanqas, family and personal papers.

Even after such a stupendous labour, the student of social history must be prepared to see his picture incomplete. The theme is so vast the issues are so complicated and the light is so dim, that in proportion, even the innumerable records, letters, journals, enough to provide reading materials for a lifetime, the accumulated materials and the knowledge gleaned therefrom, may be insufficient, nay utterly inadequate to yield a real picture.
of the variegated life of the past. Hence the social historian, generalizing as he does on the basis of a few typical instances, cannot convey the whole of the complicated truth.

(B) Equipment of the Scholar

A practical difficulty arises as regards the ability of the scholar. The student of medieval history has got to be a student of world history as well as a linguist. The canvass of his painting has to be set against a background of world panorama and the colours he uses must be sufficiently variegated to produce a pleasing effect. But the main hurdle is the language problem. He must be conversant with at least Persian and English and be able to use Dutch, Portuguese and French materials, if possible, besides the regional languages of different areas of India, where necessary. Few individual scholars can afford unaided to drink at the fountain head of all these sources in original even during a whole lifetime.

(C) Remedies

The Government and Universities, Indian Council of Historical Research and Centre for Study of Social Sciences have to come to the rescue of the researcher likely to be marooned in the uncharted and unknown ocean of original materials. Apart from the future of the India Office Library, the Government of India may procure transcripts or photostate or microfilmed copies of all Persian MSS. and Dutch, Portuguese and English records relating to India from the libraries of England and Europe. This may be done in a planned way and a definite planning of acquisition may be launched. A Corpus Indo-Moslemica or a consolidated body of such records catalogued and classified according to subjects and periods may be regarded as a desideratum. If the Government does not do this, it is for the Universities and the new bodies set up to procure such copies of records as may be required by the individual research scholars for their respective theses. The example of the University of Calcutta may be emulated by other Universities.

A planned programme of authentic editing and translation of Persian MSS. dealing with the medieval period is another imperative need. An All India Translation Bureau of Source Materials in different languages either in extenso or in summaries but preferably in the former, may be established. Under its auspices and guidance, the regional cultural or research societies,
institutes or associations and the Universities, separately or in collaboration, may take up the work of translation of records, according to a circulated scheme of editing, publication and translation under the supervision of University Professors, helped by a staff of competent scholars and assistants. This will also keep the promising alumni of the University usefully employed in learning the methodology of research who after the completion of their apprenticeship may be engaged as teachers or research guides. The Universities should institute schools of foreign languages where research scholars may pick up adequate knowledge of one or more languages as may be necessary.

Scholars working in Persian sources for their research work may be encouraged by means of suitable financial inducements and by the Government or Universities to edit, annotate, translate and publish them. These would be valuable by-products of research and make increasing source materials available to the growing members of research students in future.

Side by side with the undertaking of new works, attention should also be turned towards the working of re-editing and republishing many of existing edition of the source materials. The beginning made in this direction as regards revision of Blochmann and Jarrett’s edition of *Ain-i-Akbari* by Dr. Phillot and Sir J.N. Sarkar, of Elliot and Dowsons’ *History of India as told by its own Historians* by Mr. Hodivala *Studies in Indo-Muslim History*, by Prof. Muhammad Habib (Vol. 2) has got to be continued in near future. The importance of such revisionist studies of source materials cannot be gainsaid in view of discovery of fresh materials and extension of bounds of knowledge which were unknown to the original editors.

**Need of inter-disciplinary studies**

In discussing the problem of writing on socio-economic aspects of Medieval India, it is suggested that such a study needs to be on an inter-disciplinary basis, in order that a full integrated picture backed by proper interpretation may be possible.

To take three examples only:

(i) Survey of Cultural role of cities like Delhi, Varanasi, Allahabad, Patna, Calcutta, etc. This has been discussed in Chapter 5 of this work.
(ii) Movements of tribes and peoples in medieval period (i.e., both Anthropology and History have to work hand in hand). There are many references to various tribes and peoples of the period—the Bundelas, the Gonds, the Kolis, the Kathis, the Bhils, the people of Jharkhand and others in the Deccan in medieval histories of India. The metrical *Aurangnamah* of Haqiri tells us of the hillmen inhabiting the ‘Barjangal’ i.e., extensive or terrifying woods of the Kharagpur hills, Monghyr and the hilly region s.e. of the district. Collection of all such references will yield a rich harvest to the students of History and Anthropology.

(iii) Medieval Indian Historical Geography:

Geography is regarded as an indispensable handmaid of historical studies. From the *Manasamangala* of Vipradasa (c.1495 A D.) and the *Kavi Kankan Chandi* of Mukundaram (1566) it is clear that the river courses in medieval Bengal were different from their present ones. In the *Alamgirnamah* and the historical poem *Aurangnamah* by Haqiri we find that the Sarju, the Gandak and the Kosi met the Ganges further east of their present confluence with the Ganges. John Marshall tells us that a sandy char intervened between the city of Patna and the river. Instances can be multiplied. But it is to be emphasized that there is a great necessity of writing a medieval Indian Historical Geography and a medieval Indian Gazetteer giving location of place names and topographical details, tracing the course of rivers and boundaries of provinces and changes therein, by collating references to these in Persian chronicles and letter books, gazetteers, despatches, foreign travellers’ accounts and records of the foreign companies and powers, literary, epigraphic and numismatic sources, with the help of contemporary maps (e.g., of De Barros, Peter Van Ben Broecke and others), the Bengal Atlas of Major James Rennell and the Government of India Survey maps.

The geographical position of India projecting southwards from the centre of Asia to the India Ocean influenced her history from times immemorial. A ‘Greater India’ had once been established beyond the hills and across the oceans in Ancient India. With the decline of India’s maritime power, her overseas commercial and colonial connections also slackened. Her relations, commercial and cultural or otherwise, with Persia, Arabia
and W. Asia in general, Abyssinia, Egypt, the East coast of Africa and Madagascar and the islands in the Indian ocean, with Arakan, Pegu (Burma), Malay Peninsula, the East Indies, and S.E. Asia, China and Japan in the Far East during the period of decline of Indian maritime and colonial enterprise should be studied. Simultaneously the study of influence of India in particular and of Asia in general on the tastes and fashions in Europe will be highly instructive. Instances can be multiplied.

Fulfilment of a mission

The world outside may ridicule the antiquarian or historical researcher as ‘Dry as Dust’ and regard history as a useless mummy. But Social History is the supreme touchstone of the disinterested intellectual curiosity of the scholar. To the historian and especially to the social (and economic) historian what is dry as dust to the layman seems to throb with life. Thus be reconstructs the mosaic of a forgotten past and make the “lost-to-light ghosts” of the past live. In this the researcher finds the fulfilment of his life's mission.
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