Chapter Seven

SETTLEMENT PROBLEM: GENERATING PROVISIONS AND SUPPLIES
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Bombay's geographical relationship with western and central India was not very close one. Bombay was situated on the Western Ghats amidst mountainous topography. This topography of the region prevented Bombay till the advent of railways her commercial relationship with central and northern India through land routes. Sahyadri Mountains acted as a barrier between the coast and the Deccan tableland left Bombay with few accessible inland routes. Thus Bombay was dependant on sea for trade and even for its basic necessities.

Bombay only had the small cultivable portion on the islands and her main agriculture produce were coconuts. These agriculture limitations left Bombay dependent on the neighbouring areas for meeting her needs of grains, rice etc. John Burnell who visited this island in first decade of eighteenth century made the following observation about the supply of food to the island: Cows are scarce commodity on the island, as in truth is everything else of provision, we being beholden to our neighbours the Portugueze (sic) for almost everything that we eat; otherwise we might starve, were we only to subsist on the production of the island.¹

Bombay as stated earlier was surrounded by powerful but hostile neighbours both on land and seas. Any rupture in relationship with her neighbours was liable to hinder her supply of provisions on the island. Stoppage of provisions not only made the situation worse for the town but also led to corrupt practices like hoardings, black marketing of grains, and batty on the island by many merchants. These corrupt practices many time led to the rise in prices of eatables on the island. In these conditions it were the poor people on the island who were the major suffers. To avoid such corrupt practices Bombay government issued several proclamations from time to time on the island.

¹ Burnell, Bombay in the Days of Queen Anne, 61.
PROVISIONS: PROBLEMS OF PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPLIES (1670-80)

In 1670, Gray reported: ‘rice is scarce and dear been risen to 15 xeraphins the mora\(^2\), those have it, hoard it up, by reason none is brought from the Maine.’ In June the hoarding forced the Council ‘to make a general search and take an account what every man had in his house, enjoining them to sell rice at the rate of 15 xeraphins per mora, a price not over burdensome to the poor, and equally profitable to the seller, yet they will be obstinate and sometimes bring none to the market…that troubles us most is the thoughts wee have that there is not enough on the island to susteine it three months, and wheat there is very little, yet we finde it will be neither generosity nor policy to drive these people off the island (beggars) who are fled hither from the armes of Sevagee for refuge.’\(^3\)

To overcome this problem the Bombay government prohibited the export of grains. But in October (1670) at the solicitation of the chief inhabitants, government withdrew the order, but prohibited the selling of rice above 15 xeraphins a mora. Bombay government further issued a proclamation allowing import of any quantity and its sale that could be fetched in the market. This was done with a view to encourage the rice import from mainland, and in the hope of getting it as cheap as or cheaper than when the price was limited. This course was also approved by the Council at Surat.\(^4\)

Aungier in 1674 admitted the dearness of provisions as a matter of concern that affected all the inhabitants of Bombay, and steps were promptly taken to regulate the prices and to increase the supply of provisions.\(^5\) In March 1674, the high cost of living necessitated raising the daily wage of an ordinary labourer from 2 \(\frac{1}{2}\) to 3 pice. Allowances were also granted to the poor English widows and young orphans for maintenance.\(^6\)

\(^2\) Muda was the package of grain. E.Fl. 1670-77, fn., 15.
\(^3\) E.Fl. 1670-77, 15.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid., 92.
\(^6\) Ibid., 106.
In June, 1674, in consequence of the great complaint made to the President, by the local people and the English soldiers, against the dearness and overrating of the provisions. In response, Aungier presided over a meeting of his Council with the principal shopkeepers and provision merchants, where prices were settled for that month, and a committee consisting of Child, Wilcox, Ustick, Langford, and Adderton was appointed to meet at the judge's house every Saturday morning and 'hear and determine all abuses and breaches of the fixed prices.'

The committee also had to settle the prices each month according to the availability of the various commodities and to publish the settled prices in English, Portuguese, and Banian terms. They were also asked to consider all prudent means of getting provisions at the cheapest rates, 'for which end they were to encourage, assist, and protect the shopkeepers and corn merchants' and to punish severely any persons, whosoever disturbs the prices of commodities in the market by selling it cheaper or costly rates.

The committee was to make periodical reports to the Governor on the availability of provisions, so that due measures might be taken for timely supply. Among other steps they were asked to establish English weights and measures all over the island, which probably attained no better success. The Company had also to check the wicked practices of soldiers and seamen of stealing hens, to discourage their breeding. Other duties were to prevent conspiracies to 'forestall or engross' provisions, to control their transport from the island, and to improve the supply of fish.

The importation of adequate supplies was impeded by the Captain General of Bassein prohibiting the export of provisions from Portuguese territory. Thus in November 1674, as grain consequently could not be procured from Salsette, a boat was sent out to procure the rice. Bandra traders were however pressurized by an order prohibiting their taking of coconuts and other produce from Bombay in foreign-owned boats,
with the result that, in return for its cancellation, they agreed to bring back provisions in their vessels.\textsuperscript{10}

As the Portuguese charged ‘unreasonable rates to English for any provisions. It was decided to send two Englishmen to Nagotna, to live there and procure regular supplies of provisions, timber and firewood for the island from that part of Shivaji territories. A strict order was passed for boats from Thana and other neighbouring Portuguese places were also forbidden to fish in any of the bays or creeks belonging to Bombay. At the same time steps to encourage the building of boats at Bombay for the trade and traffic were also considered.\textsuperscript{11}

The problem of getting provisions continued in 1675. Not only did the Portuguese hinder supplies, but Bombay transport from Broach and from other Gujarat ports was prohibited by Bahadur Khan, lest they should be taken into Shivaji country. The latter was the main source of supply, thus in accordance with the previous decisions, Francis Manulerer and George Goodier were sent in February 1675 to Nogotna, for developing trade and obtaining provisions. Their costliness is illustrated by the fact that the labourers whose daily wages had been risen from 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 pice in 1674 and they now got 4 pice a day, and since more labourers were wanted for the merchants, who complained that the Company employed so many that there were not enough for their business requirements, the rate was raised to 6 pice a day.\textsuperscript{12}

In April 1676 Giffard (Deputy Governor) said that because of the Gujarat government’s extraordinary strictness, they had been able to get so little corn that provisions had grown excessively limited. This had been enhanced by the supply already given to the Sidi, and if he ‘winter’ at Bombay, many inhabitants would be forced to leave the island. In view of the rise in prices, Day and Ustick in July petitioned for an increase of the monthly diet allowance of Rs. 25 given to Married members of Council, saying their pay was insufficient for their maintenances. In October 1676 the conditions had become worse, owing to the Portuguese setting up four new custom- houses at Bandra, Trombay, and over against Sion, where they

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid, 108.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 120.
levied such heavy rates that people were frightened from importing any provisions. They also prohibited the transport of corn or other provisions from Salsette to the island. Consequently the bazaar was in great demand of batty, on which the poor mainly subsisted, which mainly came from Salsette.\textsuperscript{13}

Regarding the Portuguese hindrance to the grain supply the Surat President and Council write to Bombay on the 4\textsuperscript{th} November 1676. They should not be discouraged by the practices of Portuguese and should send people to Mangalore and Bassalor (Barcelor) to procure rice for the supply of the island. The Surat Council advised Bombay to do this on yearly basis so as to give any occasion to Portuguese to create disturbance.\textsuperscript{14}

Two weeks later, on 21\textsuperscript{st} November 1676, Surat again writes: ‘Touching the granary for corn, we hold it so necessary that the island cannot be safe without it; wherefore we confirm our former direction therein. You need not be overhasty to buy the corn all at once for then the price will rise exceedingly upon you. You must procure it at the cheapest time in the year for then the Company will not lose thereby. If you could serve yourselves anywhere else than from the Portugal country we should be much better pleased, for they will assuredly raise the prince upon you, and we suppose you may be furnished cheaper from Bassalor by the Company’s vessels than from any other place’.\textsuperscript{15}

To meet demand the Surat Council authorized Giffard to buy 2,000 mudas of batty on the Company’s account and to store it for all emergencies. There was, however, difficulty in obtaining this quantity, as most of the rice usually came from Portuguese territory, which was now barred as a source of supply, while Shivaji had all the surplus rice in his country sent to his castles. Aungier urged the Bombay Council to meet the Portuguese ‘malicious practices’ by resorting to other places, such as Mangalore and Bhatkal, where it was usually cheap, Petit (member of Bombay Council) reported in December that the Council was buying batty as not to raise its

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid, 150-51.
\textsuperscript{14}F.H.S., I, 109-110.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 110-111.
prices though its dearness did not promise the Council much profit, while there was also some danger of embezzlement by its going through such hands as the Modi’s. 16

In regard to the rice supply from Kanara the Surat President and Council write to Bombay on the 4th January 1677 to appoint the Revenge, the Good Hope, the Phoenix if not sent to Muscat, the Moody’s ketch, and the Hoigh Despatch to be sent to the Kanara country where rice is cheapest. 17 Accordingly in February 1677 Phoenix, the Malabar Coaster, and the Good Neighbour were sent to procure rice from Karwar and Mangalore. 18

In February 1677 the Chief and factors at Mangalore wrote to Bombay regarding the order placed by the President and Council to provide 300 or 400 khandis of rice for the use of their garrison, accordingly they contracted for such a parcel, and have laden on the Malabar Coaster 854 parcels. 19 Similarly in March 1677 the Karwar Chief and factors wrote to Bombay and lay on the Phoenix 371 parcels of rice for the use of their garrison, as ordered by the President and Council. 20

In 1678 the provisioning of the garrison necessitated recourse to Surat and Broach for wheat and gram. The supply from the latter place was, however, hindered by the Mughal governor, Muhammad Amin Khan. 21 There was also difficulty in getting them at Surat owing to a ‘superstitious persuasion’ of the advent of a famine that year, but the Governor licensed their export under the promise to supply the island with provisions for the Sidi’s fleet. 22 In November 1678, after the stoppage of provisions from Shivaji’s territory by the subadar of Chaul, the store of gram for the horses of the troop was ‘almost spent’ and the Surat Council were asked to send 200 candies as soon as possible. 23

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16 E.Fl. 1670-77, 151.
17 Campbell, II, 17.
18 E.Fl. 1670-77, 168.
19 Campbell, II, 17.
21 He was the son of famous Mir Jumla.
22 E.Fl. 1678-84, 15.
23 Ibid.
PROVISIONS: PROBLEMS OF PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPLIES (1680-1700)

In 1681 the Portuguese again created troubles at Bombay by hindering all commerce between the island and their territories and stopping their usual supply of provisions. At the beginning of June 1681, the Bombay had ‘plenty of all things but cattle’, which were being obtained from Salsatte.24 In the latter part of the year the relation between the two (Portuguese) were not cordial it seems as though English were no more stopping anything from the island to their country and had furnished them with wheat, iron, tobacco, cotton etc., and also released the Portuguese vessels after they had paid the customs that they tried to avoid.25

The Portuguese on the other hand continued to keep the two vessels they had seized at Thana and Karanja and had forbidden all the inhabitants of their country from coming to the island or supplying them with provisions. They also obstructed the transit of provisions from other places. They seized a vessel, bound for Bombay laden with corn at Cambay and forced it to go to Chaul instead. The Captain General had also fined the Bandra tobacco farmer for paying customs on tobacco, he got from Bombay and had made him to undertake to import it in future from Vesava and pay customs at Bandra. The result was that at the end of August, Child (member of Bombay Council) said their supplies would last only twenty days more and asked the Surat Council to send rice and other grain from Surat or Broach.26

The Portuguese problem continued in September 1681, they employed six galivats to force vessels into Vesava or Bandra, as well as four galivats at Karanja to stop Bombay boats going to mainland, thus enhancing the difficulty of getting the provisions. To counter the first of these threats, the small manchua was well manned and armed and sent to the Hunter’s assistance. In October, however the scarcity of provisions was relieved by the arrival of ship laden with corn from Cambay, and there was a prospect of their getting batty from the mainland where a large amount was reaped, so Child cancelled his provisions request for grain from Surat.27

24 F.II. 1678-84., 90.
26 Ibid., 99.
27 Ibid., 99.

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In December 1681, the island was troubled by Sidi’s and Marathas, the problem was further compounded by the scarcity of provisions on the island. The batty was selling at a high rate of Xs. 25 a muda and an attempt to get it from Portuguese territory had failed, while Antonio Camello had severely punished some poor labourers who had offered to bring provisions to the island. It was estimated that Bombay annually consumed no less than 12,000 candies, or 7,000 mudas, of batty against which no more than 300 or 400 mudas could be got from Sambhaji’s country as he had sent up great quantities inland for supply to his forts, while his and Sultan’s Akbar’s long stay ‘by the sea –side’ had also contributed to the scarcity of provisions.

To overcome this problem the Bombay Council proposed, a scheme, which had been initiated in Child’s deputy governorship, for importing rice from Mangalore, however, it was proposed that money should be lent to Bombay merchants, who would send shibars to Mangalore to buy the rice, store it, and sell it by degrees to the extent needed. It was also proposed that the Hunter should convoy the vessels, to cover the expense of her voyage by the freight obtained for the batty laden on her. The Surat Council’s orders on this topic were not received until the beginning of the following year.

In 1682 the Bombay government again took steps to relieve the scarcity of provisions by sending merchants vessels to Mangalore for batty which was approved at Surat by the middle of January. The Revenge was deployed to convoy them, but her loss forced the substitution of the Hunter for this duty. Only one grab, however, was actually sent, and Captain Adderton, the Hunter, commander, was instructed to see the boat safe into port at Mangalore, and then proceed to Calicut, as ordered by the Surat Council. The Hunter sailed about 10th February, and off Mangalore she left the grab at the entrance of harbor, but sailed out of sight before she actually got in, whereupon she was seized by the two Portuguese frigates and sent to Goa as a prize. She was eventually restored, but the neglect of Adderton to carry out his instructions resulted

28 A muda was about 1 ½ candies. E.Fl. 1678-84, fn.3, 101.
29 Ibid., 102, 275.
30 Ibid., 102-104.

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in the collapse of Mansell Smith's (deputy governor of Bombay) plan to get extra rice. 31

In January 1682 Sambhaji besieged the Sidi’s stronghold on the island of Janjira with large army 32 such that the supplies from his territories were scarce and batty was unprocurable except the little brought by the stealth. What was obtained fell ‘short of expectations’ and was taken to fort for storage as fast it came. This difficulty probably remained in February also, when news came that he had raised the siege and there was large army of about 20,000 men in the neigbourhood of the island. Money had been lent to Girdhar and Cowas Modi to purchase the provisions, and what they bought us kept in the fort. In June they were allowed to sell some of their batty at its then high price of Xs. 32 a mora, so that the inhabitants should not suffer, but care was taken to see that enough was retained for the needs of the garrison. 33

Food became scarcer in October 1682, when Sambhaji who was annoyed with Sidi’s fleets anchoring at Bombay. 34 Only little rice remained in store and Ward (member of Bombay Council) renewed the proposal that the supply should be got from Mangalore, suggesting this should be done with the help of the Karwar factory. But any steps towards this came too late secure it during the year. In November he asked the Surat Council to send him grain, oil, and butter saying the inhabitants of Sambhaji’s country had gone away with their cattle and the Portuguese took their oil and butter for sale at Kalyan, where the Mughal army was again camped. 35

The scarcity of provisions prevailed during most of the year in 1683 much like the conditions of the previous year too despite the Return was ordered from Karwar inter alia to get a supply of rice which the factory had obtained it was not brought up by her. 36 In April 1683 the Surat Council mentioned the scarcity and dearness of the provisions in a letter to the Company. By August there was evident difficulty in

31 Ibid., 106.
32 According to Jagunath Sarkar the force consisted of 20,000 men and a vast train of cannon. The siege had started in December 1681, E.FI. 1678-84, fn., 108.
33 E.FI. 1678-84, 108.
34 Ibid., 102.
35 Ibid., 103. No provision was sent on the Return or latter vessel that went to Bombay. E.FI. 1678-84, fn.6, 109.
36 Ibid., 149, 400.

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getting the cattle and sheep for slaughter, as Ward asked the Surat Council to send some to Bombay. This was refused on the ground that no transport was available for it, and Child added that nothing absolute necessity would make them deal in those commodities.\textsuperscript{37}

In September 1683 Ward's letter to the Company said that the staying of the two Mughal fleets had exhausted the supply of all kinds of provisions, and the war between Sambhaji and the Portuguese prevented cattle being imported except by stealth. In the same month he again stressed the scarcity of cattle, for Child replied he would supply some when necessary. The scarcity was enhanced by the influx of refugees from Portuguese whose number the Deputy Governor estimated to be from 4000 to 5000. Child suggested the island should get provisions from the Coorlas, but Ward said they had no vessels fit to send for this purpose.\textsuperscript{38}

By the beginning of November they had no store for provisions except for little paddy. No attempt to send any provisions from Surat or Broach was made during that year, and Child blamed the Bombay Council for making needless complaints in the matter. This scarcity of provision led to rise in prices. In October, Ward said provisions were excessive and higher than had ever been known and his letter to the Company mentioned that, unless some speedy remedy was found, the garrison soldiers would never be able to live on their pay, they 'having often made several complaints'. This was corroborated by a report he made to Surat on 21\textsuperscript{st} December 1683.\textsuperscript{39} The letter reads as follows:

"Yesterday all those that kept and dieted your soldiers turned them out, upon which they came open mouth to the fort, but by the Deputy Governors mild answer to them they returned and have persuaded their landlords to receive them again; and wee must needs tell your Honour [that] unless more regard is taken of the island, it will certainly prove of ill consequence in a short time – noe commission officers to keepe our men in order but one, noe provision [such] as cows, goats, hens, or a stick of wood, to be got – the last bought at 4Xs. The thousand – and little batty and that at Xs. 37 per mora, [so] that wee are sure we are upon the wrack of invention how to supply our

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 149.
\textsuperscript{38}E.FI. 1678-84, 149-150.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 150.
soldiers &c. And long here is the Mogulls fleet arrived into our port, and how long they will stay here we know not...in short time it will be quickly fulfilled...According to this the prices of meat had doubled and in some cases trebled their former rates.”

Seeing the scarcity of provisions on the island the Court of Directors in April 1684, wrote to Surat about building the granary at Bombay. The building proposed by Court to be of five or six storey's high, 27 or 28 feet wide from outside to outside, each Story to be 6 ½ feet in depth, and a post under the middle of every girder perpendicular one over another from a stone basis from the ground, and another right over that to the garret (floor), without which supports no girder of any reasonable scantlings will bear at such a length. The Court further said that granary to be of four collateral sides of a square yard or quadrangle, after the manner of the bridge-house granaries in Southward, having a large pair of gates to come in at, which when shut all are in safety. The Court though proposes the plan of granary but left to Surat Council to look for the suitable place on the island and other contingencies required as they think proper.

Unfortunately Portuguese continued hindering commerce between their territory and Bombay including the supply of provisions. There was again some scarcity of provisions owing to the Portuguese continued stoppage of supplies. In December Zinzan reported to Surat that they absolutely refused the supply to the island, and had taken a boat laden with rice and other provisions that was on its way to Mahim. He further said that the provisions were the chief thing they wanted, especially as the war between Sambhaji and Mughal's had come to neighbourhood of Bombay and stopped supplies from other parts of the mainland. The situation was even worse

40 Ibid., 150-151.
41 Campbell, II, 18-19
42 E.F.I. 1678-84, 90. Bombay however at the beginning of June had 'plenty of all things but cattle' which they were bringing from Salsette. Ibid. Sidi too gave the troubled to Bombay by lying off the Butcher’s island in the harbour and scaring away small boats that brought bappy from the mainland. The result was that at the end of August Child said their supplies would last only twenty days more and asked the Surat Council to send rice and other grain from Surat or Broach. Ibid, 99. In October, the scarcity of provisions was relieved by the arrival of ship laden with corn from Cambay, and there was a prospect of their getting bappy from the mainland where a plentiful supply was being newly reaped, so Child cancelled his previous request for grains from Surat. This however had been already obtained from the Broach factory. E.F.I. 1670-77, 99-100.
43 Head of the commission to settle with the mutineers. Later the Deputy governor of Bombay.
44 E.F.I., 1678-84, 212.
because Bombay even failed many times to procure meat for the garrison. The stoppage seems to have continued till the end of the year, though Dr. St. John claimed in his letter to the Company that the Captain of Salsette at his request has given orders for the supply of such provisions as it afforded. Possibly the hindrance was due to the scarcity extending also to that part of the Portuguese domain.  

Increasing scarcity of food had, however a contrary effect. In March the price of batty was Xs. 40 a mora. In October it was Xs. 1 for 3 adalas, i.e. over Xs. 80 a mora, and the Captain Mayor of Versova told Vaux (factor, Bombay Council) that its cost ‘grinds the poore people and forces them to leave the island’. The scarcity of meat made the butchers resort to stratagem to get some from outside, for October they obtained it from Portuguese territory on pretence that it was for Sidi Kasim, who was allowed by the Captain General to have what he wanted. Probably butter, rice, wheat, and grain were stored in fort for use in an emergency, as in 1685 and 1686 some of these had to be disposed of for deterioration or other reasons. But meat for the English garrison was more difficult to supply.  

Though the food was scarce, alcoholic drink was plentiful judging from the fact that in April 1685 the Council found no less than twenty one taverns on the island compared with the number of four that it considered sufficient. Wines were also supplied by the two French ships that came in September, while there were probably also little illicit sale of ale, from the Company’s ships in the harbour.  

Next year there arose a dispute on the island between two grain merchants Gangadas Madan and Girdhardas relating to the selling of grains on the island. Gangadas

45 Dr. St. John added that a fowl was so dear at Bombay as in England, and that they strove to get what supplies they could to prevent discontent among soldiers. Ibid., Fn., 213.  
46 Ibid., 213.  
47 The calculation of the price in October is based on the tables of measures given by Fryer, viz. 20 addalins make 1 parra, and 12 ½ parras 1 mora. The price of Xs. 40 a mora was the same as that ruling at the beginning of the rebellion, as compared with the old price of Xs. 20 or 22 a mora. E.F.I., 1678-84, Fn., 219.  
48 E.F.I., 1678-84, 219.  
49 The two French ships were Coche and St.Antonie. Ibid., 188.  
50 A general name for beer made with a top fermenting yeast, a brew of more than 4% alcohol by volume.  
51 E.F.I., 1678-84, 220. According to the Child’s information the sailors on the Samson who was detained by Keigwin had gone ashore, with the commander’s knowledge, to sell ale and claret. E.F.I., 1678-84,Fn., 220.
Madan, a Banian merchant, was hindered selling his rice by Girdhardas. The Company however favoured Gangadas Madan, (foreign merchant) as per their policy to encourage merchants to bring grain to this island. This year Bombay only had 80 mudas of batty or unhusked rice in store, and about 80 more was expected this year. The old batty in the store was rotten, and sold. In December again the commodities on the island became very dear and some people were asked to go to Mangalore to procure rice from there to overcome this situation.

The situation remained same during the next year as reflects from Company letter to Surat in January 1687: 'There is a prospect of some vessels going down the coast for rice and provisions for this place. Considering batty is already risen to Xeraphins 48 and 50 per Muda and likely to be suddenly dearer, we think it may not be amiss if the Ruby frigate be let out or sent down to convoy some of the vessels which may add something towards the bearing her charge she lies at and will greatly encourage the bringing trade and provisions to the island. For this we crave your Excellency’s speedy answer that no time may be lost on the design if concluded on. This frigate is now on the shore in order to her fitting for the sea. We hope she will be off in two or three tides when she shall lie ready on all occasions that may offer.'

In fact there was not much change in the conditions during the next decade too. The Company in order to keep the prices of batty under control in April 1702 ordered the warehouse-keeper of Bombay Mr. W.M. Reynolds to deliver Mr. Daniel Demitrios clerk of the market, 20 mudas from Company’s batty which will be delivered by him to the Kacheras or licensed rice sellers of this island. This thereafter will be retailed out to the people at the rate of Xeraphins 34 per muda, thereby reducing the rate from its present price of Xeraphins 38 per muda. Similar orders were passed again later in the month and in May.

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52 The policy of the Company was that no Bombay merchants including the English merchants were allowed to sale their rice before the foreign merchants on the island. This was done in order to bring provisions and encourage merchants to settle on the island. Campbell, II, 19.
53 Ibid, 19.
54 F.H.S, I, 153.
55 Campbell, II, 20.
PROVISIONS: PROBLEMS OF PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPLIES (1700-1760)

The eighteenth century too did not augur well for the island and it still continued to face the problems of provisions. Burnell who visited this island in 1710 reported the same.

In July 1720, the President acquainted the board about several complaints that was made to him both from the English and the black inhabitants for the want of provisions. The other problems were related to the forceful carry of their fowl ducks and other animals. In order to avoid such situations, the President proposed for issuing of proclamation forbidding all persons whatsoever, to take anything by the force. It also ordered to the Vereadores to supply the market (for the use of English inhabitants), every Saturday with the two cows, every Monday and Thursday with goats, and every Wednesday and Friday with fish; and likewise directing all persons that want fowls or ducks should send the supplies to the Vereadores.57

In the same year, Bombay Council in order to keep the supply of rice optimum on the island reminded the factors of Karwar about sending up the vessels and to provide 12,000 bales of rice at Mangalore.58 The 7,000 bales of Balasore rice was thus laden in October on Elizabeth59 were brought at the end of month.60 In December, Rajapor factory was asked to send the provisions for the island on the ship Revenge.61 The situation was no good in 1724 as writes Bombay Government: Our granaries being low and batty as yet coming in but very leisurely, in some measure to provide against accidents it is agreed that we consign on the Green (bound for) Mangalore Rs.4000 to be invested in rice and laden on the Victoria hither so soon as she may be spared from Karwar.62

There were difficulties in procuring the meat supplies in 1733. This had made the situation all the more difficult for the sick in the hospital for want of meals to them, as

58 Ibid., 215.  
59 Ibid, 243  
60 Ibid, 250.  
61 Ibid., 278.  
62 P.D.D No. 2- A of 1724, 236.
the price of meals had increased substantially. Bombay government thus asked the land and marine paymaster to provide provisions to the hospital. 63

In 1734 the situation on the island seemed changed as this year the island has considerable batty and even the inhabitants had a considerable quantity of the old batty in warehouse. Bombay Council thus decided to allow the inhabitants to export their batty so that they may not suffer any losses. 64 Though the inhabitants were allowed to export, Bombay again has to face the troubles from Portuguese. The Portuguese were not permitting any batty to be exported from their territory as they apprehended it will be wanted for the supplying of Goa. In order to avoid any conflict Bombay government decided a stop export of grain so to prevent any price rise. 65

In 1737 Marathas invaded the Portuguese Salsette, this in fact created the problem for the Bombay Government who were apprehensive that there will be a rise in demand of grain for Bombay inhabitants (there being prohibition of bringing it here from the Marathas’ country), as many people have taken refuge on the island since the late invasion of the Portuguese territories. To counter this problem it is agreed that a publication be issued requiring all strangers who have taken refuge on the island, to depart from the island in seven days, and proclamation also forbade any of the inhabitants to entertain or conceal them after that time. 66

In the Maratha-Portuguese struggle Bombay Government found that the Marathas refused to permit any grain being brought to the island. In apprehension of scarcity of grain for island inhabitants, it was thought to have a true account of the stocks present on the island. For this purpose it was agreed that an order be issued requiring every inhabitant to give an exact account to the heads of their respective castes, of batty rice or other grain in their possession. It was also agreed that if the account given was found wrong Board is liable to inflict punishment to the person or group concerned and half the grain attempted to be concealed would be given to the informer, in order to encourage such discoveries. The publication also directed that the heads of the

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63 P.D.D. No. 5A/1732-33, 202-3.
64 P.D.D No. 7-1734, 157-159.
65 Ibid., 170.
66 P.D.D No. 10-A of 1737, 181-82.
respective castes to deliver the accounts of the grain found upon the island to the Custom Masters of Bombay and Mahim in order before the Board. 67

In May (1737) it was found that there was no sufficient quantity of rice in warehouse for the use of the garrison and marine for the rainy season, nor was the procurement was possible at the time. Luckily for Bombay the President told the Board that Mr. Wastell, of the ship Pelham, had made an offer of about 500 bags of fine Bengal rice at Rs.4 and 2500 ordinary at Rs.3½, being the lowest he could afford to sell it for. It was agreed to take it at that rate, and directed the warehouse-keeper to receive it. 68

The need for rice was again discussed in September. It was observed that there is shortage of it firstly because of the bad crop but more importantly it’s the Marathas who prohibited bringing grains and rice from their territory. The President therefore proposes that if the Rose arrives in time from Surat, she can be sent to Mangalore to procure rice from there. It was also decided to raise the price of batty to Rs.25 per muda to encourage inhabitants to import it. 69

In October 1737, the President informed the Board about the scarcity of grains and observed that they can expect none from the Marathas who have prohibited its supply unless we consent to supply them with warlike stores, which would be too dangerous for Bombay. Neither they have any hope of supply from Portuguese so they are mainly dependant for rice on Mangalore, and as the Rose has not yet arrived from Surat, the President seeks the opinion of the Board for procuring rice from Mangalore. 70

The Board analyzing the situation on the coast, as very volatile due to Maratha inroads in Portuguese territories reckoned that the fleet may get down to Mangalore in seven days, and as the rice is available there (being the remains of last year’s crop), fleet should stay only 15 days at that port. The Wilmington was ordered to sail to Mangalore for convoy and protect the vessels sent for rice. 71 Accordingly Wilmington

67 P.D.D No. 10-A of 1737, 197.
68 Ibid., 209-10.
69 Campbell, II, 23.
70 P.D.D No. 10-B of 1737, 413-14.
71 Ibid., 414-415.
sailed for Mangalore, with the Success, Ann, and Adventure grabs and many shibars under her convoy to bring up rice for the service of the island.\textsuperscript{72}

Since the provisions were scarce on the island Bombay Government observed that it is necessary to procure provisions of grain for Bombay inhabitants till the end of next rains which they apprehend will not be possible. Neither they can expect a sufficient supply from the north nor from Mangalore since they are assured about the general scarcity in these parts will oblige the Portuguese and Sambhaji Angria to have recourse to Mangalore, where the large demand of others will probably prevent them from getting the desired quantity. The President therefore sought the opinion of Board that if Bengal Council could supply them with 12,000 or 15,000 bags or could send part thereof on any of the King’s or Company ships which is bound this way, and to contact with any merchants of the place on the best terms so that they can deliver us the remainder at a certain rate. The Board considering the great scarcity unanimously agreed to the above proposal.\textsuperscript{73}

In November 1737, the Bombay Government decided to secure batty. As according to them batty is more in demand by the sepoys and others to whom it is to be delivered. The warehouse-keeper therefore was directed to buy it as there was only a small quantity of rice present in warehouse for the supply of military and marine. It was also agreed to purchase it from the merchants who had made an offer of 5000 robins of Mangalore rice at the rate of Rs.2 $\frac{3}{4}$ the robin, which is one quarter of a rupee the robin less than the price settled by the quarter sessions.\textsuperscript{74}

The condition was worse for the island as far as the prices of meat for the inhabitants was concerned. The prices of beef had increased substantially since no procurement was possible from the neighbouring countries because of Marathas Portuguese struggle for Salsette. The salted pork and the beef also became costlier along with the increased cost of maintaining of the cattle in the rainy season, since they were to with fed with little grain mixed with straw which adds to extra one pice a pound.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} P.D.D No. 10-B of 1737, 419.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 419-20.
\textsuperscript{74} Campbell, II, 25.
\textsuperscript{75} P.D.D. No.10-B/ 1737, 145-46.
In January, next year, Bombay was in dire need of provisions and expected little from Surat and Sind. They too can not depend on Marathas and Mangalore as Marathas were still continuing with their policy of prohibition. Bombay government required three hundred bales of batty, and even gave permission to export of wheat from Bassein.\textsuperscript{76}

The scarcity of grains continued and in January 1739 Bombay Government seeing no grains can be procured from Marathas and Mangalore agreed to write to the Chief and factors at Surat directing them to purchase a quantity of batty from 1000 to 1500 morahs (mudas). They were also asked to send batty to the island otherwise should inform them for supplying of boats for its conveyance.\textsuperscript{77} The situation however worsened especially for labour classes as they chiefly depend on the Government for even their daily supplies. To overcome this crisis the President proposed the Board to write to Mr. Charles Boddham, residing at Sind to purchase 1000 to 1500 carwals of red rice on account of the Company, and to direct him to advise them the expected time of its readiness so that they may send up a vessel to procure it. The Board agreed to it and recommended Chief and factors at Surat to convey this to Charles Boddham by the safest and speediest means.\textsuperscript{78}

In June the officers and sepoys stationed at Sion, Suri, Worli, and other outposts complained of the black Sindhi rice issued to them at Rs.2 per phara in lieu of their usual stated allowance of batty. This they considered as a loss to them, as they were obliged to take batty of the Company at the rate of Rs.22 \(\frac{1}{2}\) per muda when the market price was no more than Rs.14. Apart from this they were also deprived of the broken rice or kanaki which makes gruel or kanji and which the batty yields when grinded it to rice. They thus requested that batty be delivered to them out as customary or that the rice be charged to them at the same rate as to the Topasses.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{76} P.D.D No. 12A of 1739, 82-83.  
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 38.  
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 64-65.  
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, 353.
This request of the officers and sepoys was found true and was duly agreed by Board. The Board thus agreed that in future issues be made in batty as far as possible, or the rice be charged to the military on the same terms as the Topasses. 80 These complain of sepoys to supply them with batty at the rate of Rs.22 per muda was again referred by Captain Samuel Walker to the President in October next year.81 This being represented as a hardship, the Board gave order that the soldiers should in future be supplied out of the Company's granaries on the like terms as the sepoys as the pay of the officers is a bare subsistence, their perquisites but very low.82

The supply of provision was no better in February next year as there no more than 1900 mudas of batty in the warehouse and was only 2000 mudas in November. The price of batty during this period was cheap so Bombay Government was advised to buy it before there is any price rise due to Portuguese and Marathas. It was thus agreed to contract for 3000 mudas on the most reasonable terms. Accordingly Board agreed to contract with Rupji Dhanji to supply 3000 mudas of batty on the following conditions: A sum of Rs.10,000 to be advanced and when batty is delivered to that amount, Rupji to be paid from time to time for the quantities actually received by the warehouse-keeper. Batty was to be delivered within four months, 2500 mudas in three months and the remainder in the succeeding month. Rupji has to sign a bond for the punctual performance, in case of failure a penalty of Rs.3000 has to be paid by him. To keep this batty Board agreed to appropriate a building belonging to the land paymaster.83

In 1743, Bombay Government decided against the export of grains as they observe the scarcity of grain because of the failure of rain and also for the earlier stated reasons. The Board also decided for the merchants who had regularly exported the grain when there was no scarcity. In order to avoid any losses to these merchants Board agreed that they should be allowed to export but subject to the condition that within the space of three months the exporters were to import an equal quantity to that carried off. 84 Board also decided the price of batty at the rate of Rs.16 per muda to be sold in the

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80 Ibid, 353.
81 P.D.D No. 13-C of 1740, 523
82 Ibid, 524-25.
83 Campbell, II, 28.
84 Ibid.
bazaar so as to provide much needed relief to the poor. For this purpose 300 mudas of batty was allocated in the following year. 85

The prices continue to soar high and scarcity of grains continued on the island. The Bombay government thus decided to search the houses of private individuals and the warehouses in order to stop hoarding. For this purpose Mahim and Bombay custom masters were assigned. They were also asked to issue 100 mudas of batty to be publicly sold in the market for the poor. 86

The question about the best way to provide grains to the poor was again discussed by the President in 1744. He acquainted the Board that the rice has always been confined to be sold by the kachara's only. He further said that all persons have liberty to sell batty and beaten rice in the bazaar or anywhere else without any restraint. They also have liberty to make batty into unbeaten rice for their own use or exportation at their own pleasure (except when grain is scarce when only the Government prohibits the export of it). In spite of this freedom the Grant Jury’s presentment 87 in August end implied that the sole vending of all kinds of rice was confined to one person, the Bench of Justices ordered that every person should have the liberty of selling

86 P.D.D. No.16-I of 1743, 141, 149.
87 On the 26th August 1743, the Grant Jury delivered the following presentment to the Court of Oyer and Terminer and Jail Delivery. The members present were the Honourable William Wake, Governor of Bombay Chairman and others His Majesty’s Justices for the Town and Island of Bombay: “We, the Grant Jury, upon our oaths do present that by a petition of certain kachara’s or rice-sellers, presented unto us, it appears that the making and vending of rice is monopolized by one man and they are excluded the benefit of the same; therefore we do present unto your Worships this as a grievance which requires redress, and humbly submit to this Honourable Bench whether in future the sale of the said commodity should not be general and not limited to any one man or set of men which will prevent oppressing the poor. One the above, the Chairman (Honourable William Wake) observes that it has always been the custom of this place as also of the neighbouring governments to appoint a certain person or persons to retail unbeaten rice in the bazaar to the poorer sort of people who by that means might at all times be sure of having it in small quantities and at a reasonable rate, the Government fixing the price, always allowing the seller one rupee per muda profit for his trouble, through at the same time no restriction was laid on any who were inclined to buy and retail ground or beaten rice for their families or exportation. All that was desired was that the labouring people might be supplied without imposition; that the rice-sellers who had formerly this license had frequently been complained of and some corporally punished and others fined; and in times of scarcity had or at least pretended not to have what was required for the daily supplies of the bazaar, from whence the Company has been and if a general liberty is given, may again be obliged to issue rice from their warehouse though attended with a loss. On the whole, the orders he had given were agreeable to the usual practice of the place and what in the opinion of the most principal merchants would be for the ease of the poor. He therefore now left it to the Justices whether the Grant Jury’s presentment should be complied with. The Justices were of opinion it should. Upon this the Chairman declares he shall be glad to find the event produces a good effect, though of that he has great reason to doubt.” 87 Campbell, II, 30-31.
unbeaten rice in the bazaar or elsewhere, that the poor and labouring people might buy as cheap as they could.88

The President reminds the Board though these kacharas obliged themselves to supply the bazaar with unbeaten rice at all events, but still in times of scarcity they never had a sufficient stock. In seasons of scarcity the Company have to make good balance required by the bazaar the Company thus ought to have the sole right to supply the bazaar with batty to be made into unbeaten rice. Unless this restriction is made, all shopkeepers were allowed to sell the Company’s batty in time of excess availability. In time of scarcity, if no proper provision is made, the poor will starve. It is well known that in times of scarcity the kachara’s did not supply the bazaar but sold privately in the night by false measures at what prices and such trash as they pleased for these abuses they have been frequently fined and punished.89

The President proposed the Board that to stop such practices of hoarding, Company should solely supply the bazaar batty or rice. This stock be issued out of their warehouse by the warehouse-keeper to such person or persons being Europeans or Native Christians as shall be permitted to make the said batty into unbeaten rice. They should pay for the same at the time of taking it from the Company’s warehouse, and should sell it in the bazaar at the customary advance of Rs.1 the muda. The president also proposed the more convenient inspection of the clerk of the market. The unbeaten rice should be issued from one convenient place and in the day only. The clerk of the market to be very careful in duly inspecting the rice and the way it is sold.90

The Board however was divided on the point what is the best way to supply the poor. Some members like John Munro, Hugh Howard and Edward Owen were against kachara’s to be given right of selling batty and favoured single person mainly a European to be the in charge of supplying.91 On the other hand members like John Morley disagreed to it.92 Though the decision about it does not seem clear in the

89 P.D.D. No.17-I of 1744, 40-41.
90 Ibid., 42-43.
91 Ibid., 55-73.
92 Ibid., 97-104.
sources but it becomes evident that the President too favoured a European or Europeans to vend unbroken rice in the bazaar.\(^93\)

The decision regarding the supply of batty to military was left to the Bombay government by the Court of Directors. The decision regarding it was taken into consideration by the Bombay Council in October 1744. It was observed that the quantity necessary to be annually provided for the military (exclusive for the sepoys) ought to be at least 1000 *mudas*, and could be computed to Rs.16 the *muda*. The officers also find it difficult to raise it and take money at interest, or probably make such agreements with some of the black merchants. It was also observed that giving officers many powers to impose ordinary and bad batty upon the soldier is not in the general interest of the soldiers. It was also agreed to provide a sufficient quantity of grain for the military annually in the proper season, because in the wet monsoon no supplies can be obtained through sea. In such case Marathas ask any price for the grains they please. This problem has become more pronounced since the Marathas have all the batty country in their own possession and it was apprehended that now rates will no more be reasonable.\(^94\)

The board also observed that the monthly pay of *Topass* soldier is too small to bear any overcharge in their provisions. Such overcharge when batty was cheap has caused discontents and possibly desertions. But the cause of such effects will probably cease if the batty is bought at the best hand, and a moderate profit put upon it for interest and waste in warehouse, which may be for a year fifteen per cent in the whole. It was also observed that they with fewer advances cannot be supplied throughout the year and, when the provision is made for the year, the price can be settled accordingly.\(^95\)

Batty became exceedingly dearer in 1746 a Consultation of 1746, recorded that the proprietors were hoarding the batty and even the *kachara's* were not supplying the bazaar. This all has worsened the conditions of poor. To prevent such situation it was agreed to issue a publication requiring all persons to give an account to the warehouse-keeper of what batty or rice is in their possession. They were also to

\(^{93}\) Ibid., 143-147.
\(^{94}\) P.D.D. No.17-I of 1744, 292-93.
\(^{95}\) Ibid., 292-294.
declare that if anything is found afterwards shall be forfeited. It was also decided to
give half of the forfeited things to the informer in order to encourage these discoveries
and discouraging any such hoardings. This will provide the relief to the poor and it is
further agreed that 25 mudas be delivered to the kachara's out of Company’s
warehouse at the rate of Rs.26 the muda to be sold in small parcels by them in the
bazaar.96

In 1748, land paymaster was directed to purchase about 45 khandis as there was again
scarcity of grain. But the Company found it cheaper in Surat so directed the Chief and
factors of Surat to provide 180 khandis and send it down by any proper conveyance
before the rains.97 In May the same year the Company also contracted with
Mohammad Safi, who agreed to provide 500 mudas at the rate of Rs.29 ½ the muda.
The Company was in need of batty and finding the offer suitable accepted it and
gave him the advance of Rs.6500.98 Similarly in 1749 the Bombay Council contracted
with Vithaldas Keshavram and Mahommad Safi for the provision of 1000 mudas at
the rate of Rs.25 per muda to be delivered at the Bandar within the space of three
months, and were advanced Rs. 10,000 for this.99 The Company being in want of
batty again gave them the orders for 200 mudas with the advance of Rs. 10,000 in
March the same year.100

The Company next year contracted with Gangadhar Pant, inhabitant of Thana, for
1500 mudas at Rs.19 ½ the muda.101 In January 1751 Company was in need of
2,000 mudas of batty but failed to find any person to purchase it on Company’s
behalf.102 In February the Company was supplied 600 mudas of Rs. 15,000 by Rupji
Dhanji on an advance payment of Rs. 10,000.103 In October the prices of batty fell
suddenly as there was good harvest. The merchant therefore were allowed to export
the batty.104

96 P.D.D. No. 19- III of 1746, 421-422.
97 P.D.D. No. 21-1 of 1748,118-119.
98 Ibid., 168.
100 Ibid, 68.
103 Ibid. 59.
104 Ibid, 345.
In 1755, the island again faced a great scarcity of grain as there were no rains. It is therefore unanimously resolved to take off the import duty. This was done to encourage merchants and others to bring in grains for the relief. On the action of the Bombay Government in remitting import duties on grain the Court of Directors in May 1757 wrote “although a constant attention must be had to the continuing or increasing our revenues to the utmost extent, yet we are never against making equitable abatements where they tend to the general relief of the inhabitants. As this appears to be the case in your resolve to take off the import duty on grain we cannot but approve the measure and rest satisfied with your assurances that you will continue this indulgence no longer than is really necessary.”

Though the import duty has been taken off the scarcity continued it was therefore decided to sending one of the European ships to Mangalore for bringing up a cargo of rice for supplying inhabitants, garrison and marine service. It being observed this will be the most effectual means of inducing the neighbouring countries to export their grains, as they had hoarded it up.

In July Bombay inhabitants sent an address to the President to have proper warehouses for holding about 3000 or 4000 mudas of batty in order to ensure the supply in the monsoons. The kachara’s will also be compelled to sell at the price decided by the Governor and Council. On receipt of this representation Government thus resolved to appoint a committee in September to design the most proper measures for buying and constantly keeping a sufficient quantity of batty on their Honourable Masters’ account and for the relief and support of the inhabitants in general.

However, no committee was appointed for providing a sufficient quantity of grains to the inhabitants because of the high price of grains since September. But the government made sure to keep the prices at lowest for the season i.e., about Rs. 31 the

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106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., 428.
muda, the warehouse-keeper and two customs masters were appointed a committee to purchase the supply. 109

The committee reported to the government that they have not received any offers from or others for making a contract to deliver any certain quantity of batty. The small parcels daily imported, were not be sufficient to serve the market. The committee therefore proposed that a provision of rice to be procured from Mangalore, Mulkee, or other ports, to prevent any scarcity during the approaching monsoon of 1755. They also apprised the government that it will be almost impossible to secure more than the 2000 mudas of batty which the President had advised the Board to contract with Sankrajipant. 110

The situation however remained more or less same in the following years. Thus we see Bombay in the period under review had to constantly face the problem of provisions. These problems were further compounded by the Portuguese in the seventeenth century and later by the Marathas in the eighteenth century after they captured Salsette in 1737 band Bassein in 1739. Bombay took several measures to prevent the scarcity of grains on the island by procuring it from Mangalore and other ports of the coast. They even tried to bring the grains from Bengal and Sind. Bombay government also issued proclamation from time to time to address the problem of hoarding and people were encouraged to report about those persons who were engaged in hoarding.

The problem remained more or less same throughout our study and worsened when the coast became the theater for political rivalry between different power groups. Bombay though was relieved with the fading power of Portuguese on the coast in the eighteenth century but were also waiting to meet with another danger in the form of Marathas and Angria’s. With the Marathas becoming their neighbour in 1740’s problem worsened as Marathas now blocked the supply of provisions from their territory which was so desperately wanted by the Bombay. Bombay government also took several steps to provide relief to its poor population by asking its warehouse keeper from time to time to sell batty at minimum prices. Similar steps were also

109 Ibid. 3.
110 Ibid. 197.
taken to provide grains to their garrison so that they may not be the worst suffer. Despite all this Bombay has to face the scarcity of provisions throughout our period of study.