CHAPTER 5

SECURITY ON THE TRADE ROUTES IN MUGHAL INDIA

We have seen in the previous chapters that almost every part of Mughal India was linked with land routes. On the other hand, coastal routes linked the coastal part of the empire. All these routes carried very brisk trade by the means of transport suitable for the respective geographical terrain by paying the prevalent freight charges. But there were certain factors also which indirectly raised the cost of transport both on the land and water. Therefore a study of those factors seems important.

1.1: Problems of Safety

On the land routes, there were mainly two types of problem, which economically affected the smooth flow of transport. First one was the level of security on the routes and another, more important, was exactions of various legal and illegal tolls and cesses -- generally called rahdari.

For conditions of security on the routes we have information mainly from the European Travellers as well as European Companies’ Records. It appears from these sources that many routes were infested with gangs of thieves and robbers. In 1579, Father Monserrate during his journey on the most frequent route of Mughal India, the Surat-Agra route via Burhanpur, along the Bindha Range (Satpura range) of mountains, had encountered a
large number of thieves and even lost a guard.¹ In 1596, Abu-l Fazl reports for the same route that, one lakh *muhrs*, which were sent for the equipment for the army in the Deccan remained at Gwalior due to insecurity on the route, therefore guards were sent for the safe passage.² In the first decade of seventeenth century, during the reign of Jahangir, William Hawkins, who travelled mainly on the Agra-Surat route, observed that “the country is so full of outlawes and theeves that almost a man cannot stirre out of doores throughout all his demomions without great forces.”³ A few years later, William Finch during his journey from Agra to Ahmadabad found the route infested with thieves at several places such as at Bhadwar, Sunenarra (Sunera) Sipri etc. On the way he came across Gracias near Sunenarra in Malwa and Kolis near Ahmedabad who were “thievish people.”⁴ He described his journey on this way “from Geloure to this citie is all a sandy woody countrey, full of thievish beastly men and of mankind.”⁵ In 1619, an English caravan from Agra was looted between Manderabarree (Mandawar) and Sundelva in the Jurisdiction of Shahnawaz Khan, son of Khan-i-Khana, by the thieves who took away 14 Churles, Bayana indigo and killed four or

¹ Monseerrat, Commentary, p.13. Actually the range of Satpura in the Central Province was inhabited by Bhils and Kolis.

² *AN*, III. p. 712.

³ Hawkins in *Early Travels*, pp. 113-114.

⁴ Finch in *Early Travels*, pp. 136-137, 142-144, 173. William Foster has noted that “Gras was a kind of blackmail levied by Rajputs and Kolis, and grassia was the term given to the person who received this toll. It thus came to mean a robber.”(*Early Travels*, foot note 1, p.144).

⁵ ibid. p. 174.
five servants that attended it. In 1621 an English caravan from Agra was
looted at about a day’s journey from Mandu by a commander of 5000 horse
in the army of Malik Amber despite having the pass (qaul). Around 1626,
Pelsaert regarded Jahangir “King of the plains or the open roads only for in
many places you can travels only with a strong body of man or on payment
of heavy toll to rebels.” Peter Mundy who visited India during 1630-34
presents picture of many Inland routes as infested by robbers and rebels.
Coming from Agra to Surat in 1633 he records several incidents of
robberies and illegal exactions. Near Sironj, he records, the Dutch Caphila
was assaulted by bandits. Mundy had to pay the so called custom at
Bunkerre (Bhanpur) near Baroda on the river to the bands of Koli rebels,
who pillaged the carts of Murari, an ex-Officer at Baroda. At Bhandu, a
Koli snatched the clothes of a poor fellow who was later wounded by
another Koli when he tried to get them back. He further records that
between Jornang and Mehsana, the way was very dangerous for thieves

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6 EFI, 1618-21, pp 59-60, 81,91.
7 Pieter van den Broeke, Surat Diary, JIH, vol. X pt. II, p. 239; DFI, I, pp.155, 162,
164; EFI, 1618-21, p. 243. Due to ongoing war with the Deccans, the governor of
Mandu did not allowed the English caravan to travel further without a writing
absolving him from all blame, should it be robbed (EFI, 1618-21, p.230). The
English got assurance in writing under the seal of Malik Amber for safe passage
through his territories and same was confired by another writing under the seal of
Yaqut Khan general of the Deccan armies in Mughal territories (EFI, 1618-21, p.
231), but the caravan was robed by the same army.
8 Pelsaert, p. 58.
9 Mundy, II, p. 256.
10 Ibid. p. 269.
11 Ibid. p. 263.
hide in woods and thick forests. At Mehsana Mundy recorded that, “from Agra itself hither and as I understood to the Gates of Ahmudavad (Ahmadabad) is a desert, barren and theevish countrie.”

In Gujarat the commercial centre of the Mughal empire the evidence from European sources suggest that the routes were not safe for merchants and trade. Finch (1608-11), found the way between Surat and Cambay ‘theevish’. Pieter van den Broeke wrote in 1627 in his diary about the unsafe route between Surat and Broach. In c.1629, De Joungh, has written about the thieves staying in the mountains, in Gujarat in detail. He found these thieves under the leadership of certain rajas, considered to be better fighters than the Mughals, were continuous danger on the routes. In 1638-9, Mandelslo observed that due to the presence of ‘Rasboote’, the road between Ahmadabad and Cambay had become very dangerous. He met a caravan from whom the highwaymen had extorted one hundred rupees and again Mendelslo encountered a party of Rajput robbers near Anklessor. Thevenot who visited India during 1666-67 informs us that the Gracias

12 Ibid. p. 264.
16 Mendelslo, p. 30.
17 Ibid. pp. 35, 46.
inhabiting the villages from Cambay to Broach make their living by robbery.\textsuperscript{18}

On the Ahmadabad-Thatta route, in 1613 Nicholas Withington had to wait for another Caravan to accompany him for the fear of thieves at Carrya (Khawad). Near Raddinpoore (Radhanpur), he met a caravan that had been robbed near Thatta. Again, at Nagar Parker, he came across another caravan robbed at about two days journey from Thatta. Between Jun and Thatta (half a day journey from Thatta) he reports the presence of a criminal group, “who pay none neither acknowledge any kinge, but themselves, robbing and spoiling whom they list.”\textsuperscript{19} At a place named Sarrunne, ‘a great towne of Rasbootes’, Withington was misled and looted on several occasions. They even took away his cloths and he had to beg for food.\textsuperscript{20}

On the Agra-Patna route via Allahabad, from the experience of Mundy (1632/33) it apperas that due to presence of certain rebellious inhabitants, mainly between Bhadohi and Banaras, merchants had to buy safe passage by paying money at many places, to those rebels.\textsuperscript{21} At the same time he himself noted that the route via Jaunpur was both safe and trouble free.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Thevenot, pp. 20-21.
\textsuperscript{19} Withington in \textit{Early Travels}, pp. 209-10.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. pp. 211-216.
\textsuperscript{21} Mundy, II, pp. 111-10, 117-20. Those rebels/ thieves were the Rajputs of the Mirzapur and Bhadohi districts.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.118.
In January 1650 an English Caravan from Lucknow was robbed at Jettenore, where three carts were looted, causing a loss of at least 5000 rupees.\(^{23}\)

Thevenot records about a special group of robbers called ‘Thugs’ around Delhi that “the Cunningest Robbers in the world are in that Country.” Those robbers used a certain slip with running-noose for strangling the travellers by throwing it around their neck. They even used beautiful woman for trapping the travellers.\(^{24}\)

On the route from Lahore to Qandahar via Multan we have reports of presence of Baluch and Afghan robbers. In 1615, Steel and Crowther during their journey on that route mentioned many places which were notorious for theft. The caravan which they had joined, had to wait for ten days for procuring the convoy of horsemen to conduct them to Chatza - a small fort in the mountain, as a previous caravan was robbed there.\(^{25}\) At some places even the garrisons kept for the safe conveyance by Mughals, were not averse to robbery if got opportunity and exacted illegally cesses from the caravans.\(^{26}\) They noted about the Afghans inhabited in the mountains of Qandahar that they were great robbers and were accustomed to cut off whole caravans.\(^{27}\) Later on in 1642, Manrique, who also travelled on the

\(^{23}\) *EFI,1646-50*, pp. 294, 302.
\(^{24}\) Thevenot, p. 58. See also *Waqia i Ajmer*, 405, for reference to “highway robbers known in Hindi as thugs”.
\(^{25}\) Steel and Crowther, p. 270.
\(^{26}\) Ibid., 270, 271.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 272.
same route from Multan, found same condition of insecurity on the route. He would have to wait for six months for a caravan to accompany with, if he had not accompanied a Mughal noble, “owing to the large bands or bodies of Baluchis, who being a race addicted to robbery and plunder, used to sally forth and infest all those roads.”

**Burden of Legal and Illegal Taxes and Cesses:**

Another difficulty that travellers faced on the route was the exactions that the *jagirdars* and the *zamindars* often realized from them.

The most burdensome of the levies was *rahdari*- comprised of various tolls and cesses, exacted by the various authorities controlling the routes. Jahangir just after ascending throne noted that such dues were exacted in every *suba* and every *sarkar* by the *jagirdars.* In the reign of Aurangzeb, these cesses were realized with regularity by the *zamindars* and the *jagirdars.* The famine in 1662-3 in Dacca (in Bengal) has been attributed to “the heavy burden of the *zakat*, the oppression of the *rahdars* and the exactions of the *chaukidars* (men posted at *chaukis* or toll and guard stations).” Since these oppressions resulted in the inability of the merchants in bringing grain to the city. The rate of *rahdari* varied from place to place and from person to person assessed. Though, mostly these were field *ad valorem.* In 1616, regarding these cesses, the English Factors at Surat,  

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28 Manrique, II, pp. 251-2, 255.  
29 *Tuzuk*, p. 4.  
30 Khafi Khan, II, pp. 87-90.  
31 *Fathiya-i Ibiya*, ff.79b-80a, 110b-111a.
wrote in a letter, that "the customes etc. aryseing on carts on the way, wee conceive that severall commodities pay different customes."32 Instances of uniform levies mostly on the river crossings are also found. In Akbar's period, a laden cart was charged 4d. and empty one 2d.; a laden camel, 1d., unladen camels, horses, and laden cattle ½ d; and unladen cattle, ¼ d.; other beast of burden used to pay 1/16d., which included the tolls due by the river. Twenty people had to pay 1d. for crossing, but they were often taken gratis. One-half or one-third of amount thus collected used to go the state and the remaining to the boatmen.33 In the second half of seventeenth century Tavernier also noted on a river crossing that "For each side there is a Darogha, who allow no one to pass without an order; and he takes note also of the kind of merchandise carried, each wagon being charged four rupees, and a chariot paying but one, without counting the boat, for which it is necessary to pay separately."34 However, duty was not collected on personal property and it was collected only on merchandise before embarking in the boat for crossing the river.35 In the later years of Aurangzeb's reign, the mutasaddi of Surat extorted Rs.2 per bullock and his agent, Rs.1, from the Banjaras, who supplied grain to the imperial army in the Deccan.36 Khafi Khan noted that in later years of Aurangzeb's reign the imposts and cesses surpassed those of the past and were so frequently levied

32 Foster, A Suppl. Cat., p.66.
33 A'in, I, p. 145.
34 Tavernier, I, p. 96.
36 Ahkam-i Alamgiri, f.148 b.
everywhere that a commodity taken inland from the port sometimes ended up paying as much duty as the price of its purchase. Aurangzeb found collection of *rahdari* so extortive that he equated it with highway robbery "this is not *rahdari* but *rahzani* (Highway robbery)."

### 1.2: Measures of Safety on the Routes

The Mughal administration was not indifferent to the problems of safety and illegal exactions and tried to take measures against both. The Mughal Emperors issued several *farman* time and again for abolishing the transit imposts, known as *baj*, *tamgha*, *zakat* etc. In the early year of his reign, Akbar issued a *farman* in which he abolished *tamgha*, *Jihat*, *rahdari* etc. all over his empire. Again in 25th Ilahi regnal year (1582-83), he issued another *farman* abolishing *baj* and *tamgha*. Akbar even appointed officials to punish the extortionists all over his empire. Jahangir also prohibited the collection of *zakat*, *tamgha*, *mir-bahri* and *sair*, etc., which were collected by the *jagirdars* in every *subas* and *Sarkars* for their own profit. Similarly, Shahajhan issued *farman* for abolishing these imposts.

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37 Khafi Khan, II, pp. 87-90.  
41 *AN*, III, p. 670.  
42 *Tuzuk*, p. 4.  
Aurangzeb issued a *farman* in the year of his accession in which he abolished *zakat*, *rahdari*, etc., on the victuals and provisions necessary for the public all over his empire. For the implementation of this order he sent mace-beares (*gurz bardaran*) to all officers with strict warning to implement this order.\(^{44}\) In another order in 10\(^{th}\) regnal year (1077 A.H), Aurangzeb abolished the *zakat* on all the articles belonging to Muslims, but retained it for Hindus, at the rate of 5%.\(^{45}\) But in 1681-82 (25\(^{th}\) regnal year), he re-imposed the *zakat* on Muslims to be realized at the rate of 2.5%.\(^{46}\) The English had to pay only 3% at shipping and were exempted from all other transit dues.\(^{47}\) However it clearly reflects from the issuance of *farmans* by the successive Mughal emperors time and again that despite prohibitions from the administration these *farmans* had only partial effects and these levies were exacted continually in one form or other. In fact in the later period of Aurangzeb, though prohibited, these “illegal” cesses continued to be included in the *jagir*-orders (*parwana-i jagir*) through which the salary claims of *jagirdars* were met.\(^{48}\) Hence *rahdari* proved a major factor which raised cost of transport on the different routes.


\(^{45}\) *Mirat* I, p. 280.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., I, pp. 315-16.

\(^{47}\) *EFI*, 1665-67, p. 266.

As far the security on the route was concerned all the officers such as subahdar, faujdar, kotwal, jagirdars, etc. were held responsible for all unpleasant occurrences of theft or robbery under their jurisdiction. If a case of robbery or theft was reported and the goods lost were not recovered, it was the responsibility of the officers to make up the loss of the robbed person. Tavernier noted that ‘the Governor’ did not allow any one to go out and travel in the night as was held answerable for thefts which occur in his jurisdiction. In 1621, due this responsibility the governor of Mandu did not allowed the English caravan to travel further without giving in written document absolving him of all blames, should the caravan be robbed owing to ongoing war with the Deccans. The high officials were not only responsible for their own fault but were also held responsible for behaviour of their subordinate officials, as well. The mansab of faujdar of Gwalior, Amanat Khan was reduced to 100 suwars for failing to check his subordinate staff from exacting rahdari. Fernao Guerreno records that an officer at Lahore was so severely punished for exacting some trifling toll

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49 A’in, I, pp. 197-8; Lahori, Padshahnama, Calcutta, 1867-68, pt. II p. 35; ibid. pt. I, p. 505; Chahar Chaman-i Barhaman, A: f.25a-b; B:16b; Tavernier, I, p. 39; EFI, 1637-41 ,p. 61; 1646-50, pp. 300-302; 1655-60, p. 315; Thevnot, pp. 28-29, 50; Ovington, p.139; Manucci, II, p. 451; II, p. 423; Mirat (Suppl) p. 170,188 etc.

50 Tavernier, I, p. 39.

51 EFI, 1618-21, p. 230. However the English got assurance in writing under the seal of Malik Amber for safe passage through his territories and same was conferred by writing under the seal of Yaqut Khan, General of the Deccan armies in Mughal territories (Ibid., p. 231), but the caravan was robbed by the same army.

52 Akhbarat, document no 2189, dated 6th safar, 26th year of Aurangzeb.
that his head was shaved and he was dragged through the street of the city.\textsuperscript{53}

Most of the contemporary travellers and historians have recorded several incidences of punishment given to the outlaws. William Finch saw minars with the heads of thieves at Panipat.\textsuperscript{54} Withington notes that Sardar Khan, a great Mughal noble with 2000 horse, was besieging a castle of a Rajput who lived by robbing poor passengers on the way.\textsuperscript{55} Again, at Bollodo, he saw Nurrullah Ibrahimi Khan returning from a punitive raid, bringing home with him 169 heads of the Coolies (Kolis) a ‘theevish’ caste of mountaineers that lived by ‘robbing and spoiling’ poor passengers on the highway.\textsuperscript{56} In 1623 Jahangir sent an expedition to suppress the highway robbers on the eastern side of Jamuna near Mathura, as a result of which a large number of them were killed, their women and children taken captive.\textsuperscript{57} Near Buxer, Peter Mundy saw a great destruction of thieves by the governor of Patna, Abdullah Khan by the order of Shahjahan. He saw above “200 Munaries (minars, pillars) with heads of thieves mortared and plaistered leaveing nothing but their verie face, some 30, some 40, some more, some less.” Abdulla Khan with 12000 horse and 20000 foot soldiers destroyed all their towns, took all their goods their wives and children for

\textsuperscript{54} Finch in \textit{Early Travels}, pp. 157-58
\textsuperscript{55} Withington in \textit{Early Travels}, pp. 198-99.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 209.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Tuzuk}, pp. 375-76.
slaves and cut off heads of their men to be ‘immor¬tered’ in the minars.58

Again in 1634 an expedition was sent to punish ‘the malefactors’ on both
sides of Yamuna who used to commit robbery on the Agra-Delhi route.59

English factors noted that such was the punishment of thieves that the
whole towns were depopulated.60

The system of intelligence prevailing in the Mughal empire was to
serve as a powerful instrument through which the imperial government
could maintain strict vigilance and control the activities of its officers and
punished them if found guilty. There were parallel agencies of
intelligence.61 Waqa’i-nigars were employed to report to the court, but his
activities were closely monitored by the swanih-nigar who also called
khufia navis.62 He was required to report secretly on all the events,
everybody was in mortal dread of him and his office.63 Amanat Khan,
faujdar of Gwalior was punished by reduction in mansab due to a waqai
report in which he was reported to be of exacting rahdari and other illegal
abwabs.64 On the basis of a waqai report, the jagirdar of Mathura was
ordered to compensate the English as their victuals were looted in his
jurisdiction.65

58 Mundy, II, pp. 90, 110-11.
59 Padshahnama, 1 pt. II, pp. 71-72, 76.
60 EFI, 1646-50, p. 127.
61 Mira/ (Suppl.) p. 177.
62 Ibid., p. 175.
63 Alamgirnama, p. 1081.
64 Akhbarat, document no 2189, dated 6th safar, 26th year of Aurangzeb.
The institution of *sarais* (inns) or walled lodgings and store houses designed for the travellers were present all over the empire, proved one of the important arrangements for safety on the routes. These *sarais* not only provided the travellers and merchants resting places on the roads but also provided security to them. Jahangir himself realising the importance of *sarais* ordered that “On roads where thefts and robberies took place, which section of roads might be at a distance from habitations, the *jagirdars* of the neighbourhood should build *sarais*, *mosques*, and dig wells, which might stimulate population, and people might settle down in those *sarais*. And if these be near *khalisa* estate, *mutasaddi* of that place should execute the work. The gates were closed at sunset and opened only in the morning. Before closing and opening the gates the person deputed for this, shouted loudly giving three warnings to the travellers to look after their things. If anyone found that he had lost his things, the gate remained closed till the thing was recovered.

The system of *hundi* and *bima* was an important private arrangement in Mughal India. Sujan Rai describes it enthusiastically as one of the wonders of India. Describing it he says, “if due to danger on the routes any

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66 See previous chapter for presence of *sarais* along the important routes, throughout the Mughal Empire.

67 *Tuzuk*, p. 4.

68 Steel and Crowther, p. 268; Bernier, p. 233, Manucci, I, p. 67.

person cannot convey the sums of money to a near or distant place, the
\textit{Sarraf} take it from him and give him a piece of paper written in \textit{Hindvi}
characters without a seal or envelope addressed to their agents (\textit{Gumashta-
ha}) who have their shops in various towns and place throughout these lands,
and this paper in the language of this country is known as \textquote{hundi}' and the
\textit{gumashtas} of these honest dealers payout money in accordance with that
document, \textquote{without any argument or objection}.” He further informs us that
the \textit{hindvi} piece of paper was transferable.\footnote{Sujan Rai, p. 25.} Abu-I Fazl has also described
this system for the transition of money. This institution was so efficient that
even the Imperial revenue was transmitted through it.\footnote{\textit{AN}, III, p. 762.}
Mendelslo makes special reference of the facility with which bills of exchange could be
secured at Ahmadabad by merchants from the Banya \textit{sharrafs}, who had
their correspondents in all parts of Asia and also as far as Constantinople in
Europe.\footnote{Mendelslo, pp. 27-28.} There were two types of insurance. One type of insurance only
covered the risk of loss on the way, and in the other type the insurer not
only took the custody of the goods but also arranged for their safe
conveyance. Mundy mentions the professional carters \textquote{adowyaes} who took
so much money on hiring that they could pay the transit dues etc. on their
own risk for the safe conveyance of the goods.\footnote{Mundy, II, pp. 278, 291.}
At least European merchants themselves also made arrangements for their protection. Often they would take guards on their own cost. William Hawkins, in 1608, going from Surat to Agra took ‘Pattan’ (Pathan) soldiers.\textsuperscript{74} Pieter van den Broeke took a strong party of guards with him while carrying cash from Surat to Broach due to unsafe roads.\textsuperscript{75} Mundy hired horsemen and footmen at various places according to the suspected dangers during his journey from Agra to Ahmadabad.\textsuperscript{76} In fact it was general practice of the English Factors to hire certain number of persons for safety on the routes.\textsuperscript{77} Mendelslo, during his journey from Surat to Ahmadabad, met an English Caravan consisting of 12 English armed soldiers and as many Indians for conducting the caravan in safety from the Rajput highwaymen who frequented the country and lived as robbers.\textsuperscript{78} During his journey from Ahmadabad to Cambay he engaged eight foot soldiers for the journey, which served as lackeys also and were hired for the small sums of eight crowns or sixteen rupees for the journey.\textsuperscript{79} In his return journey, the caravan was attacked near Broach by a large band of Rajput highwaymen. A sharp conflict took place between the soldiers and the robbers and the robbers were ultimately forced to withdraw.\textsuperscript{80} Hamilton

\textsuperscript{74} Hawkins in \textit{Early Travels}, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{75} Van den Broeke, JIH, XV Pt. II, p. 209.
\textsuperscript{76} Mundy, II, pp. 255-56, 296 etc.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{EFI}, 1618-21, pp. 74, 256; 1622-23, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{78} Mendelslo, pp. 13-14.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p. 50-51.
records, that with the help of ‘thirteen best firemen’ he forced the Baluchi and the Mackran robbers to retreat, during his journey from Larribandar to Thatta.\(^81\)

Another arrangement for security on the routes was to undertake journey in a *Caphila (qafila)* or caravan. Withington records on the way from Surat to Cambay at a place Barengeo (Bareja) the *Caphila* of Cambay used to meet and moved together for fear of the ‘theeves’.\(^82\) Della Valle travelled from Cambay to Ahmadabad with a *qafila* which consisted of above a hundred coaches besides footmen and horsemen and great laden wagons.\(^83\) In 1619, a caravan of the English on Agra-Burhanpur route consisted of 1600 camels.\(^84\) Mundy met a *qafila* of 800 camels near Sironj.\(^85\) The Banjara caravan had upto 20000 pack oxen in general days, however when they travelled with the army there number might be hundred thousand and more.\(^86\) On the Multan-Qandahar route, one had to wait for six months for travelling with a caravan for the safety on the route.\(^87\)

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\(^81\) Hamilton, I, pp.114-118.

\(^82\) Withington in *Early Travels*, p. 206.

\(^83\) Della Valle, I, p. 93.

\(^84\) *EFI*, 1618-21, p. 90.

\(^85\) Mundy, II, pp. 95-95.

\(^86\) Thomas Roe, *The Embassy*, p. 67; Mundy, II, pp. 95-96; Tavernier, I, pp. 32-33; *Tuzuk*, p. 345; W. Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of the North-western Provinces and Oudh*, p. 151.

\(^87\) Manrique, II, pp. 251-2.
However, even travelling with caravan was not a guarantee of safety on the route. Sometimes a whole caravan was cut off.\textsuperscript{88}

A very common method that travellers adopted for their safety was to give small amount of money to the highwaymen, tribes etc., as custom etc. Withington mentions, that the inhabitants between Jun and Thatta used to take money in the name of custom but they took responsibility of safe journey in their territories.\textsuperscript{89} Thevenot refers to a Gracia Raja in Gujarat who, in lieu of some amount, extended free hospitality to the caravan. They offered provisions and victuals to the caravan and furnished the caravan with several horsemen for their security until they be out of his jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{90}

One may thus assume that the picture of abject insecurity painted by some European merchants is to some extent an overstatement, their complaints seem rather over stated particularly in the face of recorded experience of other European merchants and travellers such as Manrique, Tavernier and Banarsidas and others, which suggested that journeys on the routes were not as hazardous and risky as the account of the European merchants make them out. The routes passing entirely through the imperial land were safer in comparison to the routes passing through the region of the tributary chiefs and neighbouring kingdoms. Tavernier found that the route from Agra to Surat by way of Sironj and Burhanpur was safer than the

\textsuperscript{88} Steel and Crowther, p. 272; Manrique, II, p. 252.


\textsuperscript{90} Thevenot, pp. 20-21.
route passing through the territories of the Chieftains.\textsuperscript{91} An English document of 1616 described the ‘customs and extortions’ on the routes through the region of Rajput Chieftains as ‘intolerable’ and the alternative route Surat - Burhanpur - Agra which passed almost entirely through imperial lands was ‘safer, speedier and cheaper’.\textsuperscript{92} The Agra - Patna route was ‘not very dangerous for robbers’.\textsuperscript{93} The experience of Thevenot in the kingdom of Golconda where he had to pay within space of 23 leagues, money to sixteen local officers or their agents ‘not being exacted in the Name of the King, but in the Name of private Lords’, shows that the Mughal routes were safer than those of under other nearby kingdoms.\textsuperscript{94}

Chandrabhan Brahman offers a different view in 1656 in that “Owing to the justice and management of this great Government, such peace is maintained on the routes and halting places that merchants and traders and travellers journey forth to (distant) parts in tranquillity of heart and joy. If at any place anything lost, the officers who have jurisdiction (\textit{amal-daran, MS. var. ‘ummal}, revenue officials) there are obliged to pay compensation as well as a fine for the negligence.”\textsuperscript{95}

The best indicator of the safety on the land routes in Mughal India is the rate of insurance.

\textsuperscript{91} Tavernier, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{92} Foster, \textit{A Suppl. Cal.} p.89.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{EFi},1618-21, p. 269.
\textsuperscript{94} Thevenot, p.131.
\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Chahar Chaman-i Barhaman}, Add 18863, A: f.25a-b; Or. 1892, B: 16b. Cf Irfan Habib, \textit{Agrarian System}, p. 75.
Table-5.1: Rate of Insurance on the Different Routes in Mughal India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Goods insured</th>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Approximate distance</th>
<th>Insurance charges (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1646</td>
<td>Treasure</td>
<td>Daman-Surat</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1647</td>
<td>Commercial goods</td>
<td>Ahmadabad-Thatta</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1655</td>
<td>Cochineal</td>
<td>Surat-Agra</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1655</td>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>Masulipatam-Surat</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is clear from the Table 5.1 that in 1646, a treasure brought from Manila, was insured at the rate 1% for conveyance from Daman to Surat. The rate is indeed higher than the usual since a condition of uncertainty was created on the route due to death of a high official just before. In 1647, goods against which, hundi was drawn, was insured at ½ % for Ahmedabad to Thatta. In 1655, cash sent from Masulipattam to Surat was insured at 1%. Cochineal sent from Surat to Agra in 1655 was insured at 2½ % only.

Again by comparing rates of insurance during Mughal period with other regimes one can clearly understand the level of safety in the Mughal period. For this purpose I have selected some of the quotations of rates of insurance in 1820 under the East India Company’s regime. The distance between the points here given is not road distance, but ‘approximate aerial’.

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96 EFI, 1646-50, p. 88.
97 Ibid., p. 103.
98 EFI,1655-60, p. 42.
99 Ibid. p. 15.
And average distance between Hyderabad and Malwa, has been calculated taking Ujjain as an important centre.

Table-5.2: Rate of Insurance on the Different Routes in the East India Company’s Regime (1820)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Goods insured</th>
<th>Aprox. Distance (miles)</th>
<th>Insurance charge (%) in 1820</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indore</td>
<td>Ahmadabad, Baroda, Broach</td>
<td>Opium and cloth</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1.00 to 1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surat</td>
<td>Indore</td>
<td>Pearls and precious stones</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>2.00 to 2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>Malwa</td>
<td>Silver and gold coin and bullion</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>1.50 to 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berhanpore</td>
<td>Indore</td>
<td>Cloths</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indore</td>
<td>Bhopal</td>
<td>Kuranah</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1.50 to 2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-5.2 clearly shows that in 1820, merchants had to insure their merchandise by paying more even for less distance than they paid in the Mughal period. As the rate of insurance is the best indicator of level of safety on the routes, one clearly understand that level of safety on the routes during the Mughal period was much better than that of in the regime of the East India Company, surprisingly whose Factors showed the abject picture of insecurity on the routes in the Mughal period.

Considering the times charges for insurance in Mughal India, are more moderate than one would have expected and do not suggest any stifling of commerce through 'political instability'.

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the land routes was not as bad as is considered by some historians, such as W. H. Moreland. For this was, after all a pre-modern period, when transport and communication had not reached the speed and efficiency of modern times.

2: Condition of Security on the Seas and the Coast

As far as security on the coast and the ocean is concerned, the major problem was indeed piracy.

Before the coming of English and Dutch East India companies, Portugal was the only European country, trading with India on a large scale and it had established herself as a ‘Lord of the Indian Ocean’ on great extent and tried every possible option to continue this lordship. In persuasion of this motto, it opposed the entry of other European trading companies especially English and the Dutch. And this opposition led to the bitter instability in the Indian Ocean. The English and the Dutch too wanted a share in the India oceanic and coastal trade and to show their supremacy and mastery on the sea they started plundering the Indian ships. And this situation further contributed to the worsening of plight of the Indian merchants’ trade. In the 1610 A.D., Jahangir perhaps under the influence of Portuguese, denied the trade privilege to the English East India Company and Mukarrab Khan, Governor of Cambay ordered them to leave the place, in retaliation of which the servants of the English Company plundered a number of Indian ships in the Red Sea in 1612. Sir Henry Medleton, the General of the Sixth Voyage, Nichlas Downton, and Captain Saris of the
Eighth Voyage, plundered at least eleven ships belonging to Surat, Diu, Malabar, Dabhol, Cananor etc.\(^{102}\) to avenge any grievance they had against the authorities the European Companies seized or plundered the Indian ships in the water. Besides these plundering or seizing of Indian ships by the Companies’ ships in revenge, there appeared certain groups of persons on the ocean and coast, whose sole motto was plunder, such as pirates under Captain Quail, Captain Cobb, Ayers, Every etc.\(^{103}\)

Indian merchants not only had to face acts of piracies from the Europeans but they had to face indigenous pirates also as Indian coast was infested with those pirates. These indigenous pirates were broadly called Malabars, Sanganians, Warrels, etc. on the Western coast and Maghs or Arakanese on the Eastern coast mainly in the Bay of Bengal.

The pirates of Malabar were the most notorious and recorded by the Europeans in India. The coast from Goa southward, to the Cape de Comorin, was called the Southern Coast, but commonly called the Coast of Malabar.\(^{104}\) Before the coming of the Europeans in India, the Malabars used to trade mostly with Red sea ports, but even then they were known for their acts of piracy. After the coming of Portuguese, due to trade rivalry, the Portuguese, asserted their power and compelled the Malabars to trade on


\(^{103}\) For detail of depredations by this type of pirates see J. Biddulph, The Pirates of Malabar and an Englishwoman in India Two Hundred Years Ago, London, 1907, especially pp.1-68.

their own conditions and forced them to buy passes from them. Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum, writing in late sixteenth century, has pointed out that, due to compulsion the Malabars took to plundering the Portuguese and other ships, even of Muslims, to compensate their loss in income.\textsuperscript{105} The reason given by Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum, for adoption of piracy might be the reason behind rise of piracy by the Malabars, but certainly not behind adoption of the piracy, as they were notorious for this act even before the coming of the Portuguese. The Venetian traveller Marco Polo, who travelled in the thirteenth century (1239), has noted the act of piracy by Malabars in detail. He observed that (the Malabar) “who yearly scour these seas with more than an hundred small vessels, seizing and plundering all the merchants ships that pass that way. They take with them to sea their wives and children of all ages, who continue to accompany them during the whole of the summer’s cruise. In order that no ships may escape them, they anchor their vessels at the distance of five miles from each other; twenty ships occupy a space of a hundred miles. Upon a trader’s appearing in sight of one of them, a signal is made by fire or by smoke, when they all draw closer together, and capture the vessel as she attempts to pass. No injury is done to the crew, but as soon as they have made prize of the ship, they turn them on shore, recommending them to provide themselves with another cargo,

which in case of their passing that way again may be the means of enriching their captors a second time.”

In the Mughal period most of the travellers and merchants have noted their presence and act of piracy. Linschoten speaks of Chale, Calicut, Cunhale, and Panana as their headquarters. Fitch, blamed the Samorin for the patronage of the Malabar pirates, and noted that “When the Portugals complains to the king, he sayth he doth not send them out; but he consenteth that they go. They range all the coast from Ceylon to Goa, and go by foure or five parowes or boats together; and have in every one of them fifty or threescore men, and boord presently. They do much harme on that coast, and take every yere many foists and boats of the Portugals. Many of these people be Moores. This kings countrey beginneth twelve leagues from Cochin, and reacheth neere unto Goa.” In 1608-09, Withington, noted the act of piracy done by the Malabar “beeing at this time masters of these seas” who were “good souldiers and carry in each frigat one hundred souldiers, and in their galiots two hundred”, on the ships from Ormuz, Cochin and Diu. Out of 25 frigates of a fleet from Cochin, 16 were burnt and the rest escaped “if miserable spoile be an escape.” In 1623, Petro Della Valle, found it dangerous to travel by sea from Cambay to Goa “by

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107 Linschoten, I, p. 73.

108 Fitch in *Early Travels*, p. 45.

109 Withington in *Early Travels*, p. 129.
reason of the continual incursions of the Malabar pirates." European vessels were always in danger of these Malabar pirates.

Another community of pirates were Sanganians, or ‘sakna’ as called by Khafi Khan. According to Hamilton, “the Sanganias lived at the port of Baet, very commodious and secure. They admit no Trade but practise Piracy. They give Protection to all Criminals, who deserve Punishment from the Hand of Justice ... I have several Skirmishes with them. They, being confident of their Numbers, strive to board all Ships they can come at by failing. Before they engage in a Fight, they drink Bang, which is made of a Seed like Hemp-seed, that has an intoxicating Quality, and whilst it affects the Head, they are furious. They wear long Hair, and when they let that hang loose, they’ll give no Quarter.” They had ships as big as 500 tons and used to attack in groups. “They are very cruel to those they can master, if they make Resistance; but to those that yield without fighting, they are pretty civil.” However, Khafi Khan in 1695 observed that the Bwaril or Sakanas, lawless sect belonging to Sorath (in Kathiawar) plundered small crafts trading from Bandar Abbas and Mascat, but were afraid of the large pilgrim ships.

Warrels were other community of pirates who were also notorious. Hamilton notes about the Warrels that, “All the Country between Diu and

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10 Della Valle, I, p. 21.
11 Khafi Khan, I, p. 428.
13 Khafi Khan, I, 428.
Dand Point, which is about 30 Leagues along shore, admits no Traffick, being inhabited by Freebooters, called Warrels, and often associate with the Sanganians, in exercising Piracies and Depredations. They confide much in their Numbers, as the others do, and strive to board their Prizes, and as soon as get on board, they throw in Showers of stones on the Prizes Decks, in order to sink them that Way, if they don’t yield, and they have earthen Pots as big as a six Pound Granadoe Shell, full of unquenched Lime, well fitted, which they throw in also, and the Pots breaking, there arises so great a Dust, that the Defendants can neither breathe nor fee well. They also use Wicks of Cotton, dipt in a combustible Oyl, and firing the Wick, and throwing it into their Opposer’s Ship, it burns violently, and sets Fire to the Parts that it is thrown on. They have no Cities, and their Villages are small. The best of them stands about 60 Miles to the Eastward of Diu, and called Chance. It is built within the Mouth of a River, which has a small Island lying athwart it, about two miles into the Sea....The Warrels occupy all the Sea-coast as high as Goga, which lies about 12 Leagues within the Gulf of Cambay.114

As pointed out by Hamilton these Warrels were often associated with sanganians in piracy, and perhaps this was the reason behind common identity of sanganians and warrels as sakna or bwaril by Khafi Khan.115 Perhaps these were Vaddellas for which in 1668, in Surat, instruction were given on 29th August, to Captain Barker to protect ‘the King’s junnks’

115 Khafi Khan, p. 428.
expected from the Red Sea, from the ‘vaddellas’ and ‘sangannas’.\footnote{EFI, 1668-69, p. 11; In 1668, in Surat, the governor, the shahbander and the rest of the officers of this town, requested the English to send Bantam to bring in ‘the King’s junks’ expected from the Red Sea, and to protect them against, some pirates, said to be laying in wait for them.} Earlier we have references of Vaddels in 1656, when they plundered the Hollanders in Thatta.\footnote{EFI, 1655-60, pp. 78: 80-81.}

On the eastern coast pirates mostly Portuguese, under the protection of King of Arakan, were notorious for their plunder in Mughal India. However they did their depredations mostly in the coastal area by capturing people for selling as slaves, but were not averse to plunder the vessels on the coast. Bernier and Manucci have noted about the cruel practice of these pirates at length.\footnote{Bernier, pp. 74-78; Manucci, I, p. 371.} One of the reasons behind purchasing or building vessels of 80 or 120 tons by English Factors and the Dutch in the Bay of Bengal was depredations by these Arakanese pirates.\footnote{EFI, 1634-36, pp. 41-43.}

From the Red Sea episode of piracy of 1612, two type of plunder came into sight. The first one was direct plunder and the other was indirect, in the direct plunder, the plunderer, used to plunder all the things, as is the perception of plunder, but in the indirect plunder, there was hidden plunder and the traders were compelled to sell their merchandise on the price fixed or were compelled to exchange their merchandise as their oppressor
wished. From the European as well as Indian accounts, it is clear that, these pirates inflicted much damage not only monetarily but physically and morally also, especially to the women of the ships. In 1576, Akbar, resisted the going of his family member on pilgrim hajj to Mokha, only due to the fear of plunder and molestation of the ladies. However, he ultimately allowed them to go to Mokha after receiving a pass from the Portuguese. In 1695, Every, looted the imperial ship Ganj-i-sawai. During plunder the pirates striped the men and dishonoured the women. Due to which several women ended their life by jumping into the sea or by killing themselves by knife or daggers. And if we have to believe Hamilton, a princess was also carried by Every during this plunder.

Means and Cost of Security on the Seas:

The piracy was a continual menace on the ocean, but there were several methods, adopted by merchants and ship-owners to save themselves and their trade to a great extent.

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120 Purchas, III, pp. 400-3; Jourdain, pp. 212, 217. See also A.J. Qaisar. Merchant Shipping in India during the Seventeenth Century, in Medieval India – A Miscellany, Vol. 2, 1972, p. 216.
121 Blochet Sup. Pers. 482, f. 30b-31a, quoted by Shireen Moosvi, in People, Taxation, and Trade in Mughal India, New Delhi, 2008, p. 245, and full translation of this farman is also available in the same book at p.253 as appendix B.
122 Khafi Khan, I, pp. 421-22.
123 A. Hamilton, I, p. 146.
Cartazes:

The Portuguese started completely a new practice in the India Ocean, by selling cartazes (from Persian Qartas meaning paper) or passes for safe passage to the ships, without which they claimed their right to seize and plunder the vessel. The official Portuguese chronicle justified such a policy in these words “It is true that there does exist a common right to all to navigate the sea and in Europe we recognise the rights which others hold against us; but this right does not extend beyond Europe and therefore the Portuguese as Lords of the Sea are justified in confiscating the goods of those who navigate the seas without their permission.” An Arabic chronicler of 16th century noted that, the Portuguese started to issue passes to the people of Kochi and Kannur, for the safe voyage, just after settling in those ports, and impressed upon the people that the system of pass introduced by them was to their own advantage and thus induced them to submit to it. According to the chronicler Gaspar Correia, cartazes were first issued in 1502 to ships from the Malabar ports of Kollam, Cochin and Cannanore, in order to certify to the fact that they pertained to the areas that were not at war with the Portuguese. Initially, only Portuguese used to

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125 Nainar, p. 52.

give passes to the ships they pleased, but latter on after the entry of other
European Companies especially English and the Dutch, they too started
issuing passes, keeping in mind two important things. Firstly, only for those
ports, from which their own trade would not suffer and secondly to make
good relations with the authorities to get certain favours. In most of the
passes issued to the merchants not only destination of the ships were stated,
but kinds of merchandise, types of arms, type of persons it could
accompany, and ports at which it could stay on the route etc. were also
mentioned and these had to be followed strictly. In 1613, a pass was issued
to the King of Bijapur for a voyage from Dabhol to Jiddah, it laid down in
detail what weapon could be carried, and forbade the ship to transport
Turks, Abyssinians, cinnamon, pepper, ginger, iron, steel, copper, lead, tin,
brass, timber, tabado(?), coir, saltpetre, sulphur, or bamboo, or anything
else forbidden. Nor could this ship transport any Portuguese, or horses
unless they were licenced, or slaves, unless they were native of Bijapur and
not Christians. The ship was to be searched by the Royal Factor at Dabhol
before it left.\(^\text{127}\) A Dutch letter contains an extract from a passport issued by
Viceroy of Goa in favour of the Mutasaddi of Surat for a ship going to
Mocha, that, “the vessel would not carry to Mocha lead, tin, cloves,
cinnamon, pepper, nuts and iron planks. It would not carry back from

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\(^{\text{127}}\) J.F. Biker, *Colleccao de Tratados*, Lisbon, 1921, IV, 181-2, Cf. M.N.Pearson,
Mocha any blacks, Turks or Christians. The vessel would not drop anchor at places other than those mentioned.\textsuperscript{128} Passes were generally valid for a trip or a year, for that period the issuing authority used to send instructions to all their commanders, merchants etc. not only to forbear all manner of seizure or disturbance to the bearer of their pass, with their men, vessel, merchandise or whatsoever therein, but to correspond courteously during their sailing.\textsuperscript{129} However, voyaging with a pass from any Company was not the guarantee of safety on the sea. From a \textit{farman} of Akbar to Qulich Khan, who was first governor of Surat, issued in 1576, it appears that there was always some mistrust on the side of the merchants. The \textit{farman} quotes information given by Qulich Khan, that “although the Portuguese (\textit{Farangian}) have not within this period violated their promise (\textit{be-qauli na kardand}) and not obstructed any ships passage, yet during this period no one has put his trust in the pass (\textit{qaul}) of the Portuguese, to sail to Mecca.”\textsuperscript{130} Generally the rival companies used to molest the ships travelling with passes issued by their rivals. At times commanders of the issuing company were not averse to molest the ships, on account of various allegations, such as carrying people, money, goods, jewels, letters, etc. forbidden by the pass or accusing them being in league with their enemies

\textsuperscript{128} Ducht Factories in India, 1617-1623, trans. And ed. By Om Prakash,....p. 90, see p. 133 also.

\textsuperscript{129} EFI, 1630-33, p. 284.

\textsuperscript{130} Blochet Sup. Pers. 482, f.30b-31a. Cf. Shireen Moosvi, in People, Taxation, and Trade in Mughal India, New Delhi, 2008, p. 245, and full translation of this \textit{farman} is also available in the same book at p.253 as appendix B.
in any form. The Dutch issued time and again instructions to their factors to seize all those ships, which were in league with their enemies in any form, despite having passes from them.\textsuperscript{131} And this compelled the Indian merchants to make a ‘custom’ to buy passes from more than one European Company for their voyage.\textsuperscript{132} The best way to ensure safety on the sea was to accompany the ships of the issuing authority of the pass with their permission.\textsuperscript{133}

From the beginning of the system of pass in India, the Portuguese used to issue passes to the master of the ship against a fixed fee.\textsuperscript{134} Later in our period, the Portuguese used to issue passes after the inspection of the ship’s hold and then fixed the price of the pass. The procedure of issuing passes from the Indian point of view has been mentioned in detail by Bayazid Bayat, who went for \textit{hajj} in 1580, on the ship \textit{Muhammadini}. The price of the pass was taken on behalf of Diu by the “tax farmers of port Daman”. As the Portuguese arrived to board the ship, they took a son of Bayazid as hostage: clearly neither trusted the other. The elder son of Bayazid, Sadat Yar, who, as Bayazid informs us, had learnt both Indian as well Portuguese languages, negotiated with the inspectors. The Portuguese demanded 10,000 \textit{mahmudis} in cash, to be paid by the passengers. Since the passengers had only goods, Bayazid paid the sum on their behalf, they

\textsuperscript{131} EFI, 1630-33, p. 244n; DFI, 1617-23, i92, 218, 220, 221.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., I, p. 274; EFI, 1630-33, p. 215; Abbe Carre, III, p. 786.
\textsuperscript{133} Foster, \textit{A Suppl. Cal.}, p. 144, Abbe Carre, p.130.
\textsuperscript{134} Nainar, p. 52.
promising to reimburse him at Jedda, after they had sold their goods. The agreement was registered with the ‘captian of the Surat ships’, Hasan Channu, and the ‘Caudhuri of the port’, Tajpal, left the ship. Bayazid’s own son returned from the ‘Portuguese galliot’ (ghurab-i Farang) in the evening. In 1612, for the Rahimi (Queene Mother’s ship) the Portuguese demanded “an hundred thousand Mahmudies for her cartaze or Pass, and after twentie thousand, at last taking one thousand Rialls and odde money, with divers presents, which the Mogolls were faine to give them.” A letter written by Pieter van den Broecke, to the Directors at Amsterdam in 1620, informs that, cost of Portuguese pass to the merchants of Surat, was between 3000 and 8000 mahmudis per ship. And in 1617, the pass of a ship belonging to Prince Khurram, then Subadar of Gujarat, which was destined for Mokha costed 8,000 mahmudis.

Redressals:

One of the important results of having pass was that, if a ship was molested on the sea by the company which issued the pass or pirates of the

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137 Purchas, IV, p. 23.
138 DFI, 1617-1623, doc. No. 107, p. 133.
issuing nation, it was the liability of the issuing authority to compensate the victims. However it was not easy to get compensation without great exertions by the victims. Generally, the alleged company used to deny the claim and put forward various excuses, such as wrong identification on part of victims, blaming the act of plundering on their rival companies, doubting the genuineness of the pass, alleging the victims being in league with their enemies or carrying goods or people prohibited by the pass etc. The victims on their part used to complain to Shahbandar of the port or to the governor of the Suba, who ultimately tried to get compensation from the alleged company, by using various means such as arranging meeting with the factors, or confiscating some merchandise or arresting the factors or putting embargo on their trade. And it was easy for the Mughal authority to put pressure on the companies especially English and the Dutch who had established their factories in the interior of the empire, however earlier these options were not available in case of Portuguese culprits, who had restricted themselves only on the coastal regions. In the words of Methwold (after repetition of act of piracy by Captain Cobb in 1636 in the

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Red Sea). ‘Do not know what will result from Cobb’s latest act of piracy. The best wee can expect is the seizure of our persons and goods in all places, for the interested parties are departed, many of them, towards the court, where their clamour will prevaile to get the King’s order, and then wee must expect no favour, since the very name of an Englishman is became a abomination in all places of this vast kingdome.’”

In 1622 the Dutch vessel Weesp, had plundered a ship from Chaul on which Asaf Khan had his merchandise. However Chaul was out of Mughal empire, but due to the influence of Asaf Khan, the Dutch were compelled to pay him to his satisfaction. After repeated demand, which the Dutch tried to deny, the factors were arrested at Agra but were released on their undertaking to pay the amount Rs.13, 000. The money was accordingly remitted by the Dutch factor at Surat.

In 1632, the English factors had to pay compensation even to Malabars, their enemy, having pass from them, an amount of 100l (2000 mahmudi), due to plundering by Captain Quail.

In 1635, servants of English East India Company in India had to face worst of harshness as well as humiliation, due to claim of compensation by the merchants of two ships, one Taufiqi, from port of Surat and another Mahmudi from port of Diu. The merchants complained to the governor of

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141 EFI, 1634-36, pp.315-316.

142 DFI, 1, 191-3, 200, 210, 215, 218, 220, 224, 228, 243-45, 271; EFI, 1622-23, p. 197.

143 EFI, 1630-33, p. 180.
Surat, who accordingly called Methwold, the president of English East India Company in India, to listen complains as well to compensate the victims. Methwold “found a sadde assembly of dejected merchants, some lookeing thorough mee with eyes sparkling with indignation, others half dead in the sense of their losses;...” However as usual the president denied act of piracy by any of their ships, but after testimony of nakhuda of the Taufiqi, and production of large number of evidences found it was act of Ayers, and the English had to compensate the victims of the Taufiqi an amount of 110,000 rupees after examining the claim by a team comprising of the shahbandar and Virji Vora and certain other merchants. This process of compensation took a lot of time and during this period president was kept in prison for eight weeks and had to face much humiliation. Besides imprisonment of president, English Factors at various places were also either taken in prison or were kept under strict surveillance and goods were sequestrated. However after assistance of some Mughal mansabdars, they got parwana for the release of their goods and house at various places. However the English got relief in compensating the victims of Diu ‘junk’ due to intervention of the Portuguese as that port belonged to them, though the Portuguese detained certain amount of English as surety

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144 Ibid., 1634-36, pp. 190, 191, 195-97, for two accounts of piracy on the ships see pp.197-201, and for full detail of events and imprisonment of Methwold in his own words see pp. 232-242.

145 Ibid., pp. 194, 262, 272, 278, 294-95.

146 Ibid., pp. 272, 287, 291.
which was at Goa in hand of Vedor da Fazenda, till the judgement of case of Diu merchants, but at last got release of the amount.\textsuperscript{147}

In 1650, the English captured Malabar ships having passes from them and trading with Mughal ports. The Malabars complained to the governor, who complained of the seizure to the president of the company and urged him to give compensation or otherwise he would report to the court. In reply the English disclaimed all responsibility for the fact that these vessels had their passes and suggested that it was the duty of the king of India to secure his own seas from the pirates, moreover they alleged that the Malabars had done the English many wrongs and the grant of passes to them was only made at the entreaty of governor.\textsuperscript{148} The latter retorted that the president and council were responsible for all injuries done by the Englishmen, instancing the case of Cobb’s piracies and intimating that if

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 1634-36, pp.311, 316; 1637-41, pp.vii, x, xvii, 20, 116, 203; 1637-41, pp. 20, 31. The English were so scared from the Portuguese due to the piracy by Cobb, that in 1638, when they needed gold to be changed in money, the company advised the president not to send the gold to Goa due to the fear of loss of whole sum. (Ibid., 1637-41, p. 60.)

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 1642-45, pp.2-3. In 1642, the English had captured three Malabar ships near Swally, bound to Surat. These Malabars complained to the governor for their compensation, but the governor became deaf to their claim due to his personal trading relation with the English. Before this event the English had undertook the responsibility to convoy the governor’s ship to Basra. However the governor showed displeasure to the English on seizing so near this port, merchant vessels bound to this port. But the next governor sought safe conduct from the English for the Malabar vessels encountered them to the northward of Daman, but if to the southwards of that place or elsewhere they became obvious to the English, they might employ their most of power and courage to chastise and surprise them. Thus got passes for the Malabar ships trading with Mughal ports.
satisfaction were not made, similar treatment might be expected. Ultimately the English restored their vessels.\(^ {149} \)

**European Companies' Ships as Escort:**

In case of imperial families and high office bearers the European companies used to provide an escort for their ships' safety. This was done to appease them and to win some concession for their companies. In 1628 Pieter van den Broecke records that, on the request of the governor of Surat he sent Mauritius to the mouth of the river to protect some Muslim ships against the Portuguese and the Malabars.\(^ {150} \) In March 1629, *Shahi* the imperial ship was returning from the Red Sea ports, the Mughals asked the Dutch and the English to seek her and to protect her against the Portuguese, and escort her to Surat.\(^ {151} \) However, the *Shahi* could not reach Surat Bar, till November 1632.\(^ {152} \) In 1643 President Fremlen, at Swally Marine, complained to the Company that, ‘...we are upon sundry occasions enforced in a manner to convoy the Kings and other eminent merchants shipping free of the Mallavars danger...’ and he further says that, ‘... as there was no other Christian vessel left to convoy her (the King’s ship) free of the Mallavars danger, the Governor and other officials prevailed upon the

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\(^ {149} \) Ibid., *1631-35*, p. 39. In 1636, English President at Surat was put behind bar due to piracy by Cobb and Ayers, for denying compensation for at least 8 weeks and was compelled to compensate (*EFI, 1634-36*, pp. 232-242).

\(^ {150} \) Van den Broeke, JIH, XI Part II, p. 213.

\(^ {151} \) *EFI, 1630-33*, pp. 49.

\(^ {152} \) Ibid., 245. For more detailed information about the ship ‘*Shahi*’, see Shireen Moosvi, *People, Taxation, and Trade*, pp. 260-62.
President to order the *Discovery* to attend on the junk. Accordingly they departed together on March 12, and kept company until they were out of sight of land.\(^{153}\) In 1668, in Surat, the governor and the *shahbander* requested the English to send Bantam to bring in ‘the King’s junks’ expected from the Red Sea, and to protect them against, the pirates, said to be laying in wait for them.\(^{154}\) In the last decade of seventeenth century, when the incidents of piracy was on the rise, the governor of Surat made agreements with the major Europeans trading companies viz. English, Dutch and French in India, to escort the Indian ships to their respective destination. However due to dispute over demands of the Indian merchants for compensations on certain plundered ships, the agreement was set aside on March 19, 1704.\(^{155}\)

**Defence Fleet:**

One of the important measures adopted by the companies to protect their vessels from the piracy was to form fleets of defence during the voyage. Earlier the Portuguese made fleet of defence to maintain their control on the sea and to create pressure upon the merchants who tried to evade their cartazes, but later on they organised the *cafilas* or convoys of

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\(^{153}\) Ibid., *1642-45*, pp. 90-92.

\(^{154}\) Ibid., *1668-69*, p. 11. The pirates were sanganians and warrels or Vaddellas.

\(^{155}\) Manucci, IV, pp. 463-467. For detail discussion on this agreement and its result see Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and Decline of Surat: 1700-1750*, p.97.1\(^{\text{a}}\) published in Wesbaden, Germany, 1979, reprint New Delhi, 1994, pp. 95-133.
merchants’ ships to protect themselves from their rival Malabars. The Portuguese came every year to Cambay with their Kafila consisting of a large number of fusts, a single-masted oared boat with about forty oarsmen and usually of about 40 tons, from Goa, Cochin, Chaul, Bassein, Daman and Diu, bringing large variety of goods from Europe, China, Malacca and other places and in return they take back various kinds of textiles for Portugal, Malacca, Ormuz, Mozambique, etc. On 7 July 1619, the English and the Dutch reached on an agreement to form a combined fleet of defence, to protect themselves and to inflict the maximum possible damage on their common enemy, the Portuguese. It had been decided that the two companies would send four ships each to India. These ships would proceed together from the Cape and after inflicting all possible damage on the Portuguese at Mozambique, would go on to Surat. At Surat, they would try to capture the Portuguese carracks that leave Goa each year, or at least incapacitate them from proceeding further. In 1621, eleven ships, seven of which were of the Dutch and four were of the English, were sent to the coast of Malabar and Goa. While the principal mission of the fleet was to inflict damage on the Portuguese and to prevent the departure of the carracks for Portugal, it was welcome to engage in trade in the region to the

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extent possible.\textsuperscript{159} In later half of the seventeenth century, the English formed their fleet of defence to combat the Malabars, Siddis, Marathas, the Dutch and other pirates.\textsuperscript{160}

**Arms:**

It is true that, the Indian ships mostly relied on passes for their safety, but they were not without arms on the sea. Abu’l Fazl in his \textit{A’ in}, has mentioned a \textit{topandaz} (gunner) out of twelve traditional crew in a ship and its number could vary according to the size of the ship.\textsuperscript{161} Ralph Croft in 1613 found that an Indian ship of 300 tons, which had come from Mokha to Surat, had twelve great pieces of artillery on each side.\textsuperscript{162} In 1616, Terry, observed that, the pilgrim ships going from Surat to Mokha had ‘good ordnance’.\textsuperscript{163} De Laet says that the ships plying between Surat and Mokha, used to carry many large guns.\textsuperscript{164} In 1646, twelve guns were removed from the ships Shukohi and Khizri, which were in disuse outside the fort (of Surat).\textsuperscript{165} Fryer in 1680 noted that some ships carried 30 or 40 pieces of

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., doc. No. 136, pp. 172-174.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{EFI} (New Series), 1670-77, I, pp. 73-74, 77, 84, 111-12, 123, 140, ff.
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{A’ in}, I, p.144.
\textsuperscript{162} Thomas Best, \textit{Voyages}, ed. W. Foster, pp. 234.
\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Early Travels}, p. 301.
\textsuperscript{164} De Laet, p.84; Van Twist, in 1638, relying totally upon De Laet’s in formation copied the same sentence (John van Twist’s \textit{Description of India}, transl. by W. H. Moreland, JJH, Vol. XV, Part, 2, August 1956, p. 74).
cannon.\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Ganj-i-Sawai}, the biggest ship of Aurangzeb, in 1695 during her return from Mokha to Surat, was reported to have eighty cannon and four hundred matchlocks besides other equipments of defence.\textsuperscript{167}

However, it is clearly pointed out by the foreign travellers that despite their guns the Indian ships ‘cannot well defend themselves’.\textsuperscript{168} Van Twist, in 1638, observed regarding the ships plying between Surat and Mokha that, “though they carry many guns, they are not protected by them, for [the guns] are on the top orlop without defence, while they do not know how to handle them.”\textsuperscript{169} Besides these, there are several examples of the weakness of the Mughals in handling their armaments properly. In 1612, in the Red Sea, at least 11 Indian ships were plundered with ease by the English East India Company’s servants.\textsuperscript{170} In 1614 Nicholas Downton reports that, the Portuguese, burnt at Gogo, ten great ships in which, one was \textit{Rahimi}, (belonging to Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan) and one hundred and twenty small vessels with ease. In 1623, again the English captured two ships, \textit{Shahi} and \textit{Gunjawar}, belonging to Shahjahan, although, they were captured to compel Shahjahan to lift the embargo he had imposed on their Red Sea trade therefore, after a compromise between the Mughal officials

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{166}{Fryer, I, pp. 267.}
\footnotetext{167}{Khafi Khan, pp. 422.}
\footnotetext{168}{Purchas, IX, pp. 23.}
\footnotetext{169}{Van Twist, pp. 74.}
\footnotetext{170}{For the detailed story of the fate of those ships, see Jagdish Narain Sarkar, ‘The Rape of Indian Ships in the Indian waters, 1612’, \textit{P.I. H. C.} 1949, pp. 182-190.}
\end{footnotes}
and the English, the ships were released and accounts were settled. But the most alarming example is the capture of biggest ship of Surat, *Gunj-i-Sawai*, which belonged to the emperor Aurangzeb, in 1695, despite having eighty cannons and four hundred matchlocks besides other equipments of defence, almost without any resistance by a few pirates lead by an English, Henry Every. In fact Mughal Indian vessels used to be so overcrowded that a corridor necessary for naval guns to draw and push out of the vessels side to fire, a mechanism used at that time, was not available and ammunition trolley could not supply them properly. This was one of the reasons behind defencelessness of the Mughal ship *Ganj-i Sawai* despite having large number of ammunitions.

**Insurance:**

One of the methods which started to be used in Mughal India for security on the ocean or coast was insurance. This function of insurance was generally carried out by sarrafs. This method was adopted both by

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171 EFI, 1622-23, p.340, and EFI, 1634-6, p. 252 see also EFI, 1618-21, pp. 113, 176-7.


173 Ashin Das Gupta, Indian Merchants and Decline of Surat: 1700-1750, p.97.

174 EFI, 1655-60, pp. 62, 71; 1661-64, p. 86; Cf. Irfan Habib, ‘Banking in Mughal India’, p. 15.
Europeans as well by Indians. Not only goods were insured but sometimes whole vessel was also insured.

Table 5.3: Rate of Marine insurance in Mughal India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cargo</th>
<th>Voyage</th>
<th>Charges in terms of percentage of value of goods incurred</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1622</td>
<td>“Goods”</td>
<td>Cambay to Swally (Surat)</td>
<td>2 or 2 ½ per cent.</td>
<td>EFI, 1622-23, p.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1643</td>
<td>A ship</td>
<td>Mokha to Surat</td>
<td>3 per cent.</td>
<td>Ibid., 1642-45, p. 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1644</td>
<td>“Goods”</td>
<td>Surat to Mokha</td>
<td>5 per cent.</td>
<td>Ibid., p.161, fn. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1649</td>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>Surat to Gambroon (Persia)</td>
<td>2 ¼ per cent.</td>
<td>Ibid, 1646-50, p. 259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1665</td>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>Surat to Calicut</td>
<td>4 ½ per cent.</td>
<td>Ibid, 1665-67, p. 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


System of Official Protection:

So far as role of the Mughal administration in securing the ocean and coast from the piracy is concerned, initially Mughal Indians were fully dependent on the Portuguese passes. And even after getting pass they were in fear of plunder. Although even after the coming of the English and later on the Dutch, the Mughal Indians had to depend on the passes, but there occurred a great change. This change was due to accumulation of considerable assets by the English and the Dutch, unlike the Portuguese who were strictly coastal, into the interior of the empire, now the Mughal were in position to balance the strength of the European Companies on the

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175 Irfan Habib, ‘Banking in Mughal India’, p. 15-17.
177 Blochet Sup. Pers. 482, f. 30b-31a. Cf. Shireen Moosvi, in People, Taxation, and Trade, p. 245, and full translation of this farman is also available in the same book at p.253 as appendix B.
ocean by threat of seizure on the land. This ‘balance of blackmail’ made easy to get compensation from the Companies from which the plunderer or pirates belonged. And here in making pressure on the faulty Companies and making arrangements for safe conduct of vessels, the Mughal administration played their role very effectively. However the Mughals also maintained naval power, but could not make it powerful in any sense. According to Abu’l Fazl, Akbar promoted the efficiency of this department and the first object in his mind was to fit out the strong boats, capable of carrying elephants and some of them in such a manner as to be of use in siege and for the conquest of strong forts. Although Akbar took initiative to remove the Portuguese (Firangis) the ‘stumbling block in the way of pilgrims to Hijaz’, from the coastal area. In 1580, he appointed an army to capture the ports of the Firangis, under the leadership of Qutubuddin Khan. The rulers of the Deccan were also informed that the troops had been sent in that direction and they were bidden to regard this news as an opportunity for securing their loyalty and were directed to join the army with suitable equipments. However, from a letter of Akbar to Abdullah Khan Uzbeg, it appears that, this mission was not fulfilled as, even in 1586, Akbar had an idea to remove these trouble makers on the sea and laments that he could not accomplished it due to some other reason. Shahjahan developed the Bengal navara which consisted of 70,000 personnel, besides soldiers to

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178 See sections ‘Redressals’ and ‘European Companies’ Ships as Escort’.
179 A’ in, I, pp.144-45.
180 AN, III, pp.145, 280-81, 500-01.
curb the Arakanese in the Bay of Bengal. But it failed when confronted with Arakanese, even though they outnumbered them. Bernier noted that “the pirates were become so bold and skilful that with four or five galleasses they would attack, and generally capture or destroy, fourteen or fifteen of the Mogol’s galleys.” Aurangzeb, tried to develop the naval power with the help of the Europeans, but he failed in this mission. And during his period he entrusted the defence of the coast to the Siddis of Janjira who were unable to defend the vessels from the pirates like Every or Kidd. Thus Mughals could not develop naval power in true sense and always depended on ‘balance of blackmail’ for safety on the Ocean.

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181 Lahori, I, pp. 471.
182 Fathiya-i Ibrîya, pp. 124-25.
183 Bernier, p. 179.
184 Manucci, II, pp. 41-42.