The eighteenth century 'Crisis or 'Transition' in medieval India still remains a controversial issue as different theories represent variety of viewpoints concerning the decline of the Mughal empire. Inspite of political chaos, the emergence of regional powers was a characteristic feature of the phase. A study of our texts suggests that the different regional powers and ruling groups had been dominant since the mid-sixteenth century and constantly influenced the political relations between the Mughal empire and the regions. These powers worked at different levels during the declining phase of the Mughal empire. The literature composed in these regional courts during the period reflects a different perspective not viewed from the imperial angle. The references further indicate that the major centres of powers in different regions apart, different ethnic groups also consolidated their positions during the period.

The 'Reeti-Kal' poetry provides an insight into the dynamics of the regions and localities and about the regional kings and the notions of kingship. It further suggests that the enormous economic resources ensured the existence of these political elites by the means of mercenaries and standing armies. The literature contains a number of political narratives and enables us to analyse these regional polities. Our understanding of these narratives shows that the different ruling groups had been aspiring for the independent kingdoms of their own even when Akbar was aiming at political configuration. These so-called 'local potentates' or 'local chiefs'
always strived hard to increase their share of benefits and strengthen their region. Also, they attempted to assert political legitimacy and mobilize support by utilising the regional ideologies, cultural norms and language. These political identities however large or small were recognizable and significant in the mid-sixteenth century also, even though they failed in their endeavour because of the effective authority of the centre.

During the period under our review, the relations between the Mughal empire and the regional powers were determined by a mechanism of 'checks and balances' which differed from region to region. The nature of this relationship varied at different intervals depending upon the circumstances. We would attempt to show in this chapter that the political process during the period witnessed a varied pattern of political formations in each region, therefore, demanding a specific study. We have included Keshavdas’s *Veer Charitra* and *Jahangir Jas Chandrika* in our study even though these do not belong to our period, with a view to understanding the patterns of political development these texts represent. *Rajvilas* of poet Man, *Chhatra Prakas* of Gore Lal, and ‘*Jungnama*’ of Shridhar Ojha and ‘*Sujan Charitra*’ of Sudan also constitute the sources of study. These narratives describe different aspects of the political culture of the period. We may assume that the emergence of the local centres of power during the eighteenth century was re-assertion of their already existing identities.

**Veer Charitra, the Bundelas and the Mughals**

Among the regional powers, the Bundelas occupy an eminent place. They lived in central India to the south of Narmada river and sometimes extended their territories upto the Sind river. The historians relegated them
to a relatively isolated position in terms of Rajput genealogy. Keshavdasa, a court poet of Bir Singh Deo Bundela (1605-27) attaches high lineage to Bundelas. The Bundela history, generally begins in the historical works with special emphasis on Rudra Pratap who founded the city of Orchha in 1531. Keshavdasa also narrated the events since Rudra Pratap’s period and added to our information concerning Bundela genealogy. He wrote that Kush, the son of Lord Rama, became the king of the earth after his father departed for heaven. A descendent of Kush named Bir Bhadra was recognized as the king. His grandson Arjunpal left Kashi due to some conflict with his father Karan and settled in Mohoni, a place in Jalon district of Uttar Pradesh. Arjunpal’s son Sohanpal conquered Garh-Kundhar in Madhya Pradesh. In the pedigree, Keshavdasa mentions the name of Rudra Pratap of Gaharwar tribe who founded the city of Orchha. His son Rudra Pratap, like pacific ocean and God Rudra, descended to the earth and founded the city of Orchha.

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1. In context of the Bundelas, D.H.A. Kolff writes that they could never achieve full Rajputhood and as ‘spurious’ Rajput clan they were neglected in bardic literature. Though the Bundelas were militarily accomplished, still, could not change their old identity. Keshavdasa’s poetry, however, refutes his statement that ‘they did not attain bardic legitimacy and largely lost its claims to kshatriya status...’ For Kolff’s views on Bundelas, see D.H.A. Kolff, Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy, p. 72-73;

2. Keshavdasa informs only name and not the period of Bir Bhadra and other Bundela rulers. The verse reads as follows:

The successors Bharti Chand and Madhukar Shah expanded and consolidated their territories after Rudra Pratap died.

These descriptions are not different from other historical accounts but a deliberate attempt to assign a *Suryavanshi* lineage to the Bundelas marks the major difference in Keshavdasa. The identification of the Bundelas as *Suryavanshi* indicated their attempt to assume aristocratic self-image by linking their origin to ancient Indian mythological tradition. The claim of being *Suryavanshi* also implied securing a *kshatriya* status for them. The *kshatriya* status in turn represented the Bundelas as conglomeration of various clans related to each other through kinship ties. It also implied allocation of many political and military functions on behalf of the king in order to protect his kinsfolk. The genealogies were then not necessarily

4. Romila Thapar, 'Genealogy as a source of social history', *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. II, No. 2, Jan. 1976 (p. 259-81), she writes that the tribal chiefs, religious teachers and priests who began to participate in the social and political power attempted to trace their descent either to *Suryavansha* or Ramait lineage or to *Chandravansha*, the Krishnaite lineage. Reconstruction of traditional genealogies was a fixed tradition which got interspersed with the narrative traditions. The lineage was generally traced back to eight generations. These are rarely faithful descriptions as they are influenced by the social conditions of the period. Even as we accept these views, the reference of the Bundelas as *Suryavanshi* is still important for us for denoting the identity of the Bundelas in medieval Indian historical context.

5. Richard Fox maintains that locally dominant castes often claimed Rajput status by performing military and political services. See, *King, Clan, Raja and Rele*, p. 16. Bhagwan Das Gupta also informs that some local tribe during the thirteenth century came to be called Bundelas for their extreme devotion to Vindhya-goddess. They came into prominence when Rudra Pratap, after the death of the Mughal Emperor Babur encroached the territories in the vicinity of Orchha and became the king. See, B.D. Gupta, *Bundelkhand Ka Samajik, Arthik Aur Sanskriti Itihas*, (p. 9). Henceforth, the Bundelas continued their policy of war and conquest. In this process, as warriors, they also claimed the status of Rajput because Rajputhood could be attained through warrior influence. For emergence of Rajputs from histories of warrior ranking, see also, David Ludden, *An Agrarian History of South Asia*, p. 85-89.
historical genesis but were carefully fabricated to support the claims of the emerging king's authority and to rationalize his political status. In the newly established state of Orchha, Keshavdasa's poetry became the medium to secure for his patrons a social identity of Rajput and Kshatriya. The military accomplishments helped them in maintaining their status during the reign of Emperor Akbar and Aurangzeb.

Rising from obscure origin, the Bundelas had acquired significant political power during Akbar's reign who made constant efforts to dissuade and include them in his set up for political integration of his empire. Though vague definitions of genealogy by Keshavdasa may be treated as a narrative tradition, the descriptions of negotiations between the Mughal Emperor and the Bundela rulers suggest that they never remained in the background of the Mughal elite culture and the terms of alliances and compromises were determined by changing power relations. The poet writes that Madhukar Shah and his Queen possessed extreme religious temperament and were less politically inclined, therefore, never bowed before the Turks. 6

His sons Ram Shah and Bir Singh Deo were endowed with opposite traits. The descendants of the same house of the Bundelas, Ram Shah joined the court of Emperor Akbar while Bir Singh Deo continued his

6. K.G., III. p. 407. Though Bhagwan Das Gupta refers to the raids of imperial army in 1573-74 and 1577 on Bundelas under Madhukar Shah and establishment of some alliance between the two, the poet's narration is confirmed by Badaoni in his Muntkhabu-t-Tawarih, Vol. II (Tr. by Lowe), p. 391. Badaoni writes that Prince Murad, being appointed the governor of Malwa, attacked Madhukar Shah who was in Narwar at that time. "Madhukar Shah, the Zamindar of Orchha, who was distinguished above all the rajas of Hind for his retinue and army, and had remained a rebellion in those parts; and defeated him. He fled and betook himself and Madhukar died a natural death..." P. Saran admits the submission of Madhukar Shah after being defeated in 1578 but also writes that he never presented himself at the imperial court. See, Provincial Government of the Mughals, 113-14.
attempts to assert his identity independent of the Mughal power. The ambitious Bir Singh Deo was not satisfied with a small territory of Baraun entrusted to him by his father and encroached the neighbouring lands. His activities aroused the problems in the Imperial camp as the power of the Bundela chief was inflating at the expense of the Mughal Empire. The process of negotiations was initiated by the Mughal Emperor; Ram Shah, the brother of Bir Singh Deo becoming the main agency of mediation, resorted to violent and tactful ways for dissuading his troublesome brother. Ram Shah would gain a mansab of five thousand in the imperial court if succeeded in this venture. Bir Singh Deo determined to establish his own rule in Orchha by undermining all the claims of his brother and Akbar, intrigued and executed the murder of Shaikh Abul Fazl in collaboration with the rebellious Prince Salim. He was placed the tika by the Prince as reward for killing Abul Fazl which intensified the faction and rivalry between the two brothers. Bir Singh Deo was restored in Orchha as the king of all his ancestral territories in 1605 after accession of Prince Salim to the Mughal throne. Bir Singh readily accepted the suzerainty of Jahangir and even

7. K.G., III, p. 89; The poet writes that Bir Singh annexed Narwar, Eirach, Karhara and Hathnora; some of these places belonged to the empire. Ram Shah added to the fury of Akbar by complaining against Bir Singh Deo.
8. Ibid, p.90.
9. Ibid, p. 495, The verse reads as follows:

saahi kahye bunto rajaram | jee dohe ye karhein kama | 
raah chalaai bhee jas hos | panch hajari karhein tohe | 
10. For the description of the meeting of Bir Singh Deo and Prince Salim at Allahabad, see K.G. III, p. 499-505. The return of Abul Fazl from Deccan to the imperial court was viewed as a threat to both Prince Salim and Bir Singh. Both shared their grievances and conspired the murder of Abul Fazl.
accepted renaming of Orchha as Jahangir Pur when he was bestowed the homeland.¹¹

These descriptions in Veer Charitra reflect a trend towards self-aggrandization even during the sixteenth century. Bir Singh's loyalties to the Mughal Emperor were shaped by his own aspirations. Akbar was viewed as Jalim Shah for he was not supporting Bir Singh's claims and Jahangir was portrayed as benevolent and just ruler.¹²

The establishment of his authority in his region was thus a complex issue for Bir Singh Deo. Even after his installation as king, the authority had to be legitimized. The concept of Rajdharma was defined elaborately by Keshavdasa, as we will discuss it later, in order to justify his claims of a just ruler. The religious preaching, patronage to brahmans, protection to his subjects irrespective of their creed, the affluence of his kingdom and the grandeur of his court served to project his image of a great king. The attempts to portray themselves as kshatriyas or Rajput and portrayal of Bundelas as rival and partners in the imperial system became a permanent feature of the medieval politics. The continuation of the struggle by Jhujhar Singh of Orchha and Champat Rai Bundela of Mahoba with Shah Jahan, the conflict between Chhatrasal and Aurangzeb and cooperation of Devi Singh, a descendant of Ram Shah at Chanderi and Pahar Singh, the brother of Jhujhar Singh, to the imperial forces against their own clansmen was described by Gore Lal in Chhatra Prakas.

**Chhatra Prakas, the Bundelas and the Mughals**

The image of Bundela ruler as *kshatriya* and Rajput of *Raghuwanshi* lineage was also focused by Gore Lal in *Chhatra Prakas*. The similar genealogical tradition could be traced in *Chhatra Prakas*, a text dedicated to Chhatrasal Bundela by his court poet:

कुस कुल कलस भये छबि छाये, अवसरुरी नृप घने गनाए।
तिनके बंस भए नृप जेते, गहरिवार कहियत सब तेते।

(The glory of the *Kula* of Kush expanded, in the region of Awadh great kings emerged, in the same lineage, all the kings called themselves the Gaharwar.)

Udaijit, the brother of Madhukar Shah, received the territory of Mahoba and settled a different house of Bundelas to which belonged Champat Rai and his son Chhatrasal. The third section describes Champat Rai’s struggle for kingship who first attempted to unite the kinsfolk of different Bundela houses against the Mughals and when failing, joined the imperial services. He was deputed to Qandhar to assist Dara who was convinced of his military accomplishments. Even though Champat Rai sided with Dara in the war of succession, he was given a *mansab* of twelve thousand by Aurangzeb:

नौरंग साहि कृपा करि भारी, मनसब दीनी दुर्दस हजारी।

The denial to comply the imperial orders deprived him of this position and he once again was forced to wage a war against the Emperor. The details of his struggle suggest the complexities of political culture that

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13. *Chhatra Prakas* Section 1, p. 3 and 4.
14. Ibid, Section 4, p. 41; It is hard to believe that Champat Rai received a rank of twelve thousand because even the royal princes and great nobles were at the most raised to a rank of 7000/7000.
prevailed with in the various houses of Bundelas. The descendants of Ram Shah living in Chanderi, the house of Orchha under Bir Singh Deo's successors and Champat Rai always attempted to secure power and position even at the expense of the life of their kinsmen. Due to the internal strife amongst the Bundelas, Champat Rai was reduced to obscurity. In such circumstances, Gorelal introduced Chhatrasal as the protector of the Hindu faith.

15. *Chhatra Prakas*, Section 3, p. 25-30 narrate the factionalism among the Bundelas. Pahar Singh of Orchha attempted twice to kill Champat Rai who had come to his capital for sorting out the rivalries amongst the Bundelas. For internal feuds and Devi Singh's (Chanderi) cooperation to Shah Jahan in operation against Jujhar Singh of Orchha, see also, B.P. Saxena, *History of Shah Jahan*, p. 86-90.

16. *Chhatra Prakas*, Section 9, p. 73 and Section 11, p. 86.
arrayed against the Turkish faith. Gorelal, not only projected the two faiths as opposites but also asserted that the antagonism had been prevailing since ever. It was thus not a reaction against Aurangzeb but continuation of age old rivalries. The religions and community sentiment was also visible in another contemporary source, Raj Vilas, as we will see in the following sub-section. The enmity was aggravated by the imposition of pilgrimage tax and jaziyah and also due to the demolition of temples by Aurangzeb.\(^\text{17}\)

As a matter of politics, Chhatrasal and his brother Angad joined the military services under Raja Jai Singh and went to Deo Garh in the Deccan campaigns.\(^\text{18}\) It is significant to note here that Chhatra Prakas makes no reference to the seize of Purandar against Shivaji in which Chhatrasal had also joined Jai Singh even before the so described battle of Deogarh.\(^\text{19}\)

His attempt to gain some benefits were foiled when awards were conferred upon other imperial nobles who had led the expedition. He then proceeded to consult Shivaji before deciding the course of action. Shivji guided him as follows:

\begin{quote}
\begin{verdana}
तुरकनि की परतीत न मानी,.........\(^\text{20}\)

हम तुरकनि पै कसी कुँवानि, मारि करंगें कीचक धानी।

तुमहि जाइ देस दल जोरी, तुरक मारि तस्मारित तोरी।
\end{verdana}
\end{quote}

(Do not trust the Turks; I have raised my sword against the Turks, I will kill

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{17}{Ibid, Section 11, p. 86.}
\footnote{18}{Ibid, Section 10, p. 79-84. The description is confirmed in the historical works also; see, Jadunath Sarkar, History of Aurangzeb, Vol. V, p. 301-02. Sarkar finds these descriptions as exaggerated accounts as the Raja of Deo Garh had submitted in fear and no serious battle was fought. The verses are still significant for us because we see them as attempts to project Chhatrasal as distinguished soldier.}
\footnote{19}{B.D. Gupta, Life and Times of Maharaja Chhatrasal, p. 20.}
\footnote{20}{Chhatra Prakas, Section 11, p. 89.}
\end{footnotes}
them and cause pool of blood; you also return to your region and collect people, kill the Turks and break your sword.)

The inspiration again was secured in terms of community sentiment. Shivaji has been recognized as one of the supporters of the Hindu faith in the writings of contemporary poet Bhushan and by modern scholars like Jadunath Sarkar. Such narrations in the poetry of Gore Lal and as will be see later in the poetry of Man were representations of sectarian conflict being utilized as ideological resources.

The concept of *mleccha* was another dimension in the narrative tradition of our period. The term was used for the Mughals during Shah Jahan's reign. Shah Jahan had destroyed the kingdom of Champat Rai in Bundelkhand, writes Gore Lal and disgusted Champat decided to abolish the *mlecchas* even at the cost of his territories:

अब उठि के यह मंत्र विवारी, देस उजार मलेछ संघारी.²¹

(Got up and meditated, destroy even the kingdom but kill the *mleccha.*)

The notions of *mleccha* in the context of *Chhatra Prakas* seemingly represented the challenges to the power of Bundelas posed by the Mughals.²²

²¹ Ibid, Section 3, p. 18.
²² Cynthia Talbot explains Hindu-Muslim identities in context pre-Mughal Andhra territories. The representation of Muslims as barbarian community or *mleccha* arose in context of military conflicts when Kakatiya dynasty was wiped out by the Turkish rulers. The defending rulers then attempted to utilize the mythical concept of barbarians and their devilish attitude to win the public support. Brahmans were given donations who projected the Muslims accordingly in the temple inscriptions. In our period, the poets replaced the Brahmans and their poetry became the expressions which portrayed their patrons as the saviour against the demonic and barbarian Turks. Gore Lal used the term *mleccha* when Shah Jahan had completely destroyed the power of Champat Rai Bundela. He then used *asura* or demon for Aurangzeb when Chhatrasal was planning an armed assault on the imperial army. See for details on Hindu-Muslim relations during the medieval period, Cynthia Talbot, 'Inscribing the other, inscribing the self: Hindu-Muslim identities in pre-colonial India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 37, 1995 p. 692-722.
The historical traditions had always manipulated the term according to the changing circumstances. As foreign to the homeland of Bundelas, they still posed threat to the authority of the Bundelas and hence we find Champat Rai perceiving them as outcaste or mleccha who deserved to be killed.

The religious faith was further utilized by Chhatrasal by giving patronage to Prannath, the guru of Prannathis. In the sections twelve to twenty two, the poet describes Chhatrasal's armed conflicts with the imperial officers posted in the neighbouring jagirs of by the Mughals. After the arrival of Prannath in Panna, Chhatrasal, due to his grace, could consolidate his state and legitimize his claims of kingship. When he had established himself as a king, Aurangzeb also decided to seek his support in his expedition against Loh Garh. The alliance was mediated through Bahadur Khan and Kokaltash and Chhatrasal joined the imperial court. It thus becomes evident that the notions of mleccha and demon were utilized to mobilize public opinion in favour of the Bundela rulers and the same Emperor once alienated for his otherness became 'Hazrat' for Chhatrasal, writes Gore Lal.

Though the text marks a deviation from the narrative of Keshavdasa, it retains the continuity in confirming the identity of Chhatrasal Bundela as kshatriya. Apart from genealogical construction, the kshatriya status was also reflected in behavioural traits of the Bundela. The warrior like accomplishments had also justified his claims of being a kshatriya:

23. *Chhatra Prakas*, Section 26, p. 194; the poet informs that Chhatrasal commanded only 1500 Bundela soldiers and inflicted defeat upon Loh Garh. Aurangzeb asked him to opt for desired reward but Chhatrasal told him that Prannath had already secured for him the diamond mines so he did not need wealth. He secured permission to leave for his native place with the assurance of extending immediate support whenever called.
The kshatriyas possess this aptitude, they always earn their livelihood by their sword; they protest cow, Vedas and brahmans and attack those who obey the commands of the Turks.

The poets, both Keshavdas and Gore Lal emphasized, in a great measure, the kshatriya-brahman relation and the same has been treated as a feature of kingship in south Indian regions by Burton Stein. We are not in a position to make any assertions as the poetry merely exhibits representations, it may still be concluded that during the seventeenth century as also in the sixteenth century, the regional powers were asserting their claims of identity and authority in one way or the other. The regional powers exhibited the tendency to carve out their own image of a distinguished ruler in the existing political scenario. Chhatrasal preferred being identified as a kshatriya whereas Rana Raj Singh preferred to be known as the greatest orthodox Hindu king. The sectarian distinctions assumed prominence in context of politics in Mewar as Raj Vilas projected Rana Raj Singh as the protector of the Hindu faith against the devilish deeds of Emperor Aurangzeb.

**Raj Vilas : Rana Raj Singh, Jaswant Singh and Aurangzeb**

Man, a court poet of Rana Raj Singh composed Raj Vilas in 1677. The Rana patronized many poets and the texts of Shyamal Das (Vir Vinod) and Raj Prashasti Mahakaryam of Ranchhod Bhatt constitute the basis of

24. Ibid, Section 11, p. 89.
many historical works. *Raj Vilas* has also been quoted occasionally but it does not receive much attention as has been paid to the other two literary sources. *Vir Vinod* has been considered as more authentic as it also contains the *farmans* of Emperor Aurangzeb. It also furnishes information which allows an unbiased understanding of the affairs in Mewar and its relations with the imperial power. *Raj Vilas* is certainly a biased text with ultimate motive of portraying Rana Raj Singh as an orthodox Hindu ruler. Still, the text deserves analysis for its detailed narrations of battles and political alignments during the late seventeenth century. The over-emphasis on projection of Rana as great Hindu ruler may be discounted as the text was composed during the second half of Aurangzeb's reign which is marked by his religious outlook. Also, being written and recited in the court, it may be treated as representation of perceptions at the regional court.

The text contains eighteen sections. The text begins with the invocation of Goddess Saraswati and proceeds with descriptions of Medpat state and acquisition of the same by Bappa Rawal. The poet traces the lineage of Rana Raj Singh, son of Jagat Singh to Bappa Rawal (dates not given) and assigns him Ramaite lineage. The description of six to eight generations was reiterated for careful construction of the genealogical accounts. The Rana's status was then essentially high in terms of his lineage to Lord

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30. As discussed earlier, the narrative tradition generally described the patrilineage of at least six to eight generations. See also, Richard Fox, *King, Clan, Raja and Rule*, p. 24.
Rama. The poet considered Mewar as the best region on the earth because *pandits* still preached *Puranas* and *Vedas* surpassing the influence of Turks:

दर्शन गंध जे देविश्य, पंडित प्रक्ष्ण पुरान

वेद चारि जह बांचिये, तेज नहीं तुरकान।

(All the six schools of philosophy exit, *pandits* recite *Puranas*; *Vedas* are recited and there is no Turkish influence.)

It is interesting to note that such descriptions are pertaining to the period when Rana Raj Singh and Aurangzeb had not yet ascended the throne. The poet wrote that Aurangzeb, after ascending the throne began open attacks on Hinduism and it produced great discontent among the Hindus. The text thus composed had to portray Rana Raj Singh as the protector of the Hindu faith. These instances become significant as they reflect clear dislike and antagonism for the Mughal rule even before Aurangzeb period. Jadunath Sarkar informs in context the Mughal-Rajput relations, that the Chief of Mewar had been loyal to the Mughal throne even since the time of Jahangir. The Maharana had been sending his agents to the Emperor with complimentary gifts and had received robes of honour in return.

The poet, inspite of the details of the cities and court of Jagat Singh, the father of Rana Raj Singh, nowhere hinted such instances. Rana Raj

32. Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. III, p. 224 and see also, Satish Chandra, *Mughal Religious Policies*, p. 74-81. He writes that Rana Amar Singh, though not signed a formal treaty, still agreed to send his son Bhim in the services of Prince Khurram. Rana Jagat Singh had also aroused the hostility with Shah Jahan by subjugating his own erstwhile territories. The tension between the two was pacified with offering of rich presents and military contingents.
Singh, on the contrary, just after his accession attached a Mughal jagir, Malpura. The attack has generally been seen as the tradition of embarking upon a programme of conquest after coronation but the poet explains it as the act of extinguishing the earth from mlecchas:

जय हिन्दु धर्मी यवनेश्वरी जीतन मारन तुं ही यु म्लेच्छ मही।
अवतार तुही हिंद भार उतारन तो कर षण प्रमाण कही।

(Victor Hindu, you would only conquer the king of Yavanas and you will remove the mlecchas from the earth; you have incarnated to remove the burden, there is no match to your sword.)

The terms mleccha and Yavan in the citation deserve attention. The concept of mlecchas was flexible so as to accommodate any interpretation. Cynthia Talbot interprets it in terms of political and military exigencies which required utilizing the notions of mlecchas. Aloka Parashar, however, sees it as a bulwark to avoid deterioration of dharma. The term implied the exclusion of the outsiders either due to their deeds which were not in conformity to the notions of dharma as given in brahmanical tradition or

34. Aloka Parashar, Mlecchas in Early India, p. 224-27 and p. 15. She traces the meaning of the term mleccha since ancient period. Though she accepts the distinction between Yawan and mleccha, she refers D.C. Sarkar who believes that Yavana was used in medieval Indian literature as synonym of mleccha. It may then become clear why the poet calls the Mughal Emperor Yavanesh, the king of Yavanas. Application of the term mleccha to the Mughals by the poet represents them as a reference group comprising the immigrants from foreign lands who did not conform to the values, ideas and norms of the society by the exiting elites (p. 16). Cynthia Talbot writes that the image of the Kakatiya descendants as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu was created in the turbulent situation. See, Cynthia Talbot’s, 'Inscribing the other, Inscribing the self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in pre-colonial India', Comparative Studies in Society and History. The king was believed to have incarnated to protect people from the depredations of the Muslims. Rana Raj Singh here was also referred as incarnated God who had descended to kill the mlecchas.
due to the danger of challenges to the authority of the elite natives. In the Puranas the killing of mlecchas and dasas was treated as righteous deeds because they were held responsible for the decline of dharma in Kaliyuga. With the growing complexities of the societies, the mlecchas were accommodated in the brahmanical set up through various ways. In the light of this discussion, the Mughals, as they posed challenges to the authority of Rana Raj Singh, the ambiguous term mleccha was conveniently applied to them. It was further qualified by calling Aurangzeb a devil and mleccha.

जरहें ज्ञान पाकर कुंड गिरें, बरिहों सुर आसुर हों न बरों।
जिन नाम मलेछ पिसाच जनो, ...........

(Prefer falling in the terrible fire, I will marry a god and not a devil; consider him mleccha, the devil......)

He was also called Asur, pishacha and mlechha at the same time. We find different implications of the term mleecha in Chhatra Parkas and Raj Vilas. In Chhatra Prakas, it implied simply an ideological construct which disappeared in the relatively stable political conditions when Chhatrasal had established his social and political authority in Panna. Raj Vilas on the contrary with a long history of struggle against the Mughals reflects a feeling

36. Ibid, p. 115, the poet justifies the killing of the Mughals or mlecchas as righteous deed as follows:

जोर भये महि म्लेछ जब, तब हरि जानि तुरत।
आप धरे अवतार दस, आनं असुरि अवन। (Raj Vilas, p. 149)

These lines explain the meaning of mleccha as evil persons who have fallen from dharma, Lord Vishnu's ten incarnations were also believed to have taken place to remove the evils from the earth. The term mleccha, Asur, Pishacha and the Mughals then indicated the evils of Kali Yuga.

of hatred and religious bias. So enmity between the Rana and Aurangzeb was a persistent phenomenon for the poet of *Raj Vilas*. Still, three other reasons for the antagonism between the two were enlisted by the poet.

Firstly, Aurangzeb had sent a marriage proposal to Man Singh, the ruler of Roop Nagar, a small principality in the vicinity of Mewar though historians like Satish Chandra question the authenticity of the episode.\(^{38}\) The sister of Man Singh was an exceptional beauty and Aurangzeb hearing of her charm sent the proposal. The girl appealed Rana Raj Singh to protect her from the devil-*mleccha*. Raj Singh responded to her request and married her. This act of Rana was treated as defiance and refractory by Aurangzeb.

The deletion of the episode by Jadunath Sarkar may also be intended on the same grounds as suggested by Satish Chandra. We may, however, believe the episode as real incident in the light of Aurangzeb’s characterization by Sarkar. The description by Jadunath Sarkar of his earlier years suggests the possibilities of truthfulness in the episode. Sarkar describes Udipuri Mahal, the mother of Kam Baksh as a Rajput Hindu. She is portrayed as the darling of Aurangzeb’s old age. Aurangzeb was influenced by her and under the spell of her beauty, he pardoned many faults of Kam Baksh and overlooked her freaks of drunkenness which must have otherwise shocked so pious a Muslim.\(^{39}\) There is still another incident

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38. Sri Ram Sharma and Satish Chandra also refer to the incident on the basis of *Vir Vinod* and *Raj Vilas*. Sri Ram Sharma accepts it as one of the reasons of conflict between the two (Maharana Raj Singh and His Times, p. 18-22) but Satish Chandra castes doubt about the incident due to the language of the letter written by the girl to Rana (See, Mughal Religious Policies, p. 468) Zahiruddin Faruki in *Aurangzeb and His Times* also quotes the incident though source of reference is not given. These scholars also write about the clarifications given by Rana Raj Singh for entering the matrimonial alliance without Emperor’s permission. Man, however concluded the section with the description of their marriage.

of his indulgence with Heera Bai, a young slave girl. He was so infatuated by her matchless charm that she persuaded him to taste wine.\textsuperscript{40} In the light of these romantic passages, we may accept that the descriptions in \textit{Raj Vilas} and Aurangzeb's desire to Marry Prabhawati, the Rajput Princess could be correct. The incident is, however, not described by Jadunath sarkar who noticed the other romances of the Mughal Emperor.

The second reason for the conflict between Rana Raj Singh and Aurangzeb was the former's involvement in the crisis of Jodhpur that arose after the death of Jaswant Singh. Section IX in \textit{Raj Vilas} contains the discussions between Maharaja Jaswant Singh and the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.\textsuperscript{41} The section begins with the descriptions of the wars of succession in the Mughal family. The poet portrays Aurangzeb as the most cruel and devilish amongst all the contestants. Maharaja did not support Aurangzeb's claim of succession and commanded the Imperial army against the rebellious prince. The Maharaja could not send him back and Aurangzeb gained moral prestige. Having secured the throne, Aurangzeb negotiated discussions with Jaswant Singh, writes the poet. According to the text Aurangzeb tried to conciliate Jaswant Singh and asked him to join his services twice.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40}. Ibid, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{42}. \textit{Rajvilas} p. 15, V. 36. V.S. Bhargava refers to the \textit{farmans} sent by Aurangzeb to Jaswant Singh in 1658 after defeating Dara Shikoh. The latter did not respond to his demand of joining imperial services though went to receive the victor prince at Delhi. Jaswant Singh as loyal noble of Shah Jahan wanted to crush Aurangzeb at
Jaswant Singh refused to join him as their interests were fundamentally different from each other. He protected the Khshatriya religion while Aurangzeb performed mlechcha deeds. It is significant to note that the poet insists on some deeds which are mlechcha and Aurangzeb did not deserve to be the Emperor for the same. He further threatened Aurangzeb of united resistance by the Rajputs including Rana Raj Singh, Hadas and Bhav Singh. In this manner, he never bowed in front of the Emperor Aurangzeb and never conveyed any regards. The poet is silent about Jaswant's posting at Jamrud in Afghanistan as military commander in near-exile. It is not referred as why and how he was posted at Jamrud. When the poet writes about the death of Jaswant Singh, he did not quote the place where he died. He feels it sufficient to inform that Jaswant Singh died and Aurangzeb, upon receiving the news of his death decided to annex any cost so intrigued with Prince Shuja but deceived him at the last moment. Aurangzeb anticipating the alliance between Dara and, therefore, Jaswant once again sent a message to Jaswant through Jai Singh of Amber. Jaswant accepted the conditions and once again deceived Dara leaving him to fight alone. For these negotiations, see, V.S. Bhargava, Marwar and the Mughal Emperors, p. 99-103. Our poet perhaps refers to exchange of these farmans in these citations.

43. Ibid, p. 155, V. 54.
44. Ibid.
45. V.S. Bhargava believes that Jaswant Singh had cordial relations with Aurangzeb and Prince Muazzam. Diler Khan, a noble of the imperial court was envious so his foul play was the cause of Jaswant's transfer to Jamrud. See, V.S. Bhargav, Marwar and the Mughal Emperors, p. 106-10. Faruki however writes that Jaswant Singh was sent to Deccan by Aurangzeb after his accession where he planned the attack on Shaista Khan, the Imperial commander, in collaboration with Shivaji. He was then deputed in Gujarat where also he acted mischievously. To keep him away, Aurangzeb then sent him to Jamrud. Man refers to the offer of his posting in Ahmedabad which was not accepted by Jaswant Singh. It could be possible that such description of Jaswant Singh of self-reverence did not allow the poet to write about his posting at Jamrud.
Marwar into the Mughal Empire. The Rathors, however, refused to budge. Receiving the message, Aurangzeb decided to set them right and prepare for a war. He shifted the imperial camp to Ajmer:

गजिंज झंड अजमेर गढ़ अप साहि ओँगँ|46
सवा लाख हय सेन सी रहयो सुरढ़ घन रंग।
(The flag was posted at Ajmer and Aurangzeb himself stayed there with the army consisting of one lakh twenty five thousand horses).

He sent the Prince with seventy thousand horses and thirty two thousand foot soldiers to occupy the riches of the Rajputs. The Mughal forces halted five kilometers before Jodhpur. The Rajputs preferred to fight than to surrender all their riches. The Mughal forces were defeated and the Prince had to retreat.47 Aurangzeb received the news at Ajmer and thought of winning over the Rajputs tactfully. The Rajputs were invited to Ajmer to negotiate for peace and the Emperor assured them to enthrone the son of Jaswant Singh.48 As a result, peace was established and the differences between the two religions were resolved, at least, for the time being:

कमढ़जर करी रस रंग करी, भयो गेल दुहौं दीन भल।49
(The Rajputs amicably sorted out the affairs and the relations between both the religions became cordial).

Aurangzeb instead prepared for the coronation of Jaswant's elder

46. *Rajvilas*, p. 163, v. 82.
47. We do not find reference of this encounter in any of the historical works, except V.S. Bhargava. Bhargava informs that the imperial officers entered Jodhpur and conducted a massive hunt for the treasury of Marwar. Entire Marwar except the fort of Jodhpur was placed under control of the Mughal officers. See his book, *Marwar and the Mughal Emperors*, p. 121-22. *Man*, on the contrary writes that imperial forces were never allowed to enter Jodhpur.
49. Ibid, P. 168, V. 128.
brother's son which antagonized the Rajputs who had been protecting and serving the king's son. They requested the Emperor to keep his promise:

रस किये रसहि राखिये। अरज इती अबधारिये। | 50

The Emperor replied that the words of the enemies were never to be believed. The vexed Rajputs plundered the imperial camp. The Emperor had to retreat and hide himself in the fort. The Rathors won the Yoginipur battle and brought the son of Maharaja safely to Marwar.

The offended Emperor collected all his nobles and decided to destroy the enemy. He asked the qazi to suggest some auspicious date for the battle. The qazi told 28th September 1679 as the good day to wage the war:

करत प्रशन दिन शुद्धि कहि। काजि पिखिक कुरान। | 51

भद्र सित दुनिया बली। सजो सेन खुलतान।

(He asked the qazi to find out the auspicious day from the Quran; He told to command the army on the second day of Bhadon month).

Durgadas Rathor, when informed of the Emperor's intentions, thought of seeking the help from Rana Raj Singh whom he believed was the only protector of the Hindu faith. Rana readily agreed to support the cause of Ajit Singh and started preparations for war. The Emperor became more furious due to Rana's entry in the affairs:

तपो अधिक तुरकेश तहुँ सूनि हिन्दुपति नाम। | 52

50. Ibid, P. 169, V. 133.
51. Ibid, P. 179, V. 169.
52. Ibid, P. 184 p. 2. V.S. Bhargava informs that Rana Raj Singh had been loyal to Aurangzeb since 1657 and he became hostile due to latter's policy of annexation of Marwar. See, Marwar and The Mughal Emperors, p. 127. We have information that Rana Raj Singh never extended military support to Aurangzeb and had developed enmity from the Mughals since the time of his accession. For enmity between Aurangzeb and the Rana, See, Satish Chandra, Mughal Religious Policies, p. 92-93. Our poet also described a bitter relationship between Rana Raj Singh and Aurangzeb.
The poet writes about the repeated exchange of *farmans* between the Rana and the Mughal Emperor in which they continuously warned their rival of the damages that could be caused. In spite of all the warnings and threats, Rana Raj Singh was determined not to hand over Ajit Singh to Aurangzeb who then decided to ruin Mewar if the Rana did not withdraw. In the third *farman* sent to the Rana, he wrote all the reasons of the enmity. The Rana had initiated the conflict by marrying the princess of Roop nagar; he had not paid two thousand *dinars* and now he had given shelter to the Emperor’s enemy. The armies of both the kings were ready for attack. The battle was fought by eight battalions according to the poet.  

The first battle was fought by Vikram Singh Solanki and Gopinath Kamdhajja against the Mughal army in Deo Suri Pass. They defeated the Mughals and looted their wealth thus added to the riches of Rana Raj Singh. Kunwar Udai Bhan also defeated the Mughal army in the second place for which he received many villages as reward from Raj Singh. In third place, Maha Singh, Ratan Singh and Kesri Singh confronted Prince Akbar and Hasan Ali Khan. The place has been described as Nonwara. The Turks left the battle field in bad condition. Ganga Singh, the son of Kesri Singh, seized the flock of elephants of the Mughal army:

एकहि बैर औरंग के, नव गजराज उतंग।[54]

मेट किए महाराज की, केहरि कुँअर गंग।

(In one attempt only he captured nine strong elephants of the Emperor and Ganga, the son of Kehar gifted it to the Maharana)

We have the reference of another battle fought by Kunwar Bhim Singh, the son of Rana Raj Singh. Bhim Singh in anguish raided the fort of Idar Garh,

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53. For the description of battles, see page 206 onwards in *Rajvilas*.
a principality in Gujarat, and destroyed it. The tall buildings were converted into plains and the wealth was looted. Rana called his son back to his own kingdom. The Mughals, in this episode have been described as silent spectators. Sanwal Das, the ruler of Bednor also threatened the Mughals and the Imperial detachments were forced to make arrangements for their safety. The Mughal forces under the command of Rohilla Khan fought a fierce battle but could not defeat the army of Sanwaldas. The Rohillas left the battlefield and ran away. Dayal Sah, a minister of Mewar attacked Malwa and collected booty. Such was the terror that the qazis in Malwa tied their Quran to their neck and ran for safety. The Turks living in Malwa had to search for shelter in disguise:

काजिपकरीकुरानगरहिबंधबगमारनि।
भेषबदलरिथुभगतबदलतानीतुरकानी।
(The qazis ran away with the Quran tied to their necks; the disguised Turks also changed their Turkish language).

After devastating Malwa, he proceeded towards Ujjain. Troubling the Mughals in the similar fashion he returned to Udaipur. The last battle given in the text was fought between Jai Singh, the son of Rana and Prince Akbar. Ari Singh, the son of Bhagwant Rai Khichi, Chandra Sen Jhala, Rao Sabal Singh Chauhan, Ratan Singh Chaurant and Ganga Singh Sagtawat organised five commands to meet the imperial forces under Prince Akbar. The battle was concluded with the flight of the Prince to Ajmer:

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57. Ibid, P. 237, V.8.
(The Prince ran away and reached Ajmer; Neither the devil nor the battle remained; all were destroyed)

These poetic narrations present many things which are verbose, hyperbolic and need verification and confirmation. However, a careful examination of these literary representations might enable us to judge the nature and extent of religious and social perceptions in the region. A striking feature of the text is the stress on religious identity. Though Keshavdasa had also portrayed the Bundela rulers as Vaishnavaites or Hindus but conflicts between the Mughal rulers and the Hindu rulers on religious grounds was not suggested. There is evidence of sectarian conflict between Chhatrasal and Aurangzeb but the differences also disappear when Chhatrasal joined the imperial court. To the writer of Raj Vilas, Rana Raj Singh, Maharaja Jaswant Singh and all other political elites were great because they were the protectors of the Hindu faith. Aurangzeb, being a Muslim was a devil (Asura) and Rana had incarnated to kill all the devilish mlecchas on this earth. Each instance described by the poet justifies Rana's act in the name of 'Hindu Kula' or 'Hindupatt'.

We may understand such an approach in terms of utilising ideological resources for building the political base. The Sisodias of Mewar had always struggled for maintaining their political identity even during the Sultanate period. Maharana Kumbha also encroached the territories which formed the part Delhi Sultanate and had enlarged his own kingdom. The Mughal Empire was more powerful and resistance on part of Rana Raj Singh needed

greater strength. By arousing community consciousness, he could legitimize his claim as the king and mobilise more people in his favour. The attempt was considerably successful because the Rathors who had broken their allegiance with the Mughal also joined Rana. It must also be noted that such attempts could mobilize only those who had their own political problems with the Mughals.

It is strange that the text Rajvilas containing eighteen sections does not record even a single event of religious persecution either in Jodhpur or in Mewar. It is not implied that the Mughal Emperor did not undertake such acts. The poet perhaps suggested that the kingdoms of Rathors and Sisodias were the brave principalities capable of protecting themselves. They never allowed the Mughals to invade their religious places. He nowhere informs that Rana Raj Singh evacuated the capital city in the wake of Aurangzeb’s attack. There is no evidence in the literature concerning annexation of Jodhpur by Imperial forces. The poet therefore deliberately depicted only those events which highlighted the bravery of his hero. Further, the way the events have been described in these texts shows the aspirations of the regional rulers to consolidate their political and economic power at the expense of the Mughals.

**The Eighteenth century Texts**

(a) **Jungnama, Jahandar Shah and Farrukhsiar**

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 the balance of power gradually shifted in favour of the regional rulers and local potentates, otherwise kept under check through alliances and compromises. The mutual rivalry and
factionalism amongst the kinsmen and clan in different regions had helped the political configuration of the Mughals. It now became a dominant feature of the imperial court. In view of the crippled centre's control over the provinces, the nobles generally desired to strengthen their position at the court. The direction of the parties and politics at the Mughal court also depended on the benefits individuals expected and each group of nobles generally supported the claims of one or the other for personal gains. Interesting in this context is Jungnama of Shridhar Ojha, a narrative containing detailed list of the nobles and warriors involved in the war of succession between Farrukhsiyyar and Jahandar Shah.

Seemingly an eye-witness to the incidents, the poet narrates the political process and the battle between the two contestants and their adherents, known or unknown, in detailed manner. He begins with the death of Emperor Bahadur Shah and the subsequent war of succession among the four princes. Muizzuddin ascended the throne in the name of Jahandar Shah after killing his brothers Rafi-ush Shah, Jahan Shah and Azim-ush-shah:

रन मारि तीनों बादशाहहि पादशाहति मैं लई59

We have seen earlier that poet Man, for example, called Aurangzeb as imprudent and cruel for the same reason; Shridhar Ojha also presented a negative view of Jahandar Shah on the same grounds. Taking advantage of the accession crisis, Zulfiqar Khan, a dominant noble of the imperial court, played decisive role in gaining victory for JahandarShah over his brothers:

(Zulfiqar Khan taking all men to his side met Muizzuddin; Muizzuddin kept the umbrella over his head and *Khutba* was read in his name).

Mir Jumla, another influential noble at the imperial court sent the information of the proceedings secretly to Farrukhsiyar who was then in Patna. Sayyid brothers supported the cause of Farrukhsiyar as Abdullah Khan did not get anything from Jahandar Shah. Sayyid Raje Khan, the *Subedar* of Allahabad sent his deputy Abdul Ghaffar against Abdullah Khan for he was aiming at the governorship of Allahabad. On Farrukhsiyar's side, the nobles were also mobilised by the contestant Prince by the offer of higher *mansabs* in lieu of their support. Chhabele Ram, the *faujdar* of Karra-Manikpur was assured a *mansab* of four thousand:

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\text{करे निकट महयों मिल्यो आइ छबीले राम}^\text{62}
\]

\[
\text{चारि हजारी राजपद तिनको भयो सलाम}^\text{62}
\]

(Chhabele Ram met him, his designation became four thousand mansab).

Ali Asghar Khan also joined him at Hathgaon who was promised a rank of four thousand with the title of Khan. These names are quite familiar

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60. Ibid, P. 76; Satish Chandra discusses in detail the aspirations of Zulfiqar Khan for Wizarat since 1707 when his claims were ignored by Emperor Bahadur Shah by appointing Murim Khan the *wazir*. After Bahadur Shah’s death, he revived his struggle for wizarat and supported Jahandar Shah as he could fulfil his desire by crowning Jahandar Shah as the Emperor. See, *Parties and Politics of the Mughal Court*, p. 63-85. See also, William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, p. 160-85 for Zulfiqar Khan’s schemes to settle the accession crisis in favour of Jahandar Shah and subsequent overtures made for actions against other three contestants.


as they were notables or rose to eminence later on. Among the other supporters of Farrukhsiyar apart from Barha Sayyids were Ahmed Beg, Ghaziuddin Khan, Samsamuddaulah, Fateh Ali Khan, Zainuddin Khan, Saf Shikan Khan (Hasan Beg) Amir Khan, Daud Khan, Afrasyab Khan, Ghairat Khan, Ilayachi Beg (Bahadur Dil Khan), Chhabele Ram, Ratan Chand, Shujaat Ali Khan and so on. The poet goes on enlisting the names of the supporters who fought on either side.

It should be noticed here that the imperial officials posted in different places extended their support to Farrukhsiyar expecting higher positions. Anwar Khan, a small jagir holder of Gopamau, Muzaffar Ali Khan, the faujdar of Gwalior, Asghar Ali Khan, the faujdar of Etawah, Chhabele Ram, the faujdar of Karra Manikpur, Saf Shikan Khan the deputy governor of Orissa, Ibrahim Husain of Bhagalpur added to the numerical strength of the army of Farrukhsiyar. Local officials like Rahamatullah Khan, the amin of Bhira, Aminuddin Khan, Ghairat Khan and Saifullah Khan also sided with Farrukhsiyar. Shridhar Ojha mentions the name of Taqarrub Khan, the steward of Farrukhsiyar in the struggle. Muhammad Khan Bangash, a local power monger also joined with twenty thousand soldiers.

The poet also refers to the conflict amongst the dominant nobles at the court of Jahander Shah. Zulfiqar Khan, and Kokaltash Khan, were arch rivals:

इख्तियार कोकिलतास खैं अरु जुलफिकार खैं लियो।

दोऊ रहे बर बीर योधा बैर आपुस में कियो।

(Ikhtiyar Kokaltash Khan and Zulfiqar Khan dominate the court; both the brave soldiers have developed rivalry.)

63. Ibid, p. 28
Kokaltash Khan was supported by the Turanis like Ghaziuddin Khan, Wali Khan, Muhammad Amin Khan, Abdus Samad Khan, Qamruddin Khan and Zakariya Khan. Mir Jumla, the supporter Farrukhsiyar, though a noble of the imperial court precipitated the faction and the Turani group agreed not to fight in the battle field:

परंतु कीसीही गौर जमला जंग से न जुटिएं ॥

Apart from these groups, Rajputs comprising of heterogeneous tribes also extended military support to Farrukhsiyar. Gandharva Singh Bundela commanded the contingent of soldiers of stratified Rajput lineages:

रजपूत सोहाए साजे आए हाड़ा गौर सोमवंशी ॥
चौहान चंदेले बैस बघेले, गहरवार ओ रघुवंशी।
कंगवाह सुलंकी हेहय बंशी सिरसेते परिहर्षी।
गंधवर सिंह राजा सज्जयो दल बुंदेला सूरजवंशी।

After the victory of Farrukhsiyar, these men continued to enjoy power and position. In this capacity their identity attracted the notice of different historians. The poet being an eye-witness to the developments informs us about some nobles who have not been noticed by the historians. Sirajuddin Ali Khan, Mohsin Khan, Samundar Khan, Idgar Beg, Sayyid Darvesh Ali Khan, Bairam Khan, Bahram Beg, Jabber Khan, Rasheeda Khan, Mukhlis Khan, Mirza Fakirullah Khan, Akbar Khan, Sultan Beg, Qasim beg, Dost Ali Khan, Wali Muhammad and Halim Khan were among many others who

64. Ibid, p. 29. It has also been contended that the sectarian faction amongst the nobles of Jahandar Shah was also one of the major favorable points to Farrukhsiyar. Chin Qilich Khan, an eminent noble of Jahandar Shah, refrained his Turani group from fighting in the battle field near Agra. See also, J.F. Richards, The Mughal Empire, p. 265. For factionalism between Zulifiqar Khan and Kokaltash Khan. See, William Irvine, Later Mughals, Vol. I, p. 197 and 224.

65. Ibid, p. 45.
headed small or larger troops. We are not sure about their ethnic identity but our poetry suggests that they were lured by the offer of some benefits either in terms of honour or resources:

काहू दए हाथी बड़े घोरा घने काहू दिए। काहू इजाफा भाऊ सिगरे सियोपांनी सों हिए।

(Some were given big elephants, others were given horses; some were interested in promotions and some expected the robe of honour).

These adherents were presumably the warlords of small band of soldiers who were, at least, recognisable if not significant in the eighteenth century politics. As autonomous bodies of mercenaries, they extended support to either ruler depending upon their own shares of benefits. Many of them, Muhammad Khan Bangash for instance, gained considerable power in lieu of his support to Farrukhsiyar. 67

The political alignments once again witnessed the by passing of religious and community sentiment for the sake of self-recognition. The Hindu as well as the Muslim supported the claims of either contestant keeping their own prospects in mind. Interestingly, the poet himself a Brahman by caste exhibited his bias in favour of Farrukhsiyar. He also painted the image of the Mughal Emperor like the one earlier portrayed by Keshavdas. Both Jahangir and Farrukhsiyar were the protectors of both the faiths. 68

67. For the career of Muhammad Khan Bangash, see Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics, p. 209, 215, 217-18, 224 and 231. In lieu of his help to Farrukshiyar, he was granted a jagir in modern Farrukhabad region, which later became a strong centre of Afghan power that constantly influenced the political relations during the eighteenth century.
68. Compare, Jahangir Jas Chandrika, p. 620, KG III where Keshavdas writes जहांगीर दुही दीन का साहिब and Jungnama, p. 65 where Shridhar Ojha describes Farrukhsiyar as फरुखशाहियर भो पनाह दुही दीन को।
The fierce factionalism at the imperial court, self-aggrandization of the imperial nobles and rise of various regional groups influenced the equations by exploiting the religious, sectarian or secular beliefs and perceptions. No definite ideology governed the attitude of the aspirants at imperial and regional levels. The emergence of the Jats and their politics in Agra-Mathura region during the late seventeenth and eighteenth century is an illustration of the complex political culture of the time.

(b) **Sujan Charitra: The Mughals, The Jats and the other regional powers**

*Sujan Charitra* is a war-narrative which contains the description of eight battles fought by Suraj Mal, the heir apparent of the Jat ruler Badan Singh during 1743-53 C.E. The Jats did not become a noticeable identity till the accession of Aurangzeb. We have the reference to the Jats as brave soldiers in the army of Bir Singh Deo in the mid-sixteenth century. Keshavdas also informs that Bir Singh Deo extended his territories by killing the Jats. We may assume that the Jats were there as minor chiefs and small landlords in the vicinity of Bundelkhand. During the 18th century Sudan in *Sujan Charitra* and Somnath in various compositions portrayed Badan Singh Jat as a great ruler.

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69. The historians generally believe that rise of the Jat power was largely due to their reaction against the misrule during Aurangzeb’s period. See, Kalika Ranjan Qanungo, *The Jats*, p. 20-21; Natwar Singh, *Maharaja Suraj Mal*, p. 6 and Girish Chandra Dwivedi, *The Jats*, p. 37; all these scholars write that the *faujdar* of Mathura, Murshid Quti Khan often raided the village to procure beautiful women which hurt the self-esteem of the male population of the region. They were also antagonised by the temple demolitions in the region. *Sujan Charitra* however, does not suggest any reason which enhanced the Jat power.

70. *KG*, III, p. 497; the verse reads as follows in context of the composition of Bundela army: सकिले सिगरे मैना जाट। नहरा नाहर गूजर जाट।
Historians hold differing opinions if Jats were Indo-Aryans, Scythian or Yadavas. Our poets did not have any confusion concerning the lineage of their Jat patrons and they assign them Jadubanshi or Yaduwanshi lineage. They further specify their origin to Chandravansha relating them to the epic tradition of Mahabharata. Though Raja Ram and Churaman organized armed attacks on the imperial officials and built small forts at advantageous positions, the credit for building a strong and stable state has been given to Badan Singh. He was the first ruler of the clan to legitimize his claims of authority that was reflected in grand palaces, forts, army, peace and prosperity and patronage to cultural activities at the court. By patronizing great poets and directing them to translate the stories from ancient Indian traditions into Brija language, he demonstrated his links with the Sanskrit culture. Badan Singh in this manner carved out an image of the Jat ruler which was sustained by his son Suraj Mal. Sudan describes eight battles fought by his patron with different powers which are significant not only as war narratives but also because they provide an insight into the politics of the eighteenth century. Each battle presents a different pattern of alliances between different regional powers, for and against the Empire.

The first battle was fought between Suraj Mal and Asad Khan of Kol (Aligarh) when Fateh Ali Khan, a local potentate requested Suraj Mal to

71. KG, III, p. 486; Qanungo, The Jats, p. 1-18; Natwar Singh, Maharaja Suraj Mal, p. 1-3; Somnath Granthavali, Raspiyushnidhi, p. 3; the verse reads as follows:

and see, also Sujan Charitra, p. 4; the verse reads as follows:
protect him, with an additional plea that Asad Khan, after conquering Chandos-Khurja might also proceed towards Bharatpur:

चर्चा युद्ध हाथ करी तब पाइ आगे देखना? 72
इस वास्ते तुमसे अरज करी और की जाती है बलि।
अब हाथ उससे रखिये जो जंग लेहि फतेह अली।

Suraj Mal's army surrounded Chandos. Asad Khan's soldiers suggested him to wait for a day or two and collect more zamindars to his side. Asad Khan told his men that Fateh Ali and Suraj Mal's army had seized their camp. If they were expecting more contingent to come, it was not possible. The seizure of their camp would lead to a rise in prices. In these circumstances, life would become no better than death:

अरु तुम कहत फोज का आवान सो आवान नहीं पाओँ। 73
दाना, घास, घाव, आटा जब रुपए सेर बिकाए।
फतेह अली सूरज के लोगों ने....
इस जीने से मरना वर्ना लड़ना ही बनि आये।

Suraj Mal killed Asad Khan in the battle and thus protected Fateh Ali. He sent him to Kol and himself came back. Qanungo refers to some help given by Suraj Mal to Fateh Ali Khan of Chandos-Khurja but the Mughal officer was Saadat Khan and not Asad Khan. He further writes that Fateh Ali anticipating defeat offered for peace while Sudan writes that Asad Khan was killed in the battle.

72. Sujan Charitra, p. 9; Natwar Singh also confirms the battle that took place between Suraj Mal on behalf of Fateh Ali Khan and the imperial officer Asad Khan in 1745. Qanungo does not refer to this episode in his book. Natwar Singh quotes Sujan Charitra for the details of this battle.

73. Ibid, p. 15 The poet writes in detail how Asad Khan motivated his soldiers to fight. He told them that defeat would cause a sharp rise in the prices and it may create many other problems so it was wise to die in the battle field than being defeated.
The second battle was fought to decide the accession crisis in Jaipur. Shortly after Jai Singh’s death, Maharana Jagat Singh of Mewar decided to secure for his nephew Madho Singh the Jaipur seat. In the course of struggle, Madho Singh sought Maratha support while Ishwari Singh, the other claimant secured Suraj Mal’s support. The battle of Bagru took place in 1748. The Jats defeated the the Rajput-Maratha combine and terms were settled. Ishwari Singh gave two *Parganas* to Madho Singh and the latter was told to leave for maternal grand father’s home. Both Qanungo and Sarkar discuss the Jat intervention in the succession crisis in Jaipur. Concerning the terms of peace negotiations, they inform that Ishwari Singh agreed to pay five *paraganas* to Madho Singh and Bundi to Ummed Singh. There is no reference to Madho Singh having been sent to Mewar according to the terms. The brilliant victory achieved by Suraj Mal in the fraternal feud of Jaipur secured a distinguished identify for Jats. It indicated a weak imperial control in maintaining peace and order. It also signified regional power politics involving monetary, territorial and identity issues.

The Third battle is said to have taken place between Salabat Khan, the imperial Bakshi and Suraj Mal following a dispute over *jagirs*. The conflict in this case was precipitated by the Bakshi and not by the Jat ruler, writes Sudan:

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74. *Sujan Charitra*, p. 25-35 contain the description of Suraj Mal’s intervention in the crisis of accession.

The Bakshi of the ruler of Delhi is coming to your territory to fight with you. The Bakshi is portrayed as being blinded by his power and prestige. From the internal details we have some idea of the complexity of problems:

(Emperor Ahmad Shah has accepted me as his servant and given the seat of Agra, Mathura and Hindol... He has given me the jagir of Bakshi, whatever the regions Suraj Mal has acquired, he should return to him. I also urge upon him to pay two crores to the Emperor; why did he kill the government servant Asad Khan?)

The amount was to be given to the Emperor as compensation for the misappropriation of the income of the seized areas. The powerful Jat ruler, obviously, refused to respond to Salabat Khan's entreaties. The Bakshi finding himself unable to continue the war for a longer period had to sue for peace and agreed to accept whatever Suraj Mal offered:

ल्यूं सूरज की बही करी सलाबति खान ।
राजा सिंह जवाहरे लीनी देगि बुलाई। सब सेना वाकसँ दई।

76. Sujan Charitra, p. 37; Badan Singh made humble requests to the Bakshi not to ravage his lands as he had committed no offence and was living as a loyal vassal of the Emperor. The description corresponds to the views of Sarkar and Natwar Singh as they also depend on this source for the details.

77. Sujan Charitra, p. 37.

78. Ibid, p. 40.

79. Ibid, p. 62; G.C. Dwivedi, though does not write about the recruitment of Jawahar Singh in the imperial army, still believes that the Jats were uncontrolled by any higher authority and the powerful elements found it expedient to conciliate them in order to retain their own power, see his book, The jats, p. 10.
But the situation was not so straight as it was a case of assertion of power by a regional ruler. We learn from the text that Suraj Mal had earlier encroached upon the territories of Mewat and Malwa which belonged to the Bakshi. Both Salabat Khan and the Jat ruler were involved in a bid to establish hegemony. Suraj Mal in the beginning followed the tactics and humbly begged the Bakshi not to ravage his land. The Bakshi hastily put forth before him terms which were not accepted by Suraj Mal. Within a day or two of confinement, Salabat Khan sued for peace on the conditions stipulated by Suraj Mal. Consequently, Suraj Mal sent his son Jawahar Singh in the imperial service. It was also agreed that the religious deeds would not be disturbed in Mathura. Jadunath Sarkar's description is different here. He however, refers to the responsibility of collecting Rs. fifteen lakhs from Ajmer and handing it over to the Empire being entrusted to Suraj Mal. None of the modern historical works refer to Jawahar Singh being sent to imperial services.

Next episode is related to the conflict between the Bangash Afghans and Safdar Jung, the imperial wazir. It is known to us that Safdar Jung had occupied the Afghan territory after the death of Qaim Khan and the Bangash Afghans rose against him. In the battle of Khudaganj in 1749, Nawal Rai, the favourite deputy of the wazir was killed. The outrageous

80. Sufan Charitra, p. 52. Muzaffar Alam in his article, 'Aspects of Agrarian Uprisings in North India in Early Eighteenth century' in Alam and Subramanyam (ed.), The Mughal State also believes that the rich and strong zamindars in order to have some kind of autonomy, or at least, a greater share in the revenue resisted against the imperial powers.

81. Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol. I, p. 154; Natwar Singh, Maharaja Suraj Mal, p. 35-36, also describes the similar terms and conditions as given by Sarkar.
wazir then advanced against the Bangash but was defeated in 1750. Safdar Jung finding no other way sent Daya Ram to invite Suraj Mal. Suraj Mal, in confusing state was not in a position to decide his response as he wanted to support Safdar Jung only if he was going to fight the Bangash on imperial orders:

\[
\text{जौ यह मेज्जी साह को चल्या पठाननु पास।}
\]

(If he has been sent by the Emperor to fight against the Pathans, then only I should join him, otherwise not).

Ismail Khan was also sent to persuade Suraj Mal. It is interesting to note here that the muslim elite Safdar Jung praised Suraj Mal for being the greatest Hindu and asked for his support:

\[
\text{गहकी सुकलम नवाब। लिखियो सु पत्र सिताम।}
\]

\[
\text{ब्रजराज कूचवर सुजान। तुझसा ना हिन्दु आन।}
\]

\[
\text{यह देखते फर्मान। कर्ना मुझे बलवान।}
\]

(Nawab took the pen, wrote the humble letter; Braja-King Suraj Mal! No Hindu is as great as you; as soon as you see the farman, give me support/strength, make me strong.)

82. Sujan Charita, p. 59; Qunungo, though avoided the description of other wars, devotes one chapter to Suraj Mal’s support to Wazir Safdar Jung against Bangash Afghans. See The Jats p. 41-52.

83. Sujan Charitra, p. 54 and see also p. 60, where yet in another verse Safdar Jung applauded the Jat Ruler as follows:

\[
\text{ऐसे बचन सुजान के, सूनिकै सफरदर जंक।}
\]

\[
\text{बोल्यो सब हिँडुन में, हे ब्रजेन्द्र मुखरंग।}
\]

Sarkar, Qunungo and Natwar Singh depict Suraj Mal and his ancestors in subordination to the Mughal Empire. These verses being quoted here suggest the Jats as autonomous identity.
These verses reveal the perceptions of the poet concerning the image of his patron. In an atmosphere of regional rivalries amongst various Hindu powers in Bundelkhand, Jaipur, Mewar and Maratha region, demonstration of Suraj Mal's identity as the greatest Hindu was inevitable. It did not however have religious connotation as we find Suraj Mal extending support to Muslim elites against a Hindu Chief in the following description. Further, the issues did not pertain to loyalty towards the imperial power. It was not the Empire but the wazir Safdar Jung and his personal benefits that came into conflict with the regional power, like Afghans, in this context. Ahmad Khan Bangash claiming the similar status and identity in terms of region, appealed Suraj Mal not to support Safdar Jung:

जो तुम संग वजीर के तो भी नहीं बुझ्झे।\(^{84}\)

जिमींदार सी आइंकी जिमींदार न जुझ्झे।

(If you are with the Wazir, it does not suit you; a zamindar should not fight against a zamindar.)

In the context of Suraj Mal's support thus the Bangash chief involved not the religious but regional identity.

Safdar Jung convinced Suraj Mal that the Afghans were not the royal troopers nor were they imperial officials. Suraj Mal was convinced and assured him the support. Malhar Rao Holkar was also invited to join their camp. The Afghans were crushed and their territory was captured. Sudan writes that it was divided equally amongst the three parties, namely, Safdar Jung, Suraj Mal and the Marathas. Jadunath Sarkar believes that the mercenaries of the Jats and the Marathas were hired and no such division

\(^{84}\) Sujan Charitra, p. 69.
of land as given in *Sujan Charitra* is recorded by him. Qanungo however informs that Safdar Jung distributed the conquered territories among the Jats and the Marathas which was not upto the satisfaction of Suraj Mal.  

Sudan presented Suraj Mal as the benefactor in this context. (तीनि भागि भुवि करि एक मनसूरहि दीनी... p. 95)

The fifth battle was fought against Rao Bahadur Singh of Ghasira, a Bargujar, at the instance of Safdar Jung. Imperial order was secured in the name of Suraj Mal to attack Rao Bahadur Singh; Suraj Mal attacked his own kinsmen in compliance with the imperial order:

हुकुम साहि कौ यही है तुमको सिंह सुजान।

राव बहादुर को ताखत करनी जान।

(It is the order of the Emperor for you, Suraj Mal; you have to kill Rao Bahadur.)

The latter when defeated committed suicide.

The sixth section reveals the plunder of Delhi by Suraj Mal at Safdar Jung's instigation. Suraj Mal was initially reluctant, suggested Safdar Jung not to indulge in such an act:

हम चाकर हैं तखत के सकती करी न जाई?

The *Wazir* then explained the factionalism at court and told how Turani nobles and the *Bakshi* conspired against him and the Emperor expelled him from the court:

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85. Qanungo, *The Jats*, p. 44 and see also, G.C. Dwvedi, *The Jats*, p. 69
86. *Sujan Charitra*, p. 98.
Turani sided with the Emperor, aggravated the tensions and secured Irani Mansoor’s expulsion from Delhi.

Safdar Jung reacted to this insult by rising into rebellion against the Emperor. He enthroned a lad calling him the grand son of Kam Baksh and in his name he raised the banner of revolt. Suraj Mal along with Rajendra Giri Gosain sacked Delhi. Suraj Mal gained enormous wealth in the process:

Des des tatho lakshmi dilari kirtyo nibawas

Ahti adharh ahti loot misa chalri karun brajwasa

(Wealth had been dwelling in Delhi after leaving all the kingdoms; seeing injustice here it is going to stay in Braja).

The Marathas also claimed a share in the loot and demanded two crores from Suraj Mal. The Jat envoy offered four lakhs but it was not accepted by the Marathas who then laid a seige of Kuhmir in 1754 with the support of Imad, the imperial Bakshi. Suraj Mal was portrayed as an incarnation of Vishnu who had descended to protect the Braja region from the atrocities.

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88. Ibid p. 145. After Ghaziuddin died in 1752, his son Imadul Mulk was raised to the post of Mir Baksh. The rise of Turani to such a high position in an atmosphere of Irani-Turani faction that had been prevailing since the period of Jahandar Shah resulted in conspiracies against the Wazir. Emperor Ahmad Shah succeeded in expelling the Wazir from the imperial court. See; Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, vol. p. 222-35.

89. Ibid, p. 163; For plunder of Delhi by Jats, see Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol. I, p. 238-39.

90. Ibid, p. 206, Natwar Singh furnishes details of the negotiations between the Jats and Marathas. As Marathas were generally short of cash, they demanded their share in the loot of Delhi on account of their support. The details correspond to the facts given in Sujan Charitra. See, Natwar Singh, Maharaja Suraj Mal, p. 49-50.
of Kali age (कलि की मंदिर स्थान जू ने फिर बड़ी रूप बनाया)\(^9\) The text was completed with the eulogies of Badan Singh and Suraj Mal.

Sudan’s description is primarily eulogies containing glories of Suraj Mal, but his narrative helps us appreciate a number of the elements of eighteenth century politics. In the place, it reveals the emergence of a warrior state in the period with a new political-religious order. The Jat power gained autonomy in 1720s and became all powerful in 1740s so as to influence the political alignments both at imperial and local levels. The Jats not only enhanced their own power but encouraged the novices and other local potentates also by extending them military support. Secondly, the balance of power tilted completely in favour of the regional powers during the eighteenth century. The administrative and fiscal weakness of the Mughals enabled these kingdoms to reassert their positions. The power and the position of the local chiefs was exhibited in encroaching the imperial territories and diversion of imperial revenue to establish themselves as virtually independent monarchs. As warlords they could now retain a larger portion of revenues and justified their claims by penetrating into the tight clan-like brotherhood of zamindars and peasants. However, it is worth noting that inspite of their power and authority, all these regional powers still accepted the suzerainty of the Imperial Mughal Delhi. In case of the Bundelas, it was not only Ram Shah who acknowledged the Mughal suzerainty but Bir Singh Deo also went personally to the court of Jahangir for receiving sanctions for his kingship.\(^9\) Rana Raj Singh, if not in Raj

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\(^9\) Sujan Charitra, p. 211.
\(^9\) K.G., III, p. 544; The verse reads as follows:

\[\text{विभिन्न संभूँ स्वासूँ भोलाए}...\]
\[\text{राजा अरु नबाब सुख पाय} | \text{देखि जाय साहि के पौच} |\]
Vilas, elsewhere in Beetak denied Prannath a stay in Udaipur only on pretext of avoiding any conflicts with Aurangzeb. Suraj Mal in Sujan Chaitra apparently confessed on many occasions the vassalage to the Emperor. He claimed that all his activities might be guided for imperial objectives:

साहि के काज की आप को लाज है | राज के काज को मैं उठि धार्दैं |⁹⁴

The regional powers were thus not hostile to the Emperor, in general, and they acted and reacted whenever their identity was put at stake by the imperial officials. The authority of the Emperor was still recognized by the regional rulers, even though it was repudiated by his own officers off and on. While the regional rulers acknowledged the Mughal suzerain as the last resort of power, they asserted their identity by exploiting to their benefits every opportunity that was offered to them by the declining central power.

The rise of these powers was yet not simply because of the immediate political developments. It was also a process, as David Ludden and Richard Fox have noticed, wherein social groups and institutions were gaining prominence in terms of behaviour and identity since the early medieval period. It was through the process of sanskritization that these groups attempted to change their identity over many generations. We noticed, for instance, the Gaharwars that existed during the thirteenth century assumed the status of Survanshi Bundela Rajputs by adopting the war-like activities and Vaishnavaite ways of life. Bappa Rawal, the founder of the Rana dynasty of Udaipur also secured a high position for his group by conquering Mewar territories and by receiving the mythical sanctions from a Siddha ascetic.

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⁹³. See Chapter 5 in the thesis on Prannath.
⁹⁴. Sujan Charitra, p. 60.
and by attaching himself to the kula of Lord Rama. Parallel to these Rajputs, the Jats also struggled to redefine their identity during the seventeenth century by drawing support from the peasantry and Zamindars:

और कीजे इकहें जिमीदार भी जे तुम्हें चाहते ।

By exploiting the kinship ties, clan sentiment and community consciousness, the leaders of these groups became patriarchs and formulated notions of dharma which legitimized their conquest and rights to rule.

The quest to distinguish their identity in terms of wealth, power and authority precipitated conflicts not only with the imperial elites but also with other regional powers, sometimes even with the rulers of their own clan. The interpretation of dharma dictated rajdharma that included protection and patronage to the people.

**Rajdharma and the Raja**

The principles and practice of kingship in medieval India have generally been discussed with reference to the Delhi Sultanate or Mughal empire. The Turko-Mongol theory of kingship elaborated by R.P. Tripathi has been critically reexamined by Iqtidar Alam Khan. Irfan Habib examines

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96. See, Raj Vilas, p. 34; The verse reads as follows:

| सूर्यन पत्र श्री कार सोई हारीत सु सिंद्रह तुमसी सु ल हम संतुह दीन विन्यकोट |
| सुदजह शवर पद तुझ आपियाहि सुल संतति सबह सुंदिन। |

97. Sujan Charitra, p. 13; Raj Pal Singh believes that the Jats could expand their sphere of influence only in those areas which were predominantly populated by their own kinfolks. See his book, Rise of the Jat Power, p. 228; Richard fox in his book Kin, Clan, Raja and Rule and Zeigler in his article 'Rajput loyalties during the Mughal period, in J.F. Richards (ed.) Kingship and Authority in South Asia, also stress ethnic bonds as the crucial factor in regional politics.

Barni's theory of kingship and S.A.A. Rizvi largely discusses Abul Fazl's concept of sovereignty.\(^9\) Stephen P. Blake's idea of Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire further elaborates the responsibility of Mughal Emperor as an extension of patriarch's role in a household.\(^10\) J.F. Richards has also viewed autocratic and authoritarian structure of the Empire in terms of the kingly distinctions of the Mughal Emperors, Jahangir and Akbar, in particular.\(^11\) Muzaffar Alam has recently reviewed the political norms in the light of akhlaq literature compiled in Perso-Islamic World and India since the establishment of Delhi Sultanate.\(^12\) There are also some significant studies with reference to regions. Burton Stein, Hermann Kulke, Richard Fox and Norman Zeigler focus their attention on regional kings.\(^13\) In none of these studies, however, there is any serious attempt at evaluating the principles and norms delineated in the Reeti-kal poetry.

The Reeti-Kal poets as the proteges of different kings, imperial or regional, also furnished some details of the norms of kingship though these do not constitute a systematic body of ethics and political theory. But Keshavdasa is an exception. He devoted a detailed section in Veer Charitra

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to the concept of *Rajdharma*. As the orthodox Islamic notions of rulership were adjusted to the changed social situations, the traditional Indian notions of kingship also came to be interpreted and reinterpreted during the medieval period to suit the requirements of the emerging kings in different regions. Keshavdasa suggested his patron to act and rule according to the situation:

देसकाल को उचित जु होय। तैसी कहै ते बिरले कोय।

(The unique ruler considers the kingdom and time and acts accordingly.)

The notion of kingship even in Hindu realms thus appears a flexible phenomenon during our period which might have been influenced both by Islamic and Indian traditions.

The foremost aspect in our poetry as a feature of kingship was the lineage of the king. We have discussed how the kings belonging to obscure clans, after consolidating their power, attempted to legitimize their authority by linking their origin to a great mythological tradition. The lineage of the king was also a significant feature of Islamic kingship in India. The Illbaris, a tribal cult connected its descent to Afrasiyab and likewise, the Khalji, Tuqhuqs, Lods and Syeds claimed divine basis of authority. The Mughal rulers also accorded sacred origins in the writings of their court chroniclers.

104. K.G., *Veer Charitra*, p. 596. and compare R.P. Tripathi, *Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire*, p. 256. See also, Sudan, *Sujan Charitra*, p. 115 and Somnath, *Sujan Vilas, Somnath Granthavali, Part I*, p. 816. These poets also guide their patrons to decide the course of their action according to time and place.


With the dynastic sanctity was attributed to the rulers the divinity of kingship. Our poets portrayed the king not only as a shadow of God on the earth but also as God incarnate. Keshavdasa, Gore Lal, Man and Sudan projected their patrons as incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Many other poets attributed various mythological traits to their patrons which secured for them a divine authority. Mati Ram, for instance, described Bhav Singh (1649-1713 C.E.) of Bundi as follows:

बिक्रम म बिक्रम धर्मसुत धरन मं चुंभमार धीर मं धनेर वारे धन मं।
महतिराम कहत प्रिय ब्रह्म प्रताप मं प्राक्रम बल पृथु वारकर्षिन्द्र वारे पन मं।
लालसाल रैयार भाविन्द्र आजु महिम के महीप बारो तेरे तन मं।

(107) Vikramaditya is dedicated for Bhav Singh’s strength, Yudhishthara for his virtues, Kuber for his wealth, Dhundhumar in patience; Mati Ram says that he dedicates Priyabrata in splendour, Prithu in power, all the kings of the earth are dedicated for Bhav Singh, the son of Chhatrasal).

This single verse suggests how great the image of a king was. Bhushan valorized Shivaji and attached as many qualities to him as he could perceive.

(ii) Dharmsut or Yudhishthar, the eldest among the five Pandu Princes in Mahabharata, Mythologically, it implies the son of Dharma or God of Justice. John Dowson, p. 39 & 378.
(v) Priyabrata: One of the two sons of Brahma and Sata-Rupa or may also be the son of manu-Swayambhuva, Ibid, p. 224.
(vi) Prithu: Son of Veena was called the first king of the earth and from him the earth received the name Prithvi, Ibid p. 242.
Elegance, eminence, sovereignty, respect, gentility, apart from divine attributes that secured authority for the kings, certain behavioural traits as generalized qualities of a king were frequently referred. Generosity, humanity, courage, wisdom were his qualities. Somnath depicts his patron Pratap Singh, the son of Badan Singh as the perfect king and God Ganesha on the earth. He is intelligent, solemn, brave, patient, representative of God and protector of all the fugitives. Somnath also wrote that Suraj Mal, as a perfect ruler, possessed perfect knowledge of time and place, patience, wisdom, wit, glory, advice, in sight, right speech, heroic strength, knowledge of own potential, thankfulness, protection of fugitives, suppression of enemies and activeness. For a king endowed with such accomplishments, the concept of royalty is hardly different from the views of other medieval thinkers, like Barni, Abul Fazl and Tulsi.

To Abul Fazl, the contemporary Persian court chronicler, for instance, the king had to be wise and judicious, capable of understanding the spirit of so much majesty and glory, keeps himself at the court of eternal and is strenuous in administrative justice. From the king originated stability and order. If royalty did not exist, the problems would never subside and mankind as lawless creatures would face destruction; the world would lose its prosperity. An ideal ruler’s object is to remove oppression and provide everything which is good. He inculcates in his subjects unity, chastity, justice, polite manners, truthfulness and sincerity. Again, Abul Fazl projects royalty as something emanating from God and a light from the Sun which illuminates the earth. The king was an embodiment of divinity; kingly

108. Somnath Granthavali, p. 816.
attributes are of grace and not manufactured. They are fortunes and not contrivance.\textsuperscript{111} He shows paternal love towards his subjects; He is broad minded and has a "Large heart"\textsuperscript{112} Abul Fazl, however, emphasized the royalty as a "light" and divinity as its greatest sources.\textsuperscript{113} What is more significant is that Abul Fazl expects his king to be guided by reason and that he should always be in search of truth and justice.

To an earlier medieval political theorist and historian Ziauddin Barni, a major test of the king was to keep the inhabitants of his kingdom on the path of religious law. The Reeti perception of the king as the protector of religion echoes this view. Further to Barni, right determination in the enterprises of the government and firmness in the management of affairs are the characteristics of a good king.\textsuperscript{114} A king should formulate and execute his policies carefully keeping in view the likelihood of their success and failure. The great quality of the king is that he realizes the value of time. If he finds anyone in need he fixes up the amount of assistance to be given to him. He engages himself in religious practices. A king sees to it that the truth is established at the centre. It does not imply that a perfect king would succeed in removing falsehood totally from his regime but the truth defines the capacity of the people, at least, to differentiate between good

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ain-i-Akbari}, Vol. I p. 2.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Akbar Nama}, Vol. III, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{113} S.A.A. Rigvi believes that Abul Fazl in his description of monarchy relied on Sufi terminology in order to strike of the roots of the intellectual pretences of Mahdi. He also believes that identification of sovereignty with the divine light was also not novel, or ingenious. It was, in fact, transformation of kingship according to the contemporary conditions. See his book, \textit{Religion and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Region}, 1556-1605, p. 358-362.
\textsuperscript{114} The political theory of the Delhi Sultanate, Tr. of \textit{Fatawa-i-Jahandari}, by M. Habib, p. 3.
and bad. The king should have the feeling of mercy but at the same time he should be feared.\textsuperscript{115} The idea of reason and justice as reflected in the poetry of our period was thus not totally new. Further, even in “pure” Indic domain, similar directives had already been laid down by the sixteenth century. Tulsidas attributed almost the same ideal personal qualities to a good ruler. He also advised the king to follow the policy of negotiation (साम), ingratiation and appeasement (प्रमाण) and, suppression and punishment (दंड) and creation of dissensions among the enemies (भेद).\textsuperscript{116} There was thus nothing radically new in our poetry concerning the notion of kingship. Sudan, like may other contemporary poets, reiterated Tulsi’s ideas as follows:

\begin{quote}
नृप की सुरीति लखि देस काल निज बुद्धि हाल।
\end{quote}

पुनि बलु विचारि करिय सुरारि अरु साम दाम है भेद काम।

Still, one can not ignore the fact that this notion of kingship was then being attached to every elite however small territory he might have held. It is interesting that such perception of a ruler we notice even about Himmat Bahadur, a warlord in the mid-eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{118} Anup Giri Gosain was the adopted son of Rajendra Giri Gosain, an army commander in Safdar Jung’s forces. He was given the title of Himmat Bahadur by Nawab Shuja-ud-daula for whom he had rendered military services. Bernard Cohn has

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p. 41, 42, 44 and see also, for terror as an essential trait of kings as revealed by Barni is also suggested by Reeti poet Vrind as follows: रहे प्रजा घन यल सो जहे बीकी तथाप। (Vrind Satsai, V. 381)
\textsuperscript{116} Tulsidas, \textit{Ram Charit Manas, Uttara-Kanda}, 26/7-2.
\textsuperscript{117} Sujan Charitra, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{118} For description of Gosains as warrior priests who assumed prominence during the eighteenth century as warrior aristocracy, see, Bernard Cohn, \textit{The Role of Gosains in the economy of eighteenth century Upper India}, IESHR, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1964.
\end{quote}
also described the Gosains and their role in the society. He tells that the Gosains were the Shaivaite devotees in the medieval period some of whom were priests, wandering mendicants and others served as mercenaries in the armies of the princes and the chiefs during the period. Padmakar, a Reeti poet praises Himmat Bahadur as a king and writes that Himmat Bahadur is another God Shiva; he is a great donor, generous and destroyer of enemies; he is the God on earth and infinite pleasure prevails in his kingdom, he is virtuous and learned.119 A commander of troopers rendering military services to Nawab’s army was also portrayed as leading the life of a king. He was not a dominant ruler. Owning land of smaller size, he was still responsible for his subjects.

Significant here is also the way some of our poets describe the Mughal king. Keshavdasa describes Jahangir not simply in possession of divine qualities, but the divinity embodied:

नल सों जगत दानी सों सों हिरिवन्द्र जू सो पृथु सो परम पुरुषार्थनि लेखिये।
बलि तु बिवेकी सु दशीशि ऐसो और धर शान्त सुर अमर रू उर अबरेंखिये।
भूगुपति जू सो सूर हनुमंत जू सो जसी कंसीय पिक्रम से साहसी बिसेजिये।
साहिन को साह जहांगीर साहि धर-धारा कीनी दूसरी बिसाहट ऐसे देखिये।
(The King Jahangir] is munificent like Nala, veracious like Harish Chandra, Toilsome like Prithu, judicious like Bali, enduring the Dadhichi, virtuous like Ambarish, brave like Bhrigupati, glorious like Hanumant, valiant like Vikramaditya and he appears to be another god.)

Our poets’ eulogization of the Mughal Emperors was, perhaps, also a device for justifying the association and allegiance to the Emperor of their

patrons, the rulers in the regions. They thus projected the ideal of Brahman-Kshatriya relationship to the Mughals too who, like their patrons, the Kshatriya rulers, also protected cows and Brahmans:

Garbh bhip rakhbe ko dekhiyat kesoaram sulatan kusrul kudais aapu kino hai. (You encourage protection to cows and brahmans, Keshavdas says, Sultan Khusrau performs divine deeds.)

These eulogies addressed to Jahangir and his son Khusrau imply that the Rajdharna had to take care of the requirements and religious susceptibilities of all, irrespective of their individual creeds. For them thus the king was also expected to build the places of their worship. The Kshatriya king's dharma included promotion of the faith:

Suraapati kino mandir meru | navanidhi raakhre rah kuber | 122
Padda purana ek bhu meva | mani somit shri sukadeva |
(The king built the temple as huge as Meru mountain, nine types of wealth and Kuber, the God of wealth resides there; saints like Shukadeva read and recite Puranas there.)

But the projection of king's achievements implied dealing with the subjects of varied religious backgrounds. The ruler, including the Mughal Emperor was to act as the protector of all the faiths. This was intended to be the chief constituent of governance. Thus even in the territory of the community conscious Rana Raj Singh, peoples of diverse cultures were to live in peace:

People hailing from different caste, race, and lineage altogether constitute eighteen races; all with expertise in their own duties make their race elegant.

Army and defence devices were not merely an important activity of the state, these were the source of legitimation as well. The heads of different warrior groups were continuously engaged in warfare. Even an insignificant local ruler was expected to have enough armed strength. Thus Fateh-Ali, a small fief-holder of Chandos-Khurja region is told to have maintained two thousand horses:

यह फतेह अली हूँ खबर पाई। आयो सहस्त्र हय है बनाई।

Sudan counts the number of the mounted soldiers of Suraj Mal as ten thousand and foot soldiers as two thousand. The chariots and elephants were innumerable and could be secured much more as the need be:

dस हजार असावर सहस्र हैं पदाति गन।

रथ गयंद हरदन्द जिते बहियत अपने मन।

The army of Bir Singh Deo included soldiers from different clans of both the Hindus and Muslims:

123. *Raj Vilas*, p. 45; see also for similar notion, *Somnath Granthavali*, I, p. 820. Muzaffar Alam also explains the secular norms of governance wherein the objective of the State was to fulfil the human needs. Since the subjects came from to different religious background, *Shariat* than redefined the kingship ethics which could avert conflict among them. See his article, ‘Akhlqi Norms and Mughal Governance’ in *The Making of Indo-Persisan Culture*, p. 82. The attempt in both the traditions was being made to guide the king to maintain harmony and peace in the State.


The warfare and conquest must have stimulated the local economic activities. We noticed elsewhere in the first battle in Sujan Charitra that the imperial commander Asad Khan, told his soldiers to fight the battle for even the case of defeat there emerge the conditions of inflation. In this manner, the regional kingship with constant warfare as a necessary trait had a bearing on the economic process as well, directly or indirectly.

In addition to warfare and defence as the legitimate pursuit of the kings, display of wealth and sumptuary expenditure also formed parts of royal status. These were inevitable for recognition for the local rulers. The luxurious and extravagant life style of the elites also stimulated production and trade activities. Such was the demonstration of luxury at the court of Badan Singh:

गढ़ में प्रकाश नृप के अवास। बंगला उत्तंग कलसंनि सुङिंग।
सिनके मझार, गदरी उदार। कंचन लसाई जिनमें सुभाह।
प्रतिद्वार द्वार लोरन विहार। आगे वित्तान अति जोतवान।
झालरि अनुप, रंभि किरन रूप.......

(The king resides in illuminated fort; high and elevated. Palaces are beautified with cupolas. High throne is gold plated and every door is embellished with festoons. Canopy is beautiful and hangings are attractive........)

127. C.A. Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars, p. 58-60. He writes that 'Royal expenditure was an expression of legitimate rule.'
The inner apartments were also decorated with expensive equipments:

(There are soft woollen carpets over which white cloth is spread; curtains of bamboo sticks; nice food—gajak, gija; decorated bedrooms; winepots and wine cups are there in the residence of royal people).

The regional principalities thus produced varied patterns of demand and encouraged the local economic activities as well. Of interest in this connection are references in Raj Vilas, for example, to the sale of camphor, sandal, saffron, almond, pistachio nut, nut meg and drugs like maddar and opium in the markets of Mewar. Many varieties of rice and wheat, oils, spices, clothes and perfumes which were definitely not locally produced were sold in these markets. It was not the local people who were engaged in mercantile activities; the Bohras carried internal and oversea trade in the region:

(Many Bohras, the devilish sailors are engaged in overseas trade in textile; handicrafts are carried and transported from Gujarat coast).

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130. Rajvilas, p. 50 and 51.
131. Ibid, p. 52, We have discussed in Ch. 5 that Prannath attracted large number of Muslims in Udaipur who followed his faith. It becomes evident that the Bohras staying in Udaipur, preaching almost same faith were engaged in overseas trade. The Bohras largely carried trade in cloth was apparent in Beetak literature also. Rana, as just ruler, thought hostile to the muslim rulers allowed these Bohras to live in his state.
The text also indicates specialisation among merchant communities and it suggested occupational caste distinctions as well. The sarrafs were engaged in money transactions, the jewellers or sunar made and sold precious jewels and ornaments, the bajaj dealt in costly muslin and kanthar sold spices. The regional rulers also had their own mints. Then there were big centres or wherein porters carried different cartons and packages, the houses along the river side used for storing goods like paddy, salt and cotton. These places were called ‘marhi’.

Palace-building was another expression of ostentatious activity of the rulers. The Deeg fort which was built by Badan Singh was noted for its beauty. Description of Rana Raj Singh’s palace has equally been appreciated by the poet Man as follows:

प्रवर विकट पुर चहू रिपिभि पर्वतमय प्राकार, को शीशावलि सोहेप्रबल बुरज प्राकार।
खंभ सु प्रबल कपाट गुरु, प्रोत्त पौरि प्रतिहार, चहू दिसि बाग सु वाटिका
पल्ल पारित सम भूमि बहु प्रबल ऊँच प्रासाद।
गोष्ठ जोरि सोवन कलस वदत गगन संवाद। राजलोक सुरलोक सम...

(There is a main boundary surrounding the palace; ramparts are like mountains. The big towers are mounted by glasses; big doors are supported

133. Ibid, p. 54. The verse reads as follows:
धान मढ़ि, लोहन मढ़ि, स्वई मढ़ि सब सांज।
अनुभवित सुस्थित अलित, गिरिकर सम बहु गुज।
बंधि बंधि बहु मालिकन, दोड़त जितने हराल।
C.A. Bayly describes ganjs as established markets during the eighteenth century in regions other than Mewar. Mewar war described by our poet as well-organized trading centres during second half of the seventeenth century. Bayly also refers to trade in grain and salt in large volumes in Rajasthan region which have also been told by the poet as main items.
134. Rajvillas, p. 43.
by pillars and strong door keepers keep a watch; there are gardens all around which cover the land with leaves. High building is decorated with gold plates and high cupolas speak of the sky. Raj Singh's world is like heaven).

Moreover, the luxurious clothing, housing and maintenance of large bodies of servants absorbed labour and provided employment opportunities outside the agricultural sector. In addition, we have information about gift-giving and charity of kings, patronizing musicians, poets, astrologers and astronomers, priests, singers, dancers or acrobats etc. Maintaining sancturaries for hunting was expensive consumption. Celebration of religious rites and festivals was also an essential duty of the ruler. The quantity and quality of the consumption in the courts of different rulers created opportunities of growth of market economies.

Further, these political power structures also acted as agents of social change by encouraging mobility. One of the most dominant themes of the Reeti poetry is that of separation i.e. viraha. The poets, though telling us all about the yearnings of women left behind in lonely houses do not inform us about their spouses' whereabouts and reasons for their departure. The barahmasa songs and Shad-ritu-varnana in the poetry reveal only little about the absent nayak. One verse suggests that the husband had gone to a distant place and the journey would take hundred days to reach his destination.\textsuperscript{135} Men were frequently migrating to bid\textit{es} or pard\textit{es} though meaning of bid\textit{es} or pard\textit{es} can hardly be discerned from the available sources. Mati Ram is another poet specifying prolonged stay of men in pard\textit{es}. All other Reeti poets write about bid\textit{esia} and 'Virah\textit{i}'n\textit{i}', in general

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without specifying duration and purpose of the departure of the males. The only purpose of the visits to distant places seems to be earning a reasonably good livelihood. According to Som Nath this compensated also for the sufferings due to separation:

वह प्यारी परदेसिन तें .... कंिि कब आपेगी सखी श्र धन लाबेगी।

It is unfortunate that the text abundant in the theme of separation nowhere reveals the reason or purpose for which people were leaving their homes. Vaudeville, basing her study on Barahmasa and other folk songs has suggested that the absented hero is generally represented as a banjara, a merchant or as a sevaka, a mercenary soldier in the service of a warlord. The changing occupational structure and political relations produced mobility which may be seen as an index of social change. The local tribes, who formed the army of the kings became the kshatriyas in the process. Gore Lal, in Chhatra Prakas identifies all the soldiers in Chhatrasal's army as Bundelas; addressing in this manner secured for these soldiers a superior status even as they might have hailed from inferior backgrounds.

We thus notice the role, political, economic, social and cultural that the local regimes played in during the period under our study. The chaos and struggle for power and identity apart, the signs of growth and regeneration are unmistakably present.

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137. D.H.A. Kolff in Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy, p. 75-83, quotes C. Vaudeville to suggest the prevalence of soldiering as tradition that caused mobility in the society.