CHAPTER IV

ADMINISTRATIVE AND REVENUE REFORMS

During the Mughal period rapid urbanisation was the outcome of administrative and revenue reforms, brought about by rulers to a great extent. Ain-i-Akbari vividly describes that Akbar introduced certain novel principles and improved practices hitherto unknown to his predecessor Sultans of Delhi. Akbar proved worthy of conceiving certain original ideas and giving practical shape while implementing them by the grace of God. These new principles to control; raising revenue and govern gave new impetus to the process of growth and establishment of towns and administrative centres in due course.

As the conditions of the village and town population differed extremely there is every reason to believe that imperial courts were associated with the attribute of urbanisation as such, princely localities had a direct correlation with the development of trade and commerce. The town people were on the whole better off than the village people. Contemporary travellers pursue the subject in detail. They were greatly impressed by the wealth and prosperity of the great cities in the reigns of Akbar and
Jahangir. Fitch wrote that 'Agra and Fatehpur Sikri are two very great cities, either of them much greater than London and are very populous. Between Agra and Fatehpur Sikri there are 18 km and all the way is a market of victuals and other things, as full as though as a man were still in a town, and so many people as if a man were in a market'.

Terry, Monserrate have described magnificently about cities that were 'built very large, most fruitful, abounding both in people and riches, principle centres of trade, filled with merchandise and dense crowds, in high state of prosperity, full of glory, pleasant in climate and display of the choicest productions of the whole globe almost unrivalled'.

Such testimonies concerning the development and prosperous growth of great in land towns, which might be largely multiplied, permit of no doubt that a process of rapid urbanisation is the net result of revenue reforms. Revenue Reforms were responsible for mobilising resources for the state and raising additional income to the imperial exchequer. Consequently, more and more developmental activities were undertaken by the then administrators leading to tremendous economic development. This economic development
was a result as well as a cause of urbanisation. As resources of state were mobilized more and more for the development, construction and maintenance of roads – both trunk and feeder – development of trade and commercial activity was automatic. This economic and commercial growth necessarily resulted in the development and establishment of old and new administrative and other urban centres. Development of roads gave rise to transport both intercity as well as intra city, which again accelerated the process of economic, commercial and industrial activity, giving rise to growth of urban centres. This was a direct result of administrative interest and regulatory reforms.

Natural calamities and disaster management by the then administrators may have also contributed to urbanisation. Famines were common feature of Indian history. The occurrence of famines, resulting from failure of crops was inevitable in India, where the possibility of sowing and reaping crops depend upon seasonal rains, which often fail. The extension of communication and transport in villages led to mass migration of poor village people, who were victims of famines, to the urban centres, established by the then administrators to absorb them in some type of activity which gave them food and shelter. Such famine relief measures to relieve distress of the masses were under
taken by Akbar during the famine of 1595-98. Shaikh Farid of Bokhara, a man of naturally generous disposition, was put on special duty to superintend relief measures by Akbar. There is every reason to believe that famine-relief operations must have been extremely limited. Saving of human life involves an enormous cost of disaster-management and the problem obviously was a gigantic one. The widespread famine, no doubt, would have increased the mortality. Those who were fortunate enough to move to the administrative centres could only escape from disastrous consequences of starvation and misery.

Epidemics and inundation, besides famines, were also responsible for widespread starvation. Disease, like cholera in the reign of Akbar and Bubonic plague in the reign of Jahangir (1616) were widespread. A deadly epidemic of 1575, a kind of malarial fever, extended over to Bengal. Various other kinds of that multiform disease spread there. The destructive inundation in the Meghna Delta in Bengal in 1584-85 who was another major natural calamity which marred Akbar's record of prosperity. The sea shore of the Sarkar of Bakhla in Bengal faced a terrible inundation and this flood took the life of 2,00,000 living creatures. Those who did not perish moved to such relief centres where they could obtain minimum subsistence food and find refuge
in shelter improvised by administrators of that area. This administrative reform in the field of control of natural calamities and disaster-management led to the growth of urban centres established by the then administrators.

In 1575 radical changes in the traditional jurisdiction of revenue and administration were brought about by Akbar. The whole empire was divided (with the exception of Bengal, Bihar and Gujarat) into 182 purely artificial areas, each yielding a crore of tankas (equivalent to Rs.2,50,000) under a Karori (or Amil). The seat of Karori in each such area later on developed into a town leading to an urbanised centre reforming administrative activities. This lead to centralised marketing of goods and animals, all types of trade, commerce and craft of the locality were attracted there.

The most important reforms in fiscal administration were those effected in 1579-80, the 24th and 25th regnal years. The empire, as it then stood, was divided into twelve Subahs (Fig. 1) as detailed below.
TABLE VIII

Revenue of the Burhal Empire

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>149.6</td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>165</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Allahabad</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>171</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Awadh</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>184</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Agra</td>
<td>136.5</td>
<td>193</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Malwa</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>209</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Khandesh</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>232</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Berar</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>109.2</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Ajmer</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>150.4</td>
<td>290</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Lahore and Multan</td>
<td>139.9</td>
<td>319</td>
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The status of a subah was roughly equivalent to that of a province of modern times, each under a local government. These subahs comprised of more than 100 Sarkars (or districts). Each sarkar being an aggregate of parganas.
(also called Mahals) e.g. the Subah of Agra included 13 Sarkars and 203 parganas. The Sarkar of Agra 1,864 square miles in area comprised of 31 parganas. The important Sarkars of Agra were Fatehpur Sikri, Mathura, Kanauj, Bairat, Alwar etc. Bengal was subdivided into many Sarkars for fiscal purposes, which were Jannatabad, Mahmudabad, Khalifabad, Bakla, Ghoraghat, Barabakabad, Bazuha, Sonargaon, Chotagaon, Sharifabad, Satagaon etc. Bihar was subdivided into Rajgir, Hajipur, Champaran, Tirhut and Rohtas. Allahabad was subdivided into several Sarkars like Jaunpur, Chanodh, Kalinjar and Banaras. Awadh was subdivided into many Sarkars which were Khanifabad, Lucknow, Surajkund, Kheri and Bilgram. Subdivision of Malwa were Gorha, Chandari, Tumun and Dar. Important sarkars of Khandesh were Aadilabad, Changdgo, Jomod, Choprah and Thalpur. Important sarkars of Berar were Elichpur, Lonar, Panar and Kherla. Gujarat was subdivided into many sarkars, which were Ahmadabad, Pattan, Champer, Mahmudabad, Gogo, Cambay, Sidhpur, Bar Nagar, Surat, Rander, Daman, Tarapur, Mohin, Bossein, Broach, Hansot, Junagarh, Som Nath, Muzaffarabad, Nul, Mahadev, Dwarka, Bhuj, Nawa Nagar, Sirohi, Abugarh, Nandod, Baroda, Sinor, Godhra and Sar Nath. The Subah of Ajmer comprised of seven sarkars.
and 197 parganas, important sarkars were Malwa, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Amarkot and Jalon.

The seats of administration of revenue at the level of subah, sarkar and pargana attracted people from villages and prospered in trade, commerce and craft as the means of transport and communication developed. This accelerated the pace of development of these towns in particular and urbanisation in general.

Table VIII details the revenue raised subah wise which makes us to infer that administrative and revenue reforms brought about a sharp rise in the state resources. The greater was the realised revenue in the subah, the corresponding developmental activities were great as more and more budget allocations were available transforming the conditions of the area. It can be appreciated that earned revenue was mobilized towards constructing road and buildings which led to easy movements of men, animals and material and thereby bringing about an unprecedented development in the field of both trade and industry. All such small and big centres of administrative activity caused the rise and growth of towns with inter and intra town transport and communication. The pace of urbanisation was fast and unhindered.
Wilton Oldham, a revenue expert has very rightly affirmed that Akbar's revenue system was Royotwaree (or raiyatwari), under which a system was organized where the actual ryot, the cultivator of the soil himself was the person responsible for the annual payment of the fixed revenue. The revenue system of Akbar's empire, as described by Abul Fazl, was not uniformly applicable, it varied from locality to locality depending upon the specific conditions of the area. Ain-i-Akbari bears testimony to three systems under the names of 1) Gullahbaksh, 2) Zabt, and 3) Nasaq. The Gullahbaksh is the original Indian system, and Zabt is the regulation system and Nasaq is not specially defined in the text.

The rise in revenue earning was an index of the rise in trade, industry and commerce - as the revenue was levied on all such activities. This period was a period of mass migration of people and beasts of burden from remote places and countryside to seats of administrative officers and places of pilgrimage. All such centres of business and administration turned bigger and bigger in course of time. This led to hectic urbanisation. These characteristics are positively correlated e.g. urbanisation, economic development and rise in the amount of state revenue.
REFERENCES

1. Fitch, p.98.
2. Terry, p.76.
5. ibid., p.290.
6. ibid., p.289.
9. ibid., p.289.
10. ibid., p.269.
13. ibid., p.165.
14. ibid., p.171.
15. ibid., p.190.
16. ibid., p.205.
17. ibid., p.232.
18. ibid., p.236.
19. ibid., p.246.
20. ibid., p.273.