THE PROCESS AND PATTERN OF EMERGENCE
OF STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION
OF MAIN TRADING TOWNS OF
MEDIEVAL MUGHAL INDIA

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

On the basis of the evolution of towns in different periods they can be classified as Ancient, Medieval and Modern towns. The ancient towns developed as religious and cultural centres and it was only during the Mughal period that a centralized political setup came in India and trading as an activity started.

Mughal Era witnessed a continuous movement of people, money and resources, which paved the way for a strong interaction between different provinces of that time. The aspiration to govern a strong political empire by the Mughals gave birth to a series of urban centres in diverse parts of the empire for efficient control. Towns performed different types of functions by becoming either administrative or commercial or religious centres.

Different types of commodities prevailed in these towns and were traded. The "Great Mughal’s" wealth and grandeur was proverbial, and nearly all observers were impressed by the opulence and sophistication of the Mughal Empire.

For nearly one hundred and seventy years (1556-1719) the Mughal Empire remained a dynamic, centralized, and complex organization. The main trade route acted as blood vessel which ran through whole of the Mughal Empire and strengthened the interaction between various trading centres.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

• To assess the influence of geographical parameters on the evolutions of trading towns during the Mughal Empire

• To assess that how specialization of commodities gave birth to different types of market during the Mughal Era.

• To assess the current status of these trading towns
HYPOTHESIS

- Historically urban centres of India are evolutionary in nature

Trade was a major economic activity of that time and the subcontinent's productivity ensured that it enjoyed a continuing favourable balance of trade; Not only there was inland trade but also international trade since during the seventeenth century, craft industries originated and so on. Today centuries have passed after the decline of the Mughal empire but the towns that originated then are still existing though with a different scenario altogether.

Therefore to study their current status census 2001 data has been taken into account. It becomes imperative to look in to the general structure of towns which existed during that period.

As far as the urban centres are concerned in the Medieval Mughal India, different types of urban centres came up. But the four distinct types of towns which can be identified are as follows.

First, there were those cities whose leading function was administrative and where other roles manufacturing or sacral were of minor importance too and were partly dependent on the primary role, of such kind were Agra and Delhi.

Secondly, there were those cities enjoying a primarily commercial and manufacturing character, to which might have been attached administrative functions which on the other hand, remained subsidiary to their economic functions. Ahmedabad fell under this category.

Thirdly, there was the case of pilgrimage centres where trade and craft activities were drawn to where there was already an assemblage of both undeviating settled and ephemeral population as in the case of Banaras, conveniently located in relation to the major river systems of North India. Here the proximity to river assisted commercial intercourse and unvarying crowding of pilgrims fascinated crafts and service recruits from the neighbouring districts or even further off region.
Abstract

And then were port towns like Cambay and Surat. Among the factors that aided to this process must be declared as the political circumstances approving to expanding economic activity which took birth from the creation of the Pax Mughalica, the opening out of both long distance trade within India itself and of India’s international trade with a network of Asian and European markets, and ultimately in response to the latter, an enormous expansion of all aspects of textile manufacturing and marketing.

Various types of markets were found such as bazaar-i-khas, katra, mandi, ganj, dariba, nakhas, peth, fair (mela) and seasonal markets. Of the above the first six were permanent markets i.e. held daily, except on public holidays. The other three were periodic i.e. weekly, occasional and seasonal, being organised for one day in a week or twice a week in case of peth (hat) for a few days in case of a fair at some holy places and for few months in case of seasonal markets. After studying the Medieval structure of the towns and seeing their potential as trading centres, it would be interesting to know the present status of these towns. All these have evolved over a period of time and have acquired different status, some of them becoming Megacities, Metropolitans, class 2 towns as per the 2001 Census. To have a further idea about these towns their occupational structure as per 2001 census has been taken in to account. Regarding the occupational structure, workforce of each and every town has been studied, emphasizing on the share of the Total workers, Main workers, Marginal workers and Non-workers and also the share of male and female in each and every category has also been taken in to account.

The two most stupendous items of import in to Mughal India comprised treasure (notably silver) and horses, while textiles dominated exports. The Mughal cavalry generated an enormous demand for quality horses from Central Asia and Persia. Above and beyond this there were horses required by the cavalry troopers. To retain such large number of horses of non–Indian breeds, there was need to import horses continuously, particularly since these breeds could not be raised well in India. While bullion and horses constituted the main import and must have accounted for the major portion of the value of imports, there were also imports of certain other articles, namely precious stones, non precious metals like copper, quicksilver, tin, lead, amber beads and vermilion.
Russian hides, pearls, high quality woollen and silken cloth from Europe, Persia and China; unprocessed silk from China; spices from South-East Asia and Ceylon, coral cloves, coffee and ivory from the East African coast and the Red Sea; and dry fruit from Central Asia. From across the Himalayas came imports of gold, copper, lead, musk, ginger, borax, woollen stuff, wooden objects, hawks, falcons etc.

Besides these agricultural commodities there was export of iron. Malabar pepper was one of the important items of export from India; but the producing regions and principal exporting ports were in South India, well outside Akbar’s empire. The major portion of Indian exports was accounted by textile. Indian cotton textiles were also exported by the Western overland routes. Babur mentions cotton cloth among the main merchandise brought from India to Kabul. Cotton textiles had a colossal market in the Red Sea countries and Turkey.

Turkey imported Gujarat cloth through the Levant. Quantities of Gujarat calico must thus have been regularly reaching Western Europe by the end of the Sixteenth century through the Levant as well as around the Cape of Good Hope.

Ceylon and the Maldives islands also imported cotton cloth from Gujarat. Gujarat cloth had still larger markets farther east. Cambay cloth of various kinds exported to Malacca. Bengal the prior vital exporting region sent white muslin to various markets extending from the Red Sea to China. Sind too produced cotton stuffs. Diverse kinds of Muslin, conceivably fine calico, were exported from the province to Portuguese India and Hormuz.

Mughal India also exported some quantities of Silk. Although Bengal silk exports were a striking features of India’s trade in the seventeenth century, these do not seem to have been as large at the beginning of that century.

Regarding the occupational structure, most of the towns are having predominantly male population as workers in all the categories. The percentage of male workers with respect to total workers ranged from eighty three percent to ninety percent and in case of female it is ten percent to fifteen percent therefore basically the structure was dominated by male workers. There is lack of equity among the participation of male and female workers.
Moreover all these towns are dynamic in nature. Be it Demographically, Socially, Politically or economically these towns have evolved from their past status and are still evolving as they are evolutionary in nature.

The first chapter gives an introduction of the study in which the aims and objectives, hypothesis and methodology are included it also includes a small literature review which gives an insight to the research.

The first chapter elaborates upon the glory and grandeur of the Mughal Empire, it explains how the glory of the Mughal empire was proverbial, that there was a continuous movement of man, money and resources which led to a strong interaction within the Mughal Empire. The desire of governing a strong political empire by the Mughals gave birth to a series of Urban centres in different parts of the empire for effective control. Towns performed different types of functions by becoming either administrative or commercial or religious centres. And it shows how for nearly one hundred and seventy years (1556-1719) the Mughal Empire remained a dynamic, centralized,-complex organization. There was trade not only within the Empire but with the outside world also.

The second chapter gives the geographical profile of the all towns which have been selected as the study area (Agra, Ahmedabad, Banaras, Cambay, Delhi, Surat) wherein climatic factors such as rainfall, temperature, relief and vegetation has been taken in to account as to develop a strong relationship between the development of these towns and the role of geographical factors in their development.

The third chapter gives a detailed description of the structure of towns during Mughal Era; It gives the reason as to why the towns started coming up during the Mughal Era, that how they had welcomed and in a way had inaugurated an era of centralized power i.e. centralized government over a vast territory to govern an effective rule over the empire, the emperors needed effective urban centres which could be used as different administrative divisions for covering an allotted area under its jurisdiction so that there is effective law and order therefore considering this point as their major agenda potentialities of different areas was recognized to make these areas huge urban
centres and therefore after the thirteenth century various towns started appearing in different directions.

The chapter then gives a detailed description of the towns; it also informs about the various popular commodities of that time, indigo, salt peter, quilts, sugar, quick silver, paper, spices, asafoetida, leather goods, opium, dried ginger. It also talks about the famous cotton textiles of the different towns of that time. The popular cotton textiles were calico, chintz, bafta, chautar, ghazi, sahan, etc. The chapter also deals with one of the objective of the study that how specialization of commodities gave birth to different types of markets, indeed during the Mughal era one town was different from other but the most interesting thing comes in the shape of the economic morphology which was very apparent within one town and this was very well marked in Delhi, there were different types of markets existing, different markets for keeping different sorts of goods for ex the Nakhas was a daily market place where cotton and slaves were sold, both wholesale and retail. Gunges were usually the grain markets, Mandavis were markets of goods, usually provision or grains, a katra was an enclosed market. It gives a description about the various types of markets that existed during that period ranging from emporias to hats.

The chapter four talks about the Mughal administration. It gives a detailed description about the power structure during the Mughal Empire. It gives an account of the various ministers and also talks about the Mansabdari system and tries to bring out the characteristics of a South-Asian specific administration.