Introduction
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The Province of Sind forms an integral part of West Pakistan. It received its name from *Sindh* (Indus river), which literally means an ocean or a vast collection of water. Sind lies between 23°35' and 28°29' North latitude and 66°40' and 70°10' of East longitude. It is a low and flat province, divided into three natural regions such as kohistan or hilly tract is on the west side of it; Thar or *Registan* lies on the East and the fertile land on the both side of the river. 1

Sind always remained the place of culture and civilization from the time of immemorial. It was invaded by Aryans, Sythians, Parthians, Arabs, Ghorids, Ghazanavids and the Mughals, who crossed this rich valley and its alluvial plains. These invaders brought a galaxy of poets, scholar and Sufis along with them, who settled themselves in various towns and cities of Sind and immensely contributed to the growth and development of the socio-cultural life of Sind. After the Arab’s rule, Sind was governed by various dynasties like Sumrahs, Summahs, Arghuns, Tarkhans and the Mughals. It was finally annexed to the Mughal Empire

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in 1591 when Mirza Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khana, after defeating Mirza Jani Beg Tarkhan, the ruler of Thatta United Sind with the Mughal Empire.

An attempt has been made in the present work "cultural and commercial importance of the ports and towns of Medieval Sindh (16th 17th centuries)."

The work is divided into five chapters. Chapter first deals with geographical background and strategical importance of the ports and towns of Sind, as well as the controversies about the site of Debal, and Mansura. These ports and towns were the main source of its strength and prosperity and attracted the attention of foreigners due to commercial and cultural activities of Sind. I focus my attention especially on those ports and towns who were in a flourishing condition between sixteenth and seventeenth century like Thatta, Bhakkar, Laharibandar, Debal, Mansura, Nasrpur, Rohri and Siwistan.

Chapter second highlights the economic importance of Sind and trading companies like Portuguese, Dutch and English and the administrative structure of Laharibandar.

Third chapter discuss about land-routes and the sea-routes, which connected Sind with the other important trading regions and foreign
countries. I have also mentioned the commercial commodities which exported from Thatta and Laharibandar along with a list of imported commodities to Sind.

Chapter fourth is divided into two parts. In the first part I have discussed about the various tribes in Sind, their settlements, their customs, traditions, foods, dress, religion and the role of Sufi orders in Sind. Part second deals the literary contributions of various scholars, poets, historians under the patronage of the rulers of Sind.

Chapter fifth deals with silent features of Architecture of Sind as well as Persian, Iranian and Gujarati influences on the buildings and monuments.

So for the sources are concerned the work is mostly based on Persian sources such as Tarikh-i-Masumi of Mohammad Masum Bhakkari, Tarikh-i-Tahiri of Tahir Mohammad Nisyani, Beglar Namah of Qasim Beglari, Zakhirat-ul-Khwanin of Farid Bhakkari and Tuhfat-ul-Kiram of Mir Ali Sher Thattavi. These works provide detail information about socio-cultural and economic history of Sind.

Besides these sources a number of other contemporary sources proved helpful in my research work such as Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazl and Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri of Jahangir. Besides these various researches
which have been done on Sind such as *Sind Through the Centuries* written by Khusro Hamida, *Sind Arab period* of Dr. Mumtaz Husain Pathan, The *Antiquities of Sind* by Henry Cousens, *History and Culture of Sind* written by Ansar Zahid Khan, N.A. Baloch’s book *Sind: Studies Historical*, *Thatta Islamic Architecture* of Ahmad Hasan Dani and *Sind A reinterpretation of the unhappy valley* of J Abbott etc. All these works provide a lot of information about cultural and commercial history of Sind and proved helpful for my dissertation. I have also consulted with many Gazetteers, Journals and Articles to make my study worthwhile for the readers.

For the economic history of Sind our information depends upon English Factory records which provide a lot of information about trade of Sind and its contacts with the coastal regions and foreign countries. Due to the geographical situation of Sind, it attracted the attention of the travellers, who visited Sind from time to time for the study of customs and traditions of Sind. Travellers accounts are very useful. Many travellers visited Sind during sixteenth and seventeenth century such as Withington Tavernier, Hamilton, De Laet, Samuel Purchas and Orlich etc. All these accounts are considered authentic because they were eyewitness.