CHAPTER IV

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By his initial probings into the Ain-i-Akbari Moreland had succeeded in revealing some important aspects of the economic life of medieval India, and his findings appeared in the form of five articles which may well be regarded as a prelude to his subsequent major works. With these Moreland's first phase of inquiry also came to a conclusion with a significant observation that, "Abul Fazl's statistics disclose a definite picture of the economic position of the country. It remains to enquire whether that picture is true or probable".\[1\] Thus, Moreland was poised to move progressively towards sketching the economic history of medieval India, a field of study relatively unexplored and waiting to be exposed. The next phase in Moreland's historical career was to begin with his disquisition into the economic conditions of medieval India, which resulted in his principal work, *India at the Death of Akbar - An Economic Study* (1920) and followed up closely by another major work, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb - A Study In Indian Economic History* (1923). In fact, the historical craftsmanship of Moreland is revealed at its best during this phase. No historian before him had endeavoured to produce such a comprehensive account of the economic history of Mughal India.

*India at the Death of Akbar* was written with the objective of presenting a 'sketch' of the economic life of India at the opening of the seventeenth century. Moreland's principal aim was "to show how the people spent their incomes and the sources from which those incomes were derived".\[2\] It was also a genuine attempt to provide "a suitable


beginning" for the study of economic history of India in the Indian schools and Universities. Moreland hoped that the book would serve, for the time-being, "at least as a frame work on which additional results can be arranged, and as an index to the topics on which further information is required". [3]

Moreland's purpose of undertaking the study of the economic conditions of India at the close of Akbar's reign becomes evident when he states that the period under review was "immediately antecedent to the first appearance of those new forces which were destined to exercise an increasing and eventually pre-dominant influence on the development of the country". [4] Moreover, the year 1608, when the English ship Hector, touched the Indian shores at Surat, was associated by Moreland with the coming to a close of medieval period of Indian history and the dawn of modern age in India. [5] Besides, from this period onwards Moreland found that the abundance of source-material in the form of travellers accounts, the early Letter-Books of the East India Company, and then in the more copious official records and publications of later times, made it possible to trace the economic history of the next three countries and thus provided a well-defined period for study within the reach of Indian schools and Universities. Although Moreland felt that the source-material used by him seemed "to provide the basis for a coherent and consistent account of the main currents of the economic life of India", still their utilization was not yet exhaustive to produce a definite account. For instance, the records of Portuguese administration, and of the Jesuit missionaries or the vernacular literature of the East, South and West, which seemed to contain

[4] Ibid., p. V.
additional facts, were not explored by Moreland. Thus, he asserted that *India at the Death of Akbar* was a 'sketch' rather than a finished picture.[6]

Moreland found that as the source material relating to the economic life of the Deccan Kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda and of Vijaynagar in the first half of the sixteenth century did not differ in essentials from life in Akbar's Empire, it could be used to reconstruct an account of the economic condition of India as a whole, since the period was marked by uniformity rather than diversity [7] and although "the quality of the administration varied from place to place and from time to time but its framework was substantially identical, and the people lived under it as best as they could".[8] However, "the diversity of language employed by the authorities" posed a major difficulty before Moreland. While he discovered that translations had to be handled with caution, Moreland considered it advisable to consult the original text wherever possible. Further, the readers were asked to be on their guard while dealing with the narratives of Portuguese and those foreign travellers who visited India under the Portuguese patronage, as this class of writers assigned to India a much restricted signification."...to them India meant primarily the west coast and the land lying immediately behind it, so that we may read of journeys from Sind to "India", or from "India" to Bengal..."[9]

As regards the point of view, Moreland clarified in the beginning that his attempt was to write from the standpoint of readers who had a general knowledge of the recent or pre-war conditions in India. His technique was "to state the past in terms of the more familiar present". However, Moreland felt that comparisons were "difficult to draw when the earlier period is described in

superlatives". Moreland, thus, sought to brush aside the hyperbolic language employed by the sixteenth century chronicles, which "may give a very misleading impression if the adjectives are taken at their modern value. The only possible corrective is to fix the attention on quantities, and I have attempted throughout to arrive at numerical estimates, actual or relative as the available data permit, of the various factors which composed the stream of economic life.... the justification for offering such estimates is that they may assist the leader to see the past more clearly in its true perspective, ...":[12]

The contents of the work indicate the extensive field investigated by Moreland. Divided into eight Chapters namely, The Country And The People, The Administration, The Consuming Classes, Agricultural Production, Non-Agricultural Production, Commerce, The Standard of Life and the Wealth of India, the book also has five Appendices, an Index and two maps attached to it which illustrate boundaries of India at the time of Akbar's death and the chief seaports in Indian waters.

Moreland began his account by describing the boundaries of India at the opening of the seventeenth century, and indicate that three major powers ruled India at that time, the Mughals in the North, Hindus in the South, and Muslims in the Deccan. But it was the Mughal Empire which covered nearly all the rest of India and was at that time still a "novelty". The Portuguese or 'pirate' chiefs established as a sovereign power in Goa and other settlements owed allegiance to no superior authority, while the Zamorin of Calicut gave secret support to the piratical communities. A few petty Hindu States were found between

Golconda and Orissa. Moreland pointed out that the un-assimilated states in Akbar's Empire have "sometimes been compared to the intermingling of British provinces and Indian States familiar at the present day". The similarity however did not persist because, under the Mughals, "the administration meant primarily the collection of the land revenue, and the administrative ideal of the period was that the Emperor, or his nominees, should collect the revenue from the actual cultivators of the soil, but this ideal was not always realised in practice and in various parts of the Empire we find that the local administration was in the hands of men who are spoken of consistently as Zamindars".[14] Thus the Zamindars who were found universally in Akbar's Empire, disturbed the administrative ideal of Akbar, for they stood between the Emperor and the peasants.

To Moreland goes the credit of undertaking the first systematic attempt of ascertaining the population of India at the end of the sixteenth century. Despite the absence of a census or records showing the numbers of the population, Moreland felt certain that, "a certain amount of statistical information was indeed recorded in India at this period, but we have not access to the original records, ... we have to be content, as a rule with secondary and partial evidence in the shape of facts stated by contemporary writers, who may have made mistakes in the figures, or may have been misled as to their precise significance, and we can interpret their statements only by the aid of assumptions, the validity of which may be open to question .... We have to estimate probabilities .... "[15] Moreland felt that the Indian chroniclers were more devoid of any sense of comparison and at best could throw light only on the relative density in different parts of India. Some more information however could be obtained from the observations of European travellers also. With such information Moreland formed a rough general idea of the relative density of the population in different parts of the country. Thus when judged by the contemporary

European standards of Bengal, the North-Western plains, Gujarat and Southern India stood out as thickly or very thickly populated territories.\[16\] The observations of Conti, Abdur Razzak, Paes and Barbosa unanimously indicated that the Vijaynagar Empire was densely populated with numerous cities, towns and villages. Conti said "the numbers of the people exceed belief". Deccan was also densely populated. Nikitin, the Russian Monk, observed that the "land is overstocked with people". For the Mughal Empire there were a large number of incidental observations made by travellers along certain routes.

Moreland was unable to find any reasonable grounds for inferring that any city in India had a resident population of as many as half a million. He further indicated that the temporary swelling of population due to the influx of troops or pilgrims ought to be disregarded, and concluded "that the greatest Indian cities were most probably of the quarter - million to half million standard, and that in any case their inhabitants were not to be counted by million".\[17\] However, while this was a 'vague' conclusion, Moreland felt that the rural density could be determined with "somewhat greater precision" with the help of two important sources - the strength of the Southern armies and the extent of cultivation in Northern India.\[18\] He estimated

\[17\] Ibid.
that Deccan and Vijaynagar put together were capable of furnishing one million men in the field. Next using the European analogy with caution and on the basis of the data drawn from the period ending with the battle of Talikot in 1565, Moreland tried to determine the total population of Deccan and Vijaynagar. He inferred that before the year 1914 France was able "to mobilize one out of 31 and Germany one out of 32 so that, the recruiting organization of the Deccan and Vijaynagar was as efficient as that of modern France and Germany; their united strength of a million would imply a population of about thirty millions, while the population would be greater if the efficiency was less",[19] and Moreland found "it difficult to believe that the Indian system can have been the more efficient of the two".[20]

Moreland, however indicated that a similar inference could not be made with regard to Northern India since the Ain-i-Akbari rendered incomplete information with regard to Akbar's military organization and hence the strength of the Mughal forces could not be estimated.[21] But Moreland felt that if the statistical figures preserved in the Ain-i-Akbari could be interpreted correctly, a general idea could be formed of the extent of cultivation in those Mughal provinces which were assessed under the Zabt or regulation system of Akbar. He claimed that since these figures had not been studied thoroughly, hence, "I can offer my individual interpretation of the figures, which relate to a portion

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[21] According to H.L. Chablani, The Economic Conditions of India During The Sixteenth Century, so far as capacity to furnish soldiers was an index to the total strength of a population, far more definite and reliable information for Akbar's dominion was available than for the South, pp. 28-30, see Abul Fazi, Ain-i-Akbari, tr. by H. Blochmann, Vol. I, Oriental Reprint, New Delhi, 1977. Shireen Moosvi, The Economy of the Mughal Empire, p. 397.
of Northern India”. Translating the density of cultivation into the density of population, Moreland pointed out that despite numerous changes, "the main lines of the Indian agriculture have persisted during the last three centuries, and consequently the area placed under crops is a rough index to the numbers of the rural population". Thus Moreland estimated the population of the Northern region from Multan to Monghyr, excluding the two populous regions of Bengal and Gujarat to be over thirty millions and probably nearing forty millions. However, bringing together the North, South, Gujarat and Bengal the population of India at the time of Akbar's death was estimated at about hundred millions by Moreland, a big number indeed, but he pointed out that it

[23] Ibid., p. 20.
was only one-third of India's population in 1911.[25]

While discussing the different classes of population, Moreland also referred to the utter rigidity of the caste system of the Hindus.[26] The comparative insignificance of the middle classes as revealed by the contemporary narratives and chroniclers, according to Moreland, was an "arresting" feature in the economic classification of the people. In fact, Moreland appeared to have subscribed to Bernier's statement that "in Delhi there is no middle state. A man must either be of the highest rank or live miserably".[27] Moreland indicated that with the exception of those who depended on various public offices, there were "no lawyers, very few if any professional teachers, no journalists, or politicians, no engineers, no forms of employment corresponding to the modern railways, postal or irrigation services, or to factories and large workshops, few land holders in the modern sense and unless I am mistaken, scarcely any families living upon accumulated


In order to conduct a systematic inquiry into the economic life of India at the time of Akbar's death, Moreland classified the population into two groups, (1) The Consuming Classes, consisting of (i) The Court and the Imperial Service (ii) The Professional and Religious classes, including mendicants and ascetics, and (iii) domestic servants and slaves. (2) The Producing Classes who were engaged in (i) agriculture (ii) industry (iii) commerce. The discussion rounded off with an analysis of the standard of life and the wealth of India and its

[28] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, pp. 24-25. Brij Narain, Indian Economic Life Past and Present, Lahore, 1929, pointed out that rich and influential merchants under Akbar and Jahangir "would form a middle class between the common labourers and the artisan on the one side and the nobles on the other", pp. 57-58. According to Beni Prasad, "India in 1605 A.C.," The Modern Review, Calcutta, January 1921, "The better sort of trader, the more flourishing priest, physician, artist, astrologer, together with the second class military and civil officer formed what may be called a middle class", p.17. Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 2nd impression, 1969, disagreed with Moreland on the "comparative insignificance" of the middle class and pointed out that as a matter of fact, Bengal in the period under review had a numerous middle class pursuing a variety of professions p.197. Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The middle classes in the Mughal Empire", Presidential Address, Indian History Congress, Aligarh, 1975, pp. 13-41, suggested that the trading and the professional groups formed the middle stratum. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, Mughal Economy : Organization And Working, Naya Prokash, Calcutta, 1987, found it "very surprising that Moreland has completely ignored the evidence of Dutch and Italian sources regarding the existence specially at coastal towns of numerous body of merchants and trading classes, constituting a very wealthy middle class", pp. 254-260.
distribution. In the Chapter on Administration, Moreland has examined the security in the cities and country, customs and transit dues, effect on trade and industry and finally, weights, measures and currency. The fact that an entire chapter was devoted to the study of administrative conditions so far as they "influenced the conditions under which the processes of production and consumption were carried on...",[29] indicates that Moreland realised the existence of a link and interaction between administration and economy. Thus, Moreland observed that at the time of Akbar's death two objects of administration were of supreme importance - "one was the assessment and collection of sufficient revenue; the other was the supply of adequate contingents for the army, and these two primary functions were largely in the hands of a single set of officers, who also discharged most of the remaining duties, and in particular were responsible for the preservation of internal peace."[30] The administration was thus of a centralized nature. It was further characterised by two systems of appointment. The first, Kachcha or Kham was followed in the North. Under it an officer received a fixed salary, in theory at least, and had to account for all the revenue he collected to his superior. Under the second system Pakka or Pukhta, an officer paid a fixed sum to his superior, and was entitled to retain all that he could in excess of that amount. In the Vijayanagar Empire, the prevalence of Pakka was found by Nuniz "to cause the common people much hardship, those who hold the lands being so tyrannical".[31] Similarly on passing from the "Mogul territory into the Deccan, Thevenot was at once struck by the insolence of the tax collectors acting in the name of the lords to whom the villages had been granted, and... that the king granted the land to the highest bidder, or to his favourites, and that the nobles made "extraordinary exactions" on their grants,..."[32]

[30] Ibid., p. 29.
Moreland concluded that the nobles in the South could, so long they paid the revenue and maintained the requisite force, do very much what they liked.[33] The North, on the other hand, presented quite a different scenario. The Mughal Empire, under Akbar, had begun to witness the beginnings of departmental organisation, "although the separation of functions was rudimentary compared with the present state of things in India".[34] The presence of the Zamindars who were responsible for the payment of a fixed sum of revenue may be taken to indicate that Akbar's ideal of establishing direct relations between the State and the peasants was not fully realised in practice.

According to Moreland, judicial organisation had progressed little at the time of Akbar's death. Justice was discharged mainly by the King or Emperor, who redressed individual grievances and was the ultimate authority. Under Akbar, judicial officers like Kazi and Mir Adl settled mainly the questions arising out of the Muslim Law, while the Kotwal in the Mughal cities and City Governor in Vijaynagar and Deccan, heard civil and criminal cases.[35] In Moreland's opinion, the administration of justice was of great concern to a merchant or a producer, who wanted to know whether and in what manner could justice be

[34] Ibid., p. 30.
obtained, or, were the cities safe for residence and business. On this Moreland chose to rely on the record of foreign visitors since the native scholars "were apt to take such things for granted, and where they allude to them they have no standard of comparison even when their statements are not coloured by obvious flattery".[36] Due to the absence of professional lawyers at that time in India, "a merchant who wished to enforce a contract or recover his debt had to appear and plead his cause in person".[37] Two factors were noticed to have a tremendous bearing on the dispensation of justice at that time - bribery, which "was almost universal in India at this time" and the power of influence, which operated to such an extent that "the suitors knew that even a good cause must be supported by bribery or by influence of some description".[38] Moreland further observed that while individual appeals to the Emperor were heard successfully but "distances were great, travel was in some instances dangerous, and the dissatisfied suitor must have had to consider in each case whether an appeal was worth the cost and risk".[39] According to Moreland execution processes in the Mughal Empire were drastic; these included, sale of debtor's goods and house property, imprisonment along with his family and servants, while he might also be sold into slavery or handed over to the creditor in satisfaction of the decree. What was more, these processes did not run as a matter of course, rather bribe and influence were essential first to set them into motion and then to keep them working.[40]

In the cities the position of merchants, foreign and Indian,

[37] Ibid., p.33.
[39] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 34.
[40] Ibid., p. 35.
as well as producers, depended mostly on the personality of the Kotwal in the Mughal Empire, and the City Governor in Deccan and Vijaynagar. According to Moreland the extensive powers enjoyed by the Kotwal were bound to make him a very powerful autocrat, who could make life either pleasant or intolerable for the individual citizen. Besides, "the scope for bribery and influence must have been enormous, but provided that an individual took care to maintain friendly relations with the authorities, the cities appear to have been reasonably comfortable places for residence and business....". [41] Foreign merchants also, who were welcomed by the administration were greatly impressed with the maintenance of order, thieves were few and their property was well protected. The same however, could not be said about the position of Indian merchants, for the "degree of integrity" with which the Kotwal exercised his extensive powers "must remain a matter of conjecture". Although Akbar's regulation provided that the Kotwal should either discover the stolen goods or make good the loss, but Moreland was rather skeptical of the practical working of the system and referred to the observation of Thevenot, notwithstanding his description of how the suspects were whipped, the confession secured and the stolen property recovered. [42] The police administration of the time also worked principally on two methods, namely torture and espionage.

Regarding the measure of security in the rest of the country, Moreland stated that "conditions varied very greatly from place to place and also from time to time, so that the personality of the local officers was probably the most important single factor to be taken into account". [43] The information on this subject, according to Moreland could be gathered only from the observations of foreign travellers or

[41] W.H. Moreland, India At The Death of Akbar, p. 35. See also, Radhey Dhar Dwivedi, "Powers and Functions of the Kotwal in Mughal India, from 1526 to 1605 A.D.", Journal of Indian History, 1975, pp. 57-62.

[42] W.H. Moreland, India At The Death of Akbar, pp. 36-37.

rather the European merchants whose narratives were based on experience and not on prejudice,[44] albeit the Portuguese were an exception, for they regarded not only Indians but other European nations also with disdain. On the other hand, Europeans in general, did not regard Indians with disdain, but with "open-mindedness".[45]

To illustrate the law and order conditions in India, Moreland relied on William Finch's "terse and picturesque" account of journey from Surat to Agra through the eastern route by way of Burhanpur and Gwallor, which is frequently punctuated with phrases like, "a troublesome stony river", "a filthy town full of thieves (Bhadwar)", "a beastly town with thievish inhabitants, and a dirty castle", "a thievish way". The way to Gwallor was "stony and thievish". Narwar was even worse, "a desert rascally way, full of thieves". While there were guard houses in the jungle, but the watchmen were not to be trusted. Finch found Biana decayed and inhabited by rogues and thieves.[46] Moreland concluded that, if cautious, a traveller could travel long distances in India without any serious danger. In fact, broadly speaking, Finch's experience may be taken to represent that of other travellers also. Thus, Withington (1613) who tried to travel from Ahmadabad to Lahari Bandar found the population utterly lawless and was even imprisoned by the guard he had hired for his protection.[47] While Hawkins admitted that since Akbar's death, conditions had deteriorated but Moreland pointed out that even in Akbar's time they had not been perfect. The fact that on his accession Jahangir gave orders to improve the control of roads where robberies took place is a clear indication that matters were not satisfactory in the Empire he inherited from Akbar.[48]

[45] Ibid.
Examining the custom duties paid by the merchants, Moreland observed that although the duties were "distinctly moderate" yet a lot depended on the personality of custom officers at the sea-ports", the more so that the customs seem to have been commonly let on contract or in Indian phrase were held pukhta".[49] Consequently, "the authorised scale of customs duties counted for little in the calculations of ordinary merchants, compared with the payments which would have to be made in one form or another in order to secure the favour of the officers on the spot".[50] While at the ports under Portuguese authority merchants had to pay more, "because the administration was exceedingly corrupt". On the other hand, Pyrard praised the Malabar seaports, particularly at Calicut, for rare abuses and the organisation of custom house.[51]

As regards inland trade, burdens on merchants, Indian and foreigner were substantial, excluding the actual cost of carriage, as borne out by the foreign narratives. A Portuguese priest complained that in the Mughal Empire collection of taxes on inland vessels were accompanied by peculation and extortion. According to Monserrate low prices prevailing in Akbar's camp were partly due to the exemption from taxes and goods brought in for sale. In Vijaynagar, heavy transit and city dues were charged in the sixteenth century where when a new city was founded nothing came "through the gate that does not pay duty, even men and women, as well as head-loads and merchandise".[52]

The conditions reviewed in the preceding paragraphs, which reflect the economic system as well as the working of administration at the time of Akbar's death appeared as "nearly intolerable at the present day"[53] to Moreland and which, accompanied with the practise of bribes, presents, taxes and even thefts in transit proved to be of serious

[49] W.H.Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 44.
[50] Ibid., pp. 44-45.
[52] Ibid., p, 46.
[53] Ibid., p. 47.
interference with internal and foreign commerce at the end of sixteenth century. For eventually, it was the consumer who had to bear the burden of these charges, as goods would not be carried by the merchants unless a good profit appeared to be in sight. Thus the selling price would also be high to cover the high expenses incurred. Wealthy merchants were exposed to an additional risk of being used as "fill'd sponges", or be "squeezed". Besides, Sir Thomas Roe remarked that the "Mogul was the heir of all his subjects", and according to Moreland, "the Emperor certainly claimed the goods left by the wealthier merchants as well as by his nobles and officers".[54] As regards industry, "the position was not felt to be particularly irksome" mainly because the industrial production at that time was entirely in the hands of artisans who were financed by merchants and middlemen and individually it was "of too little importance to attract the hostility or cupidity of the higher officials", though the latter also had to be "propitiated".[55]

Dealing with weights and measures Moreland pointed out that in the sixteenth century as in the twentieth century, weights and measures were characterised by diversity, as the old local standards co-existed with the ones officially prescribed. Another feature which Moreland noticed was that scales of both length and weight, were more uniform than units. For instance, a maund was equal to 40 sers but its weight and consequently of the ser varied from place to place. The diversity was even more striking at the seaports "where units introduced by foreign merchants had become established side by side with the local


The coinage in circulation also lacked uniformity, for there was native as well as foreign coinage. In the Mughal Empire there were three independent standards of gold, silver and copper, "The rates of exchange between which might vary from time to time and from place to place"[57] A silver rupee was equal to 40 copper dams and there were no serious fluctuations, at least in Upper India at that time, but the rate at the headquarters of the Empire and that ruling on the West Coast constantly differed, though not very greatly. In Southern India, Varahu, or hun, or pagoda was the standard gold coin equivalent to about 3 of Akbar's rupees. On the coast, commerce was concerned largely with the foreign coins, in addition to Indian ones. Thus among the silver coins, Persian Larin, Italian ducats and Spanish reals - of eight were in circulation. While Venetian Sequin and Italian ducat were the gold coins used. Goanese pardao in gold also moved in circulation. The purchasing power of Akbar's rupee was about six times as great as in the pre-war period.[58] Keeping in view the various malpractices followed by the mint officers and not ignoring Akbar's regulations aimed at curbing them, Moreland was not surprised "to find that the business of dealing in money was highly developed throughout India, and that travellers notice the presence of expert dealers in all centres of trade".[59]

[56] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, pp. 48-49.
[58] This itself speaks of the actual prosperity of Akbar's times as compared with pre-war period.
In Chapter III entitled "The Consuming Classes" Moreland referred to, the Court and the Imperial Services, other forms of State employment, the professional and religious classes, servants and slaves. He indicated that the courtiers and officials not only administered the Empire, but the fortunes of the masses of the people were also in their hands. He observed that, "in regard to these high officials, something very like uniformity appears to have prevailed throughout India".[60] Descriptions relating to Akbar's empire Deccan and Vijaynagar reflect practically a similar organisation, so that Moreland felt justified in regarding this organisation, "as the typical Indian system of the people".[61] Moreland estimated that in the South, while on paper the surplus left to nobles was not very great, but "in all probability" their income depended greatly on two important sources - what they could economise on their troops and what they could collect in addition to the nominal revenue of their districts.[62] Turning to the North, Moreland indicated that the minuteness of the organisation maintained by Akbar was at once striking. All the 'great men' of the Empire were graded in the Imperial Service, "but the Service differed in essentials from the types familiar in India at the present day". "A person admitted to this service was appointed to a rank (mansab) as commander of a certain number of cavalry: he had thereupon to enrol and produce the men and horses corresponding to his command, and on producing them he became entitled to draw the salary of his rank.... Apart from the force appropriate to his personal rank, an officer might be permitted to maintain an additional force known as Suwar".[63]

Although Abul Fazl stated the salaries of the various ranks as fixed sums, Moreland found it, "difficult to ascertain even approximately the amount which can be regarded as the net income of officers holding any particular rank", mainly because "a competent

[61] Ibid., p. 60.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., p. 61,
officer could maintain or appear to maintain his force for a substantially smaller sum".[64] Despite the fact that Akbar issued numerous regulations to secure the maintenance of prescribed forces, "It would probably be a mistake to assume that his success was complete".[65] Moreover, those who had secured profitable Jagirs might hope for something more than what official records revealed and this greatly increased their incomes. The system of paying salaries by way of Jagirs was disliked by Akbar, who tried to introduce cash payments; but here again Moreland doubted whether he was fully successful, especially since the Jagir system was revived under Jahangir. Moreland indicated that "the higher ranks of the Imperial Service were remunerated on a scale far more liberal than that which now prevails in India, or for that matter in any portion of the world".[66] Not surprisingly the Court attracted the at best and most enterprising men from Western Asia also. However, the advancement, degradation and dismissal of an officer depended on the Emperor's pleasure.

Under Akbar, Service was predominantly foreign and the lists of amirs and mansabdars given by Abul Fazl indicates that only thirty percent appointments were held by Indians, Muslims more than Hindus. According to Moreland, while the enlightened policy of Akbar which offered much scope of advancement to his Hindu subjects has been greatly applauded, "the praise is deserved, provided that proper stress is laid on the element of the policy".[67] Thus the great majority of the appointments were made by Akbar in order to consolidate his hold over the Chiefs who had acknowledged his suzerainty. Moreland found that during his rule of forty years Akbar appointed twenty Hindus to ranks above 500, out of which 17 were Rajputs, the remaining four were held by Birbal, the Court Wit, Todar Mal, the great revenue administrator, Todar Mal's son and by a Khatri: "while, therefore, it is true that the

[65] Ibid., p. 63.
[66] Ibid, p. 64.
[67] Ibid., p. 65.
service offered a career to Hindus, it is also true that in practice the career was limited to Rajputs".[68] Moreland remarked wittingly that "the Imperial Service in fact consisted in the higher ranks of foreigners, Moslems, Rajputs, Birbal and Todar Mal".[69]

However, the Service which offered the most lucrative career in India had numerous drawbacks also. For instance, the Emperor was heir to his officers, and neither rank nor fortune were hereditary. This coupled with "the expenses of keeping up appearances and living in accordance with the fashionable standard were very great", and the irregularity of payments, while Jagirs might almost be termed "a gamble" led the officials to "take advantage of any momentary prosperity".[70] Moreland observed that while making every allowance for Akbar's gift of discernment, and although honest work was awarded, but it was "not the only or the easiest road to preferment. In order to rise, an officer needed readiness of speech, plausibility, and the capacity for carrying on, or at least withstanding intrigue, and Akbar, like other rulers was surrounded by men of this type".[71]

According to Moreland modern professions like law, education and journalism did not exist in Akbar's time, and although the Ain-i-Akbari mentions medicine, learning, literature, art (including calligraphy) and music, as the established professions, there was no clear cut demarcation between them. When viewed from an economist's angle, these professions offered a limited market, so that, "Patronage was the one road to worldly success, and patronage had usually to be

[69] Ibid., p. 66. See also, M.Athar Ali, The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb, p. 16.
[70] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 67. "Money saved was money wasted, unless it could be concealed from the knowledge of the world".
[71] Ibid., However considering the all around achievements and the enlightened rule of Akbar one is not likely to agree with Moreland on this point.
paid for in the form of flattery or otherwise".[72] A generous patron, Akbar's reign was favourable for these professionals, yet the chief characteristic of a professional career according to Moreland, "was insecurity" Success depended on favour, which might be withdrawn as quickly as it was granted."[73]

While the religious classes represented a withdrawl from the productive forces, as regards the servants and slaves, Moreland observed that the amount of labour consumed in the performance of personal services was one of the outstanding economic facts of Akbar's age. Through numerous illustrations he tried to indicate how these "productive forces were diverted to serve the purposes of luxury and display".[74] In such matters the standard was set by the Emperor, which was immitated by the courtiers and officials. Thus Ain-i-Akbari reveals that thousands of people were employed in the Zanana, Imperial camp, stables and other Household departments. In fact, provision was made even for training the fighting instincts of a variety of animals down to frogs and spiders. A similar picture of luxury, display and fashion is disclosed by the numerous references of travellers in Deccan and Vijaynagar also. Even the Portuguese could not remain immune to it. Regarding remuneration Moreland pointed out that free men were employed at rates which sufficed for a little more than a bare existence and when stated in modern currency, would appear "absurdly low". Thus, a servant with no special qualifications cost around one and a half rupees at at Akbar's Court and probably 2 rupees on the West coast.[75]

Slavery, according to Moreland, was a Hindu institution, and it continued to exist in the Mughal Empire, Deccan and

[73] Ibid., p.79
[74] Ibid., p. 81.
[75] Ibid., p. 84.
Vijaynagar also.\[76\] Even the Portuguese employed slaves, who were sold daily in the market like beasts. There were Indian as well as foreign slaves, who were imported and were thus costly and essentially articles of luxury. The status of Indian slaves was hereditary under Hindu and Muslim systems of law, while they could also be secured by capture and voluntary or involuntary surrender. Distinguishing between urban and rural servitude, Moreland indicated that while the former were "concerned almost exclusively with luxury and display" the latter played an important role in primary production. On the whole, both classes were treated alike and Moreland found "no evidence suggesting that the class was badly treated as a whole".\[77\]

Thus summing up his observations on the consuming classes, Moreland found, "that the effect of the existing social and political system was to withdraw from useful employment a large share of the energy and resources of the people, and to direct them towards unprofitable expenditure"\[78\]. Albeit the number of army maintained was numerous than those maintained under British, "but the men were wasted for lack of proper organisation and training" and also, "much of the domestic service rendered was sheer waste." On the other hand, "the dominant note" of Imperial Service was consumption rather than production of wealth. In the India of Akbar's time "where savings were accumulated they took the useless form of stores of gold and silver and gems. In the aggregate, a very substantial proportion of the income of the country was spent on waste and superfluities, the cost of which fell

\[76\] W.H. Moreland, "India at the Death of Akbar., p. 85. According to Moreland, "To speak, however of human beings as commodities is likely to produce an instinctive feeling of revolt in the minds of modern readers, and in truth the idea of slavery has become so unfamiliar in British India.... It's disappearance may fairly be described as recent... and ... complete...." Slavery was abolished by the Act V of 1843 in India, p. 84.

\[77\] Ibid, pp. 85, 87.

\[78\] Ibid., p. 87.
in the long-run on the producing classes, the peasants, artisans, and merchants...."[79]

Passing on to the producing classes Moreland first took up agriculture. About the land tenures, Moreland pointed out that even at the close of Akbar's reign, although the tenures showed some development from the traditional system of India, yet no radical changes had taken place. According to Moreland the question of ownership of land did not arise under the traditional system where there were only two parties, the ruler and the subject, and "the system is in fact antecedent to that process of disentangling the conception of private right from political allegiance which has made so much progress during the last century, but is not even now fully accomplished. Nor was the occupation of land necessarily a right in the juridical sense of the word".[80] Moreland further pointed out that "The development of this original and simple form of tenure may be associated with the aggregation of small States into great Empires, which recurred periodically in India during the historical period".[81]

The administrative ideals of Akbar favoured "substitution rather than superimposition", as happened in the Vijaynagar Empire, for he aimed at entering into direct relations with the peasants. Although

[79] W.H. Moreland, "India at the Death of Akbar, p. 87.
[80] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, pp. 90-91. Here Moreland appears to follow the Imperialist historians like V.A. Smith, Early History of India, Oxford, 1904, p. 123, who in order to justify land legislation in India tried to prove the existence of royal ownership of land in ancient India. This theory, however, has been refuted by nationalist historians such as, P.N. Banerjee, Public Administration In Ancient India, Calcutta, 1916, p. 179, and K.P. Jayaswal, Hindu Polity, 2nd edn., Calcutta, 1924, pp. 343-51. See also Indu Banga, "Landed Rights in Medieval Punjab - An Ecological Perspective", Journal of Regional History, Vol. IV, 1983, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 43-44.
[81] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 91.
Akbar's revenue system was by no means uniform, yet, "it is probably correct to say that in the most productive portion of Northern India, from Bihar to Lahore and Multan, the standard of revenue payments was set by the Zabt",[82] which marked a definite change on the indigenous system under which produce was divided at harvest and the risk was shared by both the State and the peasant. Under Zabt, while the peasant bore most of the risk, all the extra profit (in theory) also accrued to him, because his income was determined by the crops sown and not by the harvests gathered. "The change thus operated, on the one hand, to increase the peasant's interest in the success of his undertaking, and, on the other hand, to minimise seasonal fluctuations in the Imperial revenue, and while it did not amount to the establishment of a regular system of rents, it marks a definite step towards the transformation of the peasant into what is known as a cash paying tenant;..."[83]

Regarding the system of agriculture, Moreland found no complete account relating to the period, mainly because he felt that the subject was not the one to attract the Indian writers of the time, while foreign visitors also, who were interested primarily in commerce, describe the products but do not throw much light on the conditions under which they were produced. However, partial glimpses from their accounts suffice "to furnish some approach to a general account, provided that we have an outline or framework on which they can be arranged",[84] and that outline Moreland found in the theory of continuity, which was applicable to Indian agriculture. Despite the fact that Indian agriculture witnessed numerous and significant changes since Akbar's time but these had not proved sufficient to transform the system as a whole, and Moreland pointed out that "the plough and the ox, the millets and rice, the pulses and oilseeds, and the whole tradition of the countryside link us with the sixteenth century and with far earlier

[82] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 93.
[83] Ibid., pp. 93-94.
[84] Ibid., p. 94.
times in the history of the people...."[85] By finding out the changes which have since occurred, a reconstruction of the main outlines of the industry was possible. For instance, the Ain-i-Akbari provides a list of the crops grown in Northern India which were assessed under the Zabt.[86] The list when compared with the agricultural statistics at Moreland's time appeared to be "very nearly identical". Thus, while the Indian agriculture has certainly been enriched since Akbar's time, "but not to such an extent as to transform its permanent characteristics".[87]

The distribution of crops followed the main lines determined by the conditions of soil and climate. For instance, Bengal depended mainly on rice, Northern India on cereals, millets and pulses, Deccan on Jowar and cotton, South on rice and millets. As compared to the modern times specialisation of cropping was less, though not entirely unknown, for Bengal supplied sugar to many parts of India and indigo production was also largely concentrated in two localities, Biana near Agra and Sarkhej in Gujarat. In fact, Moreland found that in these instances may be traced the "early manifestations of the process of specialisation which has made such progress since the development of means of communication in the course of the past century".[88] However, in the

[88] Ibid., p. 98.
India of Akbar's time, "we look in vain for anything corresponding to the modern wheat tracts or cotton-tracts, which are essentially the results of railway enterprise..."[89]

About the implements used by the peasants, Moreland perceived that few changes could have taken place since Akbar's time, "for even at the present day the peasant's equipment is so nearly the bare minimum required for his work that it is impossible to believe he was ever much worse off.... Ploughs and hoes, water-lifts and minor implements generally, all bear their age upon their face.... and their most striking characteristic, the economy of iron, finds its explanation in the high cost of that metal during the period when India depended for it on her own resources."[90]

An idea of irrigation could be formed by drawing "a sharp distinction between what is now the main canal tract and the rest of the country", because travellers accounts and even Ain-i-Akbari contains few references relating to it. The great canal system established in the North by the British produced a striking change in agriculture, while in the rest of the country wells and reservoirs were still the chief means of water supply. Thus viewed as a whole, Moreland found that the system of agriculture was generally "similar to that which prevails today".[91]

Further, the relation between numbers and cultivation also had not varied greatly during the last three centuries, provided, it is accepted that the conditions have remained substantially unchanged. Moreland found no change in the permanent conditions of soil and climate, no "marked" changes in crops and methods, while no evidence indicated that Indian peasants and labourers were either more or less efficient in Akbar's time than at the present day. Infact it was possible that they got a little less to eat rather than a little more.[92] The bulk of the cultivators were, as they were at present, men with small holdings and

[89] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 98.
[90] Ibid., p. 99.
[92] Ibid., pp. 102-103.
limited resources. "Where we meet the cultivator he is an inconspicuous unit very much as he is today, and he is also commonly short of ready money".[93] Although Moreland failed to find any mention of the class of landless labourers in contemporary literature, however, he pointed out that landless labourers occupied or emerged from the position of serfs and that village serfdom was an "institution of old standing, dating from a period far earlier than that of Akbar".[94] His argument in support of it was based on the evidence found mainly in the Report on Slavery which held that, rural serfdom or its trace was found practically wherever it was looked for in India. Thus a servile labouring class was a normal element in the rural population in Akbar's time and up to the introduction of British rule.

Examining the average yield of land, Moreland pointed out that it was influenced by three factors - (a) change in the fertility of the land under cultivation throughout the period, (b) change in the quality of the land under cultivation at different times, or (c) changes in crops and methods.[95] Moreland did not subscribe to the current popular opinion that the fertility had decreased and the land yielded less than it did earlier although "peasants in India, as elsewhere will, indeed always tell a sympathetic audience that the yield of their land has fallen off", but such statements did not indicate facts, rather they reflected "the psychological attitude of the people who make them, and they will continue to be made so long as the golden age is sought for in the past".[96] In the absence of any evidence indicating a decline over the bulk of the old-established cultivation, Moreland concluded "that there has been no marked general change in fertility other than the reduction which resulted when the land ceased to be "virgin soil".[97]

[94] Ibid., p. 105.
[95] Ibid., p. 107.
[96] Ibid., p. 108.
[97] Ibid.
According to Moreland, at the time of Akbar's death, two opposing tendencies worked to affect the average yield of the land. While on one hand, extension of cultivation tended to reduce the average by a relatively small amount over large areas; on the other hand, improvements in cropping and water-supply tended to raise it very substantially in the tracts where they came into operation. Thus while it was difficult to assert whether the average yield had risen or fallen, it could however, be said safely that these opposing tendencies produced different results in different parts of the country. Moreland pursued the matter further so as to obtain a more definite picture of the condition of the agricultural industry in those parts of the country for which the requisite data could be drawn from the "Account of the XII Subas" in Ain-i-Akbari. The work with all its omissions and imperfections, is still the nearest approach one possesses to a systematic survey"[98] His investigations revealed that Bengal probably yielded more at present than in Akbar's time, Upper India certainly yielded more at present, but much if not all of the intervening country, had a lower average today than in Akbar's time.[99] In the South also Moreland supposed that these opposing tendencies were at work.

Analysing the "relations between the peasants and other portions of the community" and the extent to which townsmen and administrations of the sixteenth century promoted or retarded the success of agriculture, Moreland observed that the peasant received very little active help from other classes of the community which practically did little or nothing to promote the prosperity of agriculture. The period was marked by the absence of a policy of direct and conscious improvement which was later initiated by the British. "In Akbar's days there were no men of science investigating the peasants problems, no skilled engineers designing implements to meet their needs and no financial talent devoted to organising their markets or

[99] Ibid., p. 115.
facilitating the supply of capital" [100] According to Moreland the only scope for action of the kind lay in the construction of irrigation works but in that two while the advantages of action were recognised in theory, very little was accomplished in practise. Thus, wells and reservoirs made at the public cost were usually, and in accordance with precedent, designed for the comfort and convenience of townsmen and travellers rather than for the needs of the ordinary peasant. Moreland found "no trace of anything like a consistent policy directed to meeting the needs of the country systematically,... nor any suggestion for keeping existing works in proper repair" [101] Further in his relations with the market also the peasant was placed at a disadvantage. Firstly, transport at that time was more costly and dangerous, thus the merchants required a much larger margin between the prices at which they bought and sold. Secondly "the buyers for export houses, who have made things distinctly better for the peasants had not come into existence at this time". [102] Under that system peasant was the last person to benefit by price increase while he was the first to suffer from a fall. And Moreland opined that "fluctuations were at least as great in the sixteenth century as in the first half of the nineteenth before the development of communications had unified the markets of the country". [103] During calamities also the peasant had ordinarily to bear the burden unassisted. At the most he could hope for a reduction in revenue demand. [104] Finally, Moreland pointed out that "any tendency which may have existed towards enterprise was sterilized by the nature of the

[101] Ibid., p. 117.
[102] Ibid., p. 118.
[103] Ibid., p. 118.
An ordinary peasant "did not enjoy that security of tenure which is the first condition of successful peasant-farming". and he "ran a real risk of having his holding taken from him". This is in fact, confirmed by de Laet's account "that the common people were much harassed, and often compelled to change their land every season, sometimes because the Administration wanted it, and sometimes because it was to be given to some one else so that the cultivation of the whole country was rendered inefficient." The insecurity of tenure resulted in the stagnation of agriculture. Moreland thought that in this matter the southern peasant also was not better off than his northern counterpart.

Considering the share of the peasant's income claimed by the community, Moreland stated that the share claimed by Akbar was in itself high and "its severity will be at once apparent to any one who is familiar with the level of rents in Northern India at the present day". In Moreland's estimation, it was about twice as much as the present-day landholders claimed for rent, and "no modern Settlement Officer would think for a moment of framing his assessment on any such basis". Besides the revenue, legal and extra legal cesses had also to be paid by the peasant, the amount of which could not be stated with precision but they were certainly substantially in excess of the revenue calculated on prescribed rates. Especially, where the land was granted as Jagir, the extra - legal charges were probably higher. However, peasants under a Zamindar were better off than under a Jagirdar. "The grantee was ordinarily a stranger, concerned only to fill his pockets; the Zamindar was a more permanent feature of the locality".

[105] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 121.
[106] Ibid., 120.
[107] John de Laet, quoted in W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 120.
[110] Ibid., p. 125.
treated his peasants comparatively better and the jurisdiction of some Zamindars offered a refuge from oppression. Keeping in view the fact that the state demand was even higher in the South, it followed that the peasants in the Deccan and Vijaynagar were probably worse off than those in Mogul territory. Thus Moreland concluded that "while the average of agricultural production per head of the rural population, taking India as a whole, was probably not very different from what it is now, the share left to the peasant for disposal was on the average very much less...."[111]

The discussion on agriculture concluded by examining the conditions of life of those engaged in the industry. As a serf, an ordinary village labourer had a little more than the bare minimum necessary for his subsistence. Although his position was worse in unfavourable seasons, "he is now certain of finding employment on relief works.... but in the sixteenth, and indeed far into the nineteenth century he had the choice between the certainty of starvation at home and the probability of starvation on the roadside or in the jungle".[112] The position of the "ordinary cultivator was much worse off than he is to-day, paying a larger share of his present income to the sleeping partners in this industry, and discouraged from almost every form of enterprise by the uncertainty which clouded the future".[113]

While dealing with non-agricultural production Moreland found no complete account relating to it. Although the "Account of the XII Subas" deals with mineral and industrial production, but the information it rendered was found incomplete by Moreland. Similarly European travellers also ignored the staple products of the country and focussed their attention on only such goods that could be shipped to Europe. Thus to build up an account of industrial production in Akbar's time, Moreland drew his information from internal consumption and

[112] Ibid., p. 127.
[113] Ibid., p. 129.
foreign commerce.[114] Moreland found that India in Akbar's time was "very nearly self-supporting" and her imports were limited to certain metals, raw-materials and luxurious goods, intended for the consumption of a very small proportion of population. The average income per head yielded by forests and fisheries in Akbar's time, according to Moreland, "was somewhat about the same order of magnitude" as at the present time. However, in Akbar's time when cultivation was less and forest was more, the rural population as a whole was somewhat better off, in that they enjoyed an unrestricted supply of forest produce.[115]

Regarding the exploitation of minerals Moreland found more detailed information, "a subject which was considered to be of interest by the compiler of Ain-i-Akbari".[116] Production of gold was negligible since the Mysore gold fields were not worked at that time. Silver was also produced in small quantities. Quick silver, tin, lead and zinc were mainly imported, though small quantities of lead and zinc were produced in Rajputana. Coal was not mined in Akbar's time. South India obtained copper from overseas but the North depended on supplies locally mined, particularly from Rajputana, while India relied on its own iron reserves. Iron industry was organised on a small scale and in Moreland's judgement it was "inefficient when judged by modern standards, and altogether unsuited to attract capitalist enterprise, but nevertheless it formed in the aggregate an important item in the production of the country".[117] Iron was clear but copper was exceedingly costly, Akbar's mint paid 1044 dams for one maund of copper. A pound of copper cost the

[116] Ibid., p. 137.
[117] Ibid., pp. 138-139.
peasant about 84 lb of wheat, whereas in the year 1910-1912 the price in terms of wheat was about 16 lb. Moreland indicated that brass and copper in the sixteenth century must have ranked as expensive luxuries instead of being conventional necessaries for the great majority of the population as at the present day.

The most important minerals produced in Akbar's time were diamonds and salt. Diamond fields attracted large labour, but the wages however were low. Measured in foodgrains a pound of salt was 2 \frac{1}{4} times as dear in the vicinity of Akbar's Court as in Northern India about the year 1914. And the relatively high price of salt in "Akbar's time meant a much smaller consumption per head than that to which the country is now accustomed", and production per head also could not have been much greater under Akbar, it was probably even less. Other mineral products included, saltpetre, borax, alum, and ochres. Comparing the mineral production in Akbar's time with the present, Moreland, found that decrease was to be found under diamonds, iron, copper, and a variety of less important items like lead and zinc, borax, ochres, etc. Against these losses were placed huge gains from entirely new production of coal, gold, manganese, minor minerals, increase in saltpetre production and the large development of the stone quarries. Thus even after making allowance for population increase during the last three centuries, "the conclusion appears to be indisputable that the average income per head derived from mineral production, while it is still unduly low, is substantially greater than it was in Akbar's time".

According to Moreland the assessment of the contemporary authorities that, at the end of the sixteenth century, "India was characterized by widespread and diversified manufacturing activity", was

\[ \text{[118] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 139.} \]
\[ \text{[119] Ibid., p. 140.} \]
\[ \text{[120] Ibid., p. 144.} \]
\[ \text{[121] Ibid., p. 145.} \]
a result of mal-observation.[122] Apparently the travellers were misled by the localization of manufacturers in a few towns and cities along the major routes. However, to Moreland's mind it was "indisputable that in the matter of industry India was more advanced relatively to Western Europe than she is to-day".[123] But at the same time it could not be answered directly "whether the industrial income measured in commodities has decreased or increased relatively to the population in the course of the last three centuries...."[124] Moreland, therefore, tried to approach the question by a consideration of the evidence which was available regarding the nature and extent of the industries carried on at the earlier period. He classified them as agricultural manufacturers, handicrafts, ship-building and other forms of transport production, and finally the textile industries.

Agricultural manufactures were of great industrial importance since they transformed a large part of the raw material yielded by land like grain, oil-seeds, sugar, fibres, drugs or dye stuffs. However, Moreland could not indicate conclusively that income from agricultural manufactures relatively to the population differed very materially from that which was obtained in the twentieth century, or a material economic change had occurred in the interval[125]

Dealing with handicrafts[126] Moreland pointed out that the "general impression left by the accounts of travellers is one of variety and skill, especially in imitation rather than economic importance.[127]

[124] Ibid., p. 146.
[125] Ibid., p. 149.
[127] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, pp. 149-150.
However, while the work of skilled craftsmen received most attention, they catered to an extremely narrow market of the extravagant ruling classes and had a small fluctuating demand on the part of the foreigners.

The copper and iron industries were retarded by the high cost of the raw-material. The income from copper industry, "relatively to the population must have been very much smaller than at the present day", while perhaps a substantially higher income was yielded by the iron industry at present, than in Akbar's time, which was marked by the absence of factories, foundries and iron-works, which were now established throughout the country.[128] Wood-working industry was limited by the absence of demand for its products since the Indian homes were characterised by very little furniture. Regarding leather goods, Moreland pointed out that India was self-contained in Akbar's time. But the industry as a whole was less extensive than at present, when hides are exported extensively and various finished articles are imported. Paper was produced at various places in Northern India, but the production as well as consumption of paper and stationary goods was less in Akbar's time, when education was little, and there were no printed books, no newspapers, circulars or posters and very few letters. Paper in Akbar's time was used only in the public offices, by merchants for their accounts, and by scholars and calligraphists in manuscripts.[129]

Potters were more busy in Akbar's time in producing earthenware for common people who could not afford metal vessels in which case the production of pottery had probably declined, when Moreland wrote. The consumption of bricks, stone and timber in domestic architecture was little when judged by the modern standard. Moreland remarked that while it may be regretted that many of the modern buildings like, factories afforded little scope for the display of taste and artistic skill, but it must be recognised that from the economic standpoint they were of more utility than forts, palaces and ornamental

[129] Ibid., p. 153.
tombs built in Akbar's time. Thus a survey of handicrafts in general revealed that "the income of commodities relatively to the population has substantially increased".[130]

Considering the production of means of transport, Moreland found that the manufacture of land vehicles was less important in Akbar's time. Also the modern railways and metalled roads had no counterpart in the sixteenth century. Therefore, it is probable, that relatively to population there were more road vehicles at present. Transport industry was of very large volume at present, "against which the only set-off is the decline in the production of ships and boats".[131]

The ship building activity, in modern times is carried on in proximity to supplies of steel and fuel, but in the sixteenth century, however, the supply of timber was the governing factor, and ships could be built only where timber was available. Further, "it is practically certain that India also built all the small boats required for the coasting trade from Bengal as far as Sind and the aggregate volume of shipping was therefore very great when measured by contemporary standards".[132] Besides Moreland felt that India also took a lead in the construction of the great passenger ships, which were used solely for the pilgrim voyage to the Red Sea. A few carracks were built by the Portuguese at Bassein also.

Textiles formed the most important section of Indian manufactures. According to Moreland, "Silk-weaving was only a minor industry in Akbar's time and the subsequent decay on which so much stress has been laid did not affect the weaving industry so much as the production of the raw material, which had greatly expanded as the result

[131] Ibid., p. 156.
[132] Ibid., p. 159
of the European demand arising after Akbar's death". The home market, though limited in size, was more important, because silk was widely worn by the upper classes. Thus the "luxury-demand was probably large relatively to the number of persons concerned". In fact, the home market was supplemented by imports mainly from China and perhaps in small quantities from Persia. Moreland put the total imports to India, about the year 1600, at not more than half a million pounds, and the total consumption, imports and home production taken together, at about 3 million pounds of raw material as maximum. According to the latest estimates which Moreland saw, the Indian production was about 3 million pounds, while the imports (mainly from China) in the pre-war years were about 2 millions. Thus the industry consumed about 4 million pounds, which indicates that relatively to population, the silk industry had declined, but the decline, "does not represent a large increase in the average income of the entire population of India". The output of woollen and "fancy goods" like shawls and carpets, according to Moreland was not large and the industry was probably less important relatively to population than at present. In any case "the output of large modern factories more than suffices to cover any decrease which may have occurred in the production of artisans". Regarding the manufacture of hemp and jute, Moreland gathered that in Akbar's time "jute was in...

[133] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 160. According to Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, Mughal Economy: Organization And Working, "Moreland's thesis contains only half-truths. Sericulture was an old industry in India. Even if it were a minor one in the 16th century, it was in such a flourishing state in certain centres like Ahmadabad, (Gujarat), Kashmir, Bengal and Bihar including Patna that considerable silk was exported to foreign countries.... About 1600 the raw material was partly imported and partly produced in India", p. 38.


[136] Ibid., p. 166.
Bengal what sann-hemp was further West, a fibre grown for domestic use and of no industrial interest".[137] However, the evidence available indicates that in "Akbar's time jute occupied to some extent the place of cotton as well as hemp", till "jute became an important industrial crop and the price of cotton goods was lowered as the result of the introduction of machinery".[138] Cotton weaving, according to Moreland, "was the most extensive industry in India", and he considered it "fair to say that the aggregate production was one of the great facts of the industrial world of the year 1600",[139] which impressed even the Portuguese. However, Moreland found Pyrard's" picturesque phrase", that,"every one from the Cape of Good Hope to China, man and woman, is clothed from head to foot" in the Indian clothes, an exaggeration. More so, because the nakedness of people living between Cape of Good Hope and China was proved by recorded facts of travellers.[140]

While the Indian looms had a practical monopoly of the home market for clothes, the three principal export markets of the period were Arabia and beyond, Burma, and the Eastern Islands, besides minor outlets in various other parts of Asia and on the east coast of Africa. Their demand was met by production diffused throughout the country, so

[137] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 167. Tapan Raychaudhuri, "Non-Agricultural Production, Mughal India" in Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib ed. The Cambridge Economic History of India Vol. I, 272, indicates "Moreland's belief that the poor in Bengal were clad in jute cloth is now known to be based on 'a misrendering of the word tatband used in the Ain which referred to eri-silk, not jute".
[139] Ibid.
[140] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 168. The literature of the period also indicated "that the clothing worn was exceedingly scanty, not merely in the warmer parts of India, where clothes are conventional necessaries but in regions where they are absolutely required for efficiency".
that "whenever a European penetrated inland he found cloth being produced along his route".[141] The distribution however was not uniform: certain localities had acquired a reputation for special classes of goods, like muslin of Sonargaon, "while facilities for carriage had led to considerable concentrations of the industry in particular areas either on the coast or along the inland waterways".[142] Thus, Moreland indicated that if the contemporary 'authorities', both Indian and foreign, threw little light on the industrial organisation at the close of sixteenth century, it was because they had nothing interesting to say. However, the impression left by commercial correspondence indicated that production was carried on by independent artisans with scanty resources, and without superior capitalist direction and they were compelled to market their goods soon after completion.[143]

As regards the economic position of artisans, Moreland gathered that they worked mainly for the benefit of merchants or middlemen, while some might" benefit from powerful and enlightened patronage, but the great majority of the workers had nothing to hope for beyond the continuance of the conditions which afforded them bare subsistence".[144] The high cost of materials

[142] Ibid., pp. 169-170.
[143] Ibid., p. 172.
[144] Ibid., p. 176. Tapan Raychaudhuri, "Non-Agricultural Production, Mughal India", in Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib ed. The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I, 284 indicates how "Virtually every relevant feature of the economy, society and the state was designed to hold the artisan firmly down to his lowly place in the scheme of things allowing very little scope for upward mobility or differentiation. Nearly every foreign observer spoke of the relentless tyranny suffered by the artisan,... The whip and the cudgel were freely used not only by the noble's minions but by the middlemen as well".
and the burden of taxation further influenced their material position. The former placed themselves in the hands of whosoever provided the materials which led to their exploitation, while they also had to contribute to the revenue.

Regarding the remuneration of urban labourers Moreland pointed out that "the labour market in Akbar's time was almost exclusively an urban phenomenon",[145] though the labouring population of the cities was reinforced by men from the villages. However, very little information about its working existed. Moreland drew upon the rates of pay approved by Akbar and recorded by Abul Fazl. On comparing them with the rates in 1911 Moreland found no pronounced change in the standard of remuneration of workmen in the North, while the incidental observations of travellers and merchants and wages paid by them in the South and west of India indicate that early in the seventeenth century foreigners could secure servants for about three rupees a month.[146]

As compared to Indian agriculture, which Moreland insisted had retained its main features during the last three centuries, Indian commerce [147] at the end of the sixteenth century projected a position entirely different than at present.In the sixteenth century, India as a whole exercised an effective demand for limited classes of foreign goods like precious metals, as gold and silver, which were the principal imports. Other metals like copper, tin, zinc, lead, quicksilver, animals, particularly horses, "which were required in large numbers."

[146]  Ibid., pp. 180.
under the prevailing military system";[148] besides raw silk, ivory, coral, amber and luxury goods like precious stones, costly textiles like silks, velvets and brocades, spices, perfumes, drugs and finally miscellaneous articles like China goods, European wines and African slaves, and anything that could be called a novelty. India paid for these imports by exporting a variety of her own products like textiles, pepper, few minor spices, dyes especially indigo, opium, drugs and other articles of less account. As Moreland pointed out India, "was eager to sell every kind of produce, and her insatiable appetite for the precious metals rendered trade a simple matter for customers who came with money in their hands".[149] Thus, in Moreland's opinion, the position was completely in contrast with the "piece-goods and machinery which India now purchases, or to the food grains, oil-seeds, and fibres with which she pays her debts",[150] at present. Equally marked were the changes that had taken place in the means of transport by the construction of railways and metalled roads.

Regarding the organisation of the sea-borne trade, Moreland pointed out that "the sixteenth century was a period of unstable equilibrium".[151] In 1498, Vasco de Gama found that the Indian seas from Madagascar to Straits of Malacca were practically dominated by the Muslim merchants, who owned and managed most of the ships, though a few ships were owned even by the Bengali, Coromondal and Gujarati merchants,[152] who also took an important share in the land trade. The Muslim

[151] Ibid., p. 186.
merchants were dislodged from their pre-eminent position by the Portuguese, who firmly established their power from Mozambique to Malacca within a few years and dominated the Indian seas. Led by the policy to dominate the Indian Seas and secure the Eastern Trade, they rapidly acquired harbours by force or negotiations and fortified them to afford shelter for the fleets. However, the Muslim merchants were by no means driven off the seas. Rather they responded to the changed situation in different ways. While some changed their routes, others accepted Portuguese rulers and sailed under their licenses, while still others resorted to piracy, which according to contemporary writers constituted a great threat to shipping, particularly on the Malabar Coast. Thus, commercial domination of the coasts at the close of the sixteenth century was shared between Muslims and Portuguese, though by that time the latter's power had greatly weakened. An important fact noticed by Moreland was that "none of the great Indian States played any part in this struggle for the seas. They were essentially continental powers, and while they appreciated the benefits of foreign commerce, and the revenue which it brought to their seaports, they did nothing to protect it on the way". In fact even Akbar's ships from Gujarat to Red Sea sailed under Portuguese license.

At the close of Akbar's reign, the merchandise passing the land frontiers of India was of small importance. On the entire frontier there were only two regular routes - from Lahore to Kabul and from Multan to Kandahar. "Both routes carried a considerable volume of traffic when judged by standards appropriate to the conditions prevailing at the time". However, the journeys were marked by "delays, anxiety, blackmail and occasional attacks".

[155] Ibid., p. 205.
[156] Ibid., p. 207.
According to Moreland, the establishment of direct trade with Europe was not due to the misconception prevalent that it was India's wealth which lured the merchants. Such individual adventurers were exceptional and the real reason lay in the hope of securing a large profit, which led "the king of Portugal first and later the Dutch and English Companies, [157] to send ships to Indian seas in quest mainly of spices and drugs.

The merchant vessels sailing in the Indian seas were of four types:

1. **Portuguese Carracks**, which were the largest, measuring 1500 to 1200 tuns.
2. **Pilgrim Ships**, sailing to the Red Sea from India and varying from 500 to 1500 tuns.
3. **Ordinary Indian Ships**, which rarely exceeded 400 and probably averaged less than 200 tuns.
4. **Junks** which visited India rarely; on the average their capacity did not differ very greatly from that of the Indian ships.

Besides there were fighting vessels of the galley type and coasting crafts. In the Indian seas Turks and Portuguese were the sole owners of galleys. The Portuguese used it against the "pirates" on the west coast, though they were used to carry provisions also. The coasting craft took part in foreign commerce to Ormuz, the Red Sea, Pegu and a few other places. They were of all sizes from about 60 tuns, downwards.

After finding the capacity of the ships employed, Moreland estimated that "the total trade of India with the countries on the west was less than 30,000 and probably not more than 25,000 tuns"[158] and an aggregate of 27,000 tuns for the trade with countries lying to the east. The total volume of Indian foreign trade was probably less than 60,000 tuns of the period, which are, speaking very roughly, equivalent to from

[158] Ibid., p. 219
24,000 to 36,000 net tuns of the present day".[159] In the years between 1911-1914 the annual net tonnage leaving India with cargo exceeded 6 ¾ millions, so that it indicates that the volume of shipping had multiplied at least two hundred fold, since the time of Akbar. However, it was impossible to make even a rough estimate of the net profit obtained by India from foreign commerce, because apart from "maritime dangers, there was the risk that goods might prove unprofitable at their destination. The markets were exceedingly narrow; the arrival of a single ship might convert scarcity into glut, and the commercial correspondence of the period contains frequent references to the uncertainty of business".[160] Thus while it is certain that a profit was made but we may suspect that the average rate was not high because a large proportion of the profit was concentrated in the Portuguese hands and the profits of Indian merchants consisted of what was left. Coasting Trade was of much importance on both sides of India, but its organisation was not uniform. On the east coast boats sailed more or less independently throughout the trading season, but on the west coast, the danger from "pirates" was so great that practically the whole of the traffic was conducted under convoy.[161]

The inland routes like the sea borne commerce were also dominated by season, and "Allowing for the influence of the season, and for the varying degree of security in different parts of the country, inland trade was governed, as it is governed now, by differences in the level of prices, but since costs and risks were much higher, the difference in prices had to be much greater to induce traffic to

[161] Ibid., p. 225.
flow”. However, valuable goods could be moved in small quantities for very great distances. Moreland further pointed out that the effect of the existing limitation was more obvious in the case of bulky goods such as grain, the trade in which was concentrated in the hands of the tribes known as Banjaras. The speed with which they moved grain, would indicate “that the entire seasons, traffic would be equivalent to an amount which a railway could carry over an equal distance in less than a week”. Thus, according to Moreland, while India had developed a system of internal transit which, like her sea-going trade was a remarkable achievement for the period, it was insignificant when compared with modern results. Another factor to be noticed was that at the close of the sixteenth century, forces (like Dutch and English merchants) were just beginning to penetrate the Indian markets subsequently led to a marked rise in the prices of various staples and to a large extension of trade. Thus, while Moreland could not estimate the volume of inland commerce but “it was certainly very small when judged by modern standards, but looked at from the contemporary standpoint it represents a very substantial achievement”. [164]

Finally, dealing with the organization of Indian commerce Moreland indicated that it was “carried on by a comparatively small number of castes or races, the members of which had specialised in the direction,...” [165] and the three most prominent communities were the Muslims of the seaboard, the banians of Gujarat and the Chettis of the Coromondal coast. Besides there were in Northern India Persians and

[164] Ibid., p. 229.
Armenians, Jews of Cochin, besides the Europeans. Thus the commerce on land as well as coast was distinctly of a cosmopolitan character. Besides the foreign merchants enjoyed in some respects, more advantages over their native counterparts. Also in the period under review, in India there was no settled code of commercial law applicable to subjects and foreigners alike. Indians were governed by the law of the land while the foreign merchants were "treated with due regard to the international position of the State to which they belonged, and they commonly attempted to secure more or less formal treaties or agreements defining the conditions on which they might trade, and settling the particular rates at which customs duty would be charged",[166] a system which according to Moreland was not invented by European merchants but by Muslim merchants. The system of credit, which extended over a wide area, was not confined within the limits of India and was "quite independent of political limits, has been read as indicating a high level of morality".[167] But Moreland did not appear to agree to it, he held that "Indian conventional morality in matter of commerce was not, and is not, perfect; its merit lay in the fact that it provided a system under which commerce could be effectively carried on, ...".[168] Nevertheless, the Indian men of business, in Moreland's viewpoint must be ranked as merchants in the highest class, in the sixteenth century as at present.

After examining the sources of income of the consuming as well as the producing classes, Moreland's next task was to attempt a description of the standards of life prevailing at the end of the sixteenth century.[169] Since the contemporary literature contributed practically nothing relating to the standard of life for, "Indian writers accepted the existing state of things whatever it might be, as natural or necessary", Moreland turned to the observation of foreigners which albeit fragmentary, possessed in Moreland's viewpoint the

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[167] Ibid., p. 232.
[168] Ibid., p. 233.
[169] Ibid., p. 237.
qualities of being free from any bias or prejudice. They however, told
more about the upper classes than the rest of the community since, "our
authorities noted such facts as interested them, and there can be no
doubt that the life led by the nobles was intensely interesting to
observe, while the food or clothes or homes of the common people
afforded little scope for picturesque description ...".[170] The task of
producing a connected account from these fragmentary observations was
greatly facilitated "by the rarity of contradictory statements among our
authorities". After making due allowances for differences of time,
place, climate and environment, "the most definite impression produced
by contemporary narratives is one of essential uniformity", which in
some cases like Court life, was almost startling.

As regards the standard of life of the upper classes, the
picture which emerged was one of ostentatious living. Keeping in view
the low prices of necessities and reasonable comforts the income of this
class, which was small in numbers was very large. They had a substantial
surplus at their disposal for investment or to be spent on luxuries.
Investment was rare, while commerce probably attracted some nobles and
courtiers. Industry offered practically no scope for employment of
capital, and "as a rule money not immediately spent would be hoarded in
the form of cash or jewellery".[171] Yet spending and not hoarding was
the dominant feature of Akbar's time. The example of magnificence and
luxury set by Emperors and kings was followed by their courtiers and
officials also. Wealth was spent lavishly upon imported goods or
novelties and on expensive dresses. Another outlet for the surplus
wealth was the large camps, which served as residences for most of the
courtiers who accompanied the Court which was often on the move. Their

[170] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 239.
[171] Ibid., p. 240. See also, Urban Glimpses of Mughal India : Agra
The Imperial Capital (16th & 17th Centuries), Delhi, 1986, pp.
68-76. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, Mughal Economy : Organization
And Working, pp. 238-241.
extravagant style of living required a large staff of servants. In fact, the crowd of attendants was to be found everywhere alike, in the Mughal Court, Deccan, Vijaynagar and even among the Portuguese at Goa where a "man of quality" would not walk in the street without a train of attendants, pages, and African slaves. The amount of money expended on costly presents to the Emperor and influential persons was so exhorbitant that it led to the impoverishment of the nobles. The practise had become an integral part of the establishment and "the presents given to secure promotion may almost be regarded as akin to investments, ...".[172] But while "the financial ruin of the aristocracy was by itself a matter of little moment" the practise had "an important bearing on the economic condition of the masses of the people" because when the resources of the Governors and other officials were running low, it was on the peasants and artisans that the burden fell.[173]

Numerically, the middle classes were small and little is known about the standard of the life of professional men or minor functionaries at the administrative centres. Moreland gathered from the silence of the authorities that their life was at any rate free from ostentation. A little more is however, known about the merchants in Akbar's time. Although their economic position must have varied greatly but the rich merchants in the interior of the country were not free to live extravagantly, "since ostentation was as dangerous in their case as it was desirable in the case of courtiers".[174] This is confirmed by Terry's statement that it was not safe for the wealthy merchants to appear rich "lest that they should be used as fill'd sponges". On the other hand the life of some merchants living on the west coast, like the Muslims in Calicut and Rander was indeed characterized by luxurious living.

Analysing the standard of living of lower classes or the masses - peasants, artisans and labourers, Moreland pointed out that,

[172] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 244.
[173] Ibid., p. 245.
[174] Ibid., p. 247.
"one set of facts indeed comes to us from Indian as well as foreign sources, excluding Bengal, to recurring periods of famine, with heavy mortality, enslavement of children and cannibalism as its normal accompaniments; ...",[175] all of which indicated Moreland are recorded by Barbosa, Correa, Badaoni, Caesar Frederic and Linschoten. The evidence accumulated revealed the dependence of people "on the season for their subsistence, and that a failure of the range resulted in an immediate economic collapse",[176] to withstand which the mass of the people had no economic reserve. According to Moreland the evidence regarding normal times also indicated the misery, penury, and oppression of the lower classes. Nikitin who travelled in parts of Deccan and Vijaynagar early in the fifteenth century noticed that people "in the country are very miserable, while the nobles are extremely opulent and delight in luxury".[177] Barbosa, who wrote at the beginning of the sixteenth century was struck by the extreme poverty in Malabar. Regarding the common people at Vijaynagar, Varthema remarked that they "go quite naked with the exception of a piece of cloth about their middle". Moreland also referred to Sewell, Paes and Nuniz, the Portuguese chroniclers of Vijaynagar who observed "the mass of the people being ground down and living in the greatest poverty and distress".[178] This evidence indicated Moreland, was recorded at the time when Vijaynagar was at the pinnacle of its glory. Linschoten who observed the conditions on the west coast between 1580 and 1590 gave precise details of the poverty of 'common' Indians living in Goa. His account of the country people who lived "very poorly and go naked" was even less favourable. Moreland pointed out that the incidental observations of the first English travellers though belonging to a later period disclosed a similar

[176] Ibid., p. 249.
[177] Ibid., p. 250.
[178] Ibid., p. 251.
picture of oppression of the country people and their poverty.[179]

While the limited data in the form of observations was insufficient for a comparison of the condition of common people between Akbar's time and the present, Moreland felt that "from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century the great majority of the population of India were exceedingly poor, when judged by contemporary European standards, which, it must be remembered were lower than the standards which now prevail",[180] and that no great qualitative change had occurred and "the masses lived on the same economic plane as now". However, it could not be stated whether they had a little less or a little more to eat. Their diet consisted essentially of the same articles as at present - rice, millets and pulses, with fish in Bengal and on the coasts, and meat in the South of the peninsula. According to Moreland wheat was eaten less commonly by the peasants between Agra and Lahore in Akbar's time than at present.[181] Moreland analysed that fats were cheaper in Akbar's time than at present "and in this respect the lower classes were better off as consumers, though not as producers".[182] On the other hand, salt and refined sugar were dearer than at present.

The observations of all the travellers with regard to housing accommodation were 'contemptuous' in all parts of India. Moreland pointed out that though "in some parts of the country notably Bengal and Central India, progress has of late years been rapid in the matter of making the buildings weather-proof, but apart from this change, the housing of the people can still be described in the terms used three centuries ago".[183] Further, as at present furniture was little,

[179] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, pp. 251-252. For another viewpoint see I.P. Gupta, Urban Glimpses of Mughal India, pp. 82-83.
[181] Ibid., p. 253.
[182] Ibid., p. 254.
[183] Ibid., p. 255.
Consisting of bed steads, a few earthen vessels, thin and scanty bedding, while "metal goods in general were luxuries, desired perhaps as they are desired now, but too costly to be obtained in the quantities which are now available",[184] especially the copper and brass vessels.

While contemporary evidence in regard to clothing "lay stress on the nakedness of the people",[185] Moreland, however, acknowledged that the importance of clothing depended a lot on climate. Thus South had an old standing tradition of nakedness. In the beginning of fourteenth century Montecorvino wrote that tailors were not required as the people went naked, covering their loins. Similarly Nikitin, Barbosa, Varthema, Fitch, Linschoten, della Valle and De Laet refer to the scanty or meagre clothing of the people of South. While "nothing is said of coats or upper garments, which are now common, by no means uniform".[186] According to Moreland, the accounts of Fitch, Salbank and Abul Fazl in the Ain-i-Akbari, indicate clearly that scanty clothing was worn and the people covered only the lower parts of their body, which was certainly not applicable to Northern India at the present time. Moreland "found no mention of woollen garments in any part of India, and no records of blankets being used or carried by the common people".[187] In the South the tradition of nakedness extended to feet also. As regards the North, Moreland found no evidence about the use of

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[185] Ibid., p. 256. H.L. Chabani, The Economic Condition of India During The Sixteenth Century, disagreed with the "ingenious theory of nakedness of people in India", and he quoted extensively from contemporary accounts to contradict Moreland's viewpoint, pp. 86-103.
[186] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 257
[187] Ibid., p. 258.
The common people "enjoyed practically nothing in the way of communal services and advantages". For though "there were some installed roads, and a very small number of bridges; there was nothing in the way of organised medical assistance; I can trace no signs of a system of popular education; and the day had not come for schemes of industrial or agricultural development, or for the provision of veterinary treatment or other modern forms of state activity. In all these matters the masses are economically better off at the present day". Thus, "speaking generally, the common people had to provide what they needed for themselves". Broadly speaking, the mass of the nobles were steeped in luxury and the mass of the people were miserably poor, poorer even than they were today. According to Moreland, the only benefit which accrued from the activities of upper classes, indulging in luxury, display, hoarding money in unproductive forms was indirect: "their patronage of foreign merchants, dictated solely by their desire for novelty, in fact facilitated the opening of new channels of trade, and thus paved the way for economic developments in the future". In the background of this picture lurked the shadow of famine, a word which Moreland reiterated had undergone a radical change within the last century, for until then, famine was marked by such repulsive features as destruction of homes, sale of children into slavery, hopeless

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[188] See Tapan Raychaudhuri, "Non-Agricultural Production, Mughal India", in Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, (ed.) The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I, 263-265. "In Mughal miniatures the urban artisanate is almost invariably shown as clad in simple tailored clothes and not infrequently, wearing some headdress and foot wear". I.P. Gupta, Urban Glimpses of Mughal India, also indicate that the use of foot-wear was common, pp. 72-73.


[190] Ibid., p. 238

[191] Ibid., p. 261.
wandering in search of food, and finally starvation, with cannibalism as the only possible alternative. And it is against this background, stated Moreland, "that the splendours of Agra and Vijaynagar must be viewed".[192]

The final stage of Moreland's inquiry was to find out whether India was a rich country in Akbar's time, a question, "which can be answered in different ways according to our choice of the criterion of the wealth of nations". Thus according to the ordinary European and the Elizabethan financiers and statesmen, India was indeed a wealthy country in the sixteenth century. For the ordinary European the criterion of the judgement was the "visible stock of what they knew as costly commodities" like spices and similar goods with which the Indies were supplied in abundance. So tremendous was its hold on the Western imagination that India was still accounted fabulously rich even when her population was known to be miserably poor.[193]

The alternative criterion laid stress on the persistent influx and absorption of precious metals in India. In fact their influx was "one of the permanent outstanding features of the commerce of the world". As before, in the sixteenth century also the balance of trade in India "was adjusted by imports of precious metals to an extent sufficient to excite alarm".[194] The contemporary viewpoint was illustrated in Thomas Roe's remark that "Europe bleedeth to enrich Asia". The influx of treasure came from various quarters, as Portugal, Red Sea Trade, Persian trade, East Africa, Pegu, Siam, the Archipelago and Japan. The destination of this steady influx was a matter of much economic importance for Moreland who thus discovered that while only a part of it was consumed in coinage and industries, the balance was stored up in large hoards which prevented their employment in productive enterprise. The practise of hoarding existed amongst rulers, custodians of religious institutions, merchants and was still prevalent. In fact

[193] Ibid., p. 263.
[194] Ibid., p. 264.
Moreland felt sure to state "that a certain proportion of the influx of silver was absorbed by the more prosperous members of the lower classes also".[195]

The criterion of wealth of the modern economists, "is the income of commodities, or more precisely the relation of that income to the numbers of the population ...."[196] Moreland had tried to ascertain the changes which took place in the 'average income', or in the income of commodities yielded relatively to the numbers of the population by each source. Thus average income from agriculture per head of the total production was found to be about the same; forests also yielded about the same; fisheries probably yielded more and minerals almost certainly less. As regards the industrial production, agricultural manufacturers showed no material change on balance, and while the average income from miscellaneous handicrafts, wool-weaving and transport production, other than ship-building, revealed a substantial increase, silk weaving indicated a decline.[197] This conclusion was drawn with the exception of three sources of income, namely ship-building, cotton and jute weaving, and foreign commerce. However, after analysing these also, Moreland reached the conclusion "that they cannot have yielded so much more than now as to raise the average income of the country materially above its present level".[198] In Akbar's time merchant ships, coasting craft and fighting ships, aggregated about 120,000 tuns, while the annual output was some where between 12,000 and 24,000 tuns. The annual output in the year before 1914 figured between 4500 to 7800 net tuns. Thus, the ship-building industry indicated a decline at present, but the loss in income was obviously insignificant when spread over the inhabitants of the whole country. Moreland concluded that 'the average income derived from sea-borne commerce may well have been less than now, and in any case cannot have been so much greater as to make a material

[195] W.H. Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, p. 266.
[196] Ibid., p. 267.
[197] Ibid., p. 267.
[198] Ibid., p. 273.
difference in the average total income of the entire population of India", and the volume of trade on land frontiers was even less significant for entire India.[199]

Finally, average quality of cloth produced in Akbar's time was undoubtedly higher than at present. However Moreland concluded that the production of cloth was almost certainly not greater than at present, it was in fact, somewhat possibly less.

Thus in Moreland's viewpoint, a review of the various important branches of industrial production at the close of sixteenth century revealed that India was almost certainly not richer than at present and probably she was a little poorer, keeping in view an adequate income per head of the population. In fact, "the deficiency of production which is the outstanding fact at the present day was, at the least, equally prominent at the close of the sixteenth century. Hence not withstanding the fact that the commodities produced by India were eagerly sought for by other nations and their sale secured a steady influx of precious metals, Moreland passed the 'final verdict' that "then as now, India was desperately poor".[200]

As regards the actual distribution of the income, Moreland arrived at the conclusion that, the upper classes lived much more luxuriously than at present, the middle classes appear to have occupied more or less the same economic position as at present but their numbers were proportionally much smaller and they formed an unimportant section of the population and the lower classes comprising nearly all the productive elements, lived even more hardly than at present.[201]

Moreland's investigation of the economic life at the end of Akbar's reign also disclosed that the economy was "characterised essentially by inadequate production and faulty distribution".[202] Inadequate production stemmed from the prevailing conditions which

[200] Ibid., p. 274.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid., p. 278.
penalised productive enterprise, since "producers as a whole were at the mercy of an administration conducted by men who were accustomed to extremes of luxury and display, who were discouraged by the conditions of their tenure from taking measures to foster the development of their charge, and who were impelled by the strongest motives to grasp for themselves the largest possible share of each producers' income".[203] On the other hand, producers enjoyed practically no 'communal' benefits.

The chief agent of distribution was the revenue system in force. The bulk of the consuming classes were dependent mediately or immediately upon the State. In the Mughal territories under Zabt, the standard of revenue-demand was about double the modern standard of rent, while it was equally substantial in Deccan and Vijaynagar. Moreland emphasised the fact that while the revenue was calculated on the gross yield it had to be paid from the net income. Thus the position of a peasant depended not on his gross income, but on the amount of the free surplus which remained at his disposal. Moreland calculated that the surplus for which Akbar's peasants could hope was at the best very small, for while half the produce was used to cover necessary expenditure, and one third was claimed as revenue, there remained only one-sixth of the gross income expected in favourable years, and a very slight loss due to accidents of season would absorb the whole of the anticipated balance. However, reduction of the revenue-demand by one-half would obviously double the amount of free surplus.[204] The reduction in the burden of compulsory payments since Akbar's time was visible in the improvement of the peasant's position. While "he may not handle a larger gross produce than formerly, but he is able to keep a larger share of it himself.[205] This was precisely the difference drawn by Moreland between Akbar's time and the present day.

Further, according to Moreland, it was the contribution of the village rather than the towns which marked the

[204] Ibid., pp. 275-276.
[205] Ibid., p. 276.
system of distribution in existence at the end of Akbar's reign. But apart from varying and imperfect measures of security the peasant in the village obtained no return whatever and the large share of his free surplus which was taken by the State was consumed by a very limited section of the population, who in turn expended the wealth upon luxury articles, hoarding of treasure and the maintenance of a large mass of unproductive employment, features which still characterise the economic life in India, albeit their relative importance had diminished.[206]

However, at present the income diverted from these objects was utilized on three main items, firstly increase in communal expenditure like education, medical relief, sanitation, means of communication and assistance to production in various forms. Secondly, on the growth of middle classes. "The ordinary landholder of Northern India is a new and distinctive feature, as is practically the whole of the professional class of lawyers, doctors, teachers, journalists, engineers and the rest"; and finally the modest improvement which had been effected in the standard of life of the masses of the people.[207] While it could not be stated that by these three innovations, the needs of the country had been adequately met, but they certainly represent a distinct change from Akbar's time, and the progress achieved had also been substantial, so that it could be said conclusively that, "though the average income of India may be no greater than it was three centuries ago, the changes which have taken place in its distribution have resulted in a material increase in the well-being of the people taken as a whole.[208] But the existing distribution was also not entirely satisfactory to Moreland, for the standard of well-being was still so deplorably low that nothing but a large increase in the National dividend would suffice. Infact Moreland wanted the comparison that he had portrayed between the two widely different periods, to serve as a lesson for modern statesman and administrators, in realising that, it is the paramount need for concentration of effort to secure an adequate increase of

[207] Ibid., pp. 277-278.
[208] Ibid., p. 278.
According to Moreland, it was in the country's unstable position that the seed had been sown of economic and political collapse of India. The entire tendency of the economic environment which penalised productive enterprise was to discourage production still further, and to increase the existing faulty distribution, "so that a period of increasing impoverishment was to be expected but that other ad less conspicuous forces were just beginning to operate which offered a more hopeful prospect for the distant future". In Moreland's viewpoint it was the expansion of trade which ultimately brought about a change in the country's economic position, for it was the demand of the upper classes for luxuries and novelties which led to the patronage and encouragement of foreign merchants. The advent of the foreigners stimulated production through the increased demand for commodities and the introduction of new staples and improved processes, but initially they exercised no influence on "administrative exploitation", "which in Akbar's time and from a much earlier period dominated and sterilised the energies of the population of India". It was only following the political changes in eighteenth century that they came into contact with this root evil in the Indian economic system. While at first a policy of administrative indifference was pursued, later experience however, indicated the need for a conscious and an organised attempt in order to eradicate the deep-rooted evil completely.

[210] Ibid., p. 279.
[211] Ibid., p. 280.
[212] Ibid.