

**URBAN CENTRES AND URBANIZATION IN THE MIDDLE AND
LOWER GANGETIC REGION IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

in partial fulfilment of the requirement

for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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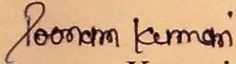
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NEW DELHI 110067
INDIA
2018**



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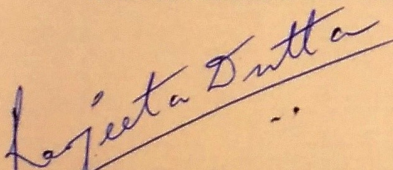
DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled 'Urban Centres and Urbanization in the Middle and Lower Gangetic Region in the Medieval Period' submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of any degree of this or any other university.


Poonam Kumari

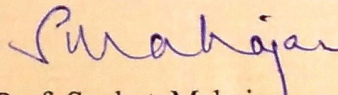
CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This dissertation is an outcome of excessive support of my esteemed supervisor Dr.Ranjeeta Dutta. It was under her able guidance that I finished my M.Phil dissertation on URBAN CENTRES AND URBANIZATION IN THE MIDDLE AND LOWER GANGETIC REGION IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD. Her leadership, support, attention and hard work have set an example, I hope to match some day. I thank her for her patience, enthusiasm, motivation and immense knowledge. I could not have imagined a better guide and mentor for my M Phil dissertation.

I also thank the staff members of my centre, Nehru Memorial library and J. N. U library. I sincerely acknowledge the help of the participants who were quite patient and spared a lot of time for making the recording possible for my data collection.

I am also thankful to all my senior and junior colleagues, my friends and well-wishers in the department and outside for all their emotional and moral support and encouragement which I received during this period.

No words can express my sincere thanks to my beloved parents, brothers (Vineet, Ravi, parwez bhaiya) and also special thanks to Manish ji, sunil ji for their genuine concern and constant encouragements, moral support, warm love. They always lifted my moral during the difficult times.

I must confess that all the faults which are in this thesis are my own for which I take full responsibility.

Poonam Kumari

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Aims and Objectives:

The present study is an attempt to explore the rise and development of various urban centres, their conditions, networks between them and certain aspects of urbanization in the middle and lower Gangetic region from the thirteenth to seventeenth century CE. An attempt will also be made to study the social, economic and political complexities that the process of urbanization generated in this region. Further, the study will focus on the urban-rural networks, whereby rural centres developed gradually into urban economies and the interconnection between urban and rural, particularly the rural hinterland was always crucial. Thus, it is emphasized that urban-rural dichotomies cannot be assumed while analysing the process of urbanization as there is a vertical linkage between the town and its surrounding areas as well as horizontal linkage between the towns of one region with the town of another region.¹Towns and cities of a particular area, in this case the middle and lower Gangetic region, performed varied and overlapping roles.²By demonstrating an interdependence on rural economy, the dissertation will highlight the role of urban centres and the process of urbanization in the development of the economy of the middle and lower Gangetic region.³

The Gangetic region is more than half-a-million sq km of alluvium below the outer arc of the Himalayas and north to the segment of the geologically old Indian

¹Renu Tuli, *Urbanization in Early Medieval India (750-1200 A.D)*, Simla: Himachal Pradesh University, 1990, 1

²Tapan Ray Chaudhuri and Irfan Habib: (Ed.). *The Cambridge Economic History of India C.1200-1750*, Vol. I, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 434

³H K Naqvi, *Urbanization and Urban Centres under the Great Mughals*, Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1971, 1-7.

Peninsula.⁴The Middle Gangetic Plain covers the eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. As such it lies mostly in Bihar, while parts of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal too, lie within its confines. It is mainly drained by the Ganges and their tributaries, viz., Ghaghara, Gandak, Kosi and Son. Further east, the Ganga bends southwards, bifurcating into two. The Lower Plains as the region is designated, extends from the foothills of the Himalayas in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south and from the edge of Chotanagpur Plateau in the west and includes parts of Bangladesh within its eastern confines. Gangetic plain was very fertile, and its productivity was extraordinary. Abul Fazl mentions that the soil is for the most part arable and productivity was high.⁵ Most of the areas of Gangetic plain covering Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal region had alluvial soil. Certain belts in this area also had laterite soil which was less fertile than the alluvial soil. Some of the major towns in middle and lower Gangetic plain were Allahabad, Banaras, Patna, Hugli, Dacca and soon. These medieval towns were in Awadh Subah, Illahabad Subah, Bihar Subah and Bengal Subah.

The purview of this work is based on the valuable insights derived from the accounts of the European travellers who visited this area in the medieval period, certain Persian records like the *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Jahangirnama* and finally the modern works by scholars. The study would focus on the period between the thirteenth and seventeenth century CE when the Gangetic region was witnessing political upheavals coupled with political stability at times (tenth to thirteenth century CE), a period of expansion and

⁴R.S. Sharma, *Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and post-Gupta times*, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 52nd Session, New Delhi: Amrit Printing Works, 1972, 3-7

⁵Abul Fazl-i-Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Ed. by H.S. Jarrett, Corrected and further Annotated by Jadu Nath, Sarkar, Vol. II, New Delhi : Crown, 1949 reprint, 5

consolidation of the Delhi Sultanate (1206 to 1526 CE) and the Mughal empire (1526 to 1707 CE). During the period between the thirteenth and seventeenth century, a continuous and high-level growth of urbanization with much greater intensity than the earlier period could be witnessed in the Gangetic region.

This study will focus on three themes, viz., geography, the rise of urban centres and trading networks between the urban and rural economy. The region, that is the middle and lower Gangetic basin has been chosen for the study because it was varied in geographical aspects and emphasis has been given to assessing the influence of geographical factors which supported the urbanization process between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. The prime aim is to study how different geographical factors and their inter-relationship influenced the urban development and affected the economic and political setting of the region which in turn supported and accelerated the pace of urbanization.

Another theme of study seeks to explore the growth and development of towns, its social implications and its economic ramifications. The study also attempts to examine the nature of urbanization and its influence upon the social, political and economic development of the people. The growth of towns had varied impact on the surrounding regions and this increases the importance of the study of urban life in this period as the economic situation had improved and villages became more prosperous with agricultural production surplus.

Therefore, in addition to analysis of the process of agricultural production and productivity, another objective of this study is to access the role of increased trading activities especially grain trade and how it helped in the urbanization process. Grain trade was beneficial for various communities like *banjaras*, *baniyas* and *sarrafs*,

transforming their life-style in due course of time in many aspects. The nature of this grain trade was dynamic due to the relationship between the various trading communities. Several trading centres emerged as a major urban centre. Trade activities were not a separate process and were linked to geographical, economic and political factors. For instance, favourable geographical condition provided the basis of increased agricultural production and mineral extraction which in turn brought economic prosperity. The well-developed economy supplemented agricultural output with increased grain trade. Further, this region provided good transport facilities which was also supplemented by well distributed rivers through riverine transport.

The middle and lower Gangetic plain was the main centre of North India during the medieval period. The region chosen for the research is very significant as it was one of the most fertile region from the perspective of agriculture which witnessed the agriculture led growth and urbanization. This study emphasizes on the fact that the process of urbanization is evolutionary in nature. While the study begins from the thirteenth century, it will assess the factors of continuity and change from the period of the Delhi Sultanate to that of the Mughals. Though both the regimes are distinct political periods, the process of urbanization was not totally determined by the dynastic changes. Despite these political transformations that undoubtedly influenced urbanisation, there were distinct urban processes that continued from the previous period and underwent significant modifications.

Historical Context of Urbanization: Thirteenth to Seventeenth Century CE

As stated above, the period of Delhi Sultanate (1206 CE to 1526 CE) marked a major shift in the Indian urban scene. However, the process of urbanization was geographically wide spread in India during the early medieval period (eighth to thirteenth century). According to some scholars, in this period the Gangetic plain was characterised by urban decay, decline of markets, migration to the village, ruralisation of the economy and village self-sufficiency.⁶ However, recent researches show that the older urban areas were declining and newer ones were emerging and an agrarian economy expanded serving as a prerequisite for the development of markets. The local goods were transferred through these markets and several transit points leading to wider networks of commercial exchange emerged. All these developments led to the emergence and growth of urban centres.⁷

During the period between the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the Mughal supremacy was at its peak and urbanization process was rapid than the earlier period. In seventeenth century, many European countries had established commercial relations with the Indian subcontinent. Among them, the Portuguese (1498 CE, 15th century) were the first, followed by the Dutch (1605CE, 17th century), English (1600 CE, 17th century) and French (1664 CE, 17th century). These overseas commercial relations accelerated the process of urbanization in this period.

After the establishment of the Mughal Empire, a number of towns witnessed a shift in their existing structure and expansion. Besides, many new towns developed and consequently Mughal India had a large urban population. Political stability,

⁶R.S. Sharma, 1972, Op. cit., 92-104

⁷For instance, see for views on the development of urbanization, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, R. Champakalakshmi

security and economic prosperity during the Mughal period provided a coherent atmosphere for urbanization. Mughal rulers provided uniformity in the administration system and to a great extent, a centralised system was established. Commercial contacts with other parts of the world were also established. All these factors paved the way for the growth of several towns and the acceleration of urban process in Mughal India, in this case, the Gangetic plains. Besides, many emerging urban centres were also a result of ruler's strategic policies and often political geographies coincided with the urban geographies. The growth of several existing cities and emergence of several new cities were a characteristic phenomenon of urbanization process during this period.

Besides, political stability, there were several factors which were responsible for rapid urban growth. These factors were growth in the agricultural and non-agricultural sector, development of several agricultural-based economic activities trading activities as well as development of trade routes supported by an efficient transport system and communication networks. The changing patterns of urbanization were not only associated with the changing aspects of economic and political activities, they were also related to the social transformations. The development of urban processes led often to the rise of new social groups of traders and artisans, improved standard of living and changing occupational structures-all transforming the nature of the existing social relations. All these features of urban phenomena were related to the increase in population and sophisticated monetary transactions.

Historiography

The research on urbanization in the medieval period has looked into some of the aspects discussed above. Most of the works have emphasized on the political and administrative aspects of the cities with some focus on the urbanization process. The relationship between processes of urbanization, the subsequent socio-economic and cultural developments and the influence of cities on the surrounding areas has received attention from different scholars. I. H.Siddiqui's *Delhi Sultanate: Urbanization and Social Change*, H.K.Naqvi's *Agricultural, Industrial and Urban Dynamism under the Sultans of Delhi*, B. B. Bhattacharya's *Urban Development in India-since Pre-Historic Times*, Shireen Moosvi's, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire*, are some of the important works which shed the lights on urbanization process in Mughal India.⁸ However, sometimes, in these works the role of political factors has been emphasized over the geographical and economic factors of that period. A huge gap still remains in the study of relationship and inter-dependence of these three factors i.e. geographical, political and economic. In addition, the geographical, political and economic situation of middle and lower Gangetic plain needs further attention as an area of study.

W.H. Moreland in his work, *India at the Death of Akbar* gives a detailed account of the country and people of late 16th century.⁹ He portrays a detailed picture of the Mughal India. He provides information on production, administration, and on

⁸H. K Naqvi, *Agricultural, Industrial and Urban Dynamism under the Sultans of Delhi*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1986; I.H. Siddiqui, *Delhi Sultanate: Urbanization and Social Change*, Delhi: Viva Books, 2009; Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire. 1595: A Statistical Study*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987 and B. B Bhattacharya, *Urban Development in India (since pre-historic times)*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing company, 2006

⁹W.H.Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar: An Economic Study*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1920

different classes in towns. He makes an economic study of the social, agricultural, commercial conditions of north India around the time of the death of Emperor Akbar. He says that the living condition of the upper classes in urban areas was high but most of the population was worse off than that of the Europe. He mentions that the Mughal economy was at peak under Akbar and it declined later.

Hamida Katoon Naqvi in her work, *Agricultural, Industrial and Urban Dynamism under the Sultans of Delhi* provides valuable details for understanding the urban growth and the development of industries and trade during the Sultanate period.¹⁰ She identifies that the urban areas, which emerged in history had two primary characteristics: first, a high density of population concentrated in a limited area and second, predominantly non-agricultural mode of population.

In her work, *Urbanization and Urban Centers under the Great Mughals*, Khatoon states that urbanization was shaped solely by economic factors. This is different with the rural society where dispersed population is spread over a large area, a rather loose administrative set-up, and cultivation as the principal productive activities exists. She explains the whole process of how an urban centre comes into existence and gains national and international significance. She further explains that for the existence of a new urban centre at least forty *namizis* (*namizis* is a central mosque with bazaar) were needed.¹¹ These institutions acted as nucleus for a town and would attract the rural population from its vicinity and people with or without skills. These towns provided its inhabitants with some basic facilities like water, housing, personal services, and other goods and services. In the initial stage, the town was left for a while for its general progress. If the town had prospects of stability or

¹⁰H. K. Naqvi, Op. Cit., 1986

¹¹H. K. Naqvi, Op. Cit., 1972, 3-4

state was interested in developing it, a *faujdar* or a *kotwal* was stationed in the town and provided with a staff, to maintain law and order. Then the state constructed a well-protected fortress for their residence and this was set apart from the other residential houses. Naqvi further explains that the communication system both by road and river would be improved for linking the town with other major urban centers of the region. The state also provided more facilities to raise the output of the town's manufacturing and trading activities.¹²

Hameeda Khatoon Naqvi in her book, *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India* explains that how the major Mughal towns were an independent living entity, with a good economic base.¹³ This book is divided in two parts, one dealing with industries and another with urban centres of Mughal India. She has emphasized the importance of political stability in the growth of medieval Indian towns. According to her the highly centralized Indian states were the main centres of urban concentration and the rise and fall of the medieval Indian towns were dependent upon the vigor or weakness of the central political power. She emphasizes that because peace and tranquility achieved under the Mughals, urban centres received unprecedented growth. Naqvi further refutes the views of the parasitic Indian towns because these towns had great industrial productivity and gives a detailed account of manufacturing and trading procedure in several industries like cotton textiles, iron, salt, sugar and paper. What is clearly demonstrated by Naqvi in her work is that industry and trade played a crucial role in the rise and decline of urban centres.¹⁴ Naqvi has also identified the common features of urban settlements in medieval period and points out that differences in the degree of urbanization in different regions were due to the

¹²*Ibid*, 4

¹³H. K. Naqvi, Op. Cit., 1968

¹⁴*Ibid*, 61-65

differences of economic development in the medieval Indian economy.¹⁵ These differences in the economic developments were due to the conscious policy of the rulers. Thus, this concern underlines the importance of state action and state policies in the urbanization process. Naqvi has also gone through different sources particularly the Persian records and the accounts of the European travelers and therefore provides a comprehensive description of towns of medieval time.

H.C Verma in his book, *Dynamics of Urban Life in Pre-Mughal India* has pointed out the positive aspects of Turkish invasions in the process of urbanization.¹⁶ He has opined that the foreign invasions did not occupy a large period of broader warfare in the span of almost five hundred years. Though small periods of warfare depleted the population and destroyed the settlements, there was an influx of foreign inhabitants and transplantation of the selected Muslim population. Verma also points out that the requirement of the sultans and new ruling class to create pockets of defense and administrative centers was mainly done through the *iqta* system.¹⁷ He describes the coinage system as an indicator of growing trade and commerce and prosperous money economy. All these aspects had two-fold influence on economy of the Sultanate. First, the coinage system helped in measuring the value of articles with accuracy, which fostered the urban concentration. Second, it provided a permanent form of wealth other than land. Gradually, money lending and cash purchase became a form of economic transaction among urban population.¹⁸

Irfan Habib's book, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)* provides detailed information regarding on agricultural production, trade in

¹⁵*Ibid*, 1-15

¹⁶H.C Verma, *Dynamics of urban life in pre-Mughal India*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publication, 1986, 32

¹⁷*Ibid*, 42

¹⁸*Ibid*, 115

agriculture produce, agrarian economy and so on.¹⁹ It also provides information about different technologies employed in agricultural production. Thus, this information sheds lights on geographical base of urbanization. Many of his exciting findings result from his ability to uncover the intention of the authors of his primary sources. Irfan Habib also explains about trade routes in his book. He provides a sketch of various means of transport and condition of security on these trade routes and also the role of the state in maintaining law and order on these routes.

There is lack of work on the historical geography and urbanization. However, Irfan Habib in his book, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire* has made an in-depth study of historical geography.²⁰ He has incorporated almost all the relevant information regarding political divisions and administrative centres of the seventeenth century. Out of thirty-two maps, twenty-six are devoted to the Mughal Empire in North India whereas only 6 maps cover southern India. This *Atlas* also includes complete references with notes on sources and on the identification of locations. It also provides data for a comparative analysis with the pre-Mughal period as well as the subsequent centuries. Further, he presented information in detailed notes, regarding the various routes, rivers, bridges, breeding places of pack animals, ports, and centres of boatbuilding and shipbuilding and so on.

Tapan Ray Chaudhuri and Irfan Habib in their book, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, have provided a chapter that is the geographical introduction to north India.²¹ This chapter describes the role of state, agrarian relation and land revenue, system of agricultural and non-agricultural production in the urbanization process.

¹⁹Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)*, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963

²⁰Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982

²¹Tapan Ray Chaudhuri & Irfan Habib, 1982, *Op. cit.*,

Further, they have also discussed about inland trade, monetary systems and price movements and commerce, which gives a comprehensive picture of the urban system of that time.

The Economy of the Mughal Empire: A Statistical Study by Shireen Moosvi presents the most detailed account of the structural composition of the Mughal imperial economy. Much of the service sectors in the towns were created through diffusion of the rural surplus. She explains about urban manufacturing sector, whose actual size is established by a number of methods. She also compares the urban population with the total amount retained by the rural population.²² She also attempts to chart out the geographical spread of urbanization on the basis of estimates calculated from the information in the *Ain-i- Akbari*, English factory records in India, European travelers account, some published documents of various English companies and so on. Moosvi cross checked these details from various sources and finally produced a consistent and connected account of the economic system at the turn of the seventeenth century. She has provided estimates on the scale of the economy. Further, she combines the calculations of agricultural and non-agricultural income. Her book gives a detailed account of the Mughal economy and stands as a valuable reference work on the economy, especially the urban economy in medieval India. However, Moosvi's estimates have some drawbacks also. She anticipates that prices of some of manufactured products like cotton textile declined relatively as compared to the prices of wheat between the sixteenth and nineteenth century. This estimate along with estimates of a higher population somehow does not match with the estimates by other scholars and may not be correct.

²²Shireen Moosvi, 1987, Op. cit., 460

B.B Bhattacharyain his book, *Urban development in India* gives a detailed account of the urban development from the fourteenth to seventeenth century.²³ He has studied the medieval trade and urban centres and elaborates the urban setup during that period. While discussing the views of different writers such as AbulFazl, Manucci and Thevenot about the nature and characteristics of these towns and cities, Bhattacharya examines the role of European settlements in urban development during the medieval period.

M.P Singh in his book, *Town, Market, Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire*, talks about towns during the Mughal Empire and its main institutions.²⁴ This book deals with the administrative-cum-economic structures of different towns of the Mughal Empire. It investigates different organizations, their functioning and their economic importance such as markets, mints, ports and so on. The study further reveals that towns and cities in the Mughal India were either few or were only military camps. This estimation of Singh does not seem to be sustainable as there several other types of town in the Mughal Empire like religious towns, commercial towns, capital cities, and so on.

I.H.Siddiqui in his book, *Delhi Sultanate: Urbanization and Social Change* has broken the conventional belief that urbanization was shaped solely by economic factors. This book highlights that social and cultural processes along with economic changes transform a little-known trading town into full-fledged centres of learning and culture. It highlighted important factors responsible for social change and economic developments, which helped in the urbanization process in Delhi Sultanate. Siddiqui mentions that the political and territorial expansion and consolidation of the

²³B.B Bhattacharya, 2006, Op. cit.,

²⁴M.P Singh, *Town, Market, Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire*, New Delhi: Adam Publishing House, 2007, 1

Sultanate was an important factor in the process of urbanization. It created the need for a large number of educated people to carry on with the administrative work.²⁵I.H. Siddiqui draws several information from Persian sources to establish links between economic change and changes in language, literature, teaching and so on. Siddiqui analyses the complex socio-cultural phenomena and uses his analysis to reveal the less- known aspects of the Sultanate political economy, the process of urbanization, economy and trade and their impact on society.

Aniruddha Ray in his book, *Towns and Cities of Medieval India* gives a detailed account of important towns and cities in different parts of the Indian subcontinent in both the Sultanate and the Mughal periods mainly from 1200 AD to 1765 AD. This book focuses on the rise, growth of several cities in which the rivers had played a crucial role. Shifting course of the river influenced the growth and decline of towns and cities. For example, growth of Pandua in Bengal can be attributed to change in the course of Mahananda that began to flow close by.²⁶In the similar way, Lakhnauti in Bengal declined because river Ganga moved much towards west. Gaur city also declined because Bhagirathi moved further westwards. In his work, the physical features within the city has been given due emphasis. The manners and customs of the local population with reference to some commercial production like craft production has been explained. The morphological differences between the cities of eastern, western or northern India have also been described. Ray attributes one major factor to the rise of urban centres in Bengal, which was the decline of central power during the fifteenth century. Due to this decline, there was a rise of many semi-autonomous kingdoms that led to emergence of a number of new urban

²⁵I. H. Siddiqui. 2009, Op. cit., 99

²⁶Aniruddha Ray, *Towns and Cities of Medieval India: A Brief Survey*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2017, 174

centres like, Chittagong, Champaner, Sonargaon, Lakhnauti, Pandua so on.²⁷ However, while his work acquaints us with important towns and cities of medieval India, it is just a compilation of different urban places of medieval period and does not provide the different factors responsible for the urbanization process.

Primary Sources: A Survey

The proposed research will be based on a wide range of primary sources, ranging from accounts of the European travellers to the Persian accounts by the Mughal court chroniclers.

However, most of the sources do not overtly contain any systematic account of urbanization in the middle and lower Gangetic plain, but a substantial amount of information can be obtained by collecting, correlating and cross-examining the data in them. The accounts of contemporary foreign travellers undoubtedly, are vital source for the study of urbanization. A large number of foreign travellers visited India during our period of study. These travellers belonged to different countries and professions. Their observations about cities, their life, and conditions of people of India are not based on imagination only but also on their personal experiences. The British traveller Peter Mundy, in *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia* gave a detailed account of cities like Patna, Banaras which are very valuable.²⁸ The French traveller Jean Baptise Tavernier's account '*Travels in India*' is one of the most important works for the economic history of medieval period.

²⁷*Ibid*, 192

²⁸Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia 1608-67*, Edited by Richard Temple, *Travels in Asia 1628-54*, Vol.II, London: Halkuyt Society, 1914,159

The European travellers' accounts provided various descriptions about urban centres in North India, and the Mughal Empire to some extent. Some missions were also sent to Akbar's court starting in 1580. Almost every aspect of socio-economic life of cities and towns of medieval period were taken by these foreign travellers. Some of the most valuable information of this period can be found in the account of Ralph Fitch, William Finch, Peter Mundy, Tavernier, Francois Bernier and so on. These travellers depicted the socio-economic life of people with considerable objectivity.

Ralph Fitch was the first English traveller in the real sense to travel across India. He travelled India from 1583-1591. *The Voyage of Ralph Fitch to India* is of great interest and importance. Ralph Fitch's description about urban cities in north India was very lucid and valuable. Ralph Fitch travelled to the Eastern provinces and described about some of the cities like *Allahabad, Banaras, Patna, and Hugli*.²⁹ Fitch was a very intelligent observer. His account is based on his personal experience and observations. He mentioned culture, customs, and living pattern of various cities which he visited and described about inhabitants of the city, their food, clothing, houses and so on. He also explained how trading activities helped in the urbanization process. He described the economic conditions of the people in urban areas, trade between various cities, means of transport, and various industries which sustained cities and facilitated their further growth.

Peter Mundy visited India thrice between 1628 and 1656 from England. The travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia is a good source of urban life in the seventeenth century. Initially, he served as a cabin boy on the merchant ship in the Surat. Later, he was transferred to the English factory at Agra. During his service, he

²⁹Ralph Fitch, *England's Pioneer to India (1583-91)*, Edited by J.H. Ryley, London: T Fisher Unwin, 1899, 102

visited several cities in north India and travelled extensively from Surat to Agra and then Patna and returned from Patna to Surat travelling through the city of Agra. He documented everything that attracted his attention. He used to write in his diary every day in which he connected narratives from one city to another. Peter Mundy gave detailed account of the routes, towns and *sarais* which he passed during his journey.³⁰ His description about various cities like Patna and Banaras are very valuable. While describing the commerce and industries of various places, Mundy provided details about the markets, offices, houses, public building and administrators of the town. He took interest in learning the daily activities of the common man and describes their social and economic life, social and religious customs of the people and gives information about the produce and manufacture of several commodities which were exported to England. He interacted with several merchants and brokers and narrated their character, how they deal their business and so on.

Travels in Indiaby Jean Baptiste Tavernier is a good source which provides valuable information about the seventeenth century Mughal India and is one of the most important works for the economic history of the period. Tavernier is one of the most renowned French traveller of the seventeenth century. He travelled many times in India between 1640 and 1661. Tavernier visited most of important towns of medieval India and some of the towns of Gangetic belt also. He was an acute observer and his observation and judgments regarding the matters of industries and trade, commerce and so on are most reliable.³¹ Before coming to India, he had already travelled in different parts of the world. He travelled to many Indian towns and studied various aspects of the towns and described about these towns on the basis of

³⁰Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 159

³¹J.B Tavernier, *Travels in India by Jean Baptiste Tavernier*, English translations by V.Ball, Vol II, London: Macmillan & Co., 1889, 172

his personal experiences. He understood the economic conditions of India very well and the prospects of foreign companies especially French companies in India.

Tavernier observed Indian towns very closely. He mentions about administration of the towns, condition of trade, highways, security of travels. He mentions about navigable river transport system also. For example, he informs us that between Allahabad and Patna, Ganga was mainly navigable only during and after the monsoon and during the winter boats plied between Patna and riverine tracts of Bengal. In his account, he is concerned about the frauds which were prevalent in manufacturing goods. These frauds were practiced by the roguery of the workers or the knavery of the brokers and buyers. He mentions the measure adopted by the government against such practices and urges the state to adopt rules and implement them strictly in order to prevent theft and robberies so that highways would be safe. Tavernier comments on the social and economic life of the period and mentions that how several merchants, bankers and other government officials contributed to the economy of towns. Each of them had their own laws, customs regarding their profession. He provides many details related to Indian manufactures in different towns. His records are also very helpful in identifying some small and important town which are not otherwise traceable.

However, there are some discrepancies in his accounts. His account lacks the systematic arrangement of the subject, correlated chronology and at many places there are some contradictory statements. His chapters on history may have been derived from Bernier's writings or from conversation with him. Some places which he has not visited himself, he provided information about those places by collecting information from various sources and never tried to verify them.

Bernier's account is one of the most popular amongst of those who have travelled to India.³² His book *Travels in the Mogul Empire* provides valuable information about different facets of Mughal Empire. He travelled to many cities of India not only of curiosity, but also to know their inhabitants. He provided information about commerce, trade and industries, administration of the towns. Bernier's *Travels in the Mughal Empire* is a celebrated work which focuses on the study of social life also. He gave detailed descriptions of economic conditions and religious and social customs in northern India.

Travel accounts of Bernier provides detailed information about the urban centres, trade and economy of the Mughal period. However, it can be seen at several places that Bernier made several statements without proper verification of facts. Bernier also mentions about price fluctuations of several metals, however, at many places he could not provide exact details of several essential commodities and sometimes these data are confusing also. Bernier painted India as a land of precious stones and metals but sometimes provided exaggerated account of some precious metal like gold and silver. Bernier also did not write much about urban institutions and specialist in urban areas who helped in the facilitation of the trade activities. He was mostly engaged in exploring trading possibilities in India which would further help France. Bernier compares every custom and institution of France with that of India and labours to prove in every possible way the superiority of the former. Moreover, being a highly educated man, he sometimes finds it difficult to separate idealism from reality.

³²FrancoisBernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*A.D. 1656-1668, Translated by Archibald, Constable, Revised by V. A. Smith, Delhi: Low Price Publication, 2005, 152

Niccolao Manucci's '*Storia do Mogor or Mogul India*' provides information about different aspects of Mughal Empire.³³ Niccolao Manucci is by far the only traveller who has spent a lifetime in India. Manucci had a working knowledge of Persian and Turki. He was an acute observer. He travelled to many Indian cities. He had advantage of a long and close experience of the country. Some of the towns visited by him in Gangetic plain are Patna, Raj Mahal, Dacca, Hugli and Kasimbazar. He provided varied and abundant details about these towns. He describes about their general appearance, administration, commerce, and industry based on his personal visit. He mentions those things which he has observed and experienced. with honesty and was particular about the sources of his information. Despite all these things, his account is not free from blunders. His extracts from the Mughal official records has many mistakes. At many places, they are distortions of the facts. His various records are based purely on *bazaar* gossip. He was at times misinformed and prejudiced. He has criticized Indian customs and said that they are evils, hateful and abominable. His account of Indian customs and religion is not entirely accurate. It seems that at times he was just trying to provide interesting and not accurate information about the country.

Thevenot was a French traveller who remained only a year in India, but he visited a very large number of towns and places.³⁴ He studied the life and condition of the people in the country. He throws much light on varied aspects of urban life. Thevenot's narrative shows that he was a thoughtful observer. He had knowledge of Turkish, Arabic and Persian languages which helped him in easy conversation with

³³Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor, 1653-1708*, Translated with Introduction & notes by William Irvine, Vol. I, London: Published for the Government of India, 1907

³⁴Jean De Thevenot, *Indian travels of Thevenot and Careri, Indian Records Series*, Edited by Surendranath Sen, New Delhi: National Archives of India, 1949

other people. He was a keen observer. He studied condition of the country, its people, various urban institutions, town administration, commerce and industry, which is the most valuable source for the study of urban life of medieval period. Thevenot has recorded from his personal experience. He recorded details like the roads travelled by him, the town which he visited. He describes about the men he met, the things he saw, the amenities he enjoyed. He describes through personal experience the administration of towns, security of life and the law and order situation in the town. These details also provide information about Mughal administrative system. Despite his best efforts, his accounts of India suffer from occasional errors.

Thomas Bowrey was an independent trader.³⁵ He remained in the eastern regions of India particularly Bengal from 1669 to 1679. Thomas Bowrey was well educated and an acute observer. He has visited many towns in eastern India and was deeply interested to know about the inhabitants of those cities. His book *'The Countries Round the Bay of Bengal'* contains his observations and experience in Bengal. He visited cities like Patna, Hugli, Dacca, Kasimbazar etc. Apart from those towns, he also visited many important commercial centres. Thomas Bowrey's account provides much information about commerce, trade and industries, general appearance of town. Most of his observations are of keen interest and immense value which contributed uniquely to medieval Indian history.

Second type of primary record comprises the Persian chronicles. Persians sources are very important to understand the medieval period as Persian was the state language and a court language. All court historians have written court history in Persians language. Some important Persian sources are Ziyaud-din Barni's *Tarikh-i-*

³⁵T. Bowrey, *The Countries Round the Bay of Bengal 1669-79*, Edited by Richard Temple, Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1905

Firuz Shahi, Afif's *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, Ferishta's *memoirs*, Babur's *Baburnama*, and Gulbadan Begum's *Humayunnama*. These records in many places differ from the information provided by the foreign travellers in their accounts. Comparison of these two types of sources provides a complex picture of urbanization process of those times.

The *Ain-i-Akbari* written by Abul Fazl is an administrative and statistical record of Akbar's government and is very useful for studying the administration and urban life during the medieval period. Abdul Qadir Badauni's three volumes of the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* is also considered to be a comprehensive political account of India from the period of Ghaznavids to Akbar's reign. Badauni's text can be used in comparison to Abul Fazl's text, as both were court chroniclers during Akbar's reign and documented about it in great details. The comparison becomes interesting as Badauni has been considered as a historian with an orthodox worldview and Abul Fazl has been identified as somebody with an unorthodox worldview. Their account provides information about general histories, administrative and institution support by the rulers which facilitated the urbanization process. They also provided statistical information and comparison between different regions.

Contemporary historical records like *Babar Nama*, *Humayun Nama*, *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Tabaqat-i-Jahangiri* etc. are the major sources of information. The *Babar Nama*, also known as the *Tizuk-i-Baburi* is the memoirs of Babar.³⁶ It provides a first-hand account for Babur's own career and his times. In this book Babur has given the full picture of geography, history, nature of the region. The chronicle provides a wealth of information about many aspects of the life and history of those

³⁶Babur, *The Babur-nama in English (Memoirs of Babur)*, Ed. from the original Turki Text of Zahiru'd-din Muhammad Babur Padshah Ghazi. By Annette Susannah Beveridge, Vol.I. London: Luzac & Co.,1922.

times. Though this book does not shed much light about the urbanization process of that time, still it describes the land, with its geography, administrative system, trade and industry of Babar's period which provided the background for further urbanization. It also helps us in understanding the administrative and political situation of Mughal period at that time.

Ain-i-Akbari (last volume of Akbarnama) which is written by Abul Fazl, are one of the most important repositories which provides a vast variety of information.³⁷ During 16th-17th century urban progress was higher on the western parts of India. *Ain-i-Akbari* provide us a list of industrial cities like Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Jaunpur, Burhanpur, Murshidabad etc. The *Ain-i-Akbari* contains the most systematic details of towns, their character, administration, trade, transport facilities and industries. It also provides information about increased agricultural production during that time. The *Ain-i-Akbari* describes that Akbar introduced certain novel principles and practices which were not available earlier. During the Mughal rule industries played an important role in urbanization especially textile industries. The *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions about sacks and sack clothes also. It also mentions about the transport facilities of both form i.e road transport and river transport system and specify that river transport system was more preferred that time because it was able to carry more bulky material and safer. It also mentions that Mughals used to take good care of these rivers so that rivers should not be get silted and traffic route through rivers should not get blocked. It also records various Farman issued by Akbar for the protection of the routes and provides information regarding various routes, breeding places of different beasts of burden, construction of boats and ships so on. Emperor Akbar took several steps for the urban development. Imperial factories of Mughal

³⁷Abul Fazl, 1988, Op. Cit.,

India also attracted urbanization as mentioned by Abul Fazl that Akbar maintained hundred imperial factories.

Chapterisation

Chapter one titled as “Geographical Factors of Urbanization in the Middle and Lower Gangetic Region” will attempt to understand how geographical factors shaped a region and contributed towards the urban growth. Geographical conditions are one of the most decisive factor in determining the pattern of agriculture of any region. Therefore, different geographical factors will be discussed first and then how these factors like extensive plain, fertile soil, suitable climate helped in the agricultural production and consequently new crops and agricultural patterns were introduced that created a surplus leading to market network and finally an urban economy.

Chapter two titled, “Urban life in Medieval India”, will analyse the accounts of the European travellers related to medieval Indian cities. Although it is very difficult to estimate the actual number of foreign travellers who visited India, an attempt will be made to discuss the accounts of some of the well-known travellers who visited different cities of India during the period under study. In this chapter attempts will also be made to study those aspects of urbanization and their socio-economic life in medieval India which were either not focused upon or not given due importance in the official or Persian chronicle.

In the *Chapter three*, “Grain Trade and Urban Economy in the Medieval India”, the rural-urban interaction through the grain trade and urban manufacturing in the medieval period will be discussed. Grain trade had an important role in the

urbanization process as it provided food stuff to the towns which were primarily non-agrarian economy. A discussion on this aspect will help us to understand the role of the rural hinterland and contest for control over it for economic resources and urbanization. Some work has already been done on few aspects of grain trade in medieval India. However, in this study focus is given on different aspects of grain trade which facilitated the process of urbanization.

Conclusion

Thus, this work focuses on the urbanization in medieval period, especially on the basis of the European travelogues. India witnessed an unprecedented agrarian expansion during the medieval period. The advanced agricultural techniques, improved irrigational facilities, new agricultural implements etc. led to the surplus production which increased the trade activities. This has increased the interdependence between the urban and rural areas which mutually benefitted each other and the country as a whole. Shift of rural population to urban centres, the growing commerce and expanding trade were the important factors which promoted the growth of medieval Indian towns. In many aspects, the growth and evolution of towns that took place during this period has laid the foundation stone for the urbanization in modern India.

CHAPTER TWO

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS OF URBANIZATION IN

THE MIDDLE AND LOWER GANGETIC PLAIN

The middle and lower Gangetic region of India has a variety of physical features like alluvial plains, rivers, and forests, which have influenced the pattern of society of India in many ways. The Ganges plain is one of the most ancient zones of human settlement and culture.¹ The middle and lower Gangetic plain was prosperous and reasons of prosperity of this region require serious investigation as it would reveal the various factors behind the process of urbanization and tell us how this region got transformed from agricultural to an area of urban networks and urban centres.

The River System

The Ganga plain had a thick concentration of population, availability of labour, rich and fertile agricultural lands, stable supplies of minerals like saltpeter that contributed to the wealth of the Mughal Empire in the medieval period.² The various rivers like Ganga and its tributaries flowing in the Mughal Empire provided alluvial deposits on their banks. The total distance covered by Ganga from the Allahabad to the Bengal is 905 km or 562 miles. When Ganga enters plains of Bengal it is bifurcated into two main channels, one channel in South-east called the Padma and the other flowing straight southward called the Bhagirathi. The Padma carries the main volume of the

¹S.S Kulshreshtha, *The development of Trade and Industry under the Mughals (1526-1707 AD)*, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1960, 182

²Murari Jha, *The political economy of the Ganga River: highway of state formation in Mughal India, c.1600-1800*, Leiden University: Leiden University Institute for History, 2013, 159

water of the Ganga. It flows south-east and joins the Meghna near Chandpur and ultimately meets to the Bay of Bengal.

The Ganga river and its tributaries played a significant part in the development of cultural and commercial pattern of the region. There was a great expansion in agriculture and population mainly due to comparative stability and consolidation facilitated by the administration. However, these developments were confined to only a few centers of habitations like Agra, Ayodhya, Prayag, Jaunpur, Benares, Sasaram, Patna, Rajmahal, Burdawn, Behrampur and Tipperah and so on.³ Development of these centres triggered a process which helped in the urbanization. The Ganga has been an artery of commerce. It is a dividing line between the Northern and Southern portions of the plain. Middle Ganga plain and lower Ganga plain is a level riverine plain. The region is mainly dominated by fertile alluvial soil and therefore having wide spread vegetation.⁴ It is predominantly an agricultural region. Middle Ganga plain measures about 600 km in east-west and nearly 330 km in north-south direction comprises total area of about 1.44 lakh sq km. Its northern boundary is defined by the Himalayan foothills and southern boundary is defined by the peninsular edge. The region is drained by the Ganga and its major tributaries like the Ghaghra, the Gandak, the Kosi in the north middle Ganga plain and the Son, the Punpun, so on in the south middle Ganga plain. Most of the rivers keep on shifting their courses making this area prone to frequent floods. The Kosi River is most notorious in this respect. Lower Ganga plain measures about 580 km in north-south and nearly 200 km in east-west direction comprises total area of about 81 thousand sq km.

³S.S Kulshreshtha, 1960, Op. cit., 182

⁴AbulFazl-i-Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Translated by H.S. Jarrett, Corrected and further Annotated by Jadu Nath, Sarkar, Vol. II, Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1949, 286

Floods were a regular feature of this region especially in Bihar. Some foreign accounts also mention about flood, especially in the rivers originating from northern mountains.⁵ Some rivers which were notorious for floods are Ganges, Ghaghra, Gandak and Kosi. The alterations occurred in the channels of these rivers frequently so that in four or five years rivers use to change their courses. The large areas get flooded leading to the disruption of the transport system, destruction of many agricultural crops, devastation of life and property. Some of these rivers have also shifted their courses. In 1665-66, Tavernier travelled along the Ganges from Patna to Rajmahal in a boat and has recorded the course of the river.⁶ In 1670, Marshall also travelled from Rajmahal to Patna and back and recorded minute details of the course of river Ganga between Raajmahal to Patna.⁷ When comparison is being made between the accounts of Tavernier and Marshall with the present course of the river, it shows that a major change in the course of river has taken place since then. Floods and shifting channels have made the several abandoned water courses, lakes and *chaurs, tals*. The *Ain-i-Akbari* refers to some of such lakes which were in the Tirhut and Rohtas regions. However, small rivers used to have almost fixed narrow channels and little change in their courses.

Role of river in urbanization process is very important. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century most of the towns developed on the bank of river. Some of the reason to choose a river nearby the location of a town was, to ensure water supply, act

⁵Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia 1608-67*, Ed. by Richard Temple, Travels in Asia 1628-54, Vol.II, London: Halkuyt Society, 1914, 135

⁶J. B. Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Ed. by V.Ball, Vol II, London: Macmillan & Co., 1889, 123-125

⁷John Marshall, *John Marshall in India Notes and Observations in Bengal*, 1668-72, Ed. by Shafaat A. Khan, London: Oxford University Press, 1927, 71-79

as a defensive barricade, a cooling influence during summer and a means for transportation.⁸ Another advantage of having a town along the banks of a river was the availability of fertile land, which assured supply of food grains to the city. In Medieval period we find most of the Indian towns in low lying plains, where agriculture flourished widely and communication was easy. For example, major cities like Allahabad, Benaras and Patna were on the bank of river Ganga. The *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions that the river flowing to the south of Benaras formed a bow string, and the city itself presented the appearance of a bow.⁹ Patna was situated on its west bank. Here, river Sone effected its confluence with the river Ganga. Ganga in this region was almost stable and it is due to the stability in the course of river Ganga, many cities were developed on its bank.

Almost all the major rivers of middle and lower Gangetic plain during the medieval period were used as transportation. Riverine routes used to take longer time of travel than the road but, these routes were safer and could carry heavy bulk at cheaper cost.¹⁰ Therefore, the state took good care to see that the rivers did not get silted.¹¹ Thus, a good transportation facility in Gangetic plain facilitated the trade activities and thus helped in the urbanization process.

Climate

The climate of North Gangetic plain can be described as consisting of three seasons into which the year is divided: the cold season from November to February, the hot

⁸F.S.Manrique, *Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique*, Ed. by C.E. Luard, Assisted by H. Hosten, Vol. II, London: Hakluyt Society, 1927, 191

⁹AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 169

¹⁰*Ibid*, 282

¹¹AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 291

season from March to May and the rainy season from June to October. The region is intensely hot in summer, while the winter is temperate.

The climate during the cold weather is pleasant. Most of the days are bright and not hot. As soon as the sun sets the temperature falls. Then low temperature follows till next morning. There is no frost even in the extreme winter. December and January are the coldest month. Mean minimum and maximum temperature in December and January are around 50F and 85F respectively.

Summer in India is known for their oppressive heat. At times the North-west winds constantly laden with dust. It gets up with great strength every year in the heats. Mean maximum in May and June months are 100F. In June, the sun's rays falling directly on tropic of cancer and whole north India develops an area of low pressure belt which attracts moisture-led sea-winds from Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.

Rainfall is intense from July to September and average rainfall on a rainy day being 0.75-1 inch. However, variability in rainfall was very high and sometimes created insecurity in the mind of people, although draught was rare.¹² Bernier mentions that the rainfall is not the same for two years together. Sometimes it commences early and terminate late whereas in some other years it may commence late and terminate early. Sometimes a year go without rain and have serious consequences like draught, famine.¹³ Abul Fazl describes the general climate of North Gangetic plain as intensely hot summers and moderate winters. He mentions that the

¹²H. K. Naqvi, *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India 1556-1803*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1968, 92

¹³Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668*, Ed. by Archibald Constable, Revised by V. A. Smith, Delhi: Low Price Publication, 2005, 431

rainy season continues for six months.¹⁴ He also mentions that climate of this region was generally pleasant for most of the time and suitable for agricultural production.¹⁵ Perhaps the nature of the climate and the riverine systems helped in an increased agricultural production that generated a surplus. The exchange of this surplus created an extensive market network and such an economic system became the basis of urbanization in this area. The pleasant climate was also suitable for other activities like trade, commerce so on and thus suitable for urbanization.

Soil

The high fertility of Gangetic plain has been a remarkable feature of its agriculture through the ages. Amir Khusrau also speaks of the fertility of soil and the temperate nature of its climate.¹⁶ Ibn Battuta, in the early fourteenth century A.D., says that the soil in this region was so fertile that two crops were cultivated every year- autumn crops and spring crops.¹⁷ The revenue rates for the period of Akbar are mentioned for two crops- spring and autumn.¹⁸ There was, of course, a significant regional variation in this area. The cultivation of two to three crops a year means the absence of fallow in agriculture. However, in some regions keeping the land fallow was prevalent. Out of four categories of land mentioned by Abul Fazl, *parauti* is the land which is left out of cultivation for a time so that it may regain its fertility.¹⁹ The renewal of soil fertility was also a result of the annual silt deposited by the rivers in the plains. Abul Fazl further mentions that the soil is for the most part arable and productivity was

¹⁴ AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 416

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 164

¹⁶ Yusuf Husain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, 2nd edition, Bombay: Asia Publishing, 1959, 122

¹⁷ Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*. Ed. by Mahdi Husain, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1953, 18

¹⁸ AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 76-122

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 68

high.²⁰ Most of the areas of Gangetic plain covering Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal region were having alluvial soil. Some belt in this area also had laterite soil which was less fertile than the alluvial soil.

Irrigation

The region has good natural irrigation facilities due to the presence of the river Ganga and its tributaries. Apart from that, several technological advances were registered in the field of irrigation which was provided by the state, the community and even by individual peasant initiatives. The supply of water for irrigation has always been a vital consideration.²¹ Under the Delhi Sultanate, Ghiyasuddin Tughluq was the first Sultan who opened canals and probably did some minor work on a small scale.²² Well-irrigation was also common during that time. However, it was slightly expensive and therefore, in later years its uses got declined. Muhammad Tughluq advanced sum of money to the people for digging wells so that cultivation can be extended.²³ Ibn Battuta has described a non-bricked well and how he drew water from it.²⁴ Masonry wells also existed but brickless wells were found more abundant. Firuz Shah Tughlaq also paid attention to the construction of well. According to Ferishta, he constructed 150 wells, 50 dams and 40 reservoirs.²⁵ In some places, water blocked by building

²⁰ *Ibid*, 5

²¹ Ahmad Y al-Hassan and Donald R. Hill, *Islamic Technology: An Illustrated History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 37

²² R.P. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1992, 286

²³ Ibn Battuta, 1953, *Op. cit.*, 88

²⁴ *Ibid*, 156-57

²⁵ Mohammad Qasim Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Ed. by J. Briggs, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India*, Vol. I, Calcutta: Cambridge, 1966, 465

bands upon streams, which provided another source of irrigation.²⁶ In Mughal period also, several wells were dug and Persian wheels were employed to supplement the natural rainfall.²⁷

Apart from well, several canals were cut from the rivers to furnish irrigation. The most important work for the construction of canals and irrigation was made under Firuz Tughluq. He created the biggest Indian medieval network of canals. The canals of Firuz Tughlaq were mostly elementary type, however, their value in irrigation was quite significant.²⁸ These canals had helped in creating favourable conditions for socio-economic growth in the areas through which they flowed.²⁹

In this way, some dry areas were brought under cultivation. However, irrigational devices were not much advanced. Water was lifted from the bank through leathern bag and rope with the help of wooden weighty pulley. In some regions zigzag channels were occasionally cut into which the water was raised by series of baskets at different heights.

Population

No record exists for population in the medieval period based upon regular or even an irregular census.³⁰ There are several casual remarks of different European travellers

²⁶Tapan RayChaudhuri, and Irfan Habib: (Ed.),*The Cambridge Economic History of India C.1200-1750*, Vol. I, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 49

²⁷AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 151.

²⁸W.H.Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India: A Historical Essay with Appendices*, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons,1929,60

²⁹ Al-Umari, Shihabuddin,*Masalikul AbsarFi Mumalikul Amsar*, Ed. by S. A., Rashid and S. M.Haque, Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University, 1943, 160

³⁰ S.S Kulshreshtha, 1960, Op. cit., 26

about population which mainly compares with population with European cities and hence it fails to give any correct idea.³¹ Tavernier makes a reference to a road from Agra to Dacca as lying through a tract with many inhabited people out of which most were artists and weavers. Ralf Finch observes that region from Patna to Allahabad was populous.³² Bengal area was also thickly populated. Moreland made some estimation of population of northern plain and it must be from 30 to 40 million from Multan to Monghyr (Munger) in the times of Akbar.³³ However, it excluded the densely populated areas of Bengal.

Forests

A large part of North Gangetic plain in medieval period was covered by forest. In the south of Ganga presence of elephant was common. Abul Fazl writes that forests were traversed and various strange beasts seen along the southern bank of Gogra what is now the congested district of Azamgarh.³⁴ William Finch mentions that road from Jaunpur to Allahabad lay through a continuous forest. He records the presence of tigers and lions in this area.³⁵ Bernier noticed a tract of forest near Munger.³⁶ Peter Mundy noticed large forests areas between Sahasram and Sherpur.³⁷ Tavernier noticed long ranges of hills in his journey in Bihar & Bengal.³⁸ A large

³¹*Ibid*

³²*Ibid*, 38

³³*Ibid*, 30

³⁴*Ibid*, 106

³⁵William Foster (Ed.), *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619* (A Collection of Narrative of Ralph Fitch, Mildred Hall, William Finch, Whington, Coryat and Edward Terry), New Delhi: S. Chand, 1968.

³⁶François Bernier, 2005, Op. cit., 60

³⁷Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 133

³⁸J. B. Tavernier, 1889, Op. cit., 120-124

portion of districts of Jessore, Faridpur, Noakhali and Bakarganj was full of forests and swamps.

Thus, forests were widely present in the Gangetic plain area during medieval period. However, little revenue was derived from them. There was a complete lack of scientific management of forest that time. Large tract of forests was used by people as a hiding destination. Akbar encouraged the reclamation of forest land for cultivation purpose. These forests were also economically important. Forest materials were source of timber, firewood, bamboos, fruits, fibers, grasses, gums, resin so on Palm leaves were used for writing something. Moreland mentions that De La Valle obtained a specimen manuscript which was written for him on palm leaves.³⁹

Forests also provided material for boat and ship building. High class timbers were used for boat and ship building. The provinces of Bengal, Allahabad supplied the required types of timber.⁴⁰ Ship-building industries were generally located on the sea-coast. Most of the trade from outside countries were done through ship built in India. India also built all small boats which are needed for coastal trade from Bengal.⁴¹ In Bengal there were more than 4000 big boats and more than 4000 small boats used for navigation. These were constructed from local timbers of the forests. Forests also provided gum-lac in which Bengal had a monopoly. Gum-lac is a kind of wax which is extracted from the bark of a tree. Bernier mentions that gum-lac were came from Pegu and Bengal. Pegu gum were cheaper but its quality was not good.

³⁹W.H Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar: An Economic Study*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1920, 109

⁴⁰S.S Kulshreshtha, 1960, Op. cit., 110

⁴¹W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 170

Red dyes were extracted from gum-lac and used for making women's bangles and toys. Dutch used to export it to Persia for red color.⁴²

Thus, forests provide several materials which supported the urban infrastructure, its economy. Though, there were several technological limitations in medieval period which hindered the extraction of most of the resources from the forests. Still, forests role in urbanization is quite significant.

Sea Ports

Sea ports were in the eastern half of the Bay of Bengal. In medieval period, Bengal's main ports were Satgaon-Hooghly, Sripur, and Chittagong.⁴³ Chittagong is a large city which is belted by woods. It is considered an excellent port.⁴⁴ Ports Satgaon and Hugli were near to each other. Both were in the possession of Europeans.⁴⁵ During the first half of the sixteenth century, the port city of Satgaon on the Bhagirathi/Hugli branch of the Ganga was the main commercial centre.⁴⁶ After the mid-seventeenth century, the Bhagirathi-Hugli again emerged as a commercial centre where the European Companies and other merchants established their factories and warehouses in Hugli.⁴⁷ However, in the seventeenth century, Hugli port became commercially less attractive and Chittagong emerged as an important port.⁴⁸ Sripur was situated on the Meghna, close to Sonargaon, which was eastern capital of Bengal at this time.⁴⁹The

⁴²S.S Kulshreshtha, 1960, Op. cit., 112

⁴³W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 211

⁴⁴AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 137.

⁴⁵*Ibid*, 137.

⁴⁶Murari Jha, 2013, Op. Cit., 162

⁴⁷*Ibid*, 163.

⁴⁸*Ibid*

⁴⁹W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 211

commercial activities of these ports were very important. Through the water ways of the Gangetic delta they were in easy communication with a large part of Bengal, and with Northern India. Various items were exported from these ports like textiles and large quantities of rice, sugar and other produce, and imported some metals like silver, spices, and miscellaneous goods.⁵⁰ These ports maintained significant trading connections with Burma, Malacca, and Acheh. Further, they made a trading connection with Coromandel coast also.

The principal export material from Bengal were agricultural products and some manufactured products. Exported items from the ports of Bengal were rice, wheat, gram, sugar, opium, saltpetre and textiles. Bengal imported spices, porcelain, silk, camphor, sandalwood, metals, conch shells, ivory and cowries. It was the advent of the Portuguese involvement in the trade of the Bay of Bengal that accelerated the coastal trade. Further political stability of the Mughal rule from 1575 to 1717 also helped in increasing trade activities through ports. It helped in the increasing participation of the Mughal officials in Bengal's overseas and coastal trade. This helped in the integration of Bengal with other larger trading system of Mughal India. It also accelerated the commercial contacts between Bengal and other countries. Thus, sea ports of Bengal played a significant role in the urbanization.

⁵⁰*Ibid*, 212

Agriculture

Agriculture is one of the most important factors which helped in the urbanization in medieval period. During this period, economy was mainly agrarian. The rulers of the Delhi Sultanate recognized the benefits of cultivation and production of better quality crops. Muhammad bin Tughlaq had formed a regular department for bringing new areas under cultivation known as the *Diwan-i-amir-Kohi*.⁵¹ Though other occupations were also in prevalence but agriculture dominated all occupations which is also confirmed by the accounts of several foreign travellers and other contemporary sources. Most of the people were directly or indirectly connected with land. Every region comprises several villages which were surrounded by cultivable fields. There were two types of village namely *asli* and *dakhili*. *Asli* villages had its habitation intact where as *dakhili* were the deserted villages. The cultivators were called *muzaraor asami*.⁵²

Geographical conditions are the most important factor in determining the pattern of agricultural production of any region. The nature of the soil and the seasonal distribution of rainfall and temperature determines production of particular food grains. Middle and lower Gangetic plain consisted of alluvial plain. Geographical conditions of this region were so suitable that every sort of crop could be grown. Cultivation in most of the areas could be resumed without much investments. Further, water table was not much low therefore, artificial irrigation facilities were not much required. In spite of these natural advantages, the method of agriculture was on the

⁵¹I. H. Qureshi, *The Administration of Sultanate of Delhi*, 4th ed, Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1958, 122

⁵²Karam Chand, *Society and economy in Mughal India: A critical analysis of British accounts*, Chandigarh: Punjab University, 2007, 107

traditional pattern. Manuring of soil was used to restore the fertility of the fields. Manuring was mainly done through the traditional method by using bio-wastes. The farmers made full use of manures and they gathered animal dung and let it dry for ten months. For fertilizer, they made use of liquid manure and various animal and vegetable products. Cotton seeds were treated with cow-dung and the trees were to be manured with the bones and dung of cows. The medieval agronomist advocated the bean seeds to be moistened for twenty-four hours before sowing, use of lukewarm water for moistening gram seeds, seeds of lentils and vetches were to be mixed with cow-dung for faster growth and high eryield.⁵³The use of animal manure must have helped to restore the fertility of the fields. In India, cattle were innumerable and sold at low prices.⁵⁴ The large area of wasteland forest meant that there was little shortage of pasturage for cattle. Moreland also mentions that “in most parts of the country, though not everywhere, there was more wasteland available for grazing, and it is reasonable to infer that cattle would be obtained more cheaply and easily than is now possible.”⁵⁵

For actual cultivation, the tiller needed simple equipment of a plough and a pair of oxen. The plough was termed *hal* in the local dialect and was a horizontal beam structure.⁵⁶ Indian plough only scratched the soil upto few inches rather than dig deep into it and therefore, plough was light and simple. This was mainly because the fertility of most soils in India lay at the surface.⁵⁷Thus, any deep ploughing would not

⁵³H.K Naqvi, *Agricultural, Industrial and Urban Dynamism under the Sultans of Delhi*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1986, 15-16

⁵⁴ I.H Siddiqui, *Delhi Sultanate: Urbanization and Social Change*, Delhi: Viva Books,2009, 133

⁵⁵W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 106

⁵⁶H. K.Naqvi, 1986, Op. cit., 17

⁵⁷Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)*, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963,24-26

have been necessary. Levelling of the soil was done by breaking the lumps of earth and it was done with the help of wooden boards called *patella*.⁵⁸ The levelling processes for some crops like wheat were elaborate and time consuming, whereas for some crops like barley, it was much simpler.⁵⁹

One of the remarkable feature of the agriculture was crop-rotation in the region. The rotation of crops- harvesting of two and in some cases three crops in the year- were also practiced. Thus, method of cultivation and the fertility of soil, rainfall, and temperature helped the growth of agriculture and helped in the growth this region.

Irfan Habib has noticed that the extent of cultivation increased by a hundred percent of the total cultivable land in the region of north Gangetic plain from 1595 to 1909-10.⁶⁰ Shireen Moosvi has also supported this in her quantitative study of the Mughal economy.⁶¹ Moosvi also feels that the yield for most of the crops was almost same in the beginning of sixteenth century to the nineteenth century.⁶² The agricultural pattern followed during that time was indicative of a developing and growing economy. There was a progressive extension of cultivation. The *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* mentions that during Akbar's period about 70 per cent of land was under cultivation and remaining 30 per cent of the land was uncultivated because of its topography, relief and be inadequacy of rainfall in some the region.

⁵⁸ A. J. Qaisar, *Agricultural Technology Depicted in Mughal Paintings*, Itinerario Vol. XVI No. 2, 1992, 65

⁵⁹ H. K. Naqvi, 1986, Op. cit., 14-15

⁶⁰ Irfan Habib, 1963, Op. cit., 43-44

⁶¹ Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire. 1595: A Statistical Study*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, 50-51

⁶² *Ibid*, 73-86

There were two crops in the year, one the *kharif* which was a summer season crops and the other *rabi* which was a winter season crops. Plants which required large quantities of water like rice, tobacco so on, were cultivated in the summer season and which required less water like wheat, millet, pulses so on, were cultivated in the winter season. Further, cultivation of crops varied according to the region also as distribution of various crops is determined by the conditions of soil and climate. For example, In Bengal, rice cultivation is dominant whereas in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh region cultivation of wheat, millets and pulses were dominant.

Rice

In the medieval period, cultivation of rice was very much prevalent and it is almost the same as we find it today in the rice grown areas. Rice is a tropical crop which requires a plenty of water and high temperature which were sufficiently available in middle and lower Gangetic plain. Water-logged areas are most suited for its growth. Rice was the most important crop and occupied the largest area. It was cultivated in almost in the area of 25 million hectares. Terry mentions about method of rice cultivation and informs us, “their seed time is in May and the beginning of June; their harvest in November and December which were the most temperate months in India.”

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Rice was cultivated in Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh i.e. in all the areas of middle and lower Gangetic plain.⁶⁴ In Bengal, it is sown and reaped three times a year on the same piece of land with little injury to the crop. In Bengal, Hugli and Sonargaon

⁶³WilliamFoster, 1968, Op. cit., 298

⁶⁴AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 416

produced plenty of rice and even supplies to not only neighbouring areas but to remote states also. Various kinds of rice were produced. Out of those, three varieties of rice produced in Bengal namely *kar*, *sukhdas* and *shali* were superior⁶⁵. Next to Bengal, Bihar used to produce good quality of rice in large quantities. Abul Fazl mentions, "agriculture flourish in a high degree, especially the cultivation of rice which for its quality and quantity is rarely to be equaled."⁶⁶ There were many varieties of rice produced at Patna. Abul Fazl further mentions, "if a single grain of each kind were collected, they would fill a large vase."⁶⁷ Thevenot's observations also testify the dominance of rice over other crops.⁶⁸ In Awadh region, rice was major crop and one of the best quality. Awadh produced large quantities of *sukhdas*, *jhanwar* and *madhkar* rice. These varieties are known for their whiteness, delicacy, fragrance and wholesomeness. *Sukhdas* rice from the Awadh was regarded as the best and it is said that its qualities and flavor are beyond all praise.⁶⁹ *Sukhdas* was mainly used in imperial kitchen.⁷⁰ In fact, rice cultivation crossed its climatic limits in some areas.

Irrigation from the Ganga and its tributaries made rice the chief crop of the region.⁷¹ However, average yield was not much high. There were several factors behind this average productivity like uncertainty in weather, limited water supply in some regions. Rice was cultivated in surplus in Bengal, which was exported to Patna and some other regions through riverine route.⁷² In fact, due to the surplus of rice

⁶⁵William Foster, 1968, Op. cit., 118

⁶⁶AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 164.

⁶⁷*Ibid*, 134

⁶⁸Jean De Thevenot, *Indian travels of Thevenot and Careri, Indian Records Series*, Edited by Surendranath Sen, New Delhi: National Archives of India, 1949, 68

⁶⁹M.S Randhawa, *A History of Agriculture in India*, Vol. I, New Delhi: Indian Council of Agricultural Research, 1981, 211

⁷⁰AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 53

⁷¹*Ibid*, 556

⁷²Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 158

many market-towns like Banaras, Dacca grown up. Growth of these market town helped in the urbanization process. Overland trade of rice was very much prevalent in medieval period. Several thousands of oxen were used in transportation of rice from one place to another.

Wheat

Wheat was the second important crop and it was cultivated in almost 8 million hectares area. The wheat crop depends on rainfall and irrigation facility. It is Rabi crop and rain are not much available in winter season in Gangetic plain. therefore, irrigation facility is required. Wells and canals were the main source of such irrigation. Some devices were used for lifting water from wells and irrigate the crop. Mainly two varieties of wheat were grown on well irrigated areas namely *kharchiya* and *mithavania*.⁷³ *Kharchiya* is produced with the help of irrigation even in saline water whereas *mithavaniyas* is produced in normal water.

Wheat has the greatest comparative value amongst the other food grains. Abul Fazl has provided the statistics of comparative value of different crops. This gives a rough idea of relative value of most of the crops which were grown in the Gangetic plain. If we put the assessment of wheat as equal to 100, we can show the assessment of other crops and can know the relative value of each crop:

⁷³Karam Chand, 2007, Op. cit.,109

Crop	Comparative value	Crop	Comparative value
Wheat	100	Linseed	51
Barley	67	Rape	53
Gram	60	Poppy	210
Jowar	59	Sugar-cane	213
Bajra	42	Cotton	150
Mandua	44	Indigo	254
Sawan	22		

Table: Comparative value of crop⁷⁴

Wheat producing areas were mainly Bengal and western Uttar Pradesh. The quality of wheat of Bengal was good. However, wheat of Bengal is considered of low quality than it is at the present day.⁷⁵

Millets

In the medieval period, millets played a very important role in the urbanization process. Large quantity of millets was produced which were in surplus and therefore transported to other towns. In this way, it increased the economy of towns. Further, it helped in increase of trade activities between the surplus regions to deficient region. Main millets of this region were: Jowar, Bajra, Maize and Ragi. Millets are generally cheaper food grains and are generally grown on poorer soil, less rainfall areas.⁷⁶ Bajra is the staple food of most of the poor people and hence was more extensively grown

⁷⁴W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 103

⁷⁵François Bernier, 2005, Op. cit., 438

⁷⁶S.S Kulshreshtha, 1960, Op. cit., 90

than any other millets. It was mainly grown in the region around Allahabad and Lucknow. Jowar was another important crop in medieval India. It was generally grown in the region where rainfall was moderate. It was mainly grown in the region around Allahabad.⁷⁷ It was mainly consumed by the poorer people. Barley was mainly grown in the middle Gangetic plain.

Pulses

Pulses were another major crop in which fulfils the protein requirements of the human body and very important item in the diet of vegetarian. During medieval period in north India, gram was the most important pulse crop. Other major pulses were moong, moth, *mash*, *arhar*, *lubia* and *peas*.⁷⁸ These were grown in the autumn harvest. Gram was grown in around 8-million-hectare area. It was mainly grown in Bengal. Two varieties of gram were famous under the names *nakhud-i-kabuli* and *nakhud-i-hindi*.⁷⁹ *Arhar* was the second most important pulse which was mostly grown in Bihar. All pulses were of good quality. Though Pulses were not in surplus but enough for the people.

Oil Seeds

Oil seeds were mainly grown in the region of Bengal, Allahabad.⁸⁰ Rape seed and mustard were one of the most important oil seeds. Both are Kharif crop. It was mainly grown in the Bengal region. Sesame and castor are other oil seeds. However, quality

⁷⁷*Ibid*, 91

⁷⁸*Ibid*, 91

⁷⁹M.S Randhawa, 1981, Op. cit., 211

⁸⁰François Bernier, 2005, Op. cit.,51

of sesame and castor were not good, and yield was also not good enough. Oil seeds were proportionately less valuable than they are now.⁸¹

Cash Crops

Besides the food grains, there was many cash crops grown in Middle and lower Gangetic plain such as cotton, opium, sugarcane, tobacco, indigo so on Cash crops has very important role in urbanization in Gangetic plain in medieval period. It has provided the background of trade activities which increased the pace of urbanization process. In Mughal records, it is mentioned as Jins-i-Kamil or Jins-i-Olai.e high graded crop mainly grown for the market.⁸²

Cotton

Cotton is a sub-tropical plant which requires black soil. It also requires moderate and regular heat, bright sunshine, salinity of soil, moderate rainfall. In Gangetic plain almost all the conditions for the cultivation of cotton were present except wide presence of black soil. Cotton was produced throughout North India and was highly valued in comparison to other crops.⁸³ Cotton is an autumn harvest and mainly grown in Awadh, Allahabad, Bihar and Bengal region.⁸⁴ In Bihar, cotton was grown near to Patna. Peter Mundy, in 1632, saw cotton fields in the area between Naubatpur and Patna.⁸⁵ The most common variety was the 'Herbaceous' annual variety, used for the manufacture of fabrics. The other variety inferior in quality was grown on trees called '*sanbal*' and was used for stuffing and quilting purposes. In some regions of Bengal, two crops were raised in a year. Produce of the first season were collected in April whereas of second season were collected in September. The produce of the first

⁸¹W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 104

⁸²AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., p.47

⁸³Irfan Habib, 1963, Op. cit., 26

⁸⁴Karam Chand, 2007, Op. cit., 117

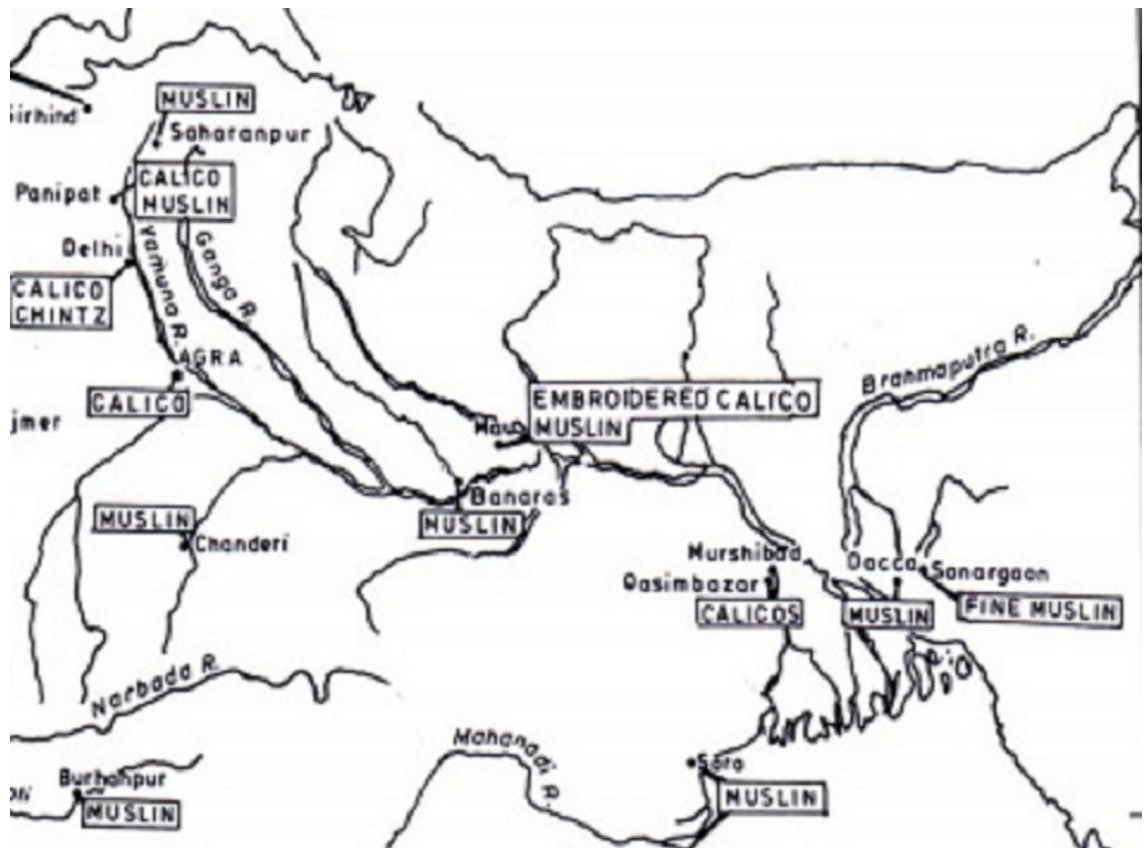
⁸⁵Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 134

season was finer and chiefly cultivated. The value and quality of cotton depended on the length, strength, softness, fineness of the fibre. The quality of cotton can be divided into ordinary, middling, fair and fine. The price of good quality of cotton was about 50 percent higher than the wheat.

India's demand for cotton goods being great due to the tropical climate and therefore there were many cotton manufacturing centres were opened up.⁸⁶ In Mughal times, cotton was more widely grown than is now, though the aggregate of production was probably less still, most parts of the country were nearly self-sufficing in the matter of clothes.⁸⁷ Most of the cotton textile industry were in Bengal. However, production of cotton in Bengal is not enough to support these industries and hence, cotton was imported from another region. Thus, the base of cotton textile industry helped in the urbanization of Patna, Benaras and in some regions of Bengal.

⁸⁶S.S Kulshreshtha, 1960, Op. cit., 95

⁸⁷W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 105



Map: Major cotton producing areas during sixteenth-seventeenth century (Based on Habib Irfan, An Atlas of the Mughal Empire)

Sugarcane

Sugarcane is a tropical crop which require abundant heat and moist soil. This crop need not be sown every year as the roots grow up year after year and thus require much less care and attention. During medieval period, it was mainly cultivated in Bihar, Allahabad and Bengal. Abul Fazl mentions that it was quite abundant in Bihar.⁸⁸ Patna's sugarcane was of two varieties: Thicker sugarcane was used for chewing whereas the thinner sugarcane was used for extraction of sugar. During the reign of Akbar, Bengal occupied the first place in sugarcane production. There were

⁸⁸AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 151

mainly three kinds of sugarcane were produced: Paunda, Black and Ordinary. Total area under sugarcane cultivation was around 1.5 million hectares. Sugarcane was costly as almost double of wheat mostly in all the province.⁸⁹ Bernier also refers that Bengal used to produce sugarcane in large quantities and supplied to other parts especially in south India.

Sugarcane is either soft or hard. Hard sugarcane is used for the preparation of brown sugar candy, common sugar, and refined sugar, and thus were useful for all kinds of sweetmeats. A large proportion of sugarcane was converted in Gur. Sugarcane was also used for the preparation of intoxicating liquor.⁹⁰ Due to surplus of sugarcane production many sugar market towns sprang up and therefore, production and trade in sugar played a very important role in urbanization.

Betel Leaf

Betel leaf is the leaf of the piper betel. It is chewed with the dried areca-nut - chummed. It is also called as pan. Abul Fazl mentions about six varieties of betel leaf. These are Kaker, Jaiswar, Kapuri, Bilhari, Kapurkant and Bangla. Some scholars observed that during sixteenth-seventeenth century betel leaf was sold in every corner shop of all towns in India. It was also available on every highway for travellers or passengers. It was so prevalent during that time is that whenever a person paid visit to another, betel leaf was the first thing offered. Manucci during his visit in India in 1656 mentions about it and was surprised to see that almost everybody was spitting something red as blood. Manucci has also highlighted the Medicinal value of

⁸⁹D. Pant, *Commercial Policy of the Mughals*, Bombay: D.B. Taraporewala, 1930, 77-93

⁹⁰M.S. Randhawa, 1981, Op. cit., 212

the betel.⁹¹ Abul Fazl mentions that it strengthens the gums. It makes the hungry satisfied, and the satisfied hungry.⁹²

Indigo

Indigo is a dye yielding shrub which was predominately used in medieval period. Indian dyes are obtained from the indigo fera, a genus of leguminous plant. It is grown in tropical and warm temperate regions. The herbs grown once in a three year being cut every year in the month of September after the rains.⁹³ It has peculiar value as an organic manure where animal manure is not available. With the extension of irrigation, a change took place in agricultural practice and later the crop became seasonal.

Refuse of the indigo plant called Siti, which was also used as manure mostly by the indigo cultivators.⁹⁴ In medieval period, Indigo in Bihar was not of good quality. Further, it is also obtained in small quantities. Cultivation of Indigo was so profitable that crops were kept in the fields to give cutting in two years. Some indigo was also sent to other regions where it was not produced. However, its quantity was meagre. Indigo during Akbar's time was much higher in value than wheat.⁹⁵ Regular trade of Indigo started only after coming of European. The period between 1618-1668 in which they bought huge amount of Indigo. Sir Thomas Roe mentions that during the reign of Jehangir Indigo was the prime commodity.

⁹¹Niccolo Manucci, *Storia do Mogor:1653-1708*, Ed. by William Irvine, Vol. I, London: Published for the Government of India, 1907, 62 -63

⁹²AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 58

⁹³D. Pant, 1930, Op. cit., 96

⁹⁴Francis Buchanan, *The History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India*, Ed. and abridged by Montgomery Martin, Vol II, London: W. H Allen & Co., 1838, 533

⁹⁵W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 108

In late seventeenth century, Indigo of Bengal was also coming in prominence. In the time of Aurangzeb indigo was largely exported from Bengal. In addition to export, large quantity was kept for consumption as it formed basic material for washing and bleaching ordinary cotton. However, after Aurangzeb, indigo trade was declined significantly.⁹⁶ Thus, production and trade of indigo in medieval period increased the economic activities which in turn helped in the urbanization.

Opium

Opium is one of the earliest crop which assumed importance as a cash crop. Opium is an intoxicant material which is manufactured from poppy seeds. It requires finest soil for cultivation. It is sown in November and harvested in February or March. It was mainly produced in Bihar in North India.⁹⁷ Marshall mentions that opium of Patna was of best quality and it was cultivated in huge quantity.⁹⁸ In late sixteenth century, Patna became the largest exporting Centre of opium. Bernier mentions that opium was also produced in Bengal.⁹⁹

In late seventeenth century, opium trade has increased significantly. Huge amount of money was involved. Cultivators were given advances and they require to deliver opium at specified prices. Moreland mentions that average rate of poppy was more than double than the wheat during Akbar's time.¹⁰⁰ The sale of opium to foreign merchants began in seventeenth century itself.¹⁰¹ Opium was also exported to other countries like Burma, Java, Malaya, China from the ports of Bengal. The export of

⁹⁶S.S Kulshreshtha, 1960, Op. cit., 102

⁹⁷W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 158

⁹⁸John Marshall, 1927, Op. cit., 414

⁹⁹François Bernier, 2005, Op. cit., 440

¹⁰⁰W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 103

¹⁰¹Jagadesh Narayan Sarkar, *Glimpses of Medieval Bihar Economy, Thirteenth to mid-eighteenth century*, Calcutta: Ratna Prakashan, 1978, 65

Opium along with other products marked the beginning of growing volume of trade within India between the production areas and port cities and outside India. Production and trade of opium has increased the economic condition of many which helped in the urbanization process.

Tobacco

Tobacco was not known in the sixteenth century in North India. Cultivation of tobacco has started mainly from the time of Akbar.¹⁰² Its spread in India seems very fast. Cultivation of tobacco shows a major change of cropping pattern during seventeenth century. It gained popularity so rapidly that Jehangir had to prohibit it in 1617 only 12 years after its introduction. However, it seems that Jehangir prohibition was formal and it became almost ineffective. In fact, peasants cultivating it with much enthusiasm. In a very little time it began to predominant over all other crops. Increase in trade of tobacco was much significant which increased the pace of urbanization.

Pepper

Among spices pepper was commercially one of the most important articles. India had been a rich producer of black pepper since ancient time. Long pepper grew chiefly in Bengal; however, the best one i.e round or black pepper was produced outside the limits of the Mughal Empire mainly in South India.

Horticulture

North India was suitable for the cultivation of many fruits and flowers. The Mughal Emperors especially Akbar had a special liking for fruits which were locally produced

¹⁰²William Foster, 1968, Op. cit.,299

in several provinces. Akbar was very fond of fruits and said it as one of the greatest gifts of the creator and he paid much attention to them.¹⁰³ In fact, Akbar had obtained many Persian horticulturists and many were settled down in India. Several west Asian fruits were introduced like melons, water melons, peaches, pomegranates and almonds began to be commonly grown in the Empire.¹⁰⁴ Some major grown in this region were melons, water melons, mangoes, peaches, almonds, oranges, plums, grapes.¹⁰⁵ In Bihar, Kathal (jack fruit) and Barhal were produced in abundance.¹⁰⁶ But the most important fruit grown in this region was Mango. In vegetables, potatoes were widely grown. Potato was cultivated in Gangetic plain especially in Bengal, Bihar, and Allahabad.¹⁰⁷ The abundance of vegetables and fruits testifies the vegetarian dietary nature of the people.

Minerals

In medieval period, Gangetic plain did not produce enough minerals. The mineral wealth of Bengal, Bihar were not much explored during that period. AbulFazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari* mentioned about development of minerals during the Akbar's time.

Gold

The production of gold in medieval period in North India was very less. AbulFazl mentions that gold was extracted from silver-sand in some parts of Northern India.¹⁰⁸ Mining of gold were done in provinces of Oudh, Allahabad and Bengal. Existence of Sarrafs and experts Gold were mainly used for making coins and ornaments.

¹⁰³S.S Kulshreshtha, 1960, Op. cit.,114

¹⁰⁴AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 68

¹⁰⁵*Ibid*, 68.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid*, 164

¹⁰⁷*Ibid*, 130

¹⁰⁸*Ibid*, 132, 155

Diamonds

Diamonds were produced only in Bengal in North India. Thousands of labors were employed in extracting the diamonds. There were employed for digging, transporting the soils in the baskets and washing it by water which altogether were very laborious method.¹⁰⁹ The method of extraction of diamond was not very intricate. Tavernier had classified the diamonds into four categories: perfect stones, perfect superior stones, imperfect superior stones, middling and the worst stone. Good diamond was found mixed with the sandy rocks. There were several merchants involved in the business of diamonds. Thus, trade in diamonds helped in the prospering of economy which supported the urbanization process.

Transport

Trade activities in medieval period had increased and these trade activities were much depended upon geographical conditions of the region. Geographical conditions determine the forms and techniques of transport. This brisk trade that was the mainstay of urbanization and required adequate means of transport. Therefore, study of important aspects of transport system becomes very obvious in understanding the urbanization pattern in medieval India.

Road Transport

The medieval Indian towns were connected, through a wide network of roadways. These roads were mostly used for transportation of commercial goods. Most of the key cities of medieval India were located near the junction of or on prominent trade routes. Thus, these cities catered to the demands of local, national and international

¹⁰⁹ Joannes De Laet, *The empire of the Great Mogol*, Ed.by J.S. Hoyland, Annotated by S. N, Banerji, Bombay: D.B. Taraporewala & Sons ,1928, 75-76

markets and became an important centre for retail as well as wholesale trade. For example, Allahabad was located on the main highway from Agra to Dacca and was connected by road with Jaunpur.¹¹⁰ Patna was also located on the main commercial highway of northern India.¹¹¹ Rajmahal was linked by road with major cities like Patna, Dacca, Hugli, Murshidabad so on which were all located on important trade routes. Banaras also had a convenient land route.

These highways were kept in good condition and safe from robbers. Trees were planted along the roads and sarais and rest-houses were built for the travellers. Tavernier observed mentions that throughout India the greater part of the roads is like avenues of trees.¹¹² Peter Mundy travelled on the Patna to Agra road and he mentions that route was covered with shady trees on either side, each at a distance of 8 to 10 steps.¹¹³ However, not all roads were so well provided. The road surface was badly neglected and reduced to mud during the rainy season. Mundy described the route between Allahabad and Benares, part of the imperial highway as "verie badd...for the abundance of water, bad way and uneven ground."¹¹⁴

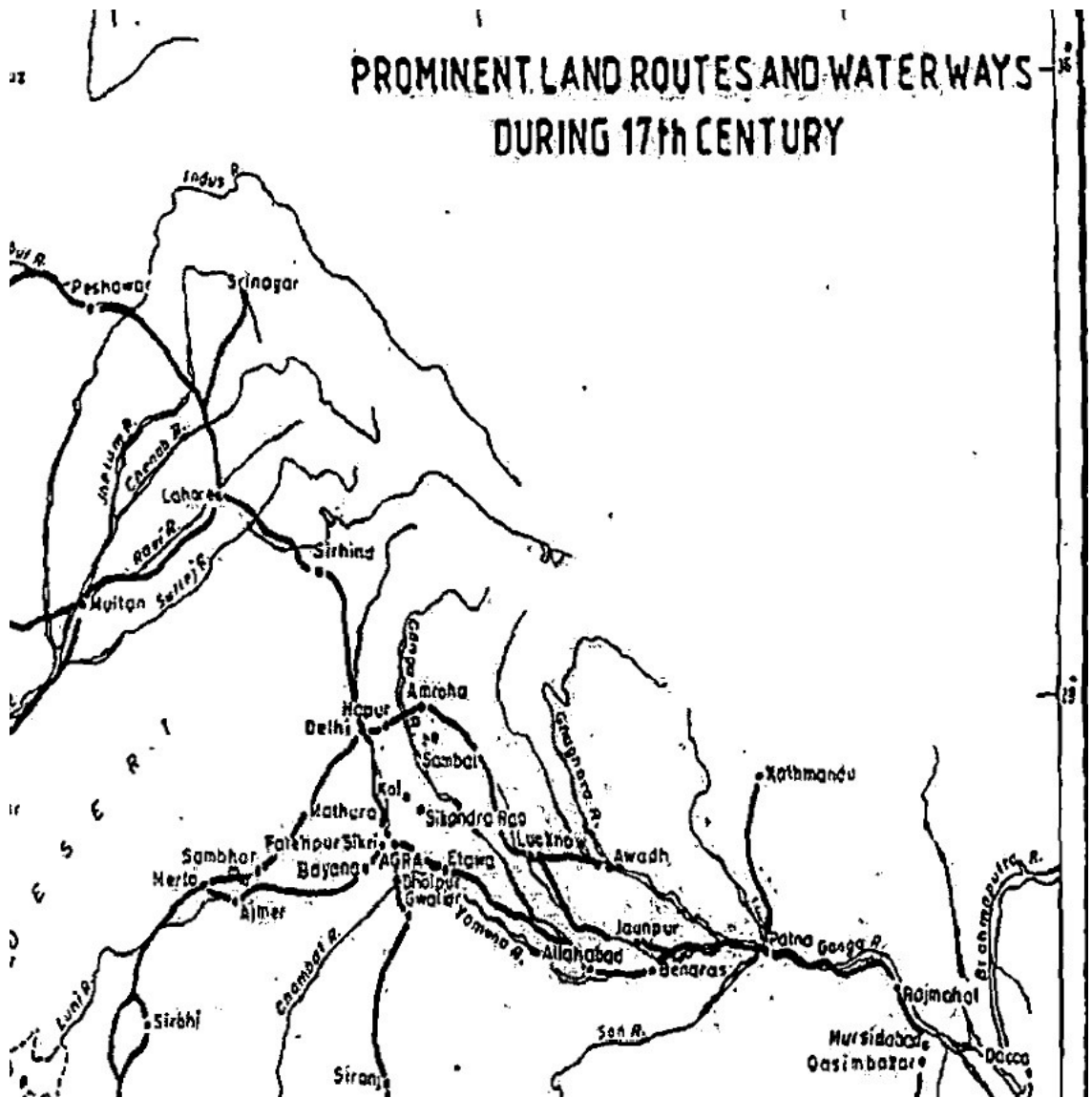
¹¹⁰J. B. Tavernier, 1889, Op. cit., 95

¹¹¹*Ibid*, 101

¹¹²*Ibid*, 292

¹¹³Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 133

¹¹⁴*Ibid*, 99



Map: Major land and water routes in seventeenth century (Based on Habib Irfan, An Atlas of the Mughal Empire)

Water Transport

Middle and lower Gangetic plain had several navigable rivers and therefore, riverine transport was used to carrying both the goods of bulk as well as high-grade products. These navigable riverine transport systems supplemented very well land transport in

their respective are aspecially in carrying goods of bulk. From Patna to Bengal, the trade was mainly carried on by the rivers. Ralph Fitch, in 1583, went to Satgaon in Bengal in company of 180 boatsladen with, salt, opium, carpets and other commodities.¹¹⁵ There were several types of vessels were used for water transportation. Peter Mundy found 'great lighters' of 3 or 400 'tonns' having both ends extraordinary high. However, he did not name these vessels. Thomas Bowrey noted that at Patna all the Saltpetre was sent to Hugli in great flat-bottomed vessels called 'Patellas' and many 'Patellas' come down yearly laden with wheat and other grains.¹¹⁶ Abul Fazl has noted that in the suba of Bengal different kinds of vessels were used according to the purposes like war, carriage or swiftsailing.¹¹⁷

Thus, it can be concluded that geographical factor had very important role in urbanization process during medieval period in Gangetic plain. A well fertile plain, a good and healthy climate for people and agriculture, availability of sufficient water through rainfall and river provided the background for increasing agricultural activities. Increase in agricultural production supported the trade activities which helped in the urbanization. Apart from that availability of some of the mineral resources helped in trade and industrialization process which gradually lead to the economic development of the region. With the increased economic prosperity, urbanization process gained a momentum which is well supported by political and economic factors which will be discussed in upcoming chapters.

¹¹⁵WilliamFoster, 1968, Op. cit., 18

¹¹⁶Thomas Bowrey, The Countries Round the Bay of Bengal 1669-79, Ed. by Richard Temple, Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1905, 225

¹¹⁷AbulFazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 50

CHAPTER THREE

URBAN LIFE IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

In the medieval period, the trends of urbanization resulted in the emergence of a large number of new towns and their continuous growth and expansion. The process of the growth of towns became rapid during later medieval period especially during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Villages expanded into towns and these started to act as centres of trade, industries and in some cases centres of administration. In comparison to earlier times, in medieval period cities had grown with much greatness and they are well described by several European travellers. The accounts of the European travellers have been considered as one of the most useful, descriptive source to describe about medieval Indian cities. They along with contemporary Persian and Indian texts provides a detailed description of medieval Indian cities. These travelogues have provided us with detailed information about the trade and commerce, including both international and intra-national trade along with the growth and development of different cities. They also provide us various information to draw a complete picture of the cities including the people, the communities, their religious and cultural beliefs and the overall living standard. The combination of these factors forms the basis of the process of urbanization and the urban life during the medieval period.

A large number of towns emerged in medieval period which are mentioned by several travellers in their account. Pelsaert mentions that eastern part of the country

contained many large cities.¹Thevenot also mentions that the country of Bengal was full of towns.² Ralph Fitch passed through some towns where regular fairs were held on his way from Benaras to Patna.³Manrique mentions, "the route from Benaras to Patnawas studded with habitations of several large towns".⁴

Emergence and origin of the medieval Indian towns at particular place was dependent on different factors like strategic location and importance, commercial or industrial factors, administrative requirement, military importance, availability of communication and transportation so on Therefore, medieval town in the middle and lower Gangetic plain can be classified on the basis of various aspects like centre of administration, industry, commerce, religion, education so on However, it is very difficult to classify these towns rigidly on these lines. For example, a town originally might be established as an administrative centre, but gradually they developed into a commercial centre or cultural centre.

Administrative towns were the headquarters of administration of the empire or a province or a *sarkar*. The main population in these towns were the bureaucracy and soldiers stationed there. The presence of imperial courts, the army and the administrative staffs attracted large numbers of artisans and merchants and these towns became busy centres of commerce and crafts.⁵In these towns, a rapid development of schools, sarais, temples, mosques, small handicrafts and so on took place. That means these administrative towns gradually became important commercial

¹Francisco Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, Ed. under the title 'Jahangir's India' by W.H. Moreland and P. Geyl, Cambridge, 1925, 7

²Jean De Thevenot, *Indian travels of Thevenot and Careri*, *Indian Records Series*, Ed. by Surendranath Sen, New Delhi: National Archives of India, 1949, 96

³Fitch, Ralph, *England's Pioneer to India (1583-91)*, Ed. by J.H. Ryley, London: T Fisher Unwin, 1899, 180

⁴F. S. Manrique, *Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique*, Ed. by C.E. Luard, Assisted by H. Hosten, Vol. II, London: Hakluyt Society, 1927, 146

⁵Jean De Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 57

and industrial centres. Some towns continued to retain their importance even when they ceased to be the seat of administration.

Commercial town is the category of town, which developed as active trading centres and remained primarily commercial centres. Some towns started as administrative or military centres but remained important as commercial centres after decline of their political or military importance or some towns may have become administrative and military centres because of their commercial importance. For example, Dacca may be included in this category. Formerly, Rajmahal was the capital of Bengal but when Dacca emerged as a commercial centre, it became the capital of the province. Tavernier mentions, "The governor and the merchants who dwelt at Rajmahal moved to Dacca, which is today a place of significant trade."⁶The growth of commercial towns was mainly due to their location in agricultural rich area or industrial goods were produced in nearby area. These goods were collected and then distributed to other regions. For example, Nadia, Kasimbazar, Malda had flourishing industries and were important trading centres.⁷ Some towns became big markets, where goods were brought from different places and sold to the local population in these towns. For example, Murshidabad was a market of textile goods like cotton and silken cloth and brass utensils like *aftaba* and *chilamchis* from Benaras.⁸

Apart from major industrial towns, some smaller towns, which produced industrial goods for local markets also emerged. The manufactured goods were sent to different regions or were purchased by the foreign merchants for their factories for export. Among these, some industrial towns were Jaunpur, Gaya, Sonargaon,

⁶J. B. Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Ed. by V. Ball, Vol II, London: Macmillan & Co., 1889, 125

⁷Jean De Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 46

⁸John Marshall, *John Marshall in India Notes and Observations in Bengal, 1668-72*, Ed. by Shafaat A. Khan, London: Oxford University Press, 1927, 114

Kasimbazar, Malda, Angrezabad. For example, Malda was a centre of textile industries.⁹ Angrezabad was a centre of textile and metal industries.¹⁰ These industrial towns grew due to availability of raw material, cheap labour, local skill,

Then there were some towns lying on major trade routes especially on the junction of roads. In these towns, the caravanserais were built for the caravans, travellers and merchants and therefore, a market sprang up to meet the demands of the people and to supply necessary items necessary for travel. Manucci mentions, "for the use of wayfarer there were several *sarais* on every route only intended for travellers (soldiers do not go into them) each one of them might hold, more or less from 800 to 1,000 persons, and some of them are even larger. They contain different rooms, halls and verandas, with trees inside the courtyard, and many provision shops; also, separate abodes for the women and men who arrange the rooms and beds for travellers."¹¹

Another category of town, which can be classified as military town or towns of strategic importance. They gained their importance because they were located at strategic point and were fortified and powerful garrisons were maintained there. Cities like Allahabad, Chunar, Rohtas, Chanderi fall into this category. Some towns became administrative centres later and expanded rapidly. For example, Allahabad was an important strategic centre, but it soon became an administrative centre and the capital of one of the biggest provinces. Some towns which were situated on important routes, gradually developed into commercial centre. For example, Monghyer a small town on the Ganges was of strategic importance due to its location alongside the river and on

⁹ William Hedges, *The Diary of William Hedges during his Agency in Bengal with notes by R. Barlow*, Ed. by Col. Henry, Yule in 3 volumes. Vol I, London: Hakluyt Society, 1887-89, 69

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 71, 88

¹¹ Niccolo Manucci, *Storia do Mogor: 1653-1708*, Ed. by William Irvine, Vol. I, London: Published for the Government of India, 1907, 68-69.

the major trade route, it became a commercial centre.¹² Manrique mentions that its location facilitated the growth of commerce and several goods were transported from there and a custom-post established at Monghyer.¹³ Some towns, which might not become administrative, industrial or commercial centre but retained their importance as strategic centre like Rohtas, Chunar may be mentioned in this connection. These towns had permanent large garrisons, and consequently a permanent population grew in the need of the garrison.

Port towns, another category of towns, whose growth was influenced by the geographical, economic and political factors of medieval India. The prosperity of a port town depends upon the location of harbour, facility of communication with hinterland and economic conditions of the region. For example, the ships of 500 or 600 tons could approach Dacca, due to its location on the river.¹⁴ The port of Dacca had a great rush of overseas trade and a large number of foreign ships visited here.¹⁵ Towns like Hugli, Rajmahal had many geographical and economic advantages, which enhanced their importance. According to Manrique, the port of Rajmahal had the capacity of berthing over two thousand vessels.¹⁶

In the medieval period, several towns developed on the banks of a river. The towns located on the bank of a river were in oblong and semi-circular shape.¹⁷ The main reasons behind this were to ensure availability of water supply, a cooling

¹²Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668*, Ed. by Archibald Constable, Revised by V. A. Smith, Delhi: Low Price Publication, 2005, 80

¹³F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 137

¹⁴Thomas Bowrey, *The Countries Round the Bay of Bengal 1669-79*, Ed. by Richard Temple, Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1905, 149

¹⁵Francisco Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 8-9

¹⁶F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 134-35

¹⁷William Finch, *Hakluyts Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes*, Ed. by Samuel Purchas, Vol. IV, London: James MacLehose Publication, Glasgow, 1905, 72.

influence during summer¹⁸, defensive barricade and a means for transportation.¹⁹ For example, cities like Patna, Dacca, Allahabad, Banaras, were all located near a river. Another advantage along the banks of a river was the fertile land available in the neighbouring areas, which assured supply of food grains to the city.

The European travellers had made comparisons of the Indian towns with the European towns in terms of importance and prosperity. This comparison was because of immense growth of the Indian towns. Most of the major towns in India were large in size, extent and population and significant in terms of trade, commerce, industries and other socio-economic activities. Some flourishing cities in middle and lower Gangetic plain according to the European travellers were Allahabad, Banaras, Patna, Dacca, Hugli, Kasimbazar, Chittagaon, Murshidabad, Burhanpur and so on

The rapid expansion of the cities led to very crowding and consequently the expansion that took place was asymmetric and unsystematic. In the early phase, cities were not properly categorised on basis of industrial, commercial or religious centres. When cities expanded, they swallowed villages in the proximity and a new suburban area was established on the outskirts of the cities. In many cities expansion was so vast that cities grew outside the city walls and gates. Pelsaert mentions that “during the reign of Jahangir, the gates which Akbar built for its security, now stand in the middle of the city and the area of the buildings outside them is fully three times greater in extent”.²⁰ Pelsaert also mentions, “There are many places belonging to great princess and lords, and they are hidden in alleys and corners. This is due to the sudden growth of the city”.²¹

¹⁸F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 191

¹⁹Jean De Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 57

²⁰Francisco Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 1-2

²¹*Ibid*, 1

Urban Societies

Indian social structure during medieval period was by no mean homogenous in character.²² Urban societies were primarily divided into three sections namely upper, middle and lower. King and his nobility were in upper section, traders, artisans, court poets, physicians comprised the middle and farmers constituted the lower section. The main population was generally constituted by the Muslims and the Hindus. Heterogeneity of social structure have been observed by several foreign travellers.

Hindu society was divided on the basis of caste system comprising Brahmana, Kshatriyas, Vaisya and Sudras.²³ Tavernier observed seventy-two castes among Hindus that could be reduced to four principle castes.²⁴ Careri mentions eighty-four castes (tribes) among Hindus.²⁵ Tavernier mentions, "The remainders of the people, who do not belong to any of these four castes, are called *Paulecour*."²⁶

The system of stratification among Indian Muslims is comparable to the Hindu Caste System, but not exactly similar. According to Tavernier, "diversity also existed among the Muslims also and he cited two main reasons for this diversity. One reason is due to the different explanations given to the *Quran* and the other reason is holding different opinions regarding the first successor of Prophet Muhammad."²⁷

Industries

Industries are quite helpful in the growth and development of the economy of cities. The flourishing industries provided an impetus to the trade and commerce of the

²²W.H Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar: An Economic Study*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1920, 23

²³Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia 1608-67*, Ed. by Richard Temple, *Travels in Asia 1628-54*, Vol.II, London: Halkuyt Society, 1914, 94

²⁴J. B. Tavernier, *Op. cit.*, 142

²⁵*Ibid*, 142

²⁶*Ibid*, 145

²⁷J. B. Tavernier, *Op. cit.*, 137

region. In middle and lower Gangetic plain, industries played a major role in the urbanization process. The urban industries had a quite different pattern for the State and several private establishments. The private enterprise had given way to merchant middle man which created a type of centrifugal tendencies for all economic activities. Generally, the independence of manufacturing from marketing was intact.²⁸

Town layout and boundaries

In India, a striking example of town planning can be traced from Indus valley civilization itself. The layout of medieval towns in north India depended upon several factors like their location, requirement of security and defence. In medieval period, town boundaries can be traced from the location of forts. Most of the towns were fortified by walls. Apart from large towns, small towns were also surrounded by a wall. The walls were made of bricks and stones. For example, Banaras was strongly fortified by brick walls.²⁹ The side of the city adjacent to the river was protected by the river itself. River acted as a protective barrier and hence a wall was not constructed for that side.³⁰ Towns like Patna had also towers and bastions along the wall.³¹ For the purpose of defence, ditches were also constructed alongside the walls. These ditches were also connected with rivers. The gates of entrance and exits of the cities were built into the walls. They were important for the security of the city. The gates gave a grand and impressive look to the town. These gates also served as the check-posts for the principal highways of the city. The important gates of the city were located at the entrance of the city and were connected to highways coming from

²⁸W.H Moreland, 1920, Op. cit., 186-187

²⁹Francisco Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 67

³⁰J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 116

³¹Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 134

important towns.³² These were shut after sun-set and nobody could enter or exit without the written permission of the guards.³³ These gates were connected and opened to the main streets of the city.³⁴ These gates were guarded by the guards who were headed by a *darogha* supervised by the *Kotwal*. The gates were also constructed at the entrance to the market and named after it, for example, “*darwazanakh-khas*” in Patna.³⁵

Generally, garden, tanks, cemetery and cremation ground were not located in the middle of town.³⁶ For the town-castle, it seems that there was no fixed pattern. But, usually it possessed effective defence works with river on one side or both sides.³⁷ It was usually surrounded by a deep ditch, if there was no river on any side. The outer wall of the fort was built of bricks, red sandstone or mud. The outer wall usually had two gates: one at the front side and other at the rear side. Fort in the capital city was mainly meant for the imperial residence. Apart from it, a strong fort was built in almost every town, and a garrison headed by *quiladar* which consisted infantry, cavalry, gunners, cannoniers. The main task of garrison was to prepare against a surprise attack.³⁸ Other tasks of garrison were to keep watch over the undesirable elements of the area, to lodge prisoners, to supervise dak-chaukis and thanas.³⁹

³²Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 184

³³J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 154-155

³⁴Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 132

³⁵Abul Fazl-i-Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Translated by H.S. Jarrett, Corrected and further Annotated by Jadu Nath, Sarkar, Vol. II, New Delhi : Crown, 1949 reprint, 115

³⁶Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 284.

³⁷William Foster, (Ed.), *Early Travels in India*, 1583-1619 (A Collection of Narrative of Ralph Fitch, Mildred Hall, William Finch, Whington, Coryat and Edward Terry), New Delhi: S. Chand, 1968, 284

³⁸*Ibid*, 133-34.

³⁹*Ibid*, 660-67.

Housing

Foreign travellers had given a very good description of housing of the medieval period. Though they went to different places at different periods of time but they commonly observed that there was a vast difference in the housing system of rich and the poor. This difference was obvious from the structure of the houses and the materials used in building a house. In the capital, principal nobles had their palaces mostly close to the imperial residence.⁴⁰ In case of smaller towns main consideration for the nobles was the proximity to water supply and closeness to the fort.⁴¹ Tavernier mentions, "Dacca is a large town, which is only of extent as to length, each person being anxious to have his house close to the Ganges."⁴² Father Monserrate mentions, "The houses of the rich used to have ornamental gardens in their courtyards and tanks. They adorned their roofs and arched ceilings with paintings."

The royal palaces were lofty and magnificent structures with numerous apartments for different purposes, e.g., drawing rooms, bath rooms, dressing rooms, retiring rooms, the female apartments called the '*harem*', and so on.⁴³ Walls were well-ornamented with precious stones, painting and various other devices.⁴⁴ Nobles also lived in very big and spacious houses with numerous apartments and amenities. Pelsaert mentions these houses as "noble and pleasant with many apartments".⁴⁵ These houses were well-plastered and white-washed regularly with lime mixed with gum, milk and sugar.⁴⁶ The houses of the upper classes were well-decorated with

⁴⁰Francisco, Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 1-2

⁴¹J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 128

⁴²*Ibid*

⁴³Gulbadan Begum, *Humayun Nama*. Ed. by Annette S. Beveridge, Low Price Publications, Delhi,

Third reprint. 1996, 97-98

⁴⁴Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 350-351

⁴⁵Francisco Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 66-67

⁴⁶*Ibid*, 66-67

different kinds of furniture, ornamented cots and bedsteads, mattresses with fine embroidered coverings and so on."⁴⁷

Outside the houses of nobles, the other people used to live according to the professions. The merchants, craftsmen, labourers lived in separate wards. The poor common people used to make houses depending upon the climatic conditions. They used to utilize the material available to them. As for the common people, he mentions that they "lived in lowly huts and cottages."⁴⁸ The poor people used to live in houses built of mud and

thatched with straw, walled up from all sides, with one single door, without brick flooring or any furniture. Bernier mentions, "Very few are built entirely of brick or stone and several are made only of clay and straw, yet they are airy and pleasant, most of them having courts and garden."⁴⁹ Fitch mentions that the houses in Patna were built of earth and covered with straw.⁵⁰ Tavernier also mentions that houses of Patna were made up of palm-leaves thatch.⁵¹ However, Abul Fazl mentions that most of the houses in Patna were roofed with tiles.⁵² The servants houses nearby the houses of the nobles, were made of mud and straw. These houses of the poor remained in the same condition without changes made by the succeeding generation. Manucci had described the condition of the houses of the common people in detail. He mentions that these poor people living in huts had no furniture and floor splastered with a wash of cow-dung were used for both sitting and sleeping.⁵³

⁴⁷*Ibid*, 66-67

⁴⁸ Monserrate's *Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, Ed. by J.S. Hoyland and annotated by S.N. Banerjee, Cuttack, 1922, 219

⁴⁹ Francois Bernier, 2005, Op. cit., 245-246

⁵⁰ William Foster, 1968, Op. cit., 23

⁵¹ J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 86, 100

⁵² Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 164

⁵³ Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 40-41

Pura

Each town had several suburbs called *puras*. The *puras* came into being when population of the town increased much and there was not sufficient accommodation left for the accommodation. Some rich people built their houses outside the walls of cities and named the colonies after their own name. The *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions that these *puras* had all the requisites of the cities.⁵⁴ Though *puras* had all the requisites of the cities, they had no identity of their own without the city. They were just considered as the extension of the main city.

Different class in Urban life

Urbanization in medieval period led to the development in almost all aspects whether it is individual growth or community growth or growth in the living standard of the people. There were several new professions and businesses emerged which were taken by different castes, communities and strata which had a major impact on the lifestyle and living conditions of the people. There was a stark contrast between the upper and the lower classes of the people. Some European travellers have mentioned about the emerging middle class with new of professionals like merchants, officials, bankers and so on. So, there emerged a new vertical structure, bottom of which was the lower class consisting of the informal lower class of the cities, the middle class and at the top upper class of high ranked officials, the nobles and the top merchants.

The lower class comprised working classes like the servants, weavers, artisans, craftsmen like blacksmiths, carpenters, cobblers, masons, stone cutters, ornamental sculptors and so on.⁵⁵ Apart from these there were also the barbers, washer-men, tailors, hawkers, and dyers. These people were generally poor and living

⁵⁴Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 486

⁵⁵Francisco Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 66-77

on the irmeagre income of 5 to 6 tackas (dams) per day.⁵⁶ Abul Fazl describes the rate of wages in terms of *dams* and *jitals* and salaries were paid either monthly or based on work done daily. Pelsaert mentions that peon or servants were numerous for everyone- “be he mounted soldier, merchant, or king’s officials- keeps as many as his position and circumstances permit”.⁵⁷ William Hawkins also mentioned several servants doing their job in the court and camp of Emperor Jahangir like potters, gunners, watermen, gardeners, lackeys, horse keepers, tent-men, cooks, light bearers, keepers and so on Their wages vary from three to ten rupees.⁵⁸ The domestic servants also used to get presents and gifts from the princes and the princesses.⁵⁹

Apart from the above-mentioned categories, there were some slaves also whose role was also important throughout the medieval period. Manrique mentions that government of the province would seize the wives and children of those cultivators who could not pay off the revenue, made them into slaves and sold them by auction.⁶⁰ Famine and epidemic caused indebtedness and it was responsible for a considerable amount of slavery that was prevalent. Some slaves worked under the supervision of the king and worked as guards, scribes and servants for small jobs. Wages of these slaves were paid regularly.⁶¹ In addition, they were used as spies and they had to report what is going on among the nobles and as the common people.⁶² The nobles followed the practice of keeping slaves in their households as the desire to show off. They could be exploited also, but, generally, they were well treated as owner’s reputation was at stake.

⁵⁶*Ibid*, 60

⁵⁷*Ibid*, 61

⁵⁸William Hawkins, *Hawkins Voyages*, Ed. by R.C, Markham, London: Hakluyt Society, 1877, 420

⁵⁹Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 330-31

⁶⁰F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 53

⁶¹Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 333-34

⁶²*Ibid*, 357-58

Upper class in medieval period were mostly extravagant which lived in much pomp and show.⁶³This class consisted of the nobles, the high ranked *mansabdars*, the high ranked government officials and the top-ranking merchants. Bernier mentioned that there was a huge difference in the lifestyle of the upper and the lower class, “there is no middle state...a man must either be of the highest rank or live miserably.”⁶⁴ Several travellers have given a vivid description of the luxurious life of the rulers and the nobles as they attired costly dresses, ate a variety of rich food, drank costly wine. Bernier also highlighted the superfluous lifestyle of the upper class in respect of the lower class. They lived in much luxury and indulged much extravagance that the rest of the people looked mediocre and insignificant when compared to them. The noble spent a huge amount of money in constructing the palatial houses. There were huge establishments for their families, personal staff and servants.⁶⁵

Middle class included the official, warriors, traders, intellectuals, and those resulted in formation of their respective caste system. Rich and influential merchants formed a middle class between the common labourer and the artisan on one side and the nobles on the other. Tapan Ray Chaudhuri mentions that Bengal had a numerous middle class pursuing a variety of professions.⁶⁶The middle class was although well, not as good as the upper class, but having an average living standard. The houses were bigger and well-built than the lower class but smaller and inferior to the

⁶³Francisco, Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 64

⁶⁴Francois Bernier, 2005, Op. cit., 252

⁶⁵John Jourdian, *The Journal of John Jourdian*, Ed. by William Foster, Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1905, 163

⁶⁶Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, *Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir: An Introductory Study in Social History*, Calcutta: A. Mukherjee & Co., 1953, 197

upperclass or the nobles. The houses of the middle class were generally dwelled at theepicentre of the city, where most of the market was located.⁶⁷

Sarais

Sarai building was one of the benevolent works of the imperial government.⁶⁸ Sarais were also constructed by the big merchants and nobles.⁶⁹ Sarais were built both in the cities and on the highways. They were used by the travellers, strangers and other persons who came for business in the town.⁷⁰ Sarai was generally built in the form of square and divided into several cells.⁷¹ Some of the sarais were built of bricks and stones and looked like fortified places.⁷²

There were numerous mosques and temples in most of the towns. Generally, mosques were built inside the town wall, whereas temples were built within or without the town wall. Both mosques and temples were community properties and were mostly built by the collective contributions from the respective communities. Some mosques and temples were also built by the emperors, big nobles and rich men. In some of the towns mosques and temples were surrounded by the *bazaars*.⁷³ It is because some petty shopkeepers opened their shops to supply the needs of the people who used to visit mosques and temples daily. These mosques and temples also imparted the elementary education for their respective communities. Apart from schools, several hospitals were also opened in the main towns. These were run by the

⁶⁷ Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 218

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 22

⁶⁹ F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 100

⁷⁰ William Foster, 1968, Op. cit., 311

⁷¹ P. Delia Valle, *The Travels of Pietro Delia Valle in India*. Ed. by Edward, Grey, London: Hakluyt Society, 1892, 95

⁷² Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 89

⁷³ J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 63-64

imperial governments. Some animal hospitals were also opened and run by public money donated by alms and some big merchants.⁷⁴

Town administration System

During medieval period, the towns in middle and lower Gangetic plain made a significant progress towards a well-defined and effective administration. The main aspect of town administration was its centralized framework. The Emperor held the highest authority in the Empire. He was seen as the 'shadow of God' and 'fountain of justice'.⁷⁵ Most of the Emperors took personal interest in the judicial administration. Bernier mentions that the king examined the aggrieved party personally, heard the petitions from persons in private, and also attended the justice chamber called *adalat-khany*.⁷⁶ Father Monserrate praises the justice given under the reign of Akbar and says, "for right and justice in the affairs of governments".⁷⁷ William Hawkins appraises about Jahangir's reign and says, "daily injustice everyday".⁷⁸ Shahjahan, also made sure that true justice must be enforced like his father.⁷⁹ Manrique mentions about an instance where a police officer had to pay compensation to a person who was wrongfully arrested, during the reign of Shajahan.⁸⁰ Same type of facilities were available to common people in Aurangzeb's court, who made their representation to him without fear as Aurangzeb was also desirous a great lover of justice.⁸¹ He said

⁷⁴J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 77-78

⁷⁵Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 200

⁷⁶Francois Bernier, 2005, Op. cit., 263

⁷⁷Father Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S.J on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, Ed. by J.S. Hoyland and annotated by S.N. Banerjee, London: Oxford University press, 1922, 209-12

⁷⁸William Foster, 1968, Op. cit., 112

⁷⁹Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 167

⁸⁰F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 424

⁸¹*Ibid*, 260

that a king should apply himself unworriedly and painstakingly to the dispensing of equal justice to everybody.⁸²

Apart from judicial administration, several officials were appointed for general administration of the towns. These officials were *Kotwal*, *Faujdar*, *Qiladar*, *Thanadar*, *Muhatasib*, *Mir-i-mahalla*. The *kotwal* was chief police officer responsible for the administration of a town. He was in fact the pivot around whom all the multifarious activities of the town revolved. The contemporary sources both indigenous and foreign travellers account give ample information regarding the powers and functions of the *Kotwal*.

Kotwal was usually appointed by the government on the commendation of *mir-i-atish*.⁸³ Functions of the *kotwal* were quite comprehensive. He was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, to prevent crimes, such as theft and recovery of stolen property executing the decisions of the lower courts.⁸⁴ Apart from this he performed many functions which in modern times are performed by municipal officers. His office was very much important and it can be evident from the *Ain-i-Akbari*. According to Abul Fazl, "appropriate person for this office should be vigorous, experienced, active, deliberate, patient, astute and humane".⁸⁵ He used to have a large staff, consisting of a deputy, a number of horsemen, infantry and sentries. Manucci mentions, "under *kotwal* orders there is a considerable body of cavalry and a great number of foot soldiers".⁸⁶ The place where office of the police chief was located was called the '*chabutra-i-kotwali*'. Apart from this, there were other *chowkis* present

⁸²*Ibid*, 261

⁸³*Ibid*

⁸⁴Francisco, Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 57

⁸⁵Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 43

⁸⁶Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 421

in the town.⁸⁷ Manucci mentions, “*Kotwal* has the duty of arresting thieves and criminals, if anyone is robbed within his jurisdiction, he is forced to make good what has been taken”.⁸⁸ The *kotwal* was also supposed to establish a night watch called *chaukiin* every *mohalla*.⁸⁹ According to Manucci, He himself was to ride out patrolling the streets thrice during night, at those time drums used to be beaten along with that themen of his patrolling party shouting *khbardar*. Apart from this, surprisevisits during day time to various places for finding the suspects could be undertaken.⁹⁰

Whenever *kotwal* got any information of a theft or dacoity, he had to go to the spot with his force. The *kotwal* under any condition was required to capture the guilty and recover stolen property. If he failed to capture the guilty and recover stolen property, he had to compensate the victims for all the thefts, crimes and murders which were committed within his jurisdiction.⁹¹ It was his responsibility to apprehend the culprit and deal with him so that there is no possibility left for repetition of crime. To make a suspect confess his crime, *kotwal* was to give him a severe whipping or torture him in many ways. Thevenot mentions, “When any one is robbed, *kotwal* apprehends all the people of the house both young and old where the robbery have been committed and cause them to be beaten severely. If at first, he confesses not the theft, they whip him again next day, and so for several days more, until he had confessed all, or the thing stolen be recovered again”.⁹² In order to check crime, he had orders not to allow people to enter or leave the town after night, without his dastak.⁹³

⁸⁷Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 12

⁸⁸Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 421

⁸⁹Jean De Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 27-28

⁹⁰Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 6

⁹¹J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 47

⁹²Jean De Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 28

⁹³J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 47

European travellers have described the *kotwal* as city magistrate, criminal judge and so on.⁹⁴ Manrique mentions that the *kotwal* also acted as the chief custom officer.⁹⁵ Manucci mentions that the *kotwal* was to keep an eye on dubious characters and maintain peace and order in the area.⁹⁶ Therefore, it was natural that the *kotwal* would assume certain judicial powers. The *kotwal* was the link between the ruler and the ruled. He carried out the various orders of the government which were issued from time to time. Abul Fazl mentions that it was *kotwal*'s duty to realize the money from the debtors and giving it to the creditors.⁹⁷ John Fryer says, "He seizes all debtors and secures them".⁹⁸

The *kotwal* was also entrusted for maintaining hygiene and sanitation in the city. It included sprinkling of water, general cleanliness of public streets, markets and other important public places. Tavernier mentions that the sweepers used to clean the roads, however, private arrangements were also made by tenants as each house paid them something monthly, depending upon their respective size.⁹⁹ For the general cleanliness of the street and market places, the *kotwal* used to organize a team of sweepers who were assigned to the different sectors in the towns.

Bernier mentions that in towns, there was no regular service for sprinkling water on the roads but streets were watered when the king passed through one.¹⁰⁰ Public lighting arrangements in the towns were inadequate. Some prominent places like palace gates, forts, castles and the gates of the nobles' residences, some of

⁹⁴F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 418; Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 233; Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 197-98

⁹⁵F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 18

⁹⁶Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 419-20

⁹⁷Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 44-45

⁹⁸John Fryer, *A New Account of East India & Persia, being Nine Years Travels*, Ed. by William Crooke, Vol. I, London: Hakluyt Society, 1909, 246

⁹⁹J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 186

¹⁰⁰Francois Bernier, 2005, Op. cit., 280

the government were the only places which were lighted regularly. Some arrangements were also made for the lighting and illumination of cities on some important occasions, like festivals. Abul Fazl mentions, “*kotwal* shall have lamp lit on the night of the *Nauroz* and on the night of 19th of *Farwardin*”.¹⁰¹

The building of *kotwal* for his office and residence was known as ‘*imarat-i-kotwali*’. It was generally situated in the middle of the town or bordering the main road near the *chauk*.¹⁰² It contained the *chabutra*, a raised platform in form in the front side called ‘*chabutra -i-kotwali*’.¹⁰³ *Chabutra-i-kotwali* has served different purpose like it acted as a *kotwal*’s office. After attending the court of justice, *kotwal* used to seat on *chabutra* and discharge several duties. He was attended by the large number of peons and horsemen.¹⁰⁴ Several persons used to come at *chabutra-i-kotwali* for different purposes like to lodge a complaint. Some used to come to receive the person who were released.¹⁰⁵ Several types of punishments were given at the *chabutra-i-kotwali* in the presence of the *kotwal*. Some punishments were light like receiving few whips, few were very severe like capital punishment which depended upon the offence sand the law applied to them.¹⁰⁶

Faujdar was the official mainly responsible for maintaining law and order at the level of Sarkar or jurisdictions colliding across Sarkar boundaries. He was subordinate to the provincial governors; but he could have had direct communication with the imperial court.¹⁰⁷ The *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions that as a subordinate and

¹⁰¹ Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 45

¹⁰² Jean De Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 12

¹⁰³ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 27

¹⁰⁵ Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 199

¹⁰⁶ *English Factories in India (1624-29)*, 258

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 258

assistant he held the first place.¹⁰⁸ His appointment was done by the emperor through the *farman-i-sabati*.¹⁰⁹ *Faujdar* was the *hakim* around the city, like the *kotwal* inside the city. He was responsible for all thefts and dacoities committed in places lying within his jurisdiction.¹¹⁰ The *faujdar* used to hear both kinds of cases like *faujdari* (criminal cases) and *diwani* (revenue cases). The *faujdar* also supposedly patrolled the highways leading to and from the cities.¹¹¹ The *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions that he was assigned duty related to three branches of administration i.e revenue, police and military.¹¹² On the revenue side he was indirectly involved and he was to assist the revenue collector for collecting the revenue from the recalcitrant revenue-payers.

The immediate subordinate of the *faujdar* was *thanadar* and he used to carry out *faujdar's* order. *Thandadar* was the chief of *thana*, appointed by the emperor at the recommendation of the *nazim* and *diwan*. Sometimes he was also appointed directly to the governor. *Thana* was the enclosed quarters or a fort where cavalry, infantry, cross-bow men were posted for maintenance of law and order, to check theft and robbery, to protect roads, to communicate news and so on. *Thanas*, therefore, were established everywhere in disturbed areas and around the cities.¹¹³ Normally, a *thanadar* was not a powerful influence on the internal administration of town, but he acted as an important local official if he was called to intervene in the town affairs under some specific circumstances.

¹⁰⁸Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 283

¹⁰⁹*English Factories in India (1624-29)*, 258

¹¹⁰William Foster, 1968, Op. cit., 157

¹¹¹*Ibid*, 157

¹¹²Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 283

¹¹³Jahangir, *Tuzuk-I-Jahangiri*, Ed. by Alexander Rogers & Henry Beveridge, Vol I & II, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1909-1914, 287-288

Most of the major towns had a *qila* (forts) made of mud, bricks and red sandstone.¹¹⁴ The main purpose of building the forts was to use them as place of refuge in case of some danger, to be used as a state prison, to headquarters *thanas*, to act as a storehouse for corn, treasure and heirless properties and most importantly to defend the town against the attack of trouble creators. Because of these reasons, forts were made strongholds and well provided with all types of defence.

Commandant of the *qila* was called the *qiladar*. He was appointed from the imperial court. He was a temporary head of the administration of the town especially when *Faujdar* was outside of town or under orders of transfer.¹¹⁵ He was independent of the governor, the *faujdar*.¹¹⁶ The command of the fortress was generally held by the emperor and separate and independent from the authority controlling the adjoining town. Therefore, great importance was given to forts well supplied and military-equipped by a garrison and commander loyal to the emperor. *Qiladar* was ranked among the high officials and his *mansab* dependent upon importance of the fort.

Muhtasib was the officer to guard the public morals. In India, first appointment of *Muhtasib* was made in the reign of Iltutmish.¹¹⁷ He was appointed in the cities and towns through the royal *sanads* and on the recommendation of *sadr* office. The *Nazims* of the provinces were given the strict instructions to provide military assistance when required. He had to perform two types of duties- secular and religious. His duties along with his staffs were to keep a watch over public morality like drinking, prostitution and so on.¹¹⁸ He was also entrusted with the destruction of

¹¹⁴Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 385

¹¹⁵*English Factories in India* (1618-21), 101, 145, 208

¹¹⁶Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies, being Observations and Remarks of Captain Alexander Hamilton*, Ed. by William Foster, London: Argonaut Press, 1930, 321

¹¹⁷Ziyauddin Barni, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, Ed. by Wilayat Husain, Calcutta: Publisher unknown, 1891, 441

¹¹⁸Hidayatullah Bihari, *Hidayat al Qawanin*, MS, Abdus Salam 149/339, Aligarh, 21

temple and its conversion into mosques. The secular duties were to enforce the standard measures and weights in the market, to collect information about the rates and weights in the shops of grain-dealers and other shopkeepers. In addition to that they had to perform some municipal function to discharge.¹¹⁹ *Muhtasib's* salary was in cash and land and depended upon the conditions of the town where he was appointed.

There were some functionaries through which government used to collect news about cities. These functionaries were *waqa'-i-navis*, *khufila-navis*, *sawanih-nigar* and *harkaras*. The *waqa'-i-navis* was appointed through royal order bearing the seal of the *wazir*. The *sawanih-nigar* was appointed by imperial *darogha-i-dak*. The *harkaras* were appointed by the *darogah-i-harkarahai-i-kull*. These officials acted as secret agents for the emperor or the administration. The *waqa'-i-navis* were sent once a week, *sawanih-nigar* twice in a month and *harkaras* once in a month.¹²⁰ However, if any matter was urgent then it had to be reported immediately. These intelligence officers and their agents were posted throughout the empire, at the capital, headquarters of the provinces, *sarkars* and *parganas*, ports, forts, army camps, the *Chabutra-i-kotwali* and market places.

Adminstration of Port Towns

The administration of a port town was quite different from the administration of an ordinary town. For administrative convenience, bigger port towns were constituted into separate units. In these towns trade through waterways was a major source of revenue. These revenues were in the form of custom duty, levied on items imported or exported by the sea and were collected at the port. For the administration of the ports,

¹¹⁹*Ibid*, 21

¹²⁰*Ibid*, 23

different department were set up with separate officers in charge of it. The chief officer was *shahbandar* as which was equivalent to *kotwals*, but his post was more honourable and lucrative than the post of *kotwal*.¹²¹ The officer incharge of the port was the *mutasaddi*, who acted as the collector of the port. For the fiscal administration of the port he had complete control, while regarding general administration his powers were of supervisory nature. The port officer had to fulfil the task of obtaining the custom duties and prevent smuggling. He had a large number of staffs consisting of clerks, peons, daroghas, guards, porters etc to help him. Some town officials such as *kotwal*, *qazi*, *muhtasib* were not directly under him but they had to obey the *mutasaddi*.

Mutasaddi was appointed from the imperial court through a *sanad* of *diwan-i-ala*. For the appointment of *Mutasaddi*, it was desired that the person should have knowledge of judging of qualities of horses and jewels. In fact, his *mansab* varied according to the personal and official status of the person who was supposed to be appointed. He held his position at the pleasure of the emperor. *Mutasaddi* could be dismissed or transferred or down-graded if there was a complaint of misusing of authority or failure to discharge the duties properly. He was generally paid in the cash or through assignment.

The official directly responsible for the collection of customs at the port was *Shahbandar*. He supported the act of *Mutasaddi* by acting as his deputy. He was the chief of customhouse. In the absence of *Mutasaddi*, he used to perform all matters related to customs. As *Mutasaddi* was assigned several duties, he was not always available at customhouse and much routine management looked after by *Shahbandar*. Apart from *Shahbandar*, other officials working under the *Mutasaddi* were the

¹²¹John Fryer, 1909, Op. cit., 247

mushrif-i-farza-o-khushki, tahwildar, darogha-i-khizans appointed directly from the imperial headquarters. These officials were working as clerks in the customhouse and used to assist the customers in customs related activities.¹²² They collected custom dues, maintained custom registers in which daily accounts of goods and passengers, amount collected on custom duties and other items of income and expenditure were recorded.¹²³ These officials were also involved in searching and checking the goods.¹²⁴

There are some references of abuses perpetrated by the officials. For example, some complaint against *Mutasaddi* was regarding overvaluing the goods and inflating the rates of custom on goods passing through the customhouse.¹²⁵ Generally, rates were fixed by the superior authority, however, valuation of goods were done by the officials on the spot. Overvaluation of goods, forced purchase and unnecessary detention were quite prevalent. Many a times, for the speedier dispatch of goods, almost double the custom or bribe had to be paid.¹²⁶

Market Administration

There were two types of market: permanent markets and periodical markets. Permanent markets were held daily except on public holidays. Periodic markets were held weekly, occasional and seasonal. *Bazar-i-kalan* was a permanent market which was confined to the principal streets of the cities. They contained one or more chauks (a place where four roads met). The main feature of the *bazaar* was that most of the

¹²²Jean De Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 3, 38

¹²³*English Factories in India (1630-1633)*, 116

¹²⁴Jean De Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 3

¹²⁵William Foster, 1968, Op. cit., 127

¹²⁶*Ibid*, 127

goods, commodities like cloths, toys, furniture grains, foodstuffs etc were on sale. In the evening, most of the bazaar had the arrangement for lamp light.

Now after understanding the various aspect of towns and their administration, some lights will be shed on some specific towns of medieval period located in the middle and lower Gangetic plains.

Allahabad

Ancient name of Allahabad was Prayag. Emperor Akbar, having built a strong fort between the river Ganges and Jamuna named it Illahabas. Earlier there were extensive forests in this area, but with the time forests areas were cleared for agriculture purposes.¹²⁷ Later on, Shah Jahan in his own reign gave it the name of Allahabad. The rivers Ganges and Jamuna mingle together at the foot of the fort.¹²⁸ Abul Fazl says, “for a long time Akbar desire was to found a great city in the town of Priyag and to build a choice fort there. His idea was to establish himself there for a time and to reduce to obedience of the recalcitrant ones of the country.”¹²⁹ Thus, Allahabad had its administrative and military importance. For Hindus this place as a very ancient and one of the most holy places of worship.¹³⁰ The economy of the Allahabad mainly dependent upon the agricultural productions, industries and trade. The manufacturing

¹²⁷ Joannes De Laet, *The empire of the Great Mogol*, Ed. by J.S. Hoyland, Annotated by S. N, Banerji, Bombay: D.B. Taraporewala & Sons ,1928, 65

¹²⁸ Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 169, Abul Fazl mentions Saraswati also, though it is not visible,

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 616

¹³⁰ Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh, India of Aurangzib (Topography, Statistics and Roads)* compared with the India of Akbar, Ed. and annotated by Jadunath, Sarkar, Patna, 1901, 23.

of fine paper at Shahzadpur (near Allahabad) and was quite common.¹³¹ Iron mines were also found at Allahabad.

Patna

Patna is located at 25° 37' North and 85° 12' east. on the confluence of two rivers Ganga and Punpun whereas third one, the Sone, meets the Ganges further west.¹³² It was almost at the heart of the rich alluvial Gangetic plains. These rivers provided communication prospect apart from land routes. Patna was connected to Allahabad and Banaras on the west by the river Ganga. From Patna to Banaras, there were two main routes. One ran with the Ganges through Danapur, Arrah, Buxor, Chausa, Zamania and Mughal sarai, while a second ran through Phulwari, Nawbatpur, Arwal, Daudnagar, and Sasaram to Mughal sarai.¹³³ On the eastern side, Patna was connected to the Hughli via Monghyr, Rajmahal, Kasimbazaar.¹³⁴ Manrique mentions that these routes were equipped with sarais which were built by wealthy men with philanthropic interests.¹³⁵

Patna was also a very large and great town.¹³⁶ Manrique described Patna as “*biggest town in the Mughal Empire*”.¹³⁷ Several other European Travellers such as Peter Mundy, Tavernier, Manucci who visited Patna in the seventeenth century have mentioned about the prosperity, growth and size of the city of Patna. Tavernier

¹³¹Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 98

¹³²Thomas Bowrey, 1905, Op. cit., 22

¹³³K. M. Karim, *The province of Bihar and Bengal under Shahjahan*, Dacca: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1974, 172

¹³⁴John Marshall, 1927, Op. cit., 161

¹³⁵F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 146

¹³⁶Ralph Fitch, *The First Englishmen in India: Letters and Narratives of Sundry Elizabethans*, Ed. by J. Courtenay Locke, London: Routledge Publication, 1930, 113

¹³⁷F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 140

mentions it as, “the largest town in Bengal and the most famous for trade.”¹³⁸ Fitch said that it was a great city in the east.¹³⁹ He stated that earlier it was a kingdom but later, Akbar had conquered it. He found the houses were simple, made of mud and straw. It is not clear why Fitch found the city great. Patna was a centre of considerable commercial activity and also developed itself as the chief market for different commodities, from different regions. Patna was a true riverine port. In 1545, Sher Shah transferred the capital from Bihar Sharif to Patna which strengthened the process of urbanization of Patna. According to English factors it was “*the main town of all Bengala*”.¹⁴⁰ The commerce was flourishing in Patna and merchants gained good profits that they became wealthy.¹⁴¹ In Patna merchants from different countries like Persia, Georgia and so on used to come.¹⁴²

Patna was mainly a market of agricultural products which included rice, maize, sugar, indigo, cotton and various other spices and other commodities.¹⁴³ It was also the chief market of opium and saltpetre.¹⁴⁴ The industrial aspect of Patna was mainly manufacturing of cotton and silken cloth of various type. The textile industry of Patna was one of major businesses. Demand for cotton textiles from Patna was very high. Manucci observed that fine white cloth was manufactured at Patna and was very plentiful in the province of Bihar.¹⁴⁵ Manucci mentions “*in this city, besides cloth of cotton much fine silk is woven*”.¹⁴⁶ Apart from these industries, large number of crafts were carried on. Tavernier mentions “more than 2000 persons occupied

¹³⁸J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 258

¹³⁹Ralph Fitch, *The First Englishmen in India: Letters and Narratives of Sundry Elizabethans*, Ed. by J. Courtenay Locke, London: Routledge Publication. 1930, 40

¹⁴⁰*English Factories in India, Vol. I (1618-21)*, 212.

¹⁴¹F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 140

¹⁴²Thomas Bowrey, 1905, Op. cit., 221

¹⁴³Jean De Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 96

¹⁴⁴Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 150

¹⁴⁵Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 246

¹⁴⁶*Ibid*, 83

themselves in craft activities in Patna and Dacca.”¹⁴⁷ The art of pottery also very popular in Patna. Manucci mentions, “Patna was also the centre of production of bottles and fine earthenware, including cups of clay finer than glass, lighter than paper and highly scented.”¹⁴⁸

Benaras

Benaras on the bank of river Ganga was centres of learning and culture where education was imparted on religion, sciences, literature and grammar. It was also famous for its textile and metal industries. It was a famous emporium for the products of Bengal. Manrique mentions, “the city is very rich of fine cotton cloth, which is being woven on seven thousand looms in the town itself and its suburbs”.¹⁴⁹ Finch called Benaras as “principal mart of Bengala goods”.¹⁵⁰ Benaras was a great market of textile goods and several foreign merchants purchased large quantities of goods.¹⁵¹ Manucci mentions that these textiles goods were exported to different parts of the world.¹⁵² Silk cloth of fine quality in various colours also worked with silver and gold were manufactured and were mostly used formaking turbans and girdles.¹⁵³ Before selling textile and silken goods these were stamped by government contractors. Tavernier suggests, “This system was to maintain the required standard of the quality of products, and the defaulters used to be punished”.¹⁵⁴ In Benaras, metals utensils which mainly intended for domestic use were also manufactured in large

¹⁴⁷ J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 267

¹⁴⁸ Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 85, 426

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁰ William Foster, 1968, Op. cit., 65

¹⁵¹ J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 118

¹⁵² Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 83

¹⁵³ J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 118

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 116

quantities.¹⁵⁵ Benaras also manufactured copper and brass wares but brass was more famous.¹⁵⁶

Benaras was also an important seat of higher learning of Hindus. Bernier mentions, "Benaras is a kind of university but has no college or regular classes as in our universities, but it resembles school of ancients, the masters being spread over different parts of the town in private houses".¹⁵⁷ Hindus were used to stay in shrines and sacred places where pilgrim traffic was a major source of income to the famous teachers residing there. In this way, they were free from the worries of making a livelihood, they pursued their studies undisturbed.¹⁵⁸

Dacca

Dacca was situated on the northern bank of Buri Ganga river which was a tributary of the river Dhalswari. As mentioned by some European travellers, Dacca was the largest town in Bengal.¹⁵⁹ The author of *Khulasat*, described about the town and says, "Dacca or Jahangir-nagar, which is very spacious. It is beautifully and elegantly inhabited for some kos...men of every race and country live in it."¹⁶⁰ Thomas Bowrey says that it was "an admirable city for greatness, for its magnificent buildings and multitudes of inhabitants."¹⁶¹ Dacca was famous for manufacture of textiles especially muslin. Manucci mentions, "in this vast region they produce the prodigious quantity of fine white cloth and silken stuffs of which the nation of Europe and elsewhere transport annually several ships loads."¹⁶² Gallies

¹⁵⁵ John Marshall, 1927, Op. cit., 114

¹⁵⁶ Francisco, Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 7

¹⁵⁷ Francois Bernier, 2005, Op. cit., 341

¹⁵⁸ John Marshall, 1927, Op. cit., 114

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 183

¹⁶⁰ Sujan Rai Bhandari, 1921, Op. cit. 40

¹⁶¹ Thomas Bowrey, 1905, Op. cit., 150

¹⁶² Niccolo Manucci, 1907, Op. cit., 430

(Ships) and boats were also manufactured in Dacca.¹⁶³ Tavernier mentions, “a succession of houses, inhabited for the most part by the carpenters who build galleys and other vessels.”¹⁶⁴ Large quantity of ammunition was produced in Dacca and English workers were employed along with Indians in its manufacture.¹⁶⁵ Jute industry also flourished here and fine jute mattresses were manufactured. Some mattresses were so finely woven that they looked even nicer than silk.

Hugli

Hugli was another important city in the Bengal province. It was a large and populous town. According to Bowrey, "it was a famous and beautiful town with many fine structures."¹⁶⁶ It had a large Christian population and according to Bernier it had 8 to 9 thousand Christian families.¹⁶⁷ It was a port town and most of the development were done by the Portuguese.¹⁶⁸ It acquired prominence after 1632 when other European nations had arrived in Bengal waters.¹⁶⁹ Port of Hugli was a busy centre for overseas trade.¹⁷⁰ The ships with merchandise comprising silks, quilts, tent materials, sugar, rice, ghee, indigo, long pepper and other articles which was going to western countries such as Persia and Arab and the eastern countries like China and Malacca used to sail from Hugli.¹⁷¹ The imports items at Hugli port were mainly included costly textile items such as velvets, brocades, damasks and satins, spices like cloves,

¹⁶³ Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 95

¹⁶⁴ J. B. Tavernier, Op. cit., 105

¹⁶⁵ Thevenot, 1949, Op. cit., 87

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Bowrey, 1905, Op. cit., 167

¹⁶⁷ Francois Bernier, 2005, Op. cit., 439

¹⁶⁸ F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 27-29

¹⁶⁹ Master Streyntsham, *The Diaries of Streyntsham Master and other papers relating thereto*, Ed. by R.C. Temple, Vol. II, London: Indian Records Series, 1911, 79-80

¹⁷⁰ *English Factories in India (1618-21)*, 212

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 214

nutmeg and mace metals like copper and tin, precious stones like jewels and pearls, sandalwood and so on.¹⁷²

In medieval period, the towns flourished because they were supported with rich agricultural hinterland. There were several factors leading to the rise and growth of individual towns. Occasionally more than one factor could coalesce to understand for the rise and growth of a town. But it can be said that whatever be the origin of towns, it was agricultural production, industries and subsequently the trade which ensured their continued survival and further growth. Even after passing of centuries, some major towns originated in the medieval period are still existing though with a different scenario. One point must be understood that all these towns are dynamic in nature. Geographically, socially, politically or economically these towns have evolved and are still evolving.

¹⁷²*Ibid*, 195,214

CHAPTER FOUR

GRAIN TRADE AND URBAN ECONOMY IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

Trade was one of the important aspect of an economy and in medieval period, it played a very important role in the urbanization process. The agriculture, industries and commerce formed the base of trading activities. As agriculture was the backbone of village- economy, industries, commerce and trade constituted to be the main basis of growth of towns and cities. Grain trade was one important aspect of trade in which several communities were involved. Tavernier impressed with the internal trade of north India and said, "even in the smallest villages rice, flour, butter, milk, beans and other vegetables, sugar and other sweet meats, dry and liquid", are available, a sign of an extensive internal trade in grains and food commodities.¹This internal trade in grain was largely controlled and managed by indigenous traders, usually not associated with the country's export trade.

A consideration of the extent and organization of the market for agricultural produce is necessary for study of an agrarian economy. There was a large volume of trade of agricultural produce taking place and the study of the agricultural prices prevalent in the market is an important aspect of the agrarian system. Several accounts from some scholars are available about price-control measures of Ala-ud-Din Khalji. These accounts give us an important information relating to the reign of Ala-ud-Din Khalji.

¹J. B. Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Ed. by V. Ball, Vol II, London: Macmillan & Co., 1889, 238

Price Control Policy of Ala-ud-Din Khalji

Price control policy of Ala-ud-Din Khalji was the most significant aspect which distinguishes his reign. This policy of Ala-ud-Din Khalji has always been admired by all the scholars and the historians. Some accounts which provide information about price control measures are Barani's account of the price-control measures of Ala-ud-Din Khalji, Ibn Battuta's *Rehla*, Amir Khusrau's *Khazain-ul-Futuh*, Isami's *Futuhus-Salatin*. All these sources, except Barani's account gives credit to the benevolence of Ala-ud-Din Khalji.

Barani was aware that the price-control though beneficial was not a boon for everyone.² According to Barani, price-regulations came as a solution to a critical financial problem. This problem was created due to the continuous threat of Mongol invasions, which made Ala-ud-Din to take steps urgently for organising the defence of the frontier earlier neglected by him. Comprehensive measures had to be taken for the defence like fortified walls had to be built and old and ruined forts had to be restored. There was a need to recruit a permanent army "not only large, but well-armed, with archers, and all ready for immediate service."³ All this amounted to a vast amount of expenditure. Therefore, Ala-ud-Din devised his famous policy of price control, so that they are able to bear the expenditure necessary for the Sultanate's security.⁴

Ala-ud-Din's advisers suggested that if the necessities of life could be bought at a low rate, then a large and permanent army can be maintained. Therefore, to bring

²Irfan Habib, *The Price Regulations of Alauddin Khalji - A Defence of Zia Barani*, Ed. by Sanjay Subrahmanyam in 'Money and Market in India 1100-1700', Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, 106

³Ziya-uddin Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, Ed. by Wilayat, Husain, Calcutta: Bib., Ind, 1891, 191

⁴W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India: A Historical Essay with Appendices*, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1929, 36.

down the prices of grain, it was fixed by regulations and tariffs.⁵ Moreland mentions, “control of supplies and control of transport, with rationing of consumption when necessary, the whole system resting on a highly-organised intelligence and drastic punishment of evasions.”⁶

There was a separate regulation for the grain market and commodities to be sold in the *Sarai Adl*. Sarai Adl was the market for cloth and groceries. Another type of regulations was for horse, slave and cattle markets. Prices of all the commodities were not fixed in an arbitrary manner. Barani mentions, “The King should settle before his own throne the prices of all things according to the principle of production-cost.”⁷ The main factor was the fixation of the price of grain as it affected the prices of other commodities especially in an agricultural society. There were total eight regulations for the grain market. The first regulation fixed the prices of all varieties of grain. Barani, in his *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* mentions the following list:

Food Articles	Price (per man)
Wheat	7 ½ jitals
Barley	4 jitals
Rice	5 jitals
Mash(pulses)	5 jitals
Nakhud (gram)	5 jitals
Moth	3 jitals

⁵Ziyauddin Barani, 1891, Op. cit., 192

⁶W.H. Moreland, 1929., Op. cit., 36

⁷Barani, *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, Ed. by Mohammad Habib and Afsar Salim Khan in *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*. Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 35

Table: Food articles and their fixed prices.⁸

Price-level of these articles went up in the time of Mohammad BinTughlaq, but again dropped to the previous level of Ala-ud-Din underFeroz Tughlaq.⁹ A comparison of few articles in this regard is given below:¹⁰

Name of commodity	Price under Feroz Tughlaq	Price under Ala-ud-Din
Wheat	8 jitals per man	7.5 jitals per man
Barley	4 jitals per man	4 jitals per man
Paddy and pulses	4 jitals per man	5 jitals per man

Ala-ud-Din made an appointment ofMalik Qabul Ulugh Khani as the controller of the grain market.¹¹He had an assistant controller and an intelligence officer. Ala-ud-Din seems fully recognised that the stability of prices depended on the adequate supply of the commodities and he ensured that adequate supply would be maintained. He took a number of measures in this regard.¹²Ala-ud-Din also ensured the collection of grain in the royal stores. He ordered that the all the *kharaj* of the *khalisa* villages of the *Doab* should be taken in kind and brought to the royal stores in the city. The collected grain was stored in *Jhain* and then sent to Delhi through the *karvanis* (grain carriers). By this method, grains were plentiful and even at the time of drought no scarcity was felt.¹³Another regulation brought all grain carriers of the into

⁸The jital was a copper coin. According to Ferishta, a silver tanka was equal to 50 jitals. The Alai tanka was equal to onetola of minted gold or silver. The Alai man consisted of 40 seers and a seer was 24 tolas in weight.

⁹K. S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis*, Bombay: Asian Publishing House, 1967, 198

¹⁰*Ibid*, 198

¹¹ZiyauddinBarani, 1891, Op. cit., 193

¹²U.N.Day, *Some Aspects of Medieval Indian History*, New Delhi : Kumar Brothers, 1971, 77

¹³Ishwari Prasad, *History of Medieval India*, Allahabad : Indian Press, 1966, 244

a single corporation called *yak wujud*. It was under the charge of *shahna-i-mandi*. Due to these measures so much grain came into the markets that in normal times “it was unnecessary to open the royal stores.”¹⁴ Another regulation for securing the cheapness of grain was against *ihlikar* (regrating). It was enforced strictly so that no corn-dealer, farmer or anyone else “could hold back secretly a man or half a man of grain” and sell it for prices above the fixed price. The *ihlikar* grain, if found, had to be forfeited by the state and the *ihlikar* was fined.¹⁵

Transport facility for grain trade

Grain trade in medieval period was done by both routes i.e land transport and water transport. Due to easy and cheap water transport we find that the most of the grain markets grew up on river banks, because at such places where traders could easily come by water transport. Presence of many rivers and their tributaries proved to be a geographical advantage for the trade and commerce. Riverine routes were comparatively much slower than the roadways, however, transporting higher volumes of goods and with less cost, this mode of transport was much beneficial. The main north Indian water route was Ganga, linking Allahabad to Rajmahal via Benaras, Patna and Bhagalpur. Beyond Rajmahal, trade goods were transported to and from places like Malda, Hugli, and Dacca along with the Ganga and their tributaries, thus connecting the entire Gangetic plain, especially the middle and lower regions. However, during half the year most rivers became dry and if not, at least practically unnavigable and therefore, despite the bad condition of the roads, overland trade became necessary.

¹⁴Ziyauddin Barani, 1891, Op. cit., 194

¹⁵Ziyauddin Barani, 1891, Op. cit., 194

Land transport was also more useful for short distance trade as agricultural produce from surrounding villages to towns brought by land transport only. The peasants generally carried this trade employed pack oxen or carts drawn by oxen. To estimate the number of oxen employed in village to town trade is quite difficult, as this trade was much more voluminous than the long-distance trade. For the long-distance trade, the main carrier of the trade of the bulk were the celebrated *banjaras*, who used pack oxen. Oxen provided a cheap means of transport but they were slow. Mundy mentions, “their pace was not above 6 or 7 miles a day at most.”¹⁶

Apart from oxen, carts were also used for carrying loads. Most of these carts were drawn by oxen though sometimes buffaloes were also used. We have some references about the coaches drawn by horses, however, evidence for cart drawn by horses for transporting goods are difficult to find.¹⁷ In almost all parts of middle and lower Gangetic plain, ox-drawn carts were utilised by the transporters to carry goods.¹⁸ It is evident from the English Factory Records that carts were a major means of transport between Patna and Agra.¹⁹ Cart charges generally was not very high, but in the rainy season, charges were high due to the impassable roads and partly for speedy transportation.

The loads carried by these carts varied in the different regions. Buchanan, mentioned about Bihar in 1809, loads carried by the carts, mostly drawn by a pair of oxen, varied from 7 to 15 maunds i.e. from 300 to 560 kg.²⁰ As far as speed of cart is

¹⁶Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia 1608-67*, Ed. by Richard Temple, Travels in Asia 1628-54, Vol.II, London: Hakuyt Society, 1914, 96

¹⁷Father Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S.J on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, Ed. by J.S., Hoyland and Annotated by S.N., Banerjee, London: Oxford University press, 1922, 199

¹⁸J. B. Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Ed. by V.Ball, Vol II, London: Macmillan & Co., 1889, 32

¹⁹*English Factories in India (1618-21)*, 195

²⁰Francis Buchanan, *The History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India*, Ed. and abridged by Montgomery Martin, Vol II, London: W. H Allen & Co., 1838, 1017

concerned there are some information available. On Patna Agra route, an approximate distance of 544 miles²¹ was generally covered in 30-35 days or at most 40 days.²² Ox-carts carried much of the long-distance trade in medieval India. Apart from their slow pace, the rainy season were the inhibiting factor of their use on certain routes.²³ Mundy mentions, "It being tyme of Raines....wee arrived at Puttna....not meeting all the way one laden carte either going or comeing from thence, it being not then the tyme of Travell for Laden carts."²⁴

Nature of Grain trade

The nature of the internal trade was varied in nature according to the commodity, composition, volume and distance of this trade. Perishable items as if edibles formed the bulk of local or everyday trade, whereas long distance trade were mostly food grains, salt, sugar apart from other articles. Trade in lower Gangetic plain from the north-eastern India were mainly centred in Rangpur, which was famous for its rice. Several Frenchmen and Armenians were engaged in supplying Rangpur with rice from Coursah, a place within Cooch Behar raja's province, for further exportation. Apart from these staples, Rangpur's trade with Assam in salt is well known. Bernier described Bengal as the common storehouse not only of Hindustan but also of all neighbouring kingdoms.²⁵

²¹J.Rennell, *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan or the Mogul Empire*, London: M. Brown, 1792, 318

²²*English Factories in India (1618-21)*, 191

²³*Ibid*, 258, 270

²⁴Peter Mundy, 1914, *Op. cit.*, 143-44

²⁵Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668*, Ed. by Archibald Constable, Revised by V. A. Smith, London: Oxford University Press, 1916, 435

Mercantile Class in Medieval Period

The merchants played a very important role in the commercial activity. Some of the merchants were the link between the foreign factories and the markets. The main occupation of the merchant class was trade, banking, money lending, jewellery making, and cloth selling. Both Indians and non-Indians were involved in this field. Among foreigners involved in trade were Armenians, Persians and the merchants from countries of north west of Kabul.²⁶ They used to come to India to sell their own commodities and purchase Indian commodities. Different institutions or organizations were also formed by merchant communities to systematically conduct their commercial activities. It also helped in maintaining discipline among the groups, to avoid competitions between fellow merchants and to sort out different problems. These institutions were also very helpful in smooth conduct of trade and commercial transactions.

The merchant class in the medieval period can be broadly characterised into three groups namely the big merchants like *mahajans*, the smaller and medium commodity merchants or traders who frequented the local markets like *bania* and the petty shopkeepers and hawkers. Among the merchant classes, some specialized in wholesale trade, and others in the retail trade. Before discussing these classes, first light will be shed on the Banjara communities, who led the foundation of trading activities in medieval period.

The Banjaras

Originally, the *banjaras* are one of the largest tribal communities living in India. History of the *banjaras* starts with the caravan trade. Communities of nomadic

²⁶*English Factories in India (1646-51)*, 335-36

caravaners were the loose groupings, who assimilated members from other groups involved in similar type of trading activities. This group attracted the attention of some travellers and ethnographers, because they traversed the country as grain suppliers to the army and came to be categorised as a criminal community in later period. The *banjaras* comprised of both Hindus and Muslims communities and they claimed a common origin. They in addition to supplying of food grains also involved in trading activities. They used to visit even the remote and inaccessible regions to search for grain and other commodities to sell in more populous areas. These *banjaras* were extremely reliable and honest people and because of this, they were paid cash advances to ensure no breakdown in supplies to army. In fact, the Delhi sultans and Mughal rulers used to recruit them for supplying food grains to their army. The Mughal emperor, Jahangir mentioned in his memoirs, “In this country the *banjaras* are a fixed class of people, who possess a thousand oxen, or more or less, varying in numbers. They bring grain from the villages to the towns and also accompany armies”.²⁷

The caravans were both the oldest and one of the most popular method of travelling in large groups because it provides safety and security also. It also made an important contribution to social and commercial life. The caravan traders transacted in food grains like wheat, rice, millets, pulses, jaggery, ghee and so on They also carried some articles of daily need like salt and exercised significant influence on the lives of rural and urban people. These *banjaras* were the itinerant merchants, who used to move in large caravans/tandas. They used to carry the goods on the back of their bullocks. Barani mentioned the community of *banjaras* who were familiar with

²⁷Jahangir, *Tuzuk-I-Jahangiri*, Ed. by Alexander Rogers & Henry Beveridge, Vol I & II, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1909-1914, 345.

several routes in the different regions of northern India.²⁸ Before the advent of the modern market and transport system in India, the *banjaras* were the major caravan traders and merchants. When Gias-ud-din Tughlaq was proceeding to Delhi after defeating the forces of Khusrau Shah, met a caravan of grain merchants on his way. Troops of Tughlaq extracted six lacs *tankas* from the caravan is. The *banjaras* paid a tax called *dangana*. However, the officials of the *dangana* department started to exploit them and started extracting free services from their animals and therefore, they became reluctant to come to the cities and consequently grain and other articles became dearer. Therefore, sultan abolished this tax when he came to know about this exploitation.²⁹

The role of the *banjaras* in the Indian agrarian commerce was very important and they played very important role in grain trade.³⁰The transportation of grain was the preserve of the *banjara* community and small peasants. They marketed it in local fairs and qasba towns in the localities. They controlled the commerce and were the natural link between the producers and consumers. The basis for the trade and, indeed, for the existence of the *banjaras* lay in conditions of inland transport.³¹Goods were carried on boats and carts and by camels and bullocks. *banjaras* were used move in large groups for safety and were kept together by strong clan ties and subordination to headmen. These *banjaras* communities were divided into many groups and sub groups and were scattered all over India. They owned bullocks, Bullock-Carts, Horses, Camel and travelled in large parties consisting mainly of family groups and other tribal groups and other tribal members. These carriers are first described in

²⁸ZiyauddinBarani, 1891, Op. cit., 187.

²⁹*Ibid*, 148-149.

³⁰Irfan Habib, "*Merchant Communities in Precolonial India*", in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750.*, Ed. by James D. Tracy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 373.

³¹Irfan Habib, 1990, Op. cit., 373

detail in a historian's account of the price-control measures of Sultan Ala-ud-Din Khalji.

In the Mughal period, the *banjaras* were involved in grain trade activities. However, it is difficult to estimate the quantities involved in the trade carried on by the *banjaras*.³² Peter Mundy took a great deal of interest in them and he calls the moving assemblage of the *banjaras* a '*Tanda*'.³³ There may be few to hundreds of people in Thanda consisting of men, women and children. Mundy in 1632, once met "a *tanda* or *banjara* of Oxen, in number 14,000, all layden with graine as wheat, rice, and so on two days later he encountered another "Tanda of oxen, number 20,000 laden with Sugar".³⁴ Tavernier also mentions about *banjaras*, whose name is misprinted in his text as '*manaris*'.³⁵ He further mentions that *banjaras* never dwell in houses and they take along with them their women and children. Some of the *banjaras* possess hundred oxen, some have more or less, and they have a Chief, who generally acts as a prince.³⁶ Peter Mundy further mentions about *banjaras*, "They own Oxen and are hired by Merchants, but most commonly they are the Merchants themselves, they used to buy grain where it is cheaper and carrying it to places where it is dearer".³⁷ Tavernier mentions that the *banjaras* in their caravans, numbering 10,000 to 12,000 pack oxen, carrying rice, wheat and salt to places where they exchanged these commodities with other items.³⁸ These *banjaras* was owner of the pack bullock

³²Ibid, p. 373.

³³Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 95-96

³⁴ Ibid, p. 95-98.

³⁵J. B. Tavernier, 1889, Op. cit., 33

³⁶ Ibid, p. 33

³⁷Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 95-96

³⁸ Ibid, 32-33

who went from one village to the other picking up pieces of cloth and used to sell them.³⁹

The role of the *banjaras* was quite important during famine, as there used to be a dire need to supply food grains from surplus to deficit areas through the caravan network. In addition to that, they also supplied food grains and baggage to armies during wars. Sometimes, it could be found that *Banjaras* played the role of transporters more than as traders. *Banjaras* also acted as carriers for other merchants and dealers.

The Baniyas

The *baniyas* mainly involved in the business of money-lending and banking, and traded in commodities like grain, ghee, spices, clothing and grocery. The Arabic word *baqqal*, used in Indo-Persian writing as a synonym for *Baniya*, which means 'grain merchant' in India and 'greengrocer' in Iran. They generally avoided doing commerce in polluting substances.⁴⁰ A *baniya* also managed the household of his master by engaging and dismissing servants, paying his bills apart from lending some money to him. Almost every kind of the job were the occupation of Baniyas. They remained loyal to their traditional occupation in comparison to other castes. This class consisted of several entrepreneurial sub-castes who were linked together to a system of organised markets.⁴¹ Abul Fazl mentions 48 sub-castes of the *baniyas*⁴² whereas Ali

³⁹Jagadesh Narayan Sarkar, *Glimpses of Medieval Bihar Economy, Thirteenth to mid-eighteenth century*, Calcutta: RatnaPrakashan, 1978,21-22

⁴⁰Christopher A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion: - 1770-1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 368

⁴¹*Ibid*, 370

⁴²Abul Fazl-i-Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Ed. by H.S. Jarrett, Corrected and further Annotated by Jadu Nath, Sarkar, Vol. II, New Delhi : Crown, 1949 reprint, 57

Muhammad Khan mentions about 84 sub-castes of *Baniyas*.⁴³ These sub-castes were mostly named after places, villages and settlements.⁴⁴ These sub-castes of the *baniyas* were defined by endogamy and restrictions on dining with members of different sub-castes.⁴⁵ These sub-castes were named mostly after places and villages.

The *baniyas* included both Hindus and non-hindus. The *Dabistan-i Mazahib* says, "many of the *baniyas* and *bohras* belonged to Jain community who were in the business of selling grain, whereas some lived by service."⁴⁶ Irfan Habib mentions that the sub-castes of the *baniyas* were defined by endogamy and they had restrictions on dining with members of other sub-castes.⁴⁷ There are some references of non-Hindu merchant communities as well as Muslim merchants. Fryer mentions about the Muslim merchants and comments on their extravagant life style as compared to the frugal attitude of the Hindu *baniyas*.⁴⁸

The *Baniyas* could also be found hawking cloth, cowries (small shells serving as money), and even salt. More characteristic, however, was the *baniya* shopkeeper, commonly selling rice and ghee (Indian butter) to a poor clientele, who often had to ask for credit and expected harsh conditions in return.⁴⁹ Shopkeepers are naturally to be distinguished from merchants proper. They were the peddlers who would carry on their business on a small scale.⁵⁰

⁴³ Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Ed. by Syed Nawab, Ali, Baroda: Oriental institute, 1930, 138-139.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 137

⁴⁵ Irfan Habib, 1990, Op. cit., 380

⁴⁶ Mubid, *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, Ed. by Qazi, Ibrahim, Bombay: AH 1292, 166

⁴⁷ Irfan Habib, 1990, Op. cit., 380

⁴⁸ John Fryer, *A New Account of East India & Persia, being Nine Years Travels*, Ed. by William Crooke, Vol. I, London: Hakluyt Society, 1909, 196

⁴⁹ Irfan Habib, 1990, Op. cit., 385-386

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 386

The expertise of the Baniyas was generally a result of the early training and education. This could be seen in their outlook towards education of their children. Normally, they did not give any emphasis on formal education but, practical training was preferred. Tavernier mentions about this attitude and says, “they accustom their children at an early age and their children learn perfectly those calculations, using for it neither pen nor counters, but the memory alone, so that in a moment they will do a sum, however difficult it may be. They are always with their fathers, who instruct them in trade, and do nothing without at the same time explaining it to them.”⁵¹

The main motive of the *Baniyas*'s mercantile is acquisition of profit. To achieve this, they did not hesitate to manipulate things even if it is unethical. For this, *Baniyas* used to create artificial scarcities by hoarding commodities like grains. Sometimes, they had to incur loss in hoarding activities as large amount of hoarded grain had no demand in the market due to very good harvests. Hoarding of grain by the members of the *Baniya* class for profit seems to have been a universal phenomenon and this was practiced even by the wealthiest Baniyas. When there was a bumper harvest, the *Baniyas* hoarded grain in the *kothis* (grain silos) and underground stores. They used to sell these stored grains at higher prices when there was scarcity of grains in the market. The attitude of *Baniyas* towards hoarding or saving is an indicator of its wider acceptance as a norm of the *baniya* life. Another characteristic feature of a *baniya* life was the secretiveness about his hoarded wealth. Their popular belief was that maintaining trade secrets is the key to success in trade and commerce.

⁵¹J. B. Tavernier, 1889, Op. cit., 143-144

The Brokers

The merchant class comprising the small and medium who were involved in the grain trade can be further divided into three categories: The brokers (middle men), money-lenders and the commodity merchants. The brokers directed the purchaser to the merchandise and the seller to the price.⁵²To these brokers the term *dallal* was generally applied. Generally, a *dallal* was appointed in each *muhalla* of the town to supervise the selling and buying of grains in the local market.⁵³They were expert in the matter of rates and values of all the commodities. Without his knowledge no transaction could take place. Mughal government also appointment a *town broker* for market transactions. These brokers were an essential part of the commercial establishment of the foreign merchants, who were depended on their services for their business transactions. The brokers were mostly Hindus but some Muslim brokers were also found, as one of such brokers according to the English Factory records was named *Hera Vora*.⁵⁴ The non-Muslim Hindu and Jain *Baniyas* called *idolator* were universally preferred as *dallals* by the European factors as well as the Mughal nobles. Thevenot mentions that some of these brokers grew into the richest merchants in India.⁵⁵Pelsaert mentions that the *Hindu Baniyas* also acted as brokers to all the Muslim merchants as well.⁵⁶The services of the brokers were fully utilized and some

⁵²A. J Qaisar, *Qaisar, The Role of Brokers in Medieval India*, New Delhi: Indian Historical Review,

Vol I, no. 2, 1974, 220-46

⁵³Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 84

⁵⁴*English Factories in India (1646-50)*, 325

⁵⁵Jean De Thevenot, *Indian travels of Thevenot and Careri, Indian Records Series*, Ed. by Surendranath

Sen, New Delhi: National Archives of India, 1949, 78

⁵⁶Francisco Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, Ed. under the title '*Jahangir's India*' by W.H. Moreland and P. Geyl, Cambridge, 1925, 78

brokers were even permanent employees.⁵⁷ Sometimes, the brokers were hired on a commission basis for the supply of goods.⁵⁸

Though brokers performed several functions, still their function was specialized one. Each class of goods had its separate brokers, such as cart brokers, house brokers so on paying money to those who have sold and receiving it from those who have bought, charging commissions of 1 to 2 per cent according to the class of goods.⁵⁹ There are references of brokers, who were accustomed with and appointed by the Government to a particular line of business in different parts of Bengal.⁶⁰

Brokers were very important merchants in medieval India. They were men of great authority having under them fifteen or twenty servants. These brokers worked on commission from other traders. Sometimes brokers operating between merchants and customers were thought to raise prices unduly. Barani whole heartedly lauded Ala-ud-Din's severity towards broker.⁶¹ However, the need for the brokers especially in large market was quite high that they could never be dispensed with entirely.⁶² On receiving the advance, they sub-contracted for the orders with other merchants who paid them a percentage share of their profit.⁶³ The European companies in found it quite difficult to do without the brokers as they knew local market well and could assess the dependability of the merchants.⁶⁴ However to avoid the dependency of brokers, European companies dealt with the independent traders who had their own agents. Still, dominance of broker in late medieval period was such high that it created

⁵⁷*English Factories in India (1642-45)*, 300-01

⁵⁸*English Factories in India (1665-67)*, 363

⁵⁹Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, and Irfan Habib: (Ed.). *The Cambridge Economic History of India C.1200-1750*, Vol. I, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 342

⁶⁰J. B. Tavernier, 1889, Op. cit., 156

⁶¹*English Factories in India (1665-67)*, 363

⁶²Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, and Irfan Habib, 2008, Op. cit., 86

⁶³*Ibid*, 29

⁶⁴*Ibid*

a broker economy.⁶⁵In Benares, broker economy expanded with the growth of commercial activity and distinct merchant groups. These were involved in complex relationships, which generated economic organizations and a 'moral community' to control the commercial life of the city.⁶⁶

Bills of exchange and Insurance

Bill of exchange (Hundi) has been described as "a written order made by one person on another for the payment, on demand or after specified time, of a certain sum of money to a person named therein."⁶⁷ Hundi and insurance were quite late development which were prevalent mainly in late medieval century. These methods used in commercial finance were quite simplified and advanced. The increasing activities of the traders and merchants in led to the growth of banking system. Several trade payments started to be made partly by cash and partly by bills. The credit vouchers issued known as *Hundis* by which money was transferred from one place to another. Use of hundis or bills of exchange indicate that the use of physical cash was limited. Cash was readily used in the case of short distances mainly.⁶⁸Irfan Habib mentions, "In the seventeenth century, the revenue from Bengal went to Agra in a qafila of bullock-carts whereas in the mid-eighteenth century Jagat Seth transmitted it to Delhi as a hundi drawn on his agents there."⁶⁹ In market, these fully saleable hundis developed, they provided a channel for investments. Hundi business was mainly in the

⁶⁵*Ibid*, 263

⁶⁶*Ibid*, 265

⁶⁷L.C.Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, London: Macmillan & Co,1929, 71

⁶⁸*English Factories in India (1618-21)*,346

⁶⁹Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, and Irfan Habib, 2008, Op. cit., 346

hands of the professional money-changers, the *sarrafs*, who acquired a new and important role as commercial bankers.⁷⁰

The procedure and the system of hundis were elaborate and were used for major transactions. The commission on these Hundis varied from place to place, depended upon the availability or supply of cash and distance between the two places. Irfan Habib mentions that hundi rates took into consideration the difference of the *chalani* (current) and *sikka* (newly coined) rupees, in which the payments had to be made.⁷¹ Some limited time period was given for the encashment of the Hundis beyond which certain interest was charged. Tavernier mentions that in India the period of maturing of a bill was two months,⁷² whereas English Factory records mention it 40 days.⁷³

The Sarrafs

Another category of merchants was money-lender or money-changers / bankers also called *Sarrafs*. They were also *Baniyas* and their presence can be found in almost all type of commerce activities including grain trade. Tavernier mentions, “*In India a village must be very small if it has not a money-changer, who acts as a banker to make remittances of money and issue letters of exchange*”.⁷⁴ In fact, these institutions and business practices helped to mobilize the savings in the economy for purposes of commercial investment or otherwise. The work of *sarraf* was to test and change the money. They accepted deposits, which were payable on demand. Deposits

⁷⁰*Ibid*, 346

⁷¹Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)*, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963, 70

⁷²J. B. Tavernier, 1889, *Op. cit.*, 36

⁷³*English Factories in India (1618-21)*, 247

⁷⁴J. B. Tavernier, 1889, *Op. cit.*, 124

were accepted both in cash and kind. It facilitated the development of a credit money that existed only in *sarrafs*'s books.⁷⁵ They entered the amounts in their books at interest and allowed the bills to be transferred without giving the holders the right to enforce cash payment.⁷⁶ In this way, a large amount of book money could be created without any backing in coin and strength of the general credit enjoyed by the *sarrafs*.⁷⁷ Amount of money created by *sarrafs* by exchanging bills for bills and by transfers of book credit was very large. But, it is impossible to estimate even approximately its size in relation to total coinage.⁷⁸ The *sarrafs* also lent money at very high rates sums, which could not be recalled at short notice.

Sarrafs' skill was also required to know the genuineness of coin as despite the uniformity of Mughal coinage, a coin always had to be expertly examined for its genuineness or metallic purity, age, and weight.⁷⁹ In fact, no payment could be made or received unless the *Sarrafs* has shown the money to assess its purity. One reason of this test was that a silver coin by wear and tear could lose some weight and gradually become lighter.⁸⁰ That means if an amount was deposited with a *Sarrafs* in a new silver coin but payment was made in old coin, high profit was earned by the *Sarrafs* as there was difference in the weight of old and new silver coins.⁸¹ The *Sarrafs* also earned much profit from testing the purity gold and silver. For this work he used to receive a commission of one/sixteenth of a rupee percent.⁸²

⁷⁵ *English Factories in India (1642-45)*, 303

⁷⁶ Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, and Irfan Habib, 2008, Op. cit., 363

⁷⁷ John Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India*, Vol II, London: Kingsbury, Parbury & Allen, 1823, 90

⁷⁸ Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, and Irfan Habib, 2008, Op. cit., 363

⁷⁹ Irfan Habib, 1990, Op. cit., 392

⁸⁰ J. B. Tavernier, 1889, Op. cit., 24

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 28

⁸² *Ibid*, 25

Guilds

Guilds were voluntary associations of merchants dealing in the same type of commodity such as grains, textiles so on They were mainly organizations of mercantile groups as well as of artisans and craftsmen. They helped in regulating business, avoided the competition among the merchants and ensured the interests of the traders. They were formed by both local as well as itinerant merchants. The local merchants association who had a permanent residence in the town were more permanent than the association of itinerant merchants. Itinerant merchants were formed only for a specific journey and was terminated at the end of each venture.

Merchant business was organized under *shrenis*. Guilds were mainly classified on the basis of specialized profession. Guild was headed by *Jetthak*, who controlled other members of *shreni*.⁸³ The head was responsible for his particular guild and every member of the guild had to follow the orders of the head.⁸⁴ These guilds were also involved in the business of money-lending.⁸⁵ They played an important role of bankers. Al Beruni describes eight *shrenis* in his account. They were organized socially and economically and were termed *Antyaja*.⁸⁶ In most of the main centres of trade, some leading *Baniyas* operated under the name of *mahajan*, for a merchant guild. The guild used to fix the rate of exchange and levies free on certain transaction which were spent on human and religious objects.

⁸³P.N.Chopra, B.N. Puri and M.N. Das, *Bharat ka Samajik, Sanskritik Aur Aarthik Itihas*, Vol I, New Delhi: Laxmi Publications, 1975, 133.

⁸⁴*Ibid*, 133

⁸⁵*Ibid*, 123

⁸⁶Qayamuddin Ahmad Bharat, *Al Beruni* (Translation of Kitab-ul-Hind), Ed. by Noor, Nabi Abbasi, New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2004, 41

The Mahajans

In the economic structure, *Mahajan* constituted one of the most influential and dynamic class in medieval period. In fact, they were supported by the state to granting them some trade facilities if they started a business. These facilities were varied from place to place and could be in the nature of reduction of taxes or granting free trade facilities. Hunter mentions, "In India the village economy is entirely based upon the dealings of the village Mahajan and his rate of interest used to be quite high and it was only proportionate to the risks of his business."⁸⁷ The mahajans ranged from very wealthy merchants with immense capital to men with modest capital. These men exported rice, sugar, molasses, extract of sugar-cane, oil, salt and spices. They played very important role in keeping the inter-provincial trade alive. The specialities of one region could easily surface in a distant market because of the extensive trading networks of the mahajans. It should also be noted that a certain section of bankers was also known as mahajans. For example, in the district of Bhagalpur there were seven *Rokari* or *Nukudi* mahajans, who lent money.⁸⁸

The *kothiwals* were rich bankers and took part in the internal trade of the country. Like the mahajans the kothiwals existed virtually in all urban centres from where they operated, through their houses and agents stationed deep in the interior of the country. In the district of Gorakhpur, one such kothiwai called Kanaiyalal, who had his agents stationed at Calcutta, Banaras and Patna.⁸⁹ Bayly in his study of Benaras has shown the rich mahajans and kothiwals who controlled the internal trade of that

⁸⁷ W. W. Hunter, *The Indian empire: its peoples, history, and products*, London: Trubner & co, 1886, 65,

⁸⁸ Francis Buchanan, *The History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India*, Ed. and Abridged by Montgomery Martin, Vol II, London: W. H Allen & Co., 1838, 280-81

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 572

area with Banaras as their base.⁹⁰ Interesting feature about them was the irability to serve as the creditor to the royal houses and nobles, as treasurer to the Company and also as creditor to the Residents for their private trade.

The Shopkeepers

Shopkeepers are naturally different from merchants proper. They were the peddlers who would carry on their business on a small scale.⁹¹ The shopkeepers dealt in grains, spices, fruits, cotton goods and some other commodities also. This was also one of the respectable professions as it paid average to good income, depending upon the type of commodity and the location of the shop. Shopkeepers who started to work at the newly established market were as a rule exempted from the regular customs and duties to be paid there.⁹² Most of the shopkeepers were well to do.⁹³ Pelsaert labelled them 'nominally free', compares their status to workmen, peons and servants.⁹⁴ He mentions that whatever a shopkeeper may deal in - spices, drugs, fruit, cotton goods, cloth, or anything else - the shopkeeper is held in greater respect than the workman. Further, shopkeepers are subject to a rule that if the King's nobles, governors, should require any of his goods, shopkeeper must sell for very little - less than half price.⁹⁵ The shopkeepers, sometimes also afflicted by the thieves who infested the markets.

⁹⁰ Christopher A. Bayly, 1983, Op. cit., 231

⁹¹ Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, and Irfan Habib, 2008, Op. cit., 341-42

⁹² Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, and Irfan Habib, 2008, Op. cit., 202

⁹³ Francisco Pelsaert, 1925, Op. cit., 77-78

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 60

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 63

Surplus of Agricultural Produce

The agricultural output of raw materials depends mainly on the climate like rainfall, fertility of soil and agricultural improvement steps taken by the state, landtenure system, irrigation facilities, transport facilities so on.⁹⁶ As the middle and lower Gangetic plain was alluvial fertile plain with abundance of rainfall, sufficient amount of grains were produced throughout the India.⁹⁷ Several Europeans travellers had mentioned the fact of about the fertility of Indians oil. The fertility of Bengal recorded during the reign of Shahjahan by Bernier.⁹⁸ The food grains were very cheap due to the abundance.

Market

The organization of the market depends upon agricultural produce as these are necessary for the growth and development of an agrarian economy and in medieval period, economy was mainly agrarian. The high level of agrarian taxation ensured that the peasants had to sell much of their produce in order to pay the land revenue.⁹⁹ Local trade involved the sale of grains for the payment of taxes and to support the towns which were growing in size or number. Several producing centres were developed in and around the towns. The raw material was supplied by the hinterland and reached to market after processing. The main producing and processing centres of that period were Sultanpur, Jaunpur etc where one or more than one commodity was manufactured. As these towns were commercial in nature, they acquired much more

⁹⁶Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, *Mughal Economy: Organisation and Working*, Calcutta: NayaProkash, 1987, 8

⁹⁷William Foster, Ed., *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619* (A Collection of Narrative of Ralph Fitch, Mildon Hall, William Finch, Whington, Coryat and Edward Terry), New Delhi: S. Chand, 1968, 298

⁹⁸Francois Bernier, 1916, Op. cit., 438

⁹⁹Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, and Irfan Habib, 2008, Op. cit., 183

wealth, resilience and even endurance.¹⁰⁰ Some trading towns gained their importance due to their position along the major trade routes and at the confluence of important rivers. For example, Mirzapur, which was situated at the highest navigable point at the Ganga had a prosperous trade with Bengal and other parts of India. However, these types of towns are not much in number.

In these towns various types of market emerged. These markets referred to are *Bazar-i-kalan*, *Katra*, *Mandi*, *Ganj*, *Dariba*, *Peth* so on *Bazar-i-kalan* was mainly located in the principal street of the cities and having one or more chowks.¹⁰¹ The Chowks were the prominent place of the city and was always crowded.¹⁰² Some bazars were known by the name of principal chowk was called the *Chowk Bazar*. Whatever be sold in these markets were in retail and wholesale.¹⁰³ The *ganj* was the market mainly for grains.¹⁰⁴ It was a walled structure which was also used for storing the grains. Sometimes it represented the entire pura and was named after the founder. In several towns, there were more than one *ganj* and in that case principal *ganj* was known as *shah-ganj* or imperial *ganj*. It was supervised by the government officials like administrators and tax-collectors. Some other *ganjs* were also established by the *Jagirdars* during the tenure of jagirdari of a particular qasba. *Shah-ganj* mostly was a permanent market whereas those set up by jagirdar would decay after the transfer of jagirdar in most cases.

The *Mandis* in big villages served as the base and the market at provincial capital was the focal point. The *mandi* was the place where commodities

¹⁰⁰H K Naqvi, *Urbanization and Urban Centres under the Great Mughals*, Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1971, 365-66

¹⁰¹William Foster, 1968, Op. cit., 149

¹⁰²F. S. Manrique, *Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique*, Ed. by C.E. Luard, Assisted by H. Hosten,

Vol. II, London: Hakluyt Society, 1927, 191

¹⁰³*English Factories in India (1678-84)*, 270

¹⁰⁴Peter Mundy, 1914, Op. cit., 207

and grains were brought from outside for sale in the city. Usually *mandi* was named after the chief commodities sold there. Sometimes a *mandi* was also named after a particular profession craft prevalent in that location. There used to several *mandi* in a major town and in each a separate commodity used to be sold.¹⁰⁵ In these *mandis* commodities were sold in wholesale and not in retail.

The small market in village and the city market were popular during medieval period. Apart from regular shops, some petty shopkeepers and dealers also carried on their business in some moveable stalls, on pack horses, peddlers.¹⁰⁶ Bigger deals in some commodities were done in special market towns or *Mandis*, which also used to serve convenient media for the surplus of grain produced in the vicinity. There used to be annual and periodical fairs in some towns where some retail merchants and petty shopkeepers of the nearby places used to come to sell their commodities. In fact, this type of market is not only dominated by grains but sale of all kinds of cattle like Cows, Oxen, Horses, Buffaloes etc and people used to come from the long distances to buy or sell their animals.¹⁰⁷

The *Peth(hat)* was a market held at a fixed place around the city or at a village on a fixed day, for example, once in a week or twice in a week. Here some small Baniyas, local manufacturer used to assemble to sell their product. This market was started in the morning and continued till a little before sun-set.¹⁰⁸ Here things of daily need like foodstuff, oil, rice, sugar, ghee so on were sold and purchased.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Mahendra Pal Singh, *Administration of towns and markets under the Mughals (1556-1707)*, Aligarh:

Aligarh Muslim University, 1973, 185

¹⁰⁶ K.M. Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, New Delhi :Munshiram, 1967, 137

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 137-38

¹⁰⁸ Mahendra Pal Singh, 1973, *Op. cit.*, 187

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

Shopkeeper used to sell their product either in small stalls on the ground or in the open.¹¹⁰

Trade with towns and cities, unlike the villages, was quite more varied and complicated. Bazaars developed in and around towns and cities and in some cities, there were shops on each side of the main street. For example, bazaar of Hugli showed exchange of almost all types of commodities. Tavernier mentions that some producers used to market their own products in these markets.¹¹¹ Apart from this, there was intra-regional and intralocal trade was carried out through the urban centre. The main difference between rural and urban bazaar was that in rural bazaars the commodities were of local products, whereas in urban bazaars the commodities were collected from other places also. The rural bazaars used to serve the local inhabitants only, but urban bazaars, apart from this, used to serve some outside dealers and traders also. In case of inter-local trade there was only one-way process i.e. the commodities were transferred from the village to town. There was non-existence of the system of exchange. Both credit and commerce were aided by the institution of brokerage, which was present in almost all parts of India.¹¹²

These markets performed two types of distinct functions: i) local buyers were provided with several commodities for consumption and ii) local markets exported several commodities to distant markets for consumption of buyers of the latter and at many times, some organization performed those dual functions of the market. Some traders were dealing both types of functions whereas in some instances there was no link between these two types of markets. In small scale markets goods were gathered from places within a sort radius and primarily meant for the local consumption in

¹¹⁰*English Factories in India (1618-21)*, 138

¹¹¹J. B. Tavernier, 1889, Op. cit., 96-97

¹¹²K.M. Ashraf, 1967, Op. cit., 138-39

Mandis or wholesale markets. The isolated rural market was that type of market where local surplus produces were exchanged among the producers and consumers.¹¹³

In periodic fairs, specialized traders used to meet to sell and replace their stocks, but consumers were not excluded.

Control of Market

The control of market was done by the town's administration system as it affected the interests of the public and the government critically. For this purpose, various officers were appointed whose duties were to ensure proper functioning, supervision and control of various markets. To control the market, one important tool was to restrict the sale and purchase of the commodities to specified markets. Abul Fazal mentions that it was the duty of kotwal not to allow purchases to be made outside of the city.¹¹⁴

Some officers were also appointed to fix the prices of commodities in the market. Abul Fazl mentions that the kotwal should use his discretion to secure the reduction of prices.¹¹⁵ Apart from supply of goods, sale and purchase of goods also were regulated and controlled.¹¹⁶ Some items before being offered for sale were stamped by government contractors to maintain the required standard of the quality of products. In this regard, defaulters were punished.¹¹⁷

The *kotwal* and the *muhtasibs* were responsible to see that standard weights and measures were used in transactions. Custom levies and other taxes from the various sections of the people were collected by the administration, such as the toll taxes from the markets and on the goods entering the city. Several officers were appointed and allocated in this regard which varied and depended upon the size of the

¹¹³Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, and Irfan Habib, 2008, Op. cit., 339-40

¹¹⁴Abul Fazl-i-Allami, 1949, Op. cit., 44

¹¹⁵*Ibid*, 44

¹¹⁶*English Factories in India (1618-21)*, 187

¹¹⁷J. B. Tavernier, 1889, Op. cit., 187

town and its commercial significance. Illegal gratification to the officers concerned was quite prevalent. The custom posts called *chowkis* were mostly situated near the city gates so that collection of taxes would be convenient. Apart from this, a large number of the custom stations were also located within and outside the town. Peons were posted at various stations to assist the custom officials. A custom house was called the *chabutra*. Whenever a new vessel arrived in the city, registration of the vessel was done in *chabutra* and after that they were given the permission to enter the city.¹¹⁸

Thus, grain trade in Medieval India was voluminous and multifarious. There were many small and big trades going on in various regions of the country. Due to well managed administration, majority of the trade activities were properly managed and controlled. This overall contributed to the economy of the middle and lower Gangetic plain.

¹¹⁸F.S Manrique, 1927, Op. cit., 135-137

CONCLUSION

The research focuses on urbanization in medieval India in middle and lower Gangetic plain. An effort has been made to understand the making of region, assessment of its agrarian potential, its role in emergence and development of urban settlements and their relations with the rural settlements. It analyses what were the factors that during this period towns started to appear almost in all the directions of this region. It also tries to establish relationship between the geographical factors and their impact on the growth of the towns. The towns grew so flourishingly because they were supported with rich agricultural hinterland. Increased agricultural production provided a complementary base for the rise of an urban structure. The agricultural prosperity in this regard, for both food grains and cash crops especially the cotton crop supported the urbanization. Food grains sustained the urban population while cash crops feed the industry. Surplus agricultural production made people find new ways of investing and they had to find new towns and markets. They also started travelling from one place to another in search of market, where they can sell their surplus.

Though middle and lower Gangetic plain was much productive, still it could not achieve its potential in early medieval period. The change was brought through the efforts in the field of irrigation by the digging of the canals, wells and other means of irrigation from 13th century onward. This period witnessed an increase in extent of cultivation, high yield and surplus revenue which enhanced the economic potential of the region. Thus, the role of the artificial irrigation became vital in the growth of agrarian economy of the region. The maximum benefits of increased production were extracted out of the production of food crops though the cash and other crops also

played a significant role. The horticulture activity was also very important. Special efforts were made for the plantation of fruit trees from the time of Firuz Shah Tuglaq which retained their importance throughout the medieval period.

In Medieval period, we find symbiotic relationship between the urban and the rural areas which was one of the important factors in the urbanization of middle and lower Gangetic plain. An unprecedented agrarian expansion took place during medieval period which is reflected by several references to numerous land grants made in uncultivated, barren and forested areas. Improved irrigational facilities, new agricultural techniques, better knowledge of new crops, use of manures were some of the factors which led to the surplus production. This period also experienced the tremendous pressure of growing population and therefore, more people were being accommodated on the available land and some uncultivated areas brought under the agriculture. A great degree of agrarian expansion led to the emergence and development of urban centres. The increased agricultural production and the emergence of urban centres bridged the gap between the towns and rural areas which increased the circulation and consumption of goods. The cities were dependent on rural areas for obtaining the food grains and other raw materials and in-turn they exported the finished goods from the cities to the rural areas to compensate the trade.

The geographical situation and the topography of the region also determined the choice of the original sites for the development of cities. A large number of cities became increasingly more important because they were situated on the bank of a navigable river or near a good harbour or at a site which provided suitable defence or in the centre of a productive area. The trade routes and transportation facilities also greatly influenced the growth of the towns. Most of the cities in the medieval period were situated on or near the trade routes.

The cities of middle and lower Gangetic plain, during medieval period were large and prosperous and expanded tremendously in size, extent, population; in commerce, trade and industries. In fact, some of these towns were compared in size and population with European towns like London and Paris. However, some towns declined due to natural calamities. In most of the towns public institutions like schools, mosques, wells, sarais and gardens were constructed for the benefit of the people. These institutions were properly administered. Furthermore, the efficient and effective administration of the towns, helped in maintaining peace and order, supervising trade and proper collection of tolls and taxes.

The cities with a larger population were active centres of trade and commerce as the number of consumers was more. This also attracted the rural population, who brought their products and goods for sale and purchased the articles which were necessary. Some professionals like the servants, soldiers, artisans and skilled craftsmen were also hired mostly from the rural population and in this way, those who moved from the villages and small towns to the city, acted as a source of income for their respective families. Thus, villages and small towns were in constant touch with the larger cities by means of trade or socio-cultural activities which was mutually beneficial for them.

The urbanization in the medieval period was also helped by the development of significant domestic industries and commercial centres. As the trade relations strengthened with other regions, the towns developed and their importance increased. Further, the movement of the people from rural area to urban area increased the population of towns. These towns were gradually evolved into several categories like administrative cities, commercial cities, industrial cities, cultural cities, religious cities so on. For example, Allahabad which is situated on the confluence of Ganga and

Yamuna, developed as a seat of government. Benaras situated on the Ganga, developed as a seat of learning and a pilgrimage centre for Hindus. Most of the towns of medieval India had their origin generally to administrative, commercial and military causes, but a very large number of them developed as industries expanded. Most of the towns retained their commercial character for a long time and still are centre of economic activity. The commercial and manufacturing character of the towns extended their influence over the neighbouring regions. These towns became active centres of trade.

Towns, which were primarily of administrative importance gradually became important centres of commerce and industry. In fact, no town retained purely one character. The capital towns were not entirely dependent upon the court and the presence of the royal camp, but commerce and industry dominated these towns. Some towns of military and strategic importance gradually also became administrative centres. Some of these towns might not have had much commercial or industrial development, still because of large population some minor industries were developed and played an important role in the economic life of the region.

In medieval period, village agricultural economy became developed which gave an unabated economic and industrial base to urbanisation. Some industries that prospered were textiles, sugar, salt, paper and metal ware. As industrial production was in surplus, it gave rise to trade, transport, commerce and growth of towns. Most of the towns and cities were interconnected by roads or waterways facilities. Provision were also made for lodging and boarding facilities in sarais and water arrangements. Safety of travellers was also ensured by the administrative authorities which accelerated the process of urbanisation.

The flourishing urban economy supported well by the promising political circumstances which were highly beneficial to commerce and trade. These relations required a free economy of exchange of trade and services between the city and the rural areas. The emerging and expanding markets fulfilled the needs of the people by the supply of different types of goods. These increasing trade activities required participation of a mercantile community who carried different articles from one place to another. Traders and merchants had to look for new production centres from where they can purchase the goods and markets where they can sell these goods. In fact, merchants traded in commodities which they themselves did not produce. The existence of various groups of merchants and the techniques existed for trade and transport speaks about economic dynamism in the middle and lower Gangetic plain. An effort has been made on the merchants and some mercantile communities like the Banjaras, Baniyas, brokers so on. What were the forms of mercantile organization, commercial and financial techniques have also been discussed. This attempt to evaluate the financial conditions, transactions and methods that were prevalent in medieval period.

The development of the banking system, bills of exchange (hundi) and insurance in the medieval period indicates that advanced nature of the centralized commerce administration was developed. Several officers were appointed to administer and control the markets properly so that interest of both the public and government may not be ignored. Standard weights, coins and other measures in business transactions were taken to discourage the fraud. The merchants from other countries had to obtain a licence from the governing authority to pursue any commercial activity. A record was also being maintained of the arrival and departure of the foreign merchants.

The existence of various groups of merchants and peddlers and the techniques existed for trade and transport speaks about economic dynamism of medieval India. Along with the other issues, present topic also highlights about banjara community and their socio-cultural aspects. Banjaras community occupied important place in the society and their role in economic and cultural sphere was very important. Banjaras were perhaps the most travelled tribe in medieval and modern times. As a result of their wandering habits, they are a very mixed race. An effort has also been made by focusing more on the merchants and selected mercantile communities like the Banjaras (long-distance transporters), Baniyas, brokers, sarrafs so on

All of these progressive activities contributed towards the urbanization process in the medieval period. This study focuses from the foundation of urbanization to the pinnacle of urbanization during this period.

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