

CHIEF TRADE CENTERS & SEA PORTS DURING MUGHAL PERIOD FROM 1526 TO 1707

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ABSTRACT

Inland trade during the Mughal Period was wide ranged from intra local to between the towns. The material which villages supplied for towns there were grouped in a general way as raw materials, necessities and luxuries. The trade centers were of two kinds- Inland towns & Port towns. A few towns grew as 'localized markets' for particular goods secured through inter- regional trade from where commodities, agricultural products and other manufactured goods moved to other centers or ports. Development of internal and foreign trade had great impact on the growth of urbanization. Face of villages changed altogether. They turned into big industrial or commercial centers. Its typical example was Masulipattam. Internal trade Markets in various towns were established in wide range. Commercial activities of these towns were conducted from the various markets such as Bazar-a-Khas, Katra, mandi, ganj, dariba, nakhas, Mela and other seasonal and non-seasonal markets. Port towns were the chief centers of vibrant urban life during the medieval period. These were the centers of coastal and foreign trade. The ports were a great source of revenue for the rulers of those age.

Keywords: *Inland-trade, Massulipatam, Indigo, Katra, Pandariba, Nakhas, Peths.*

Introduction

Inland trade during the Mughal Period was wide ranged from purely intra-local, confined to one particular producing unit, village or town to local i.e. between different villages and towns, and between towns distributing their respective products to meet mutual needs. Generally speaking, the trend of the movement of goods was from the village (or groups of villages) to town. But the village was not actually self-sufficient in all its needs, which were partly supplied through the rural markets and the paddlers and partly through traditional customary obligations. Such inland trade would be inter-regional when confined to a small region and inter- country or cross country if covering the length and breadth of the country. Villages supplied different raw materials for urban manufactures for ex- cotton and silk to textile and forests yielded wood for ships, boats and furniture. The material which villages supplied for towns there may be grouped in a general way as raw materials, necessities and luxuries.

The most important items were food stuffs and coarse, cheap textiles. Despite the prohibitive cost of inland transport these, through heavy, were necessities. Bengal, where all kinds of food were plentiful, used to replenish most deficit areas in food grains. Agra got rice, sugar and butter from Bengal and also some wheat from Bengal and Bihar via Patna along the Ganges. Strange to say sometimes surplus areas also tracked in food grains. Massulipatam in North Coromandal took cheaper Bengal and Orissa rice. Gujrat, reputed for her manufacturing and commercial importance, had to import food grains from Malwa, Rajputana and northern India via Agra and rice from the Deccan, Gondwana and from Malabar. Supply of food was generally responsive to demand. Bengal had to import salt via Agra down Ganges. Inter- regional interdependence in certain sphere was a striking feature in inland trade. For example- silk industry of Gujrat depended wholly on Bengal raw silk largely replacing Chinese in the 17th century. Bengal also had to depend on raw cotton of Surat - Burhanpur region coming from Agra along the Ganges. Textile manufacture needed indigo and other dyes grown only in particular areas. Further,

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for washing and dying, clothes woven throughout the country had to be dispatched to places like Agra, Ahmedabad, Massulipatam and a few places in Bengal. Luxuries included finer varieties of rice, mangoes finer textile, Malabar spices including pepper, ginger, cardamom, cinnamon etc., products from Kashmir e.g. Shawl and wood crafts, Bengal lac for Gujrat lacquerware, Bihar opium to Bengal and Malwa opium to different parts. Bengal exported her sugar by sea to all India and by river to Agra. Slaves procured by Mughals and the Portuguese were available in Bengal for disposal in different areas. There were number of towns which were known for their trade and commercial activities. Some of them emerged during Mughal reign in India as big commercial towns. Right from Kabul, Kashmir upto peninsular India in each and every region there were big commercial centers. Prof. Irfan Habib's remarkable work *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire* we find glimpses of trade centers of India during 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

These trade centers can be classified in two parts:

- Inland towns
- Port towns.

Inland Trade centers

Along the rivers or trade routes flourished numerous industrial and commercial centers of trade and imperia, where from commodities, agricultural products and other manufactured goods moved to other centers or ports. A few towns grew as 'localized markets' for particular goods secured through inter-regional trade. Proceeding from the east to the west in northern India the principal emporium was-Satgaon, Hugh, Kasim bazaar, Dacca, Calcutta, Patna, Banaras, Lucknow, Agra, Delhi, Multan, Lahore, Qandahar, Kabul, Thatta, Ahmadabad. In Southern India Burhanpur, Surat, Golkonda, Massulipatam, Balasore, Goa etc. Alexander Chicherov given the list of main commercial and industrial centers of India thus-; Lahore in Punjab, Thatta, Lahri, Sahwan, Karachi, Camby, Ahamadabad, Bhruh, Surat; in Gujrat; Bombay, Choi, Goa; Manglore, Canoor, Calicut, Cochin in Malabar, Nagapattam, Trankubar, Malapur, Kanchipuram, Madras, Pulicut, Nizampattam, Masulipattam, N arasapur in Coromandal; Warangal, Golkonda, Ahmadanagar in Deccan; Burhapur In Khandesh, Sironj in Rajasthan, Delhi, Agra, Banaras in Hindustan; Patna, Luckhwar, Bhagalpur in Bihar; Malda, Dacca, Sonargaon, Chotgaon, Hugli, Qasimbazar, Murshidabad in Bengal; Cuttack, Balasore, Hariharpur; Puri, Ganjam in Orissa; Vishakhapattanam in Andhra; Srinagar in Kashmir etc. Development of internal and foreign trade had great impact on the growth of urbanization. Face of villages changed altogether. They turned into big industrial or commercial centers Its typical example was Masulipattam. W. Mathald who visited Masulipattam in early seventeenth century writes that- it is a small town but densely populated. It has no city wall. It was a small village of fisherman now with the growth of trade population has increased roads have improved.

Growth of foreign trade in 15th and 16th century promoted the development of Camby and it became one of the biggest trade centers of Asia. It influenced other towns like Choi, Surat, Calicut, Surgaon and others. Goa was not only a big trading center of India but of Asia. At the end of the 16th century on the bank of the Bhagirathi Portuguese established a factory in a village. Around this factory settlements of workmen turned this village into a town and this town came to known as Hugli and the river also Hugli. With the help of Dutch trade Nagpattam and Kudallore grew rapidly. It was a settlement of workmen who prepared goods for export. In the mid of 16th century Patna was small town on the bank of river Ganges. In 1541 Shershah found this village very potent in terms of commerce and trade. He decided to construct a fort there and declared it the capital of Bihar suba. Very soon Patna became one of the chief commercial centers of North India. Chicherov writes that with the decline of trade and commerce decline of that urban center was quite natural. For example Satgaon was the biggest commercial center of Bengal in 16th century, but the tributary of Hugli on the bank of which this town was settled turned its route so the water level of river fell down. Now ships were not able to reach there. With this the town started to decline as commercial center. Decline of Thatta, a big commercial center in Sindh, was a similar example where silting of river trade declined by the time and the town lost its importance.

Internal trade Markets in the town

Urbanization was a simultaneous process of commercialism. Commercial activities of these towns were conducted from the various markets such as Bazar-a-Khas, Katra, mandi, ganj, dariba, nakhas, Mela and other seasonal and non-seasonal markets. Out of these, the permanent markets were the Six. The remaining 3 were periodic in nature depending upon their being organized on the basis of

time such as once a week, occasional and season based. The period was ranging from once a day in a week or two times in a week, fair at some holy place could last for a few days and seasonal markets can be there for few months. The bazaar-i-Khas or Kalan was being settled at the most prominent streets of the cities. The key feature was the one or more chauks (or Chauraha) i.e. the place where four roads meet. Katra was the small market place having a few shops around or within the nobles' living place and were used for mainly supplying the provisions, which later on developed into a larger market or suburb of a town. At Katraparcha at Ahmedabad, which was a great market and a fiscal division for custom collection, yarn, hides and a variety of drugs imported from the port of Surat used to be sold. The Katraparcha existed at Delhi and Surat and probably in other big cities also. There was Katra-i-nil (indigo) at Delhi, Katra-i-sabun (soap) at Agra, Katra-i-reshum (silk) at Banaras. Mandi used to be the place where the commodities and other related items was brought from outside for sale in the city. The mandi could have been easily recognized as the same was named after the main commodity that was sold there. Sometimes the mandi was also commonly named in recognition of a particular profession or craft. The key feature of the mandis was the sale and purchase of different commodities in bulk quantity and not in retail. There used to exist a short lane or street which was called as dariba. The daribapan or pandariba usually referred to a street or markets where betel leaves were sold. In earlier days, the daribapan market was quite existing in almost every city. There existed a specific kind of daily market which were known as nakhas. In these nakhas cows, buffaloes, oxen, elephants, horses, camels, hen, partridges, donkey, goats, pigeons etc. were sold both at both wholesale and retail level. At Agra, it was held in a covered building known as imarat-i-nakhas daily in the morning. There existed a market which was held at a fixed place around the city or at villages on fixed days- usually once a week and were commonly known as peth or hat. In these markets the things of daily necessity, oil, ghee, food-stuffs, goods such as cloth, indigo, sugar, thread, cotton and rice were sold. The peths usually had stalls on the ground and in the open for the sale of the commodities. There also existed seasonal or temporary bazaars at selected places only such as at the port's towns of Surat, Hugli, Satgaon etc. These bazaars catered especially to the needs of those waiting for the arrival and departure of the ships.

Chief sea ports of east and west coast

Port towns were the chief centers of vibrant urban life during the medieval period. These were the centers of coastal and foreign trade. W.H. Moreland has differentiated Indian seaports from the European ports. The ports were a great source of revenue for the rulers of those age. Sultan Sikandar Lodi, the ruler of Gujarat is reported to have once said, the pivot of the padshahi of Delhi is wheat and barley and the pivot of the padshahi of Gujarat is coral and pearl, because it has eighty-four ports under its control'. The Mughal treasury drew considerable revenue from the collection of custom duty which was levied on the merchandise that was imported or exported by sea, and collected at the ports. With the conquest of Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat and Golkonda a number of ports lying in those provinces came into the possession of the Mughals.

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