



## AN EVALUATION OF ECONOMY UNDER THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

**Dr. SanjeevKumar Tandle**

Assistant Professor of History , Govt. First Grade College Manhalli ,  
Tq. & Dist Bidar, Karnataka.

### ABSTRACT

Very little is known about the economic condition of the people of India during the Reigns of Babur and Humayun. It is true that Babur has given us a description of the people of India in his Memoirs but that is not considered to be accurate. In Humayun-nama of Gulbadan Begam. There is a reference to the cheap prices that prevailed in the country. It is stated that four goats could be had for one rupee at Amarkot the place where Akbar was born. A reference to the Aini-Akbari of Abul Fazal also shows that wheat was sold at that time at the rate of 12 Dams per Man. Barley at 8, Gram at 16 ½, Jawar at 10, Millet at 8, Ghee at 105, Oil at 80, Milk at 25, and white Sugar at 128 Dams per Man. The vegetables were also cheap. A sheep could be had for Rs. 18.0 and a cow for Rs. 10. The Man of Akbar was equal 55 ½ Pounds. If the prices of the commodities were low, the wages were also low. An unskilled labourer ordinarily earned 2 dams or 1/20<sup>th</sup> part of a rupee per day. A highly skilled labourer, e.g., a carpenter, was paid 7 Dams a day. The view of V.A. Smith and Moreland is that "The ordinary labourer in the time of Akbar had more to eat that he has now and he was happier than he is to-day. That was very much due to the fact that the prices of grains were very low." In this connection the present article evaluate the economic condition under the Mughal Empire.



**KEY WORDS:** Currency, Famines, Agriculture, Goods Manufacture, Foreign Trade.

### INTRODUCTION:

It is difficult to write about the economic conditions of Mughal India as the material on the subject is scanty. Contemporary writers, particular Mohammadan Historians, tell us practically nothing of the man in the street and his ways of living. V.S. Smith rightly points out that the Mohammadan Writers confine their record to "a chronic of kings, courts and conquests, rather than one of national and economic evolution". From one point of view, the History of the Mughal Empire can be regarded as little more than the history of the rulers of the three towns of Lahore, Delhi and Agra. It is rightly pointed out that there was not much to write about the life of the people of the villages as the same was hopelessly dull and monotonous. The various aspects of the economic life of the people may be studied under the following heads. In this context the present article deals with the study of economic condition under the Mughal Empire.

### AIM AND OBJECTIVES:

- To Study the economic condition under the Mughal Empire.
- To know the status of currency during Mughal Empire.
- To analyze the Famines under Mughals.

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- To know the condition of agriculture under Mughal administrations
  - To explore the foreign trade during Mughal Empire.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is historical as well as analytical and based on the historical records, which consists of primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected from lithic records, monuments and other unpublished works. The secondary data were collected from State Archives of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh., various books, journals and articles etc. are also used in the present study. The primary and secondary source material has been of great help in the development of the present paper.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The present study is aimed of examining and evaluating the economy under the Mughal Empire. The present study falls in the area of economic condition under the Mughals in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which in turn falls within the range of political history of Medieval India. The researchers in the field of political history nominated historical research during the pre-independent period. The post independent period however witnessed a short decline in the study of political history. But the study of economic condition under the Mughal Empire will be widen the scope of political history of Mughal Empire for further research.

A critical review of the existing literature and also the aims and objectives of the study on hand brings forth the importance of the study.

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Studies on Economic Condition under the Mughal Empire are in general are numerous. However, specific studies like the present one are few and far between.

**Hukum Chand**, in his famous book titled History of Medieval India has given the history of Central Administration of Mughal Empire which still appended to the his works, excellent as the work was for the time and for the sources and historical material at their disposal, it suffered from the neglect of the evidence available in the various forms in literature, which go a long way towards filling up the many gaps that in respect of that history.

Among the general studies **K N Chitnis** Socio Economic History of Medieval India deals with the Socio Economic Condition under the Mughal Empire in an Indian Context. This study also deals under the veneer of a uniform Socio Economic System during Mughal's Rule.

**Satish Chandra** book entitled "History of Medieval India" is one more scholarly work on the history of Mughal Empire. This book explains the establishment of Central Administration and Economic organization aspect related with the Mughal's rule.

**V D Mahajan, Mahesh Bhatnagar** "History of Medieval India" is one more qualitative work on the administrative system in the rule of Mughal Empire. In this work author has elaborated the Economy under the Mughal's rule.

Thus, it becomes clear from the above studies that, they have concentrated much on the political and administrative aspect of Mughal Empire. Though there were some vague studies concentrating on the political history but they were related to particular reason and no effort has been made exclusively to study the Economic Condition under Mughal's rule at macro level, therefore this research study has been initiated to fill the research gap on Economy set-up during the Mughal's.

## AN EVALUATION OF ECONOMY UNDER THE MUGHAL EMPIRE: A STUDY

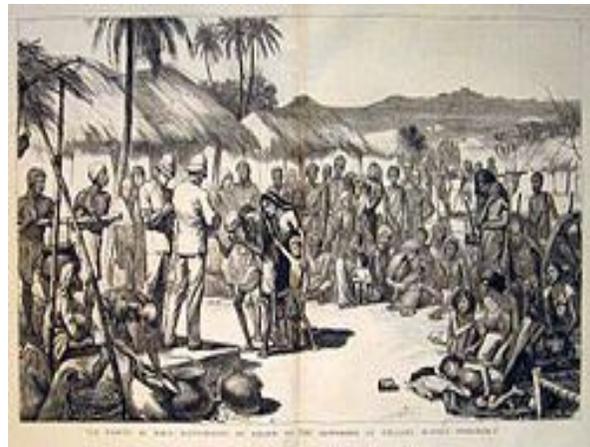
### Currency:



Jahangir's sagittarius mohur

Sher shah Suri abolished the old currency and issued a copper coin called Dam. Its weight varied between 311 grains and 322 grains. The Dam was a copper coin which was 40<sup>th</sup> part of the rupee. Its weight was 5 tankas or one tola, 8 mashas and 7 surkhs. The weight of a silver rupees was 11 ½ mashas. Such a rupees was introduced by Sher Shah. The coin which was generally used by the people was the Dam. The revenue of the State was also calculated in terms of Dam. There was not much alteration in the currency after the death of Akbar. The rupee contained 175 grains of silver. It was worth 40 Dams up to 1616. From 1627 onwards, the value of a rupee was about 30 Dams. There were rupees of several denominations and weights, but the Chalani was accepted as the standard coin[1]. The foreign travelers specifically tell us that the Indian Rupee was made of pure silver.

### Famines:



There were many famines during the Mughal period. Badaoni tells us that "A Famine broke out in the neighborhood of Agra and Biyaba in 1555-56. He writes thus about that famines: "Men ate their own kind and the appearance of the famished suffers was so hideous that one could scarcely look upon them. The whole country was a desert." There was another serious famine in 1573-74 in Gujarat. The prices shot up and the people suffered terribly.

Another famine lasted for four years from 1595 to 1598. On that occasion, "Men ate their own kind and streets were blocked up with dead bodies and no assistance could be rendered for the removal" the famine was followed by epidemics and floods[2]. It is pointed out that Akbar was the First Ruler who provided relief to those who had suffered from famines.

**Agriculture:**

Agriculture was the main industry of the people of India. The peasants took full advantage of the peace established by the Mughals in the country. They were willing to devote all their time and energy to produce more. It is true that the prices were low and the peasants could afford to live within less money, but on the whole their condition was very hard. The demands of the king, the officials and the nobles did not leave much with them. Most of the Rice was grown in India in Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Eastern Coast, the Western Coast, the Tamil areas and Kashmir. Allahabad, Avadh, Khandesh and Gujarat also produced some rice[3]. Wheat and barley were grown in the Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Agra, etc. Jowar was the main Khariff Crop in Dipalpur Region. Wheat was the principal Rabi Crop. Millets were particularly grown in Ajmer, Gujarat and Khandesh. Pulses was produced all over the country.

**Goods Manufactured:**

The important crafts of Mughal India were wooden bedsteads, chests, stools and boxes. Leather goods were produced in small quantities. Paper Pottery, and Bricks were manufactured in large quantities. Edward Terry tells us that many curios boxes, trunks, standishes (Pen cases) carpets, etc., were procurable in Mughal Dominions. Excellent cotton cloth was manufactured at Banaras, at Agra, in Malwa, the Deccan and Gujarat[4]. Maslin of very fine quality, "the best and finest in all India", was produced at Sonargaon in the Decca District. Miscellaneous goods such as cotton carpets, coverlets, rugs, ropes, bed tapes, etc., were manufactured everywhere. Moreland tells us that "The aggregate production of cotton goods was one of the great facts of the industrial world of the year 1600. So much of cotton was produced in the country that after clothing the people of India, the same was exported to Africa, Arabia, Egypt, Burma, Malacca, the Straits and other Asiatic Markets. The demand for Indian Cotton Cloth was increased all the more by the activities of the English and Dutch Traders who carried the Indian Goods to European Markets. It is rightly pointed out that the English Traders laid the foundation of the Gujarat Export trade in Calicos. Madras Calicoes were also sent to foreign countries. With the rise in demand, more and more of cotton cloth came to be produced in the country.

Metal work also developed considerably during the Mughal period. Indian swords and daggers won great popularity[5]. Gold and Silver were used for ornaments. Building industry also developed during this period. Precious stones were mined on a large scale and cut to different shapes.

### Foreign Trade:

There was a great increase in the Foreign Trade of the country. Akbar and Jahangir took great interest in the foreign sea-borne trade, although they took no steps to strengthen their navy in order to establish Mughal supremacy on the sea. Akbar himself took part in foreign trade and was anxious to make profits out of it. In the time of Akbar, the important outlets for foreign sea-borne trade were the ports of Cambay and Surat, Bengal (Particularly Satgaon), the Coromondal Coast, the Malabar Coast and the Indus. It appears that the Bengal Ports were not so much popular as the other ports. That was partly due to the constant wars and rebellions and also the presence of the pirates in the Hugli. On land, the export trade followed the routes from Lahore to Kabul and from Multan to Kandhar. The traffic was restricted and irregular. That was due to the fact that the goods were to be carried on pack-animals and there was always the danger of robbery and violence on the way.



In the time of Akbar, the chief items of export were textiles, pepper, indigo, opium, and other drugs and miscellaneous goods. What was imported from abroad was bullion, horses, metals, ivory, drugs, China goods, precious stones, coral, textiles including silk, velvet brocade and broad cloth, European wines and African Slaves. China goods were imported in large quantities as there was a great demand for them not only by the Emperor but by the nobles.

The total foreign trade of India at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was not very large. That was partly due to the fact that there was no market for European goods among the people of India on account of the high price of European goods. Moreover, the Indian traders demanded that they must be paid in gold or silver for the goods exported from India. However, things changed a little after the death of Akbar as foreign merchants gradually opened new markets for Indian Calicoes, Saltpetre, Indigo, raw silk and other commodities and Europe had to find money for her agents in India to buy Indian goods. During the reigns of Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, the Dutch and the English set up direct trade between India and the West. By 1625, the trade in indigo and Calicoes was established. Surat became the chief centre for European Imports and Exports. By 1650, the English and the Dutch were firmly established in all the important marts of the coast from Sindh to Bengal. The calicoes of Madras, saltpeter of Bihar and the silk and sugar of Bengal were the important item of India's trade with Europe during the time of Aurangzeb[6]. It is interesting to note that Mughal emperors imported dogs from Europe. Terry tells us that two dogs were brought by Sir Thomas Roe from Jahangir and the Emperor asked him to send for another pair of dogs.

### CONCLUSION / FINDINGS:

One cannot help observing that during the Mughal Period, there was inadequate production and faulty distribution. The distribution continued to deteriorate with the passage of time. It is rightly pointed out that the great evil was "administrative exploitation, which in Akbar's time and from a much earlier period dominated and sterilized the energies of the population of India". The producers were always at the mercy of the bureaucracy and the nobility who were accustomed to a life of luxury and display and did not

hesitate to exploit and harass the masses who contributed “half their gross income to the support of a relatively small number of economic parasites”.

Mr. W.H. Moreland in his book entitled “From Akbar to Aurangzeb” has made the following observation with regard to the economic system during the major portion of the 17<sup>th</sup> century “Weavers, naked themselves, toiled to clothe others. Peasants, themselves, hungry, toiled to feed the towns and cities. India, taken as a unit, parted with useful commodities in exchange for gold and silver, or in other words, gave bread for stones. Men and women, living from season to season on the verge of hunger, could be contented so long as the supply of food held out: when it failed, as it so often did, their hope of salvation was the slave trader, and the alternatives were cannibalism, suicide, or starvation. The only way of escape from that system lay through an increase in production, coupled with a rising standard of life, but this road was barred effectively by the administrative methods in vogue, which penalized production and regarded every indication of increased consumption as a signal for fresh extortion”.

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:**

There is wide scope for the Research Scholars and Teachers to conduct a Research on Economic Condition of Mughal Empire. Present study is having good future towards M.Phil, Ph.D Programs.

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