

A Study on Evolution of Society And Economy in the Mugal Empire

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Abstract:

Babur's victory over Ibrahim Lodi in the First Battle of Panipat marked the beginning of the Mughal or Mughal Empire in the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal emperors were of Turko-Mongol origin and Muslim from Central Asia. The classical era of the Mughal Empire began with the accession of Akbar in 1556. During the rule of Akbar and his son Jahangir, the economic progress in India advanced a lot. As a result of the various steps taken by the Mughal emperors, a gradual evolution was observed in the socio-economic life.

Social Status of Mugal Age

Divided Society: European travelers and traders' accounts of social conditions during the Mughal period. A lot of information is available from Chamber of Commerce papers. A lot of information is also available from the autobiographies of Babur and Jahangir, 'Ain-i-Akbari' by Abul Fazl and various provincial literatures. Indian society during the Mughal period was somewhat like a feudal society. The society was mainly divided into three classes—first, Badshah-Amir-Umrah; Second, traders and low-ranking employees; and third, the peasantry and the poor masses. The king was the head of state and society. He possessed irresistible power and immense opulence. Amir-Omrahs had a place in the society after the king. These were the elite class of the society. Many of them were the owners of large jagirs. The lands enjoyed by the Mughal princes were called 'Tumul'. The land reserved for the king was called 'Khalisha' and the land which was for grant was called 'Paybaki'. A large part of the empire was used as jagirs. The title of Jagirdars was not hereditary and did not pass from father to son. A jagirdar's jagir was vested as long as he was engaged in his reign. Jagirdars had no ownership over land.

Upper class: Jagirdars collected rent from peasants through village panchayats. Jagir, however, was not always limited to land-revenue. It also included collection and assessment of duties. Therefore Jagirdars were the highest class people in the society and their influence and prestige in the society was also immense. Mansabdars also had a special place in the society during the Mughal period. The word 'mansab' means 'position' or place. Every important official of the Mughal Empire had a mansab. As there was no such thing as military or civilian, the Mansabdar were employed in both. Mansabdars were divided into thirty-three classes. The main feature of the Mansabdari system was that the Mansabdars were always dependent on the king for money. Mansabdars who took jagirs in lieu of cash had no ownership over jagirs. Mansabdars used to get fixed land revenue instead of cash. The land was also transferred on the death or resignation of the Mansabdar. Moreover, during the Mughal era, the state policy was that after the death of a noble (mansabdar, jagirdar, etc.), his subject-property would pass

under the state. Because of this, the elite used to spend their wealth on luxury while they were still alive. It was a colossal social waste.

Apart from jagirdars, mansabdars, there was a class called zamindars in Mughal society. They had a special influence in the society. The main difference between zamindars and jagirdars is that the position of jagirdars was not hereditary, while zamindars were. Those who got ownership of land under different conditions were Zamindars. Of course, there was also stratification among the zamindars. The native kings were first class landlords. At the lowest level of zamindars were the early class petty zamindars. They were called 'Malgajari' or 'Malwajir' zamindars. Their influence on rural society was immense.

Common Class and Middle Class: Many believe that a strong middle class did not emerge during the Mughal period. Barney did not mention this category. He spoke of two classes in Indian society during the Mughal era - rich and poor ("a man must either be of the highest rank or live miserably."). But many have mentioned the middle class consisting of traders, doctors, clerks, shopkeepers, merchants etc. However, during the Mughal period the 'middle class' was underdeveloped. Most of the country were working poor. Their condition in the class based society was deplorable. There was considerable difference in quality of life between these three categories.

Expensive lifestyle of the elite: The upper classes of the society indulged in idleness, luxury, drinking and debauchery. There was no limit to the royal pomp and splendor. The aristocracy enjoyed special respect and prestige. The opulence and extravagance that was present in the royal court also spread among the aristocracy. The Mughal dynasty as well as the king himself was not free from these faults in most cases. The royal harem system was one of the major scandals of the contemporary era. Pelsart's account reveals the extreme character and moral degradation of the elite during Jahangir's time. The Mughal dynasty was famous for its grandeur. In order to protect their status in such a royal assembly, the nobles also spent a lot of money on clothes and jewels. As mentioned earlier, the aristocracy was the ruling class. The amount of salary they received from the exchequer was not possible for any ruler of the world at that time. They had plenty of money in their hands even after all expenses were covered from their personal allowances and the money they received for keeping their own troops. A few elites carried on private business. They used to earn a lot of money from this. Some used to lend money at high interest rates. Thomas Roe mentions an elite class engaged in trade.

Extravagance was the habit of the elite and this expenditure was mainly offalprasu (luxury expenditure). The nobles had huge palaces. Even the elites of Bangladesh had two-three-storey houses. The elite spent a lot on food. Fruits came from Central Asia and Afghanistan. The price of ice was very high then. The elite used it throughout the year. Precious wine came from West Asia. Their wives and daughters also used to drink. Coffee was imported from Arabia. Its price was very high then. Moreover, they also used various expensive drinks. They used to eat in expensive porcelain bowls. Gold and silver utensils were also used. During the Mughal era, when a noble died, his wealth was counted. The rest was given to the heirs of the nobility with the state's dues. The lifestyle of the semi-independent rulers can be found in Kabikankan Mukundaram's poem 'Chandimangal'. All of them wore the dress of following a king or a provincial ruler. Barney notes that they dressed modestly because the ruler's servants would confiscate their wealth if they were found out. The merchants of Agra lived in large houses but did not live like aristocrats. Its impact on the country's economy.

Social practices: During this period sati-immolation practices, child marriages, pana practices and kaulinya practices were prevalent among Hindus. Casteism became stronger. Caste discrimination also occurs in Muslim society. Among them arose the vocational caste like Zola, Momin, Nikari, Dai etc. The Italian traveler Della Walle's account of the king's efforts to suppress sati-immolation is known. Different classes were created in the society based on religious and financial wealth. There were five categories on the basis of religion - Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Adivasis and Foreigners. Again there was classification into Hindu and Muslim classes. Two groups emerged in the Muslim society - foreigners and Indians. During the Mugal period, however, there was not much conflict between religious classes. Even during the reign of Aurangzeb, good relations were maintained between the religious communities.

Hindu-Muslim Relations: Hindus and Muslims assimilated their respective religions through mutual association. As a result, devotion. There was a lot of coordination and harmony between both the Hindu and Muslim communities. Both Hindus and Muslims used to participate in festivals like Holi, Diwali, Mandal etc. Hindus and Muslims influenced each other in social manners and manners. Although there was a war over the throne of Delhi, the people of the village did not keep news of it. Common people did not care about politics.

Vehicles and Communication System: Although not comparable to present day vehicles, there was a lack of vehicles to maintain communication with different parts of India. Bullock carts were used by the rich and the poor. Cars were also driven by horses and camels. The elite used luxurious chariots. White bullocks used to drive the cart. Elites used elephants and palanquins for transportation. The middle class used dooley. Ships (large boats), small boats and dinghies were used on waterways. A big boat could accommodate 200 people.

Place of Women in Society: The place of women in society was not good during the Mugal period. Veil is also practiced among Hindu women. It was obligatory among Muslim women. Even doctors could not directly examine the women of elite families due to their ailments. Women used to live indoors in the house. Among Rajput women, however, veiling was not particularly prevalent. Polygamy was practiced among the upper classes in the society, but common people followed monogamy. Akbar was against the practice of polygamy and even tried to stop it. It is known that Akbar also tried to stop the custom of burning sati, but was not successful. Divorce and remarriage were common in Muslim society but not in Hindu society.

Financial conditions during the Mugal period

Agrarian Economy: The economic life of India during the Mugal period was as agrarian as before. 75% of the population lived in villages and their economic activity was directly or indirectly related to agriculture. At that time, the amount of arable land in proportion to the population was also sufficient. Sometimes the government encouraged farmers to increase their agricultural land. Compared to other contemporary countries, India was still known as a populous country "full of men and full of products"). There were numerous villages throughout the country and each village was surrounded by agricultural fields. Besides, every village had forest and pasture land. The village was called Mauza in official documents. Villages varied in size and population. The land of each village was divided into parcels and the boundaries of each plot were marked by high ridges. Farmers named each plot of land themselves. Generally there were two types of villages - 'Asli' and 'Dakhili'. Originally the village population was

permanent, abandoned or deserted villages were called Dakhili villages. Such villages were merged with in official documents. On the one hand, villages were classified into 'Rayati' villages and 'Taluk' villages. Villages included in Khalisa lands or the king's own Khas lands were called Raiti villages and those under the zamindar were called Taluk villages. Cultivators were called Asami or Raya or Mazara. Unprivileged cultivators were called by this name. The landlord had no influence over them.

Various agricultural products: During the Mugal period, agriculture was carried on in the old ways. Babur wrote in his autobiography that there were no canals for irrigation, water from rivers and canals, ponds and wells was used for agricultural land. Because of this agriculture was rain dependent. Farmers harvest their land at least twice a year - Kharif and Rabi. Cotton, sugarcane, indigo etc. were produced in some regions of the country. Moreland's list shows that wheat, barley, paddy, millet, various pulses, cotton etc. were the main agricultural products. Jute cultivation was also done. Tobacco cultivation also started then. According to Manuchi's account, during the reign of Aurangzeb, the city of Delhi used to earn five thousand rupees per day as tax from tobacco. Among the minerals, gold and silver were mainly imported from abroad. Zinc and copper were found in Rajputana. Iron was available from Bengal, Allahabad, Agra, Berar, Gujarat region and diamonds from South India. Forest resources were also abundant. Increase in agricultural land and forest resources: The problem during the Mugal period was how to increase agricultural land by clearing forests. The forest was not only home to ferocious beasts, but also harbored robbers, traitors and convicts. For this reason, Akbar focused on increasing the amount of agricultural land by clearing the forest. His policy helped the economic prosperity of the empire, as he ordered a very low rate of land-revenue on land that was cleared of forests and cultivated.

Wood was the main raw material for shipbuilding during the Mugal period. Moreland writes that almost all the vessels used in maritime trade were made in India. Apart from this, numerous boats used in inland trade were also made of wood. During the Mugal period, the internal trade of the country was mainly carried out by water. Nowhere else in the world was the volume of navigation on the Ganges. From this one can learn about the internal trade and commerce, as well as one can get some idea about the state of the extensive work of making boats using forest resources. It is known from contemporary writings that 4,200 large boats and 4,500 small watercraft used to travel in Bangladesh alone. Ralph Fitch arrived in Bengal by sea from Agra, stating that the fleet consisted of 180 vessels. Indus also had a similar system of water transport. Paper was produced from forest resources and met the demand for paper at that time. Paper was manufactured in Lahore, Rajgir and Ayodhya. Gala was also prepared in large quantities and exported abroad to meet domestic demand. Besides, perfumes were made from various aromatic plants. These aromatic goods were exported in large quantities abroad. Spices were also produced in abundance. Malabar region was famous for it. Ginger, pepper, chili, cinnamon, clove etc. were in demand not only in this country but also abroad. The Portuguese established kuthi at various places in the country especially for spices. Tavernier wrote that the Dutch bought large quantities of pepper and sold opium, carpus, sidur and lead in exchange. Ralph Fitch writes that Cochin was a major market for pepper.

Expansion of industry and trade: During the Mugal period, there was a special expansion of industry and trade. During this period there was a great growth in labor industry. Various industrial products were manufactured in large quantities under the supervision of government employees in many factories. Carpus industry was the largest industry during the Mugal period. Industrial products were exported in large quantities to meet the needs of the countrymen. Bengal, Gujarat, Jaunpur, Patna, Orissa were all

important centers of textile production. While traveling from Orissa to East Bengal, it seemed as if the entire country was a center of textile production. Bangladesh produced more fine textiles than other provinces. Muslin of Dhaka is respected in all European countries. After cotton cloth, silk cloth was the most notable. During the reign of Akbar, the silk industry saw a special development. The fur industry also developed considerably during the Mughal period. The dyeing industry also developed tremendously. Sora, essential for the manufacture of gunpowder, was abundantly available in India. Iron-based industries were easy to develop as iron was also available in abundance. Industries or factories are developed through public and private efforts. Barney notes that he saw government factories in various regions of the Mughal Empire. A variety of goods were manufactured in government factories. According to the needs of the royal palace and the elite, various luxury goods were also produced in these factories. Edward Terry was fascinated by the craftsmanship of India's dyeing industry. The supply of laborers and artisans during the Mughal era was not only ample but also skilled. Although the socio-economic condition of the laboring people was not very good, it is true that they had to eat twice a day.

Royal Workshops: Acharya Jadunath Sarkar writes that the Mughal period saw excellence in the production of manufactured goods. He writes, skilled artisans started working as apprentices in royal workshops after completing their technical education. After the apprenticeship, those who did not find employment in the royal workshops worked in the workshops of nobles or native kings. Thus the craft of artists and artisans spread throughout the country. It is acknowledged by all that the quality of the artefacts produced in the workshops of the royal and elite during the Mughal period was very high. Of course, ordinary craftsmen and artists made ordinary things to meet the needs of ordinary people.

Contribution of merchant class: India had commercial relations with various countries of Europe and Asia during the Mughal period. India's maritime trade has grown considerably since the arrival of European merchants in India. India had commercial dealings with Sinhalese, Brahmadesh, China, Japan, Nepal, Persia, East Indian Islands. Barney writes that Indian merchants and brokers were very efficient and shrewd. Many of them had monopolies. Indian merchants also showed special prowess during this period. Among them there were two classes - merchants engaged in foreign trade and merchants engaged in internal trade. Indian merchants who were associated with European Kuthis belonged to a separate class. A Portuguese merchant named Tom Pires wrote a detailed account of Indian traders. They were like Genoese merchants. Their ships were quite large. Aden, Hormuz, Goa, Malabar, Bengal, Pegu, Shyamadesh, etc., used to have ships carrying goods of the country. They were very articulate and would not hesitate to overcome any obstacle for this. Merchants engaged in internal trade lived in the city. They had close contact with markets and producers. For this they used to hire many brokers. They were in contact with the producers in the rural areas and bought the goods through hundi.

Price of food items: During the Mughal period food items such as rice, wheat, fish, meat, milk, vegetables etc. were very cheap. However, the income of common people was also very low. They did not have the financial ability to buy any luxuries. Laborers got less wages. Skilled laborers used to get only 50 paise wages in those days. The values of Akbar's reign continued fairly well under his successors. But during times of war or famine, the prices of commodities would rise temporarily.

Conclusion: During the Mughal era, two classes were created in the society on economic basis - the first is the producer class i.e. the peasants and class and the second is the consumer or practical class. The financial condition of the first class became deplorable due to low prices of produce, low wages of peasants and laborers and narrowness of demand for the elite. On the other hand, the wealth of the second class resulted in an excess of luxury in their lives.

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