



Economic Condition in the Mughal Empire

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ABSTRACT

The economy in the Indian Subcontinent during the Mughal Empire era performed just as it did in ancient times, though now it would face the stress of extensive regional tensions.[1] It was described as large and prosperous.[2] India producing about 28% of the world's industrial output up until the 18th century.[3][4] While at the start of 17th century, the economic expansion within Mughal territories become the largest and surpassed Qing dynasty and Europe, where from Bengal Subah alone, the province statistically has contributed to 12% of Gross domestic product.[5] by 1700s, Mughals had approximately 24 percent share of world's economy.[4] They grew from 22.7% in 1600, which at the end of 16th century, has surpassed China to become the world's largest GDP.[6][7]

KEYWORDS—economy, mughal, dynasty, India, subcontinent, GDP

INTRODUCTION

Mughal India's economy has been described as a form of proto-industrialization, like that of 18th-century Western Europe prior to the Industrial Revolution.[8] Many historians have built on the perspective of R. C. Dutt who wrote, "The plunder of Bengal directly contributed to the Industrial Revolution in Britain." [9][10][11][12]

The Mughals also responsible for building an extensive road system, creating a uniform currency, and the unification of the country.[13]:185–204 The empire had an extensive road network, which was vital to the economic infrastructure, built by a public works department set up by the Mughals which designed, constructed and maintained roads linking towns and cities across the empire, making trade easier to conduct.[2]

The main base of the empire's collective wealth was agricultural taxes, instituted by the third Mughal emperor, Akbar.[14][15] These taxes, which amounted to well over half the output of a peasant cultivator,[16] were paid in the well-regulated silver currency,[17] and caused peasants and artisans to enter larger markets.[18]

Coinage



Silver rupee coin of Akbar, from the Lahore mint

The Mughals adopted and standardised the rupee (rupiya, or silver) and dam (copper) currencies introduced by Sur Emperor Sher Shah Suri during his brief rule.[19] The currency was initially 48 dams to a single rupee in the beginning of Akbar's reign, before it later became 38 dams to a rupee in the 1580s, with the dam's value rising further in the 17th century as a result of new industrial uses for copper, such as in bronze cannons and brass utensils. The dam was initially the most common coin in Akbar's time, before being replaced by the rupee as the most common coin in succeeding reigns.[13] The dam's value was later worth 30 to a rupee towards the end of Jahangir's reign, and then 16 to a rupee by the 1660s.[20] The Mughals minted coins with high purity, never dropping below 96%, and without debasement until the 1720s.[21]



A coin issued by Emperor Jahangir, showing a fish motif.

Despite India having its own stocks of gold and silver, the Mughals produced minimal gold of their own, but mostly minted coins from imported bullion, as a result of the empire's strong export-driven economy, with global demand for Indian agricultural and industrial products drawing a steady stream of precious metals into India.[13] Around 80% of Mughal India's imports were bullion, mostly silver,[22] with major sources of imported bullion including the New World and Japan,[21] which in turn imported large quantities of textiles and silk from the Bengal Subah province.[13]

Labour

The historian Shireen Moosvi estimates that in terms of contributions to the Mughal economy, in the late 16th century, the primary sector contributed 52%, the secondary sector 18% and the tertiary sector 29%; the secondary sector contributed a higher percentage than in

early 20th-century British India, where the secondary sector only contributed 11% to the economy.[23] In terms of urban-rural divide, 18% of Mughal India's labour force were urban and 82% were rural, contributing 52% and 48% to the economy, respectively.[24]

According to Stephen Broadberry and Bishnupriya Gupta, grain wages in India were comparable to England in the 16th and 17th centuries, but diverged in the 18th century when they fell to 20-40% of England's wages.[25][26] This, however, is disputed by Parthasarathi and Sivramkrishna. Parthasarathi cites his estimates that grain wages for weaving and spinning in mid-18 century Bengal and South India was comparable to Britain.[27] Similarly, Sivramkrishna analysed agricultural surveys conducted in Mysore by Francis Buchanan during 1800-1801, arrived at estimates using a "subsistence basket" that aggregated millet income could be almost five times subsistence level, while corresponding rice income was three times that much.[28] That could be comparable to advance part of Europe.[29] Due to the scarcity of data, however, more research is needed before drawing any conclusion.[30][31]

2. DISCUSSION

According to Moosvi, Mughal India had a per-capita income, in terms of wheat, 1.24% higher in the late 16th century than British India did in the early 20th century.[32] This income, however, would have to be revised downwards if manufactured goods, like clothing, would be considered. Compared to food per-capita, expenditure on clothing was much smaller though, so relative income between 1595 and 1596 should be comparable to 1901-1910.[33] However, in a system where wealth was hoarded by elites, wages were depressed for manual labour.[34] In Mughal India, there was a generally tolerant attitude towards manual labourers, with some religious cults in northern India proudly asserting a high status for manual labour. While slavery also existed, it was limited largely to household servants.[34]

Agriculture

Indian agricultural production increased under the Mughal Empire.[2] A variety of crops were grown, including food crops such as wheat, rice, and barley, and non-food cash crops such as cotton, indigo and opium. By the mid-17th century, Indian cultivators began to

extensively grow two new crops from the Americas, maize and tobacco.[2]

The Mughal administration emphasised agrarian reform, which began under the non-Mughal emperor Sher Shah Suri, the work of which Akbar adopted and furthered with more reforms. The civil administration was organised in a hierarchical manner on the basis of merit, with promotions based on performance.[35] The Mughal government funded the building of irrigation systems across the empire, which produced much higher crop yields and increased the net revenue base, leading to increased agricultural production.[2]

A major Mughal reform introduced by Akbar was a new land revenue system called *zabt*. He replaced the tribute system, previously common in India and used by Tokugawa Japan at the time, with a monetary tax system based on a uniform currency.[21] The revenue system was biased in favour of higher value cash crops such as cotton, indigo, sugar cane, tree-crops, and opium, providing state incentives to grow cash crops, in addition to rising market demand.[13] Under the *zabt* system, the Mughals also conducted extensive cadastral surveying to assess the area of land under plow cultivation, with the Mughal state encouraging greater land cultivation by offering tax-free periods to those who brought new land under cultivation.[21] The expansion of agriculture and cultivation continued under later Mughal emperors including Aurangzeb, whose 1665 firman edict stated: "the entire elevated attention and desires of the Emperor are devoted to the increase in the population and cultivation of the Empire and the welfare of the whole peasantry and the entire people." [36]

Mughal agriculture was in some ways advanced compared to European agriculture at the time, exemplified by the common use of the seed drill among Indian peasants before its adoption in Europe.[37] While the average peasant across the world was only skilled in growing very few crops, the average Indian peasant was skilled in growing a wide variety of food and non-food crops, increasing their productivity.[38] Indian peasants were also quick to adapt to profitable new crops, such as maize and tobacco from the New World being rapidly adopted and widely cultivated across Mughal India between 1600 and 1650. Bengali farmers rapidly learned techniques of mulberry cultivation and sericulture, establishing Bengal Subah as a major silk-producing

region of the world.[13] Sugar mills appeared in India shortly before the Mughal era. Evidence for the use of a draw bar for sugar-milling appears at Delhi in 1540, but may also date back earlier, and was mainly used in the northern Indian subcontinent. Geared sugar rolling mills first appeared in Mughal India, using the principle of rollers as well as worm gearing, by the 17th century.[39] The Mughal era sugar production also appeared by the findings of archaeology evidence by Aligarh Muslim University in 2020 in Agra.[40]

According to economic historian Immanuel Wallerstein, citing evidence from Irfan Habib, Percival Spear, and Ashok Desai, per-capita agricultural output and standards of consumption in 17th-century Mughal India were probably higher than in 17th-century Europe and certainly higher than early 20th-century British India.[41] The increased agricultural productivity led to lower food prices. In turn, this benefited the Indian textile industry. Compared to Britain, the price of grain was about one-half in South India and one-third in Bengal, in terms of silver coinage. This resulted in lower silver coin prices for Indian textiles, giving them a price advantage in global markets.[42]

Diamond mining



Diamond mine in the Golconda region 1725 CE from the collection of Pieter van der Aa—a Dutch publisher known for preparing maps and atlases.

India during Mughal rule has produced many legendary gems, including the Koh-i-Noor, Nizam, Hope Diamond, Regent Diamond, Great Mogul Diamond, and the Orlov Diamond.[43] Particularly from the Diamond mining activities in Golconda, where, After the Siege of Golconda, Badshah Aurangzeb has acquired the diamond mining of Golconda.[44] After the conquest of Golconda, the diamond mines, which had been the

Golconda Sultans famed source of wealth, had stopped functioning following the conquest of Hyderabad, but in 1692 mining was restarted in service of the Mughals.[45] Until the 17th century, mines in this region were the only source of diamonds on earth.[46] Mines was usually up to 4 fathoms (7.3 m; 24 ft) deep.[47][48]

The testimonial proof of lucrative diamonds of Golconda are under the supervision of regional governors, of whom 17th-century prominent diamond trader Mir Jumla, who served as Grand vizier (Prime Minister) of the Golconda Sultanate. before came to serve the Mughals. He established a network of diamond merchants in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia up to China and the Malay Archipelago.[49][50][51] which Mir Jumla had his own ships and organised merchant fleets in the 1640s that sailed throughout Surat, Thatta, Arakan, Ayuthya, Balasore, Aceh, Melaka, Johore, Bantam, Makassar, Ceylon, Bandar Abbas, Mecca, Jeddah, Basra, Aden, Masqat, Mocha and the Maldives.[52] By his enormous wealth, he was able to recruit Pathans, Rajputs, Afghans and Mughals in his campaign to Bijapur in 1652. In 1653-1654, in one of Aurengzeb's letters to Shah Jahan, Aurengzeb cites a report of his agent Mohammad Amin where Mir Jumla is said to have maintained a force of 9000 Cavalry , 20000 infantry and his army filled with Iraqi and Arabi horses.[53][54]

Shantidas Jhaveri, was also a diamond trader from this area during the era of Mughal rule.[47]

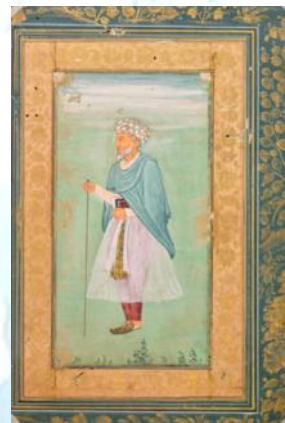
Industrial manufacturing

Up until 1750, India produced about 25% of the world's industrial output.[55] Manufactured goods and cash crops from the Mughal Empire were sold throughout the world. Key industries included textiles, shipbuilding, and steel. Processed products included cotton textiles, yarns, thread, silk, jute products, metalware, and foods such as sugar, oils and butter.[2] The growth of manufacturing industries in the Indian subcontinent during the Mughal era in the 17th-18th centuries has been referred to as a form of proto-industrialization, similar to 18th-century Western Europe prior to the Industrial Revolution.[8]

In early modern Europe, there was significant demand for products from Mughal India, particularly cotton textiles, as well as goods such as spices, peppers, indigo, silks, and saltpeter (for use in munitions).[2] European fashion, for example, became increasingly dependent on

Mughal Indian textiles and silks. From the late 17th century to the early 18th century, Mughal India accounted for 95% of British imports from Asia, and the Bengal Subah province alone accounted for 40% of Dutch imports from Asia.[56] In contrast, there was very little demand for European goods in Mughal India, which was largely self-sufficient, thus Europeans had very little to offer, except for some woolens, unprocessed metals and a few luxury items. The trade imbalance caused Europeans to export large quantities of gold and silver to Mughal India in order to pay for South Asian imports.[2] Indian goods, especially those from Bengal, were also exported in large quantities to other Asian markets, such as Indonesia and Japan.[13]

Textile industry



Miniature painting - Portrait of an Old Mughal Courtier Wearing Muslin Muslim Lady Reclining or An Indian Girl with a Hookah, painted in Dacca, 18th century



The largest manufacturing industry in the Mughal Empire was textile manufacturing, particularly cotton textile manufacturing, which included the production of piece goods, calicos, and muslins, available unbleached and in a variety of colours. The cotton textile industry was responsible for a large part of the empire's international trade.[2] India had a 25% share of the global textile trade in the early 18th century.[57] Indian cotton textiles were the most important manufactured goods in world trade in the 18th century, consumed

across the world from the Americas to Japan.[58] By the early 18th century, Mughal Indian textiles were clothing people across the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, Europe, the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East.[59] The most important centre of cotton production was the Bengal province, particularly around its capital city of Dhaka.[60]

Bengal accounted for more than 50% of textiles and around 80% of silks imported by the Dutch from Asia,[56] Bengali silk and cotton textiles were exported in large quantities to Europe, Indonesia, and Japan,[13]:202 and Bengali muslin textiles from Dhaka were sold in Central Asia, where they were known as "Dhaka textiles".[60] Indian textiles dominated the Indian Ocean trade for centuries, were sold in the Atlantic Ocean trade, and had a 38% share of the West African trade in the early 18th century, while Indian calicos were a major force in Europe, and Indian textiles accounted for 20% of total English trade with Southern Europe in the early 18th century.[55]

The worm gear roller cotton gin, which was invented in India during the early Delhi Sultanate era of the 13th–14th centuries, came into use in the Mughal Empire sometime around the 16th century,[39] and is still used in India through to the present day.[61] Another innovation, the incorporation of the crank handle in the cotton gin, first appeared in India sometime during the late Delhi Sultanate or the early Mughal Empire.[62] The production of cotton, which may have largely been spun in the villages and then taken to towns in the form of yarn to be woven into cloth textiles, was advanced by the diffusion of the spinning wheel across India shortly before the Mughal era, lowering the costs of yarn and helping to increase demand for cotton. The diffusion of the spinning wheel, and the incorporation of the worm gear and crank handle into the roller cotton gin led to greatly expanded Indian cotton textile production during the Mughal era.[63]

3. RESULTS

Once, the Mughal emperor Akbar asked his courtiers, which was the most beautiful flower. Some said rose, from whose petals were distilled the precious attar, others, the lotus, glory of every Indian village. But Birbal said, "The cotton boll". There was a scornful laughter and Akbar asked for an explanation. Birbal said, "Your Majesty, from the cotton boll comes the fine fabric prized

by merchants across the seas that has made your empire famous throughout the world. The perfume of your fame far exceeds the scent of roses and jasmine. That is why I say the cotton boll is the most beautiful flower.[64]

Shipbuilding industry

Mughal India had a large shipbuilding industry, which was also largely centred in the Bengal province. Economic historian Indrajit Ray estimates shipbuilding output of Bengal during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at 223,250 tons annually, compared with 23,061 tons produced in nineteen colonies in North America from 1769 to 1771.[65] He also assesses ship repairing as very advanced in Bengal.[65]

Indian shipbuilding, particularly in Bengal, was advanced compared to European shipbuilding at the time, with Indians selling ships to European firms. An important innovation in shipbuilding was the introduction of a flushed deck design in Bengal rice ships, resulting in hulls that were stronger and less prone to leak than the structurally weak hulls of traditional European ships built with a stepped deck design. The British East India Company later duplicated the flushed deck and hull designs of Bengal rice ships in the 1760s, leading to significant improvements in seaworthiness and navigation for European ships during the Industrial Revolution.[66]

Bengal Subah

Ruins of the Great Caravanserai in Dhaka.



The province of Bengal was especially prosperous from the time of its takeover by the Mughals in 1590 until the British East India Company seized control in 1757.[67] It was the Mughal Empire's wealthiest province.[68] Domestically, much of India depended on Bengali products such as rice, silks and cotton textiles. Overseas, Europeans depended on Bengali products such as cotton textiles, silks, and opium; Bengal accounted for 40% of Dutch imports from Asia, for example, including more than 50% of textiles and around 80% of silks.[56] From

Bengal, saltpeter was also shipped to Europe, opium was sold in Indonesia, raw silk was exported to Japan and the Netherlands, and cotton and silk textiles were exported to Europe, Indonesia and Japan.[13]

Akbar played a key role in establishing Bengal as a leading economic centre, as he began transforming many of the jungles there into farms. As soon as he conquered the region, he brought tools and men to clear jungles in order to expand cultivation and brought Sufis to open the jungles to farming.[36] Bengal was later described as the Paradise of Nations by Mughal emperors.[69] The Mughals introduced agrarian reforms, including the modern Bengali calendar.[70] The calendar played a vital role in developing and organising harvests, tax collection and Bengali culture in general, including the New Year and Autumn festivals.

The province was a leading producer of grains, salt, fruits, liquors and wines, precious metals and ornaments.[71] Its handloom industry flourished under royal warrants, making the region a hub of the worldwide muslin trade, which peaked in the 17th and 18th centuries. The provincial capital Dhaka became the commercial capital of the empire. The Mughals expanded cultivated land in the Bengal delta under the leadership of Sufis, which consolidated the foundation of Bengali Muslim society.[72]

After 150 years of rule by Mughal viceroys, Bengal gained semi-independence as a dominion under the Nawab of Bengal in 1717. The Nawabs permitted European companies to set up trading posts across the region, including firms from Britain, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Portugal and Austria. An Armenian community dominated banking and shipping in major cities and towns. The Europeans regarded Bengal as the richest place for trade.[71] By the late 18th century, the British displaced the Mughal ruling class in Bengal.

The Mughal empire is conventionally said to have been founded in 1526 by Babur, a Timurid prince from Andijan which today is in Uzbekistan. After losing his ancestral domains in Central Asia, Babur first established himself in Kabul and ultimately moved towards the Indian subcontinent.[10] Mughal rule was interrupted for 16 years by the Sur Emperors during Humayun's reign.[11] The Mughal imperial structure was founded by Akbar the Great around the 1580s which lasted until the 1740s, until shortly after the Battle of

Karnal. During the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, the dynasty reached its zenith in terms of geographical extent, economy, military and cultural influence.[12]

Around 1700, the dynasty was ruling the wealthiest empire in the world, with also the largest military on earth.[13] Mughals had approximately 24 percent share of world's economy and a military of one million soldiers.[14][15] At that time the Mughals ruled almost the whole of the South Asia with 160 million subjects, 23 percent of world's population.[16] The Dynasty's power rapidly dwindled during the 18th century with internal dynastic conflicts, incompatible monarchs, foreign invasions from Persians and Afghans, as well as revolts from Marathas, Sikh, Rajputs and regional Nawabs.[17][18] The power of the last emperor was limited only to the Walled city of Delhi.

Many of the Mughals had significant Indian Rajput and Persian ancestry through marriage alliances as they were born to Rajput and Persian princesses.[19][20] Mughals played a great role in the flourishing of Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb (Indo-Islamic civilization).[21] Mughals were also great patrons of art, culture, literature and architecture. Mughal painting, architecture, culture, clothing, cuisine and Urdu language; all were flourished during Mughal era. Mughals were not only guardians of art and culture but they also took interest in these fields personally. Emperor Babur, Aurangzeb and Shah Alam II were great calligraphers,[22] Jahangir was a great painter,[23] Shah Jahan was a great architect[24] while Bahadur Shah II was a great poet of Urdu.[25]

4. CONCLUSION

Another woman named Sultana Begum who lives in the slums of Kolkata has claimed that her late husband, Mirza Mohammad Bedar Bakht was the great-grandson of Bahadur Shah II.[28]

Ziauddin Tucey is a sixth generation descendant of the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar and today struggles to make ends meet. Living in a rented house, he still believes that the government will release properties of the erstwhile Mughals to the legal heirs. He also demands restoration of a Rs. 100 scholarships for Mughal descendants, that was discontinued by the government a while back. He wants that amount be raised to Rs 8,000. and that the government should grant the economically depressed Mughal descendants the

money for their upliftment. Tucu has two unemployed sons and is currently living on pension.[29] According to a new Claim, through Bahadur Shah I's lineage one more family has a claim to the throne.[32] This claim is validated today by the help of crucial historical research and calculations about the ancestors of a family connected to the Great Mughals. It is said that Jahan Shah[33] one of the sons of Bahadur Shah I was killed by his own Jahandar Shah with his eldest son in Lahore during the Mughal Civil War in 1711-1712. The Mughal Elite Zulfikar Khan and Jahandar Shah erased all the details about Jahan Shah's[34] eldest son whose name was Shahzada Farkhunda Akhtar.[35] According to the sources as well,[36] the family comes from an ancestor Malik Kalimuddin, was the only son of Shahzada Farkhunda Akhtar.[37] Whilst it is a hypothetical claim[38] from another settled family in Pakistan [Karachi, Lahore & Islamabad

Conflict of interest statement

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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