

The Economic structure of The Subah of Lahore during the time Mugal Emporia. (1556-1605)

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ABSTRACT:

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Lahore was the largest city in Bari-Doab during the medieval period. In an ancient Astronomical table, it is recorded as *Lohawar*. Its longitude is 109.22 and latitude 31.22 Its length from the River Sutlej (*Sutlej*) to the river Sind was 180kos. Its breadth from Bhimbar, to Chaukhandi, one of the dependences of Satagarh, 86kos. It is bounded on the east by Sirhind, on the north by Kashmir, on the south by Bikaner and Ajmer, on the west Multan.¹

Among the important town through which the route passed were Narela, Ganaur, Panipat, Karnal, Thanesar, Shahabad, Ambala, Sirhind, Dorha, Phillaur, Nakodar, Fatepur and Sari Aman at Khan. The same highway linked Lahore to Attock in the north-west.² The second broad category of towns performed a more obviously dual function. They were manufacturing centres and intermediaries in trade and commerce. In this category of towns can be included Starting from Lahore, the first town was Shahdara, followed by Eminabad, Jamia-Ghakkar, Wazirabad, Gujarat, Khanpur, Khairpur, Kairali, Rawalpindi, Hasan-Abdal and finally Attock,³Sultanpur and Sirhind. The town of Gujarat, as mention earlier, was established by Akbar. To some extent the towns importance restored upon its location at the junction of the routes from Kabul and Kashmir to Lahore.

The benefits of political patronage and artisanal manufactures apart, Lahore was also advantageously located in a commercially strategic position. The city lay astride the main overland trade route which connected the middle-east, through Iran, with Delhi, Agra and other areas further east. Towards the south it was linked by land and river routes to Multan, from where the bifurcation for Quandhar and Thatta took place. Richard steel who were sent in 1614 from Ajmer to Persia to prospect for trade, passed through Lahore. According to them it was a city of considerable significance for traders and those engaged in commerce. He says that it was a city of India, and it is the key to the kingdom of Kabul."Commercial activity at Lahore, therefore, was intimately connected with international trade.⁴

The role of ruling class increasing a substantial market in the urban area was important. Though in higher nobles they require limited number of luxury articles, their numerous dependents created demand for article of more common use. The market thus provided opportunities for traders and artisans.

The economy of Lahore was, however, not entirely dependent upon the Mughal ruling class or upon imperial patronage. In Lahore as many as other Punjab towns, manufacturing and trading were the activities of considerable economic importance.⁵

The city of Lahore, apart from its political importance, was also known as a market where commodities produced by artisans were procured for export. Consequently, many of these commodities were manufactured in and around itself. Infact, Even before the 17th century, Lahore was well established centre of production.⁶ In Lahore, as many other Punjab towns, manufacturing and trading activities of considerable importance.⁷ There were hundred *kharkhanas* engaged in fabricating shawls, twenty varieties of woollen material of Lahore found in its ways to the Agra market.⁸

Abul Fazl observed, "All kind of carpet weaver had settled here in Mughal Empire and driving a flourishing trade."⁹ These are found in every town in the subah of Lahore. In different colours and verities was encouraged by the Akbar at Imperial *Karkhanas* of Lahore. Abul Fazl mentions that the fine Persian types carpets, woollen coverlets (*TakyaMasnads*) were produced in Lahore. Carpet-weaving continued to be an important industry in Lahore during the seventeenth century and created to the demands of both internal and export markets.

Shawl-weaving too, was an occupation which a considerable number of people seem to have followed even earlier. Under the keen interest and patronage of Akbar who used double the size of usual shawls, it was established at Lahore in more than 1000s of workshops and perhaps elsewhere too. Lahore was specialized in a shawls of mixed silk and wool (*Mayan*) used for turban (*chiras*) and loin-bands (*fotahs*). Most of woollen shawls, blankets, loin-bands, turbans etc were used in the country of Lahore. Shawls of a more expensive variety were also produced in the royal *karkhans*. The variety of woollen articles made at Lahore has been mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Lahore was more famous for the weaving of several kinds of cotton-cloth. There is no state that the cotton-cloth which was bought and sold at Ahmadabad came from Lahore. This industry of Lahore was well established and seems to have been retained its importance throughout the eighteenth century.

The Economic structure of the subah of Lahore during

Akbar sought to improve the output by his patronage the production of foreign stuffs was studied, foreign workers were encouraged in India. Under Akbar silk weaving expanded in imperial workshop at Lahore manufacture the material that were imported from the foreign countries.¹⁰ Abul Fazl tells us that both silk yarn and manufactured articles available in abundance in Kashmir and Punjab.¹¹

K.N Chitnis writes that Lahore, manufactured blankets, turbans shawls and loin-bands. Lahore was especially known for its *Mayan* variety of shawls which made of both silk and wool. These shawls were also used as turbans and loin bands.¹² Other Artisanal products of Lahore included silk of all colours which were called *elattachs* (alachah), also much work in embroidery. Under Akbar silk weaving expanded in imperial workshop at Lahore.¹³ Abul Fazl tells us that both silk yarn and manufactured articles available in abundance in Kashmir and Punjab.¹⁴

Ship building was another industry in the Lahore of Akbar's times, Abul Fazl provides definite instance of ships being built at Lahore. In the 38th regnal year (1593) of Akbar, "artificers by command of H.M commenced to build to four ships. The very next year it was supposedly completed on the banks of the River Ravi."¹⁵

Bows and arrows, tents, sandals, swords, and shoes were also produced here. Brick making is also probably another industry of significance for Lahore. Most of the building of Lahore was made of bricks. The royal buildings were, in fact, indorsed by a very strong brick — wall. This industry, however, was more independent than the others upon the patronage of the ruling class and the political status of the city.

Manufacturing towns were generally situated away from the main trade route. They lay amidst prosperous agricultural areas which supplied them with the requisite food for their population and raw material for their manufactures. Among such urban centres were the towns of Sialkot, Batala, Bajwara, Machhichtra and Samana.

Sialkot was the headquarter of a very rich Mahal. Sialkot for tray covers and embroidered articles worth rupees one lakh a year.¹⁶ Embroidery work with silk and gold thread was carried out. Weaving was, probably, flourishing occupation. Sialkot was famous for the *Mansinghi* variety of paper which was smooth like silk, white, strong and clean. It was particularly reputed for its brightness and whiteness. The factories produced paper at Lahore.¹⁷

Machhiwara and Samana were the other manufacturing towns situated away from the Lahore- Delhi route.¹⁸ Machhiwara, which lay on the southern bank of the Sutlej was also known for its cotton-textiles, primarily the *baftas*.¹⁹

The highways towards Lahore was to be found the town of Eminabad, little is known about it, though the existence of brick fort in this place as far as the reign of Akbar, suggests the Eminabad was a place of some local importance.²⁰ Shahdara acted as the principal grain market. *Katra* (enclosed market) existed in Lahore.²¹

Sirhind was an urban centre of both manufacturing and commercial significance. Manriques refer to them, "abundance of various cotton goods which are made here." Its convenient location on the imperial highways enabled Sirhind to thrive upon commercial transactions. Obviously, then, several factors contributed towards the importance of Sirhind during the seventeenth century.²²

Findings:

- The introduction of some of the new technique by the Mughal emperor particular under the Akbar widened the scope of the artisanal crafts.
- Akbar invited foreign artisans to India to create a sense of better competitiveness among the Indian artisans. After the establishment of *Shahi Karkhanas*, providing employment to the artisans goods

realized that the state was concerned with their condition. For example in Lahore *Kharkhanas* artisans from Kashmir were employed for weaving shawl of different texture and designs.

- Lahore was located at the commercially strategic location. And it was intimately connected with international trade.
- Manufacturing Industry, however, was more independent than the others upon the patronage of the ruling class and increases the political status of the Subah of Lahore

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