

Theme IV

Economic Processes



Time Line
Agricultural Production
Extent of Cultivation
Means of Cultivation
Irrigation
Food and Cash Crops
Productivity and Yields
Agrarian Relations
Mughal India
Deccan
South India
Exchange Economy
Mughal Coinage
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Prices and Wages
Urban Landscape
Urban Demography
Urban Life

Akbar Inspecting the Construction of Fathpur Sikri, *Akbarnama*, 1603-1605



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Painter: Balchand

Photograph Source: Chester Beatty Library

Source:https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Balchand._Akbar_inspecting_construction_for_his_new_capital_Fatehpur_Sikri,_Akbarnama,_1603-5,_Chester_Beatty_Library.jpg

UNIT 14 AGRARIAN ECONOMY AND AGRARIAN RELATIONS *

Structure

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14.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will discuss the agrarian economy under the Mughals. After going through this Unit, you should be able to learn about:

- the extent of cultivation during the under the Mughals,
- the means and methods of cultivation and irrigation under the Mughals,
- the main crops grown under the Mughals,
- the status of livestock and cattle breeding under the Mughals,
- various agrarian classes who appropriated a share in the produce of the land,
- the *zamindars* and their rights,
- various categories of peasants and the village community,
- other intermediaries who enjoyed a share in the surplus produce,
- the relations between various agrarian classes,
- the characteristic features of the medieval Deccan village,
- the debate regarding ownership of land in the Deccan,
- the categories of land rights which existed there,
- the nature of village community,
- the relationship between the different sections constituting agrarian society
- the agrarian structure of South India, and
- the nature of land rights in South India.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

India has a very large land area with diverse climatic zones. Throughout its history, agriculture has been its predominant productive activity. During the Mughal period, large tracts of land were under the plough. Contemporary Indian and foreign writers praise the fertility of Indian soil.

In this Unit, we will discuss many aspects including the extent of cultivation, that is the land under plough. A wide range of food crops, fruits, vegetables and **cash crops** were grown in India. However, we would take a stock only of the main crops grown during this period. We will also discuss the methods of cultivation as also the implements used for cultivation and irrigation technology. While focusing on the area under Mughal control, we will also include the areas lying outside it.

A large part of the agricultural surplus was alienated in the form of land revenue. Theoretically, the Emperor was the sole claimant as discussed in Unit 16. However, in actual practice, apart from the state and its agents, a number of intermediaries also took away huge amounts through various channels. In this Unit we will also discuss the rights of various classes to land and its produce. We will also discuss the interrelationship between these classes.

In this Unit, we will discuss the nature of agrarian structure in medieval Deccan and South India and the various Land rights which existed there. First, we will discuss the features of the agrarian structure in medieval Deccan.

A study of the agrarian structure and land rights means an examination of the right to use and dispose of one's landed property which bestowed on the landholder economic benefits and administrative and judicial powers. Land rights controlled the life of the small agricultural societies or the village communities. They regulated the relations of landholders with other members of the village community, persons claiming superior rights over land, the king and his tax collecting officials, etc. The various categories of land rights, whether transferable or hereditary, arose due to economic benefits from land which was the prime source of income for the majority of the people in those days.

14.2 EXTENT OF CULTIVATION

In the absence of relevant data, it is difficult to find out the exact area under the plough. Nevertheless, the available data helps us to have an idea about the cultivable land during Mughal period.

Abul Fazl in his *Ain-i Akbari* provides area figures for all the Mughal provinces in North India except Bengal, Thatta and Kashmir. In the case of most of the provinces, like Delhi, Agra, Awadh, Lahore, Multan, Allahabad and Ajmer, separate figures are provided for each *pargana* (with a few exceptions).

The figures of the *Ain-i Akbari* belong to the year c. 1595. The area figures for the 17th century for various regions are available in an accountancy manual of CE 1686. The same figures have been reproduced in a historical work *Chahar Gulshan* (1739-40). This manual provides measured area figures for each province; total number of villages in each province and a break-up of measured and unmeasured villages.

As stated earlier, the *Ain* provides area figures in most cases for each *pargana* but it is difficult to say to what extent the *pargana* was actually measured. The set of figures available from Aurangzeb's reign provide a better picture. These show that almost fifty per cent of the villages were not measured till CE 1686.

The figures for Aurangzeb's reign show that the measured area increased compared to the *Ain* (1595). But it is difficult to say that the total increase in the measured area was due to extension of cultivation. This may as well have been due to the inclusion of some of the earlier unmeasured area under measurement.

There is a debate among historians as to what these measurement figures actually represent. The questions raised are: whether these figures are for the area actually under crop, or cultivable land or the total measured area? W.H. Moreland was of the view that these figures represent the total cropped area.

Irfan Habib holds that it would have included cultivable area which was not sown and also area under habitation, lakes, tanks, parts of forests, etc. Shireen Moosvi agrees with Irfan Habib and has calculated this cultivable waste as ten per cent of the measured area. But she feels that even after deducting this ten per cent, the remaining area cannot be taken as net cropped area because large tracts of cultivated areas were not measured. She also thinks that many a times the land under *kharif* and *rabi* crops was measured separately and, after adding the two, it was recorded as measured area. In such a situation, measurement figures of Mughal period alone are not of much help to ascertain the extent of cultivation. Irfan Habib and Shireen Moosvi have taken the help of other available data such as detailed figures of some areas available in some revenue papers, *jama* figures and *dastur rates*. These

have been compared with the figures of actually cultivated area in the beginning of 20th century.

According to their estimates the cultivated area between the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 20th century almost doubled. The increase in Bihar, Awadh, and parts of Bengal is ascribed to the clearance of forest. In Punjab and Sind the spread of canal network also contributed to the extension in cultivation.

14.3 MEANS OF CULTIVATION AND IRRIGATION

The Indian peasant used a variety of implements and techniques for cultivation, depending on the nature of soil and need of the crops. Similarly, irrigation was done through various means in different regions.

14.3.1 Means and Methods of Cultivation

Tillage was performed by harnessing a pair of oxen to the plough. The latter was made of wood with an iron ploughshare. Unlike in Europe neither horse nor bullock-drawn wheeled plough nor mould board were ever used in India. Regional variations, in a sprawling country like India, in the size and weight of ploughs must be expected from a light plough that could be carried by the tiller upon his shoulders, to the heavy one meant for harder soil. Again, for soft soil, the iron **ploughshare or coulter** could have been dispensed with, more so as the price of iron was high. Many contemporary European travellers noted with surprise that Indian plough just turned the soil and that deep digging was not done, it seems that this suited to Indian conditions because deep digging would result in the loss of moisture in the soil. Moreover, it was only the upper layer which was more fertile.

A separate devise was used for breaking the clods or lumps of earth. This was done with the help of wooden boards called *patella* in parts of north India. Like plough this flat board was also harnessed to a pair of oxen. Generally a man would stand on the board to provide weight. The *patella* was dragged on the field by oxen.

The sowing of seeds was generally done through scattering by hand. In 16th century Barbosa also refers to the use of a sort of seed drill in the coastal region for sowing rice.

Efforts were made to increase the fertility of the soil through artificial means. In South India flocks of goat and sheep were widely used. Generally flocks of these cattle were made to spend a few nights in the agricultural field for their droppings were considered good manure. It was assumed that if a flock of 1000 spend five or six nights in one *kani* of land (1.32 acres) it was enough to keep land fertile for 6 to 7 years (Raychaudhuri and Habib 1982, I: 231). The same practice was commonly used in Northern India also. Fish manure also seems to have been used in coastal areas.

Rotation of crops was used for the optimum utilisation of land throughout the year. It was also considered good to maintain the productivity of the soil. Peasants through the experience of generations had acquired some knowledge of using rotation of crops for the good of the soil. They would decide which crop to be replaced by another in a particular field for a better yield.

A semi-circular sickle was used for cutting the crop.

The harvested crop was spread on the ground for threshing. Our sources refer to two methods: in the first method the crop was beaten with sticks; in the second method

animals were made to move on the spread out crop. The weight and movement of the animals treaded the grain.

The threshed out matter was put in open baskets and the contents were thrown outside the basket at a controlled speed. The chaff got scattered by the wind and the grain fell on the ground.

14.3.2 Means of Irrigation

Indian agriculture was heavily dependent on rains for irrigation needs. The major criterion for selecting the crops for sowing was availability of rain water in a particular region. Apart from rain water, a number of devices were used for artificial irrigation.

Well-irrigation was the most common method employed throughout the length and breadth of the country. A number of methods were used to lift water from wells depending on the water table and technology available.

Various methods used for lifting water have been discussed in **BHIC-107, Unit 11**. Here we will give only a brief description of water lifting devices.

In the Northern plains both masonry and non-masonry wells were dug. The non-masonry wells were not durable and some digging was required every year.

The masonry wells were durable and were suitable for fixing better water lifting devices. The masonry wells had raised walls and enclosures or platforms. Both bricks and stones were used to construct wells. These wells were usually set inside with terracotta rings. These are also known as ring wells.

A number of devices were used for lifting water from the wells.

- i) The most simple method was to draw water with rope and bucket by hand without any mechanical aid. Due to its limited capacity this device could not have been used for irrigating large fields.
- ii) The second method was the employment of pulleys over the wells. The same rope and bucket was used over the pulley to lift the water. With the help of pulley larger amounts of water could be drawn with less effort than our first method. Both the above devices were used for the supply of water in domestic use or for irrigating small plots.
- iii) In the third method the rope-pulley was used with the addition of the employment of a pair of oxen. The use of animal power in this method helped in irrigating larger areas.
- iv) The fourth device worked on a lever principle. In this method a long rope is lashed to the fork of an upright beam or trunk of a tree to put it in a swinging position. The bucket was fastened to rope tied on one end of the pole. The pole's other end carried a weight heavier than the filled bucket. One person is required to operate it.
- v) The fifth method required the use of a wheel. In its earlier form the pots were attached to the rims of the wheels which were to rotate with the help of animal power. It was used to lift water from shallow surface and was of no use for wells.

The use of wheel for lifting water from well was also done. In this form a garland of pots was used with 3 wheels, a gear mechanism and animal power. (For details see Block 6 of EHI-03.) With the help of this device regular supply of large amounts

of water could be ensured for irrigating large fields. This was also helpful for lifting water from deep wells. The complex machine and animal power would have made the device expensive. It therefore would have been accessible only to the peasants with substantial means.

Lakes, tanks and reservoirs of water were also used uniformly in all parts of the country. In South India, this was the most prevalent method used for irrigation. Here the dams were made over the rivers. Construction of such reservoirs was beyond individual means. It was therefore the responsibility of the state, local chiefs and temple management to create such facilities. The massive Madag Lake built by Vijaynagar rulers is a marvel of civil engineering of the time. It was built on the Tungabhadra with three earth embankments to bridge the gaps in the hills. When full, this lake was 10-15 miles long. Each of the three embankments had sluices built of huge slabs of hewn stones.

Rajasthan is another region where large reservoirs for storing water abound. The Dhebar Lake in Mewar, according to the *Ain-i Akbari*, had a circumference of 36 miles. The Udaisagar is said to have a circumference of 12 miles; Rajsamand and Jaisamand were other important lakes built in Mewar in the 17th century. Similar reservoirs created with the help of dams in Marwar and Amber regions were Balsan and Mansagar respectively.

Almost every cluster of villages had smaller reservoirs and lakes where rain water was stored. Our sources inform us that in the 1650s, Mughal administration proposed to advance Rs. 40,000 to 50,000 to the cultivators in Khandesh and Berar for erecting dams for irrigation. It is interesting to note that a wide network of such small dams in Khandesh is still in use, and they cover the basins of the five major rivers in this region, viz., Mosam, Girna, Ken, Panjbra, and Shivan.

In Northern plains, canals figure prominently as a means of irrigation. We have read about canals constructed by Sultan Feroz Tughlaq during the 14th century in the Sub-Section 11.2.2. The trend seems to have continued under the Mughals. The Nahr-i Faiz built during Shah Jahan's reign was around 150 miles in length. It carried the water from the Yamuna to a large area. Another canal, around 100 miles long, was cut from the river Ravi near Lahore. Remains of a number of canals are available in the whole Indus delta. Irfan Habib is of the opinion that the main deficiency of Mughal canals was that they did not often run above the surrounding plain, and so the water that could be obtained from them for irrigation was limited to what could be lifted from them. The network of canals in the region kept on increasing. Canals are not reported from South India.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) What was the extent of cultivation during Mughal India?

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- 2) List three methods used for increasing fertility of soil.

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3) List three methods used for lifting water from the wells for irrigating fields.

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4) Name four major lakes or dams used for irrigation.

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14.4 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

India with extensive land area, different types of soils and varying climatic conditions, could boast of a large variety of agricultural products. For the convenience of study, we will discuss agricultural produce under three heads 6 food crops, cash crops and fruits, vegetables and spices.

14.4.1 Food Crops

The majority of seasonal crops in North India were grown in two major crop seasons *kharif* (autumn) and *rabi* (spring). In some areas the peasants tended to grow even three crops by producing some short-term crops in between. Rice was the main *kharif* crop and wheat was *rabi*. In South India, these distinct crop-seasons with different crops were absent. Here, on wet lands one paddy (rice) crop was in the fields from June/July to December/January and another from January/February to April/May. In North Arcot, dry crops (*kumbu*, red gram, horse gram, castor) were sown from May to September/October and harvested from August to December/January on the wet lands, in August/September the *ragi* and *cholam* and in February/March the paddy crop, were harvested (Raychaudhuri and Habib 1982, I: 229).

Rice and wheat were the two major food crops throughout the country. The regions with high rainfall (40" to 50") accounted for the bulk of rice production. The whole of Northeast, Eastern India (Bihar, Bengal, Orissa with parts of Eastern U.P.), southern coast of Gujarat and South India, were rice producing areas. As indicated above, in South India there were two main seasons of rice cultivation *kuddapah-kar* and *samba-peshanam*. They were named after the variety of rice cultivated during the summer and winter seasons.

Rice cultivation is also reported from irrigated areas of Punjab and Deccan. Every region had its own variety of coarse to ordinary to fine quality of rice. Regions of Bengal and Bihar produced the finest quality of rice.

Like rice, wheat also had specific regions. Punjab, Sind, Western Uttar Pradesh and other regions with little rainfall produced wheat. References to its production in Bihar, Gujarat, Deccan and even some parts of Bengal are also available.

Apart from these two major crops, barley was grown extensively in the Central plains. The *Ain-i Akbari* refers to barley production in Allahabad, Awadh, Agra, Ajmer, Delhi, Lahore and Multan, etc.

Millet is reported with some exceptions mainly from wheat producing zones. *Jowar* and *bajra* were the two main millets.

Pulses are reported from different regions. Important ones are *gram*, *arhar*, *moong*, *moth*, *urd* and *khisari* (the latter was grown extensively in Bihar and the regions of present Madhya Pradesh). However, Abul Fazl says that its consumption was-injurious to health. The same is confirmed by modern researches.

It was believed for long that maize (*makai* or *makka*) was not known in India during THE 17th century. Some recent works establish beyond doubt that it was grown definitely in Rajasthan and Maharashtra and possibly other regions also during the second half of the 17th century.

14.4.2 Cash Crops

Crops grown mainly for the market are commonly termed as cash crops. These are referred to in Persian records as *jins-i kamil* or *jins-i ala* (superior grade crops). Unlike seasonal food crops, these occupied the fields almost the whole year. The major cash crops in the 16th-17th centuries were sugarcane, cotton, indigo and opium.

All these crops were known in India from historical times. However, in the 17th century their demand increased due to enhanced manufacturing and commercial activities. During this period, a large foreign market also opened for these commodities. The Indian peasant, quick to follow the market demand, increased the cultivation of these crops.

Sugarcane was the most widely grown cash crop of the period. The *Ain-i Akbari* records it in most of the **dastur circles** of Agra, Awadh, Lahore, Multan and Allahabad. Sugar from Bengal was considered to be the best in quality. Multan, Malwa, Sind, Khandesh, Berar and regions of South India all testify to the presence of sugarcane in the 17th century.

Another cash crop grown throughout the country was cotton. The region with large scale cultivation were parts of the present day Maharashtra, Gujarat and Bengal. Contemporary sources refer to its cultivation in Ajmer, Allahabad, Awadh, Bihar, Multan, Thatta (Sind), Lahore and Delhi.

Indigo was another cash crop widely cultivated under the Mughals. The plant yielded a blue dye (*neel*) which was much in demand in India and European markets. Its presence is recorded in the *dastur* circles of Awadh, Allahabad, Ajmer, Delhi, Agra, Lahore, Multan and Sind. Its cultivation is referred in Gujarat, Bihar, Bengal, Malwa and Coromandal in South India and Deccan.

The varieties high in demand were those of Bayana and Sarkhej. Bayana, a place near Agra, was considered as producing the best quality of indigo and fetched high price. Sarkhej, near Ahmedabad, was considered second in quality and also fetched a high price. Other notable places for quality indigo were regions around Khurja and Aligarh (in U.P.), Sehwan (in Sind) and Telingana (in Deccan).

Cultivation of opium is reported from a number of places in India. The Mughal provinces of Bihar and Malwa seem to have produced good opium. It was also cultivated in Awadh, Bihar, Delhi, Agra, Multan, Lahore, Bengal, Gujarat, Marwar, and Mewar in Rajasthan.

Cultivation of tobacco seems to have spread in India in a short time. The *Ain-i Akbari*

does not mention it as a crop in any of the *dastur* circles or other regions. It seems to have been introduced in India during the 16th century by the Portuguese. Its cultivation was noticed in almost all parts of the country (specially in Surat and Bihar).

Cultivation of coffee seems to have started during the second half of the 17th century while tea does not figure during the period of our study as a common beverage.

San or sunn-hemp, a fibre yielding plant, was cultivated in all the core provinces of the Mughal empire (Awadh, Allahabad, Agra, Lahore, Ajmer, etc.).

Sericulture (rearing of silkworms on a mulberry plant) was carried on in Bengal, Assam, Kashmir and western coast. However, Bengal was the main region of production.

The plants whose seeds were used for extracting oil come under the category of food as well as cash crops. The main oil yielding crops listed are rapeseed, castor, linseed. Rapeseed is reported in all provinces from Allahabad to Multan as also in Bengal. Cultivation of other oilseed plants was relatively less widespread.

14.4.3 Fruits, Vegetables and Spices

Horticulture seems to have reached new heights during the Mughal period. The Mughal Emperors and the nobles planted lavish orchards. Almost every noble of consequence had his gardens on the outskirts of the towns where they resided. Orchards and groves were laid down with careful planning. A number of fruits available today were introduced in India during 16th and 17th centuries. Pineapple (*anannas*) is one such fruit which was brought from Latin America and introduced in India by the Portuguese. In a short period of time it became popular and was extensively cultivated all over the country.

Papaya and cashew-nuts were also introduced through the same agency, but their spread was a bit slow. Leechi and guava seem to have been introduced later. Cherries were brought from Kabul and grown in Kashmir through grafting. The practice of grafting was in order to improve the quality of a number of fruits. Quality of oranges and other types of citrus fruits, apricots, mangoes and a host of other fruits was greatly improved through grafting. Coconut was grown not only along the coastal region but also inland.

Seeds of different variety of melons and grapes were brought from Kabul and successfully grown in the gardens of Emperors and nobles. Ordinary melons were grown everywhere on riverbeds by the peasants.

A large variety of vegetables were grown all over the country. The *Ain-i Akbari* provides a long list of vegetables in use at that time. Potato and Tomato seem to have been introduced in the 17th century and after.

For centuries India was known for its spices. The Southern coast of India witnessed large scale spice export to various regions in Asia and Europe. Pepper, clove, cardamom were plentiful. Ginger and Turmeric were grown extensively. The Dutch and English purchased large quantities for export. Saffron grown in Kashmir was celebrated for its colour and flavour. *Pan* (betel leaf) was produced in many areas. The Maghi *Pan* of Bihar and various other varieties from Bengal were famous. Betel-nut was also produced in coastal regions.

Large forest tracts supplied a number of commercially important products. Lignum

used for medicinal purpose and *lakh* were exported in large quantities.

14.4.4 Productivity and Yields

Shireen Moosvi (1990, Chapter 3) has worked out the productivity of crops and per *bigha* yields for Mughal India. In this Section, we will be providing information based mainly on her researches. The *Ain-i Akbari* provides schedules of crop yield and revenue rates for *zabti* provinces (Lahore, Multan, Agra, Allahabad, Awadh and Delhi). For each crop yields are provided separately for high, middling and low categories. An average yield can be worked out on the basis of these. However, Abul Fazl does not inform us what was the basis of the three categories? It seems that the low yields are those of non-irrigated land while the rest two are for irrigated fields.

Shireen Moosvi has worked out the agricultural productivity on the basis of various data available from the 16th century records. According to her estimates the yields (average of high, middling and low yields) for some major crops were as follows:

Average Crop Yields 66 1595-96
(*man-i Akbari per bigha-i Ilahi*)

Crops	Yields	Crops	Yields	Crops	Yields
Wheat	13.49	Barley	12.93	Gram	9.71
Bajra	5.02	Jowar	7.57	Cotton	5.75
Sugarcane	11.75	Mustard	5.13	Sesame	4.00

Source: Moosvi, Shireen, (1990) *Economy of the Mughal Empire c. 1595. A statistical study*
(New Delhi: Oxford University Press), p. 82

Shireen Moosvi has also compared the yields of the *Ain-i Akbari* with yields around the close of the 19th century. She finds that on the whole there is no major change in the productivity of food crops between the two periods. However, in case of cash crops a definite increase in the productivity in the 19th century can be noticed.

14.5 CATTLE AND LIVESTOCK

The cattle played a very important role in agricultural production of our period. They were employed in important agricultural activities like ploughing and irrigation, and their dung was used for manuring. Besides, dairy products contributed substantially to the agriculture-related production. The peasants in general along with some specialised castes were involved in the rearing of cattle.

Large scale involvement of cattle in agricultural operations suggests the presence of large cattle population. With high land-man ratio, grazing fields would have been available in abundance. Contemporary European travellers refer to large numbers of cattle in Indian fields. Irfan Habib suggests that the per capita cattle population in Mughal India compares favourably with modern statistics. Abundance of butter or *ghee* is said to be the diet of the common people; this also suggests a large cattle population. Oxen were used for transporting goods as pack-animals or for bullock carts. The *banjaras* (migrant trading community) are said to have maintained flocks of a few hundred to thousand animals. Flocks of thousands of sheep and goats were also reared.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) List six main food crops.

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- 2) What are food crops, cash crops and oil yielding crops?

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- 3) List four major cash crops.

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- 4) List four fruits brought to India from outside

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14.6 AGRARIAN RELATIONS: MUGHAL INDIA

In this Section we will focus our attention on agrarian relations of Mughal India.

14.6.1 Revenue Assignees and Grantees

The state adopted two ways to realise the land revenue from the peasants. First, the *Jagirdars* were assigned certain areas with rights to collect revenue and utilise the same for their salary and to meet their military obligations. Secondly, it collected revenue through imperial revenue officers from the *khalisa*. The *jagirdar* had no permanent rights over the areas so assigned due to frequent transfers. His claims were confined to the authorised land revenue and other taxes.

Grantees

While the *jagirdars* were given revenue assignments in lieu of cash salary (for details see **Unit 11**), there was another category of people which was given revenue grants for their subsistence. This was the class of religious men who were patronised by the state.

These grants were known as *suyurghal* or *madad-i maash* (aid for subsistence). A separate department under the charge of the *sadr-us sudur* looked after these grants. If the aid was given in cash, it was known as *wazifa*. There were certain categories of people who were qualified to receive *madad-i maash*. These grants did not invest the grantee with any right over land but were entitled to the prescribed revenue from its produce. Akbar put the ceiling of such grants of land to 100 *bighas* per person. The policy of Akbar was to grant half cultivable and half waste land to improve agriculture.

The grant was for the lifetime of the grantee and the heirs could apply for a renewal. Generally only a part of the grant was allowed to heirs. Jahangir confirmed all the grants made by Akbar while Shah Jahan began to examine all grants given during the previous reigns. He allowed 30 *bighas* to be inherited, Aurangzeb reduced it to 20 *bighas*. In the 30th year of his reign, he allowed the grant to be entirely hereditary, by calling such grants as loan ('*ariyat*') and not property. In the latter part of his reign as well as after his death, the grantees started enjoying the right to sell or transfer the land, which, then, acquired the characteristics of a *zamindari*.

In Akbar's period, it was found that the revenue of such grants would not be over 5.84% of the total *jama*. The mapping of these grants shows that most of these were concentrated in the upper Gangetic provinces (highest in Delhi and Allahabad). It appears that no change had taken place in the proportion of the revenue alienated through the grants till the early years of Muhammad Shah. The mapping also show that these grants were mainly in the urban areas. We find that over 70% of the *suyurghal* lay in the *parganas* which were under the control of the non-Muslim *zamindars*.

Another type of grant (*waqf*) was given to institutions, etc. Revenues of certain lands were permanently assigned for the maintenance of religious tombs, shrines, *madrasas*, etc. Such grants could be given by the *jagirdars* also, and lasted till the term of the *jagirdar* in that area.

The *madad-i maash* grants were intended to create pockets of influence and to develop waste lands. Generally, these were given to Shaikhs and Sayyids and other men of learning. In emergency they joined the government forces to curb local disturbances. The total revenue alienated in such grants was not large. There was a tendency on the part of the grantees to acquire *zamindari* rights in their area and elsewhere. Thus, some of them transformed themselves into small *zamindars*. By the first half of the 18th century, these grants were treated as *zamindari* land in all transactions.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) What do you understand by revenue free assignments?

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- 2) What were land grants? Who received these grants?

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14.6.2 The Zamindars

The *zamindars* were present in practically every part of the Mughal Empire and held the most significant position in the agrarian structure of Mughal India. The word *zamindar* is derived from two Persian words 6 *zamin* (land) and *dar* (holder). During the pre-Mughal period, the word *zamindar* has been used in the sense of the chief of a territory. The fact that a chief had acknowledged the supremacy of a superior sovereign power made no difference to his position within his own domain, so long as he was

allowed to retain it. From Akbar's time onwards, this term was officially used for any person with any hereditary claim to a direct share in the peasant's produce. The early local terms such as *khot* and *muqaddam* in the Doab, *satarahi* and *biswi* in Awadh, *bhomi* in Rajasthan and *banth* or *vanth* in Gujarat were replaced by the term *zamindar*. However, many of these terms continued to be used interchangeably with *zamindars* in contemporary accounts. The areas without *zamindars* were termed *raiyati* (peasant held).

Nurul Haran divides the *zamindars* into three categories.

- a) Primary *zamindars* who had some proprietary rights over the land;
- b) Secondary *zamindars* who held the intermediary rights and helped the state in collecting land revenue; and
- c) Autonomous chiefs who had autonomous rights in their territories and paid a fixed amount to the Mughal State.

Zamindari Rights

Zamindars did not signify a proprietary right in land. It was a claim on the produce of the soil, co-existing in a subordinate capacity, with the land revenue demand of the state. Yet, like any article of private property, it could, and was, freely bought and sold. It was also inheritable and divisible, that is, the heirs of a *zamindar* could divide the fiscal claims and perquisites of their inherited *zamindari*, in accordance with the law of the land.

The *zamindar* acquired his rights by virtue of the historical tradition of control he and his kinsmen exercised over the inhabitants of particular villages. At times, the *zamindars* had settled villages and distributed its land among the peasantry. In eastern Rajasthan, *wasidar* (a category of peasants) were settled by the *bhomia* (*zamindar* as known there) in the village to undertake sometimes the cultivation of his personal lands. The *zamindari* rights, therefore, were not created by the ruling classes, but preceded them. The king, however, could create *zamindari* in villages where none existed. He could also dislodge a *zamindar*, but this was a right he exercised only in case of sedition or non-payment of revenue.

The medieval rulers recognised the rights of the *zamindars*, but were equally insistent on treating them as agents of the government for revenue collection. When the *zamindari* took this form, that is, it came to assist the government in the collection of revenue, for the service (*khidmat*) so rendered, the *zamindar* was entitled to a percentage of the total revenue collected. This percentage in official documents is stated to be 10% and is described as *nankar* ("allowance"). When the administration decided to collect the revenue through its own agents, by-passing the *zamindar*, the latter was entitled to a share in the collection of revenues called *malikana* (proprietary right), and like *nankar*, was fixed at 10% of the total revenue collected.

In Gujarat, this claim of the *zamindar* was described as *banth* or *vanth*, but unlike *malikana* in Northern India, it was considerably higher. Like *malikana*, it was paid in the form of cash. In the Deccan, it was called *chauth* (lit. "one fourth"), and as the name suggests, stood at one-fourth of the revenues collected. *Sardeshmukhi*, another fiscal claim of the *zamindar* in the Deccan, was equivalent to 10% of the revenues. Under the Marathas, the cesses of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* came to be realised not through a legal claim based on actual *zamindari* right, but by the sheer use of force. Under Shivaji, while the claim of the king comprised one-fourth of the *chauth* and the

whole of *surdeshmukhi*, the other three-fourths of the *chauth* was to be retained by the Maratha feudatory barons.

Besides their principal fiscal claim, the *zamindars* also exacted a number of petty perquisites from the peasantry. Some of the well-known cesses so realised were *dastar shumari* (turban tax), house tax (*khana shumari*), cesses on marriage and birth, etc. The *zamindars* used to collect taxes from weekly markets also in their areas. At times, they are found collecting toll tax on merchandise passing through their territories. The amount that the *zamindars* realised through these petty perquisites is quite difficult to estimate; in all probability, in relation to their principal fiscal claim, it was not quite considerable.

We have so far been discussing about the primary and intermediary *zamindars*, that is, those who resided in the directly administered territories, and of whom the administration was anxious that they be reduced to the status of mere 'rent-gatherers'. Apart from them, there were chiefs or chieftains 6 the *rajas*, *raos*, *ranas* and *rawatas* 6 who were more or less autonomous in their estates, governing them without any interference from the imperial administration (see Sub-section 11.3.2). Their obligation to the king did not go beyond paying him a fixed amount as tribute (*peshkash*). Their share in the surplus produce of the peasant, therefore, amounted to the difference between what they collected from the peasants and what they paid to the king as *peshkash*. The Imperial administration recognised their semi-autonomous status, and exercised no control over their internal administration once they had paid the usual *peshkash*. According to Irfan Habib, the difference between the *zamindars* and autonomous chiefs "lay most clearly in the relationship with the imperial power which allowed autonomy to the chiefs, but made ordinary *zamindar* mere propertied subjects of the Emperor".

Military Strength of Zamindars

The *zamindars* employed their footmen and cavalry. These troops helped them in the realisation of land revenue and subjugation of peasantry. Almost all *zamindars* had their own small or big *qilachas/garhi* or forts. According to the *Ain-i Akbari*, the troops of the *zamindars* in the whole Mughal Empire exceeded forty four lakhs. In Bengal they possessed thousands of boats.

Chaudhuris

As mentioned earlier, the *zamindar* played a prominent role in the collection of land revenue. Some of these *zamindars* were designated as *chaudhuri* for the purpose of collection of revenue. One of the prominent *zamindars* of a *pargana* was appointed *chaudhuri*, generally one in each *pargana*.

The *chaudhuri* was supposed to collect the revenue from other *zamindars* of the *pargana*. Apart from their customary *nankar*, these *chaudhuris* were entitled to another share in the land revenue collected by them. This was termed *chaudhurai* which amounted to two and a half per cent of the revenue collected. Unlike the *zamindar*, the *chaudhuri* was appointed by the state and could be removed for improper functioning.

14.6.3 Other Intermediaries

Each village had a number of hereditary officials. The most important of them was the village headman (*muqaddam* in Northern India and *patel* in the Deccan).

He was the person responsible for the collection of land revenue and maintenance of law and order in the villages. For the services so rendered, he was granted a part of the village land revenue-free, though, in some cases, he was also remunerated in cash at a percentage of total land revenue realised. In addition, he was also entitled to receive some amount of produce from peasants. In the task of the collection of land revenue the *muqaddam* was assisted by the village accountant (*patwari* in Northern India and *kulkarni* in the Deccan). The *patwari's* task was to maintain a record (*bahi*) of the revenue collected from the individual peasants and its payment to the state authorities. His records, therefore, were of immense help to the administration in assessing the revenue-paying capacity of the peasants and in fixing the total land revenue claim on the village. Like the *muqaddam* he was also remunerated by the grant of revenue-free land or by a fixed commission in the total revenue collected. However, being an employee of the village organisation, his allowance was much smaller than that of the village headman. The office and the accompanying privileges of both the *muqaddam* and *patwari* were hereditary.

Check Your Progress-4

1) Describe briefly the nature of *zamindari* rights?

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2) Write two lines on each of the following:

i) *Chaudhuris*

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ii) *Muqaddams*

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14.6.4 Peasantry

In the earlier Sections, we studied about the classes who enjoyed superior rights over the produce of the land. In this Section we will discuss the main producing classes.

The main agrarian class, directly involved with the agricultural production, was the peasantry. Though the class had a number of strata within it, for the convenience of study we are including all of them under one nomenclature.

The peasants constituted the primary class in rural society and the revenue collected from them sustained the whole state apparatus. We have noticed in Unit 10 that the peasant had to pay a large part of their produce as land revenue. It appears that the bulk of the peasantry lived on the subsistence level of existence.

Land Rights of Peasantry

There has been a long debate among historians regarding the rights of the peasantry over land. Peasant's claim to land was not disregarded by the state, yet he was never allowed the right to free alienation. It appears that peasants had all the rights over

land as long as he cultivated it. The *zamindars* or state had no right to evict the peasant as long as he cultivated the land and paid the revenue. It seems that proprietary rights in land were not quite developed during the Mughal period. However, the most important aspect of the period is the varying claims over the produce of the land.

In contemporary accounts we come across a number of references to the flight of the peasantry from villages because of oppression or other problems. A number of instances are available about peasants settling individually or in groups in various regions. The mobility of the peasant was an established practice in Mughal India. This mobility was more pronounced in cases of their oppression in one region or natural calamities like floods and famines.

Stratification of Peasantry

The peasantry was not a homogenous class. The stratification was due to inequalities in wealth and social status. Peasants with large resources cultivated bigger plots of land, and even employed labourers on his fields. They could acquire head-ship of a village (*muqaddam* or *patel*) and enjoy a superior share in the produce of other peasants. The divisions were so well-established that they are differently designated even in official accounts and records. Richer peasants are referred to as *khudkasht* (self-cultivated) in Northern India, *gharuhalas* in Rajasthan and *mirasdars* in Maharashtra. The poor peasants are referred to as *reza ria'ya* (small peasant) in Northern India, *paltis* in Rajasthan and *kunbis* in Maharashtra.

One major reason for this can be found in the wide prevalence of cash-nexus. Since land revenue in the larger part of India had to be paid in cash, peasants and cultivators were forced to carry their produce to the markets or sell it to merchants or moneylenders on the eve of harvest. In such a situation, those peasant who could cultivate cash crops would be placed in a better position, because of the higher prices they fetched in the market than those who, owing to their scarce resources, could only cultivate food crops for which the prices were comparatively low. Not all peasants could shift to cash crop cultivation since it involved much expenses (good seeds, better fertilisers, irrigation facilities, and also more productive soil). The requirement of the payment of land revenue in cash would thus cause a widening gulf between the relatively better-off peasants whose resources allowed them to shift to cash crop cultivation and the poor peasants who found even the cultivation of food crops an arduous and expensive business. The regressive nature of land revenue demand was another major factor that caused and intensified divisions within the peasantry. The incidence of land revenue demand being uniform for both the rich and the poor peasants, in actual fact it fell more heavily on the latter than on the former. The village organisation, or what has often loosely been described as the "village community", further perpetuated these divisions by levying lower revenue rates on the *khudkasht* peasants, and calling upon the *reza ri'aya* to meet the deficit thus arising in the total revenue claim.

Economic inequalities were not the only basis of divisions within the peasantry. They were also divided between the permanent residents of the village (*khudkasht* in Northern India, *mirasdar* in Maharashtra and *thalvaik* or *thalkar* in the Deccan) and the temporary residents (*pai/pahi kasht* in Northern India; *upari* in Maharashtra). Caste associations and kinship ties (*bhaichara*), even as they served as linkages that afforded supra-local affinities were also at the same time sources of divisiveness.

Below the class of peasants existed in rural India a large population of menial workers. Their number or their proportion to caste peasantry is almost impossible to estimate, yet, in all probability, they did constitute a significant portion of the rural population of India. They are described in the contemporary literature as 'chamars', *balahars*, *thoris* and *dhanuks*, etc. They were a cheap source of labour for the peasants and *zamindars* to work on their fields during the sowing and harvest seasons. It was, therefore, in the interest of both of them (i.e., the peasants and *zamindars*) to suppress and exploit them. The creation of a huge reserve of labour force for agricultural production reduced the cost of production, which enhanced the "surplus" produce of the peasant, and thus allowed a greater exploitation of land revenue by the ruling power. In the suppression of the menial workers, the state, the *zamindars* and the peasants were equal collaborators.

14.6.5 Village Community

Generally the peasants of a village had a majority of the same caste. Such villages were established historically by one clan or family. Apart from the peasants of the dominant caste of a village, there were menial workers who came from lower castes. From the contemporary accounts it appears that in many activities these villages functioned as a community. It should not be taken to mean that there were any communal land holdings. The fields were definitely held by individual peasants. The revenue officials found it convenient to treat village as a unit for revenue assessment and collection. The description of the *patwari* as a village official supports this. It is reported that the *patwari* was supposed to keep the account of individual peasants production and revenue liability. The payment to state was made by the village as a unit. The revenue from the individual peasants was put in a pool whose incharge was the *patwari*. From this pool, land revenue, fees and perquisites of certain officials and sundry common expenses of the village were paid. Even the loan taken from the moneylenders was paid back out of the village pool.

The dominant group of people in a village constituted the village *panchayat*. The latter used to decide village affairs regarding dispute over land rights, disposal of waste land, etc. It was also responsible to the state for arresting criminals, compensating for the value of goods stolen or tracing them. These *panchayats* were not above the state. The latter allowed it to discharge its traditional role in the village society only if its activities were not hampering the basic interests of the state. Some social groups in the village were not directly involved in the agrarian production, but they played some role in the agrarian activities. The *mahajans* acted as middlemen between the state and peasants and had considerable control over the rural society and economy. They would advance loans to individual peasants and village collectively for buying seeds and equipments or pay revenue or for social needs.

The village had artisans attached to it to provide their services and were paid at the harvest. The system was very well organised in Deccan and Maharashtra. These were called *balutedars*. We have discussed about them in some detail in Unit 4. The system of village community, *panchayats* or *balutedars* was not uniformly applicable to all the villages of the Mughal Empire. There were different types of structures in different regions. Most villages had some sort of community structure, though varying in degrees of control on their members.

14.6.6 Relations Between Agrarian Classes

In the earlier Sections of this Unit, we studied about various agrarian classes. We noticed that a number of groups appropriated a share in the surplus of the produce, i.e., *jagirdars*, religious grantees, *zamindars* and various intermediaries at the village level. We have also studied about the producing class or peasantry. Here, in this Section, we will study the relations between these classes.

Both the *zamindars* and the *jagirdars* fed upon the surplus produce of the peasant, and therefore, insofar as the exploitation of the peasantry was concerned, both acted as each other's collaborators. Yet, the *zamindar*, being permanently based would not allow exploitation that went beyond the alienation of surplus produce, for that would lead to exodus of the peasantry and desertion of agricultural operations which would in turn affect his own fiscal claims during the following year. The *jagirdars*, attitude is best reflected in Bernier's account who visited India in the mid-17th century. He writes that, because of the frequent transfers of *jagirs* the *jagirdars*, governors and revenue contractors were not bothered about the deplorable state of peasantry. They therefore were interested in exploiting the peasantry to the maximum even at the cost of their desertion and fields lying unattended.

Jawahar Mal Bekas, an 18th century writer observes that the *hakim (jagirdar)* of a day can in a moment remove a *zamindar* of five hundred years, and put in his stead a man who has been without a place for a life-time. Irfan Habib further elaborates his powers and writes that 'as for peasants, the *jagirdars* claimed powers to detain them on the land, like serfs, and bring them back, if they ran away'. In the second half of the 17th century due to the uncertainty of holding a jagir for a stipulated period, the *jagirdars* oppressed peasants.-They had no regard for their welfare. According to Irfan Habib, 'While undoubtedly the Mughal administration sought to take measures to regulate and moderate the *jagirdars*' exactions, it is not certain that these could reduce the pressure for short-term maximization of revenue by individual *jagirdars*. Such pressure not only inhibited extension of cultivation, but also involved the Mughal ruling class in a deepening conflict with the two major agrarian classes, the *zamindars* and the peasantry'.

The divisions within the peasantry, as also the deep contractions that existed between the peasants and agricultural workers, acted as severe constraints and weakened the capabilities of this class. Disjointed and truncated, this class was quite incapable of confronting the medieval despotic states. It did, however, revolt for two reasons: one, when the revenue demand appropriated more than the surplus produce of the peasants, thereby threatening their very subsistence. Peasant revolts in these circumstances never went beyond asking for a reduction in revenue demand. Peasants also revolted as followers of a *zamindar* who was leading a revolt against the state or *jagirdar* (mostly on the question of his claim to the produce of the soil), either in the hope that the end of revolt would lead to better conditions of living for them or simply as rendering a service to their overlord. Peasant revolts, particularly those of the Satnamis and the Jats, in the reign of Aurangzeb were of this nature were actually *zamindari* revolts: the *zamindars* led them and the peasants served the purposes of the *zamindars* alone.

Check Your Progress-5

- 1) Give a brief account of various categories of peasants.

2) How did the village community function?

3) Discuss the clash of interests between the *jagirdar* and *zamindar*?

14.7 AGRARIAN RELATIONS: DECCAN

Before analysing the various land rights, we will give a brief description of the medieval Deccan village where these agricultural lands were situated. In later sections, we will also deal with a more complex problem regarding the ownership of land in medieval Deccan and the village community.

14.7.1 Medieval Deccan Village Structure

The village is referred to as *gaon* or *uru* in the local language of the Deccan. It is also called *mauje* (a corrupt form of Arabic *mauza*), and *deh* (Persian). A bigger village that included a market place (*bazar*) was called *kasbe* (Arabic *qasbah*). The word *gaon* is derived from Sanskrit *grama*. The vast expanse of village fields was called *gaon shiwan*. It consisted of cultivated (*kali*) and non-cultivated or waste lands. Cultivable land was divided into plots. Fields belonging to one family were called *thal* (Sanskrit *sthala*). It consisted of 20-40 blocks. Each block consisted of area called *shet* or *kshetra* (Sanskrit) or *jamin* (Persian *zamin*). Each area together with the surname of the original family proprietor was registered in the village records lists called *thalazadas*. The records containing the extent of land actually cultivated, and the amount of revenue assessed, were incorporated in a ledger called *kul ghadni*.

The boundaries of the village were well demarcated and any encroachment upon it was unwelcome. The cultivable area of a village was called *kali* (indigenous term originally meaning black soil fit for cultivation) and the residential site of a village was known as *gaon sthan* or *pandhari* (indigenous term, originally meaning white soil unfit for cultivation). The *pandhari* was surrounded and protected by a wall called *gaon kunsu*. It was divided into house sites called *ghar*, *thikane* or *gharthana*. Each family built a house (*ghar* or *vada*) on its allotted site. The house site and the house left by a family (*gatkul*) which had either left the village or had become extinct were called *gatkul*, *gharthana* and *gatkul vada* respectively. These lands were either taken over by the village community or acquired by a new family, but the name of the original proprietor was not changed in the *thalazadas*. The original family in possession of *thai* or estate was called *jatha*. The *jatha* family was synonymous with *thalkari* or *thalwahi*, and the list of divisions in consonance

with family names was known as *zaminzada jathawar*. One such division was *munda*. The villages varied in size according to the fertility of the soil, produce and population.

14.7.2 Land Ownership

The question of ownership of land has been and continues to be a subject of scholarly debate. The *Manu Smriti* held that land belonged to the person (or family) who reclaimed it from the forest or brought it under cultivation. A contemporary judicial work *Parashurampratap* compiled by Sabaji Pratap Raja, a protege of Burhan Nizam Shah I, throws light on the issue of the ownership of land. It reinforces the claim of the king to the wealth of the soil only, thereby conceding the proprietary rights of the cultivators. In the Nizam Shahi kingdom, Malik Ambar revived the ancient co-parcenary village institutions by recognizing the hereditary proprietary rights of the *thalkari* called *mirasi*.

The Marathas looked to the ancient traditions laid down in the *Smritis* as regards the problem of land ownership. The village co-parcenary and *got* institutions existed in the Maratha realm in the 17th-18th century. There is evidence of a sale-deed which refers to the sale of land, transferring the *mirasi* rights to the *Peshwa*. In another instance, land was granted by the village community to the *Peshwa* for a sum of money assuring him against the claims of the former proprietors. The author of the treatise *Vyavaharmayukha* (a 17th work) points out that state is not the owner of all lands but can only realize taxes from landholders.

The various rights of the king in the soil have been mentioned in the grants of the Marathas. The *Vyavaharmayukha* regards *vrittis* or *watans* (consisting of land and houses) as private property. It also refers to the right of partition, sale, mortgage and inheritance which further corroborates the function and existence of *got majlis* (village assembly).

In the Muslim ruled states, the question of land rights and ownership of land acquired a new dimension due to various reasons. The Muslim legal theories regarding the rights of the conquered races or tributaries provide the basis for resolving the problem of land ownership. In accordance with these theories, an important duty of a Muslim ruler was to wage wars against the land occupied by the non-Muslims (*Dar-ul harb*). The people of the areas conquered in this process were extended protection on payment of tribute. These people were called *zimmis*. The author of the traditional Islamic *fiqh Hidayah* states regarding the conquered territories that either they should be divided among the soldiers in conformity with the way suggested by the Prophet, or they should be restored to the original inhabitants on payment of *jiziya* and *kharaj* (land tax). In the latter case, property rights were vested with the original inhabitants. The amount the *zimmis* had to pay as land tax was one half of the produce, whereas the Muslims were required to pay a tenth of the produce called *ushr*. The Muslim theorists regard cultivators as tenants referred to in documents as *r'ayats*. Their right to property in the soil and in that sense ownership of land was not recognized formally by the Muslim rulers except Malik Ambar who accepted *mirasi* rights.

Modern theories regarding the ownership of land in medieval Deccan also deserve attention. The first theory advocated by B.H. Baden-Powell in his work, *The Indian Village Community* (1896), regards almost all agricultural land (except *inam* and *watan* in which case individual or institutional ownership was prevalent) to have

been owned by the state. According to him: 'Ownership was only acknowledged in land granted revenue free by the state and apparently in lands held on the privileged tenure of *watan*' (land held in virtue of office in a village or district). A.S. Altekar counters the above by propounding a theory of peasant ownership of all agricultural land. In his work, *A History of Village Communities in Western India* (1927), he neither accepts communal ownership of land (as advocated by Marx and H.J.S. Maine) nor state ownership but enunciates peasant proprietorship. He goes to the extent of denying the *inamdars* any proprietary rights in the soil and recognizes *inamdars* as having only one right, i.e., to collect the revenue. S.N. Sen in his *Administrative System of the Marathas* (1923) categorizes three kinds of land viz., *inam*, *miras* and state's land and two classes of peasants—*mirasdars* and *uparis*. The *mirasdars* possessed permanent proprietary rights in their land and could not be evicted as long as they paid rent. The land held by the *mirasdars* was hereditary and saleable, and, even when they were evicted for non-payment of tax, they had the right to recover their ancestral lands. The *uparis* were tenants-at-will holding government land under the supervision of *mamlatdars*. These theories are based on the reports of the early British administrators and concede two important points: (1) there were two classes of peasants, and (2) the *miras* land belonged to the individual *mirasdars* on which tax was levied.

The reports however disagree on the question of rights in the land of extinct families and wastelands. They do not specify *watan* and *inam* tenures and maintain ambiguity as regards government lands.

14.7.3 Categories of Land Rights

The rights and privileges enjoyed by the cultivating families comprising the village community were determined in accordance with the degree of superiority of proprietary rights in land held by them. The cultivated area of a village was divided into: (1) *Miras* lands (2) *Inam* lands (3) State lands and (4) lands of extinct families. The various rights in these lands would throw light on the agrarian system of the period under review.

Mirasi Rights

The word *miras* is of Arabic origin. As mentioned in the Marathi documents, it refers to hereditary or transferable right or patrimony (*bap roti*) obtained by descent, purchase or gift, etc. The *mirasdars* were the holders of land under the *mirasi* tenure. They owned the village land and could exact rent in money or service from persons who lived on their land. There were two categories of the *mirasdars* (1) the hereditary owners of the *miras* land, and those who had reclaimed the *gatkul* land of the village. The hereditary *mirasdars* were placed in the old land lists of the villages called *thalazadas*, but they did not possess any titledeeds over land. The other category possessed *miras patra* (*miras*: deeds) attested by the authorities of the village community where the deed was sanctioned by the village communities of the neighbouring areas and by the *deshmukhs* and *deshpandes* of the district.

The practice of issuing *miras patra* was analogous to the system mentioned in the *Smritis*. The families of the *mirasdars* possessed the right to vote in the village assembly or *got sabha*. More specifically the elder member of the family exercised the right in accordance with the Hindu co-parcenary family system. In the Maratha state under Shivaji, the *mirasdars*' rights and privileges were substantially curtailed. The *mirasi* right embodied the concept of hereditary proprietorship of land. In the case of inability

to pay the government dues, if someone was forced to leave his land his name continued to occur in the *thalazada* and his descendants could recover the land even after hundred years on payment of arrears to the government.

The village land was held by the *mirasdars*: 1) on the basis of joint co-parcenary terms according to which the village land was divided into several shares, and 2) on the basis of a single proprietor ownership of the village.

Mirasi rights held on the basis of village coparcenary or ancient *thal* system. Such lands were held in common or jointly by the members of different families of a village. The share and the rights and immunities which went with these were clearly demarcated. The original *thal* was held by the *jatha* in the form of several shares. The *jatha* collectively comprised the lineal descendants of the first occupants of the *thal*. As a corporate body, the *jatha* was responsible for cultivation and payment of government and other dues. In case a member of the *jatha* did not leave behind an heir, his land was divided among his surviving relatives in accordance with the Hindu law of inheritance. Each individual member of the *jatha* was accountable for his share of payment of dues to the government although the payment was made collectively by the members of the *jatha*. Sale of one's patrimony was not easy and was carried out only if absolutely necessary. The sale could not be done without the approval of the village community. The members of the *jatha* were related to each other and were called *ghar bhau* ('Home Brothers'). The purchasers of land or new members of the *jatha* were referred to as *biradar bhau* (brothers by village) coparcenary and they were bound to meet all the obligations of the original holders. The *mirasdars* had to pay a permanent land tax to the government called, *swaithidhara*, although the government also levied certain other cesses such as *miraspati* from time to time. In case a family ceased to exist, its share went to the village coparcenary. The *gatkul* or abandoned lands of the village were placed at the disposal of the village co-parcenary or *patel* (village headman).

The chief characteristics of *miras* tenure: The *mirasdars* could sell their land as and when required. The purchaser could be an outsider who might not settle in the village where he had bought land. He could arrange for some members of his family to stay in the village where he had purchased land. Buying and selling of *miras* lands required the sanction or recognition of village officers and neighbours. The sale could be carried out without the prior approval of the state which lends support to the view that the state did not possess proprietary rights over the *miras* land. The purchaser on payment of revenue to the state was at liberty to use the land. The state sanctioned the sale by issuing a document for which it charged a fee equal to one fourth of the sale price.

The *mirasdar* possessed complete private proprietary rights in the *miras* land. The state could not encroach upon the *mirasi* rights. Also the headman and other people of the village could not infringe upon the *mirasi* rights. However, if the state wanted it could convert the *mirasi* lands into house sites after giving due compensation to the *mirasdars* in the form of *gatkul* lands. The corporate functioning of the village and *desh* was ensured due to the existence of the *mirasi* tenure.

Inam Lands

Inam is an Arabic word originally meaning gift or reward. In its broadest sense, it suggests either simply *inam*, *inam* villages or *inam* lands. Here *inam* implied grant of a specific amount of revenue of a village to a person. The *inam* village was assigned on a hereditary basis to persons or officials.

Here we will focus only on the nature of *inam* as a category of land tenure. The *inam* lands were either totally exempt from tax, or subject to a low tax called *inam patti*. It was a privileged category of land right. *Inam* was assigned to different categories: hereditary village officials, state officials, temples and *balutedars* (priests). The holders were designated *inamdars*. There were both resident and absentee *inamdars*. There is sufficient evidence to prove that these land assignments were hereditary. Rights in the *inam* land held by a *watandar* (hereditary village office holder) were saleable and transferable together with the office or *watan*. However it cannot be said with certainty whether the *inam* lands and the *watan* could be sold or transferred separately. It has not been established whether the *inam* lands held by institutions such as temples, monasteries, etc. could be sold without any constraints.

State Land (Crown Land)

Land held by the government as a corporate body or by the *Peshwa*/ruler could be treated as state land, although there might have been some kind of difference between the two. State lands existed in many villages of the Deccan managed by the local bureaucrats. They could be sold by them after taking approval from the central government. These lands were granted in *inam* or could be developed into house sites.

Waste Lands or Lands of Extinct Families

The *mirasi* rights and *inam* rights were unambiguous; however, the rights in the land of extinct families or wastelands contained a large degree of vagueness. These lands could be sold by either the village headman or village assembly or state. The lands of the families which had become extinct were called *gatkul zamin*. Lands which were left uncultivated for long periods were called *pad zamin*. Even the *miras* lands contained *pad zamin*. We will discuss those lands which had become, barren due to the extinction of the proprietors. Both *gatkul zamin* and *pad zamin* meant wastelands. The term *khalisa pad zamin* referred to state wastelands.

The wastelands could be appropriated and disposed of by the village headman, local village assembly and government. The lands expropriated by the village headman were regarded as *miras* lands on which land revenue was levied. The houses and house sites of extinct families could be acquired by the village headman after taking the approval of the local village assembly. However, generally this was not a lucrative proposition. The lands thus appropriated were cultivated by the *uparis* on a share-cropping basis and were subject to a high and fixed land revenue demand which could be relaxed only in the event of crop failure. Though such an undertaking added to the headman's social prestige, on the whole it was not worthwhile. Above all, the headman did not have the authority to dispose of the land according to his wishes.

Wastelands were disposed of by the local assembly either as *miras* or as *inam* lands. The purchaser (*inamdar*) of wastelands in the form of *inam* was not required to pay land tax on the lands. However, the village as a group had to pay land tax to the government on large *inam* lands thus sold. Wastelands sold as *miras* lands were subject to a heavy land tax which had to be paid by the new incumbent.

The government at the request of the headman gave away wastelands to *mirasdars* as compensation for taking over their *miras* lands located near the inhabited area

of a village for converting them into house sites. The grant of wastelands to local bureaucrats and hereditary officers was a means of encouraging cultivation. Wastelands were also granted as *inam* to individuals and institutions. The king or *Peshwa* also received wastelands in the form of grants. Wastelands which were neither appropriated by the village headman nor by the local assembly were resumed by the government. The government granted these lands as *inam* to priests, state officials, temples, mosques, hereditary officers, etc. In this manner, the government aimed at curtailing state expenditure and also securing the allegiance of the grantees to the state.

Check Your Progress-6

- 1) What were the main features of Medieval Deccan Village?
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- 2) Discuss briefly the modern theories regarding ownership of land in the Deccan
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- 3) Enumerate the four categories of land rights in the Deccan.
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14.7.4 Village Community

The village community was based on the principle of hereditary rights in land. This principle was derived from ancient Hindu system of joint property. The village headman, accountant, artisans, landholders, etc. constituted the village community. A few autonomous village units combined to form larger territorial units called *naikwadi* or *sthal* (Pre-Muslim Hindu period) under an officer called *naik* whose tasks included assisting the village headman for collecting revenue and heading the local militia. About 84 or more villages combined, to form an administrative division called *paragana* or *desh* headed by a *deshmukh*. These larger territorial units acted as links between the villages and the ruler. The *Sardesais* and *Sardesbpandes* (above the *deshmukhs* and *desais*) were other components in the chain between villages and the ruler. A village consisting of a trading centre was called *qasba*. The corporate body of the village and *desh* was called *got* derived from Sanskrit *gotra* which means family. Thus the villages and *parganas* as territorial units which were constituted according to the ancient customs of villages communities remained unaffected by political changes.

Theories

The socio-economic writings of the 19th century project two broad theories on the nature of the Indian village community. The first theory as advocated by Karl Marx (based on two books written by British administrators, e.g., Sir C.T. Metcalfe, the

acting Governor-General of India who considers the Indian village community as stagnant) regards the village community as 'self-sufficing' and unchangeable based on 'division of labour'. The individuals such as priest, barber, headman, etc. are referred to as rural servants by Baden Powell and others. According to Karl Marx, these servants were maintained at the expense of the whole community. Relying on Baden-Powell's work *Indian Village Community* (1896), Max Weber pointed out that the village servants were provided a share in land or harvest or money in return for the service they performed for the village community. This Max Weber terms as 'demiurgical labour'. Marx and Weber attribute the 'unchangeableness' of Indian society to 'economic self-sufficiency' and 'Caste system combined with magical traditionalism'.

The view of the historians like S.N. Sen and A.S. Altekar are in conformity with the theory propounded by Marx and Weber. Both agree that the village servants were employed by the village as a whole. S.N. Sen clearly points to the hereditary nature of occupation of the village servants.

Refuting the demiurgic theory, sociologists and anthropologists writing on rural India and the little communities enunciate the *jajmani* theory. It was first propounded by W.H. Wiser, an American Christian missionary. According to him, rural servants were engaged on a hereditary basis by certain families (patrons) belonging to the dominant castes on a trans-village level. T.O. Beidelman defines the *jajmani* system as a feudal system consisting of hereditary obligations of payment and service between two or more families of different castes in the same area. M.N. Srinivas, an eminent sociologist, does not accept the *jajmani* concept. He cites instances to disprove the element of hereditary service and also the opinion regarding the relation between specific families.

Peasants

The reports of the British administrators as well as the indigenous Marathi records throw valuable light on the categories of peasants and the land tenures which existed in the Deccan. Various terms are used for the peasants in the records such as *raiyyat*, *loka*, *praja*, *kula* or *kunbi*. The village land was held by the peasants or cultivators. They can be divided into two broad categories: a) *mirasdars* and 2) *uparis*. The *mirasdar* (*mirasi* or *thalkari*) was generally a landed proprietor cultivator (free holder). The *upari* was a tenant-at-will. He was a stranger in the village where he cultivated the land either of the *mirasdar* or government (after the second half of the 18th century). These lands were held by the *upari* on the *ukti* tenure. This was a land-lease comprising a verbal agreement for a year in which the rent rates were not fixed. The tenant cultivators also held land on *qaul* (agreement)-*istava* (land) tenure. It was a contractual agreement (lease for 5, 7 or 9 years) intended to encourage cultivators to bring wasteland under cultivation. The *deshmukh* who issued the *qaul-istawa* was allowed commission on the wasteland thus reclaimed. Large inam lands were cultivated by the *uparis* on a share cropping (*batai*) basis. Occasionally, the *mirasdars* could also be tenants holding *inam* lands. The absentee *inamdar* got his share of rent in cash either through his agent in the village or village headman whom he deputed for the task. The resident *inamdar* was paid rent in kind. The amount was usually half of the gross produce.

Individual peasants and hereditary village officers were holders of *miras* lands on which land tax was levied. The obligation to pay the final land tax to the government even in the case of poor harvest or crop failure induced the *mirasdars* and village headman to leave the village. The *uparis* were the tenants of the *mirasdars* who cultivated the *miras* land on sharecropping terms. They paid the rent to the government

if their landlord was absconding. It was generally 2/3rd of the total produce. An important change which occurred in the second half of the 18th century was that the mirasdars became cultivators of lands and the uparis were encouraged by the government to cultivate state and wastelands. It is clear that tenancy was not prevalent on a large scale in the Deccan, sale of land was infrequent and that the *uparis* soon acquired occupancy rights in land.

Got Sabha or Majlis

Got sabha was an independent body which held jurisdiction over the administrative, fiscal and judicial affairs of the village or *pargana*. The administrative body of the village consisting of the local officials of the *pargana* was called *diwan*. The two *got* and *diwan* performed the role of arbiter in disputes brought to them by the village community. The *watandars* and *balutedars-watandars* participated in the meeting of the *got sabha*. The Muslim rule in the Deccan promoted the development of the *majlis* system, the *qazi* serving as the link between *got* and *diwan*. The traditional system of naming the judgement according to the nature of transaction was discontinued. The verdict was attested by the members of the *majlis* before it became a legal document (*mahzar*).

14.7.5 WATAN SYSTEM

Watan is an Arabic term and *watan* system owes its origin in the Deccan to the establishment of the Muslim rule. Broadly speaking, it refers to a hereditary grant

made by the government to an office-holder in a village, in lieu of services rendered by him to the village community. The hereditary village officers were permanent residents of the village (*desaks*) and were granted land by the state together with rights and immunities in lieu of administrative tasks performed by them in the village. The *desaks* were called *watandars* (*deshmukh*, *desai*, *deshpande*, *kulkarni*, etc). They were exempted from payment of land revenue to the government. The *Smritis* refer to *vrittis* which was the indigenous variant of *watan*, and the emolument received by the holders of *vrittis* were termed as ***nibandhas***. The rent-free land held by the *watandar* was called *inam*.

The chief hereditary officer of the village was the *patel*, also called *gava patel* or *mokaddam patel* in the contemporary Marathi records. The main responsibility of the *patel* was to collect land revenue and remit the government share to the state treasury. As the village headman, he performed several administrative duties in the village. In return, he received certain privileges (*haq*) and perquisites (*lazims*) which were mentioned in his *watan-deed*. *Haq* was granted to him as a matter of right (legal grants). It consisted of a share of the total revenue collection in cash or kind which was fixed by the state. *Lazim* was voluntary payment such as phaski (a handful of any corn) *pasodi* (a garment), etc; free services from *mahars* and artisans; seniority rights (*man pan*) which enabled him to preside over the village festivities. Besides the *patel*, other officers such as *kulkarni*, and *chaugula* (*patel's* assistant) also enjoyed perquisites and rights in return for their services.

The hereditary officers of a *paragana* were *deshmukh* and *deshpande*. The *deshmukh* was the head *patel*. For his services he was paid in kind from land and also received services and goods from the village servants, merchants, etc. Besides, he also held land in the village. The *deshkulkarni* supervised the work of the *kulkarnis* in his *paragana*. He was however subordinate to the *deshpande*. The

deshkulkarni received remuneration in the form of rent-free land as well as payment in cash and kind which was usually half the amount the *deshmukh* received.

Seth and Mahajan were hereditary officials of the *qasba* or *peth* (market village). They received emoluments in cash or kind and land. A *taraf* or *karyat* consisted of a few villages. This territorial unit was smaller than a *paragana*. The hereditary officer of this unit was the *naik*. His task was to collect taxes from the cultivators. Later in the Muslim-ruled states, this officer was replaced by the *havaladar*.

The *deshmukhs* and *deshpandes* were the *zamindars* (*haqqadars*) who did not possess proprietary rights over all the lands under their jurisdiction. They sold their lands only under desperation, but the rights and privileges attached to their office could not be sold separately. Their position remained unaffected even in times of political upheavals.

There was a sharp distinction between the *mirasi* and *watani* rights. *Mirasi* was a hereditary proprietorship right in the land, whereas the *watani* right flowed from the office held and services offered by the *watandar* which was transferable. A *mirasdar* could also be a *watandar*, but a *watandar* need not necessarily be a *mirasdar*. A *watandar*, however, held *inam* lands on a hereditary basis.

Balutedars

The rural servants in Maharashtra villages are referred to as twelve *balutes* (*barah balute*) or *alutas*. The scholars differ regarding the composition of the balutedars. However, the following were invariably included in the list: carpenter, blacksmith, potter, leather-worker, ropemaker, barber, washerman, astrologer, Hindu priest and *mahar*. The term (referred to by Grant Duff, etc) twelve *alutas* was probably an extension of the word *balutas* and had the same connotation. The *alutas* are not mentioned in the 18th century Marathi documents and, thus, it appears that they were found only occasionally in villages. There were two categories* of the *balutedars*: 1) *watan* holding *balutas* and stranger (*upari*) *balutas*. The first category possessed hereditary monopoly over their services. They were employed by the village as a whole and served the individual villagers. The *balutedars* were paid by the peasants in three ways:

- 1) in kind or cash called *baluta*;
- 2) in the form of perquisites, rights and privileges in cash or kind, and
- 3) in the form of revenue-free *inam* lands.

It is not clear whether the perquisites were enjoyed by the *upari-balutas* also. Regarding the *inam* lands, it can be safely said that only *watan-balutas* were entitled to hold these lands. The *baluta-watan* could be transferred divided or sold without the consent of the village as a whole, but such a transaction required the sanction of the village assembly.

The division of the *baluta-watan* did not imply division of service duties, but of emoluments. The amount of emoluments did not increase; therefore, such a practice was not discouraged. The *balutas* remained the servants of the whole village and not of any family.

The *balutas* generally belonged to different occupational castes. The priest and the accountant were Brahmins. The priests did not hold any *watan*. Their function was confined to certain castes or families because of the peculiar nature of Hindu

rites and ceremonies. These families (*jajman*) were either temporary or permanent clients of the priests. Thus, the *jajmani* principle is applicable to priests, but not to the twelve *balutas*. In the final analysis, it can be stated that the *watandars* and *balutedars* were maintained and controlled by the village as a body.

Feudalism

The *pargana* and the village community represented a vertically stratified structure, whereas *jati* was structurally horizontal and had a trans-village character. The latter constituted an important component of a village and *pargana*. It also had a tribal structure which imparted to it a mobile and militant character. Thus the community structure of the local society in medieval Deccan was pluralistic, but stratified either horizontally or vertically. From this we can infer that the Indian village community was not self-sustained and isolated but had linkages with neighbouring villages. The factor which regulated the functioning of the community structure was the *watan* system which represented division of labour between peasants and artisans in the village community. The increase in productivity in the local society led to the accumulation of surplus which got converted into perquisites of the community leaders. In a society where land was available in plenty a system based on landed property could not have evolved. Instead, the peasant proprietors turned community leaders were metamorphosed into the rural ruling class which acquired the attributes of exploiter by the end of the 16th century. Around this time, the *watan* tended to become the private property of the grantees. It was sold separately and freely in this period. The perquisites of the rural ruling class absorbed into the political structure of the state were transformed into rights of exaction. This tendency is seen by historians like Fukazawa as feudalisation from below. However, we find that class relations between peasants and rural ruling classes were not lord-serf relations as in medieval Europe, but they can be termed as communal-based agrarian relations. In the context of medieval Deccan, the peasants were the direct producers who possessed the means of production carried on by a nuclear peasant family. The community leaders who became the exploiting class of the local society did not become landlords or feudal lords because landownership in a society where land was abundant was not an important criteria for appropriating the surplus produced by the peasants and artisans. In such a society it was the community which was supreme, and the rural ruling groups could not monopolise the judicial rights over the peasants.

The grant of *jagirs* and *saranjam* (mokasa) to state officials for realizing revenue from the *parganas* and villages has been termed as feudalization from above. But these terms should be used with caution considering the peculiarities of the situation in medieval Deccan.

Check Your Progress-7

- 1) Discuss in brief the two theories which throw light on the nature of Indian village.

- 2) List the two categories of peasants which existed in medieval Deccan.

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- 3) What do you understand by the term 'Watan System'? What were its chief characteristics?

14.8 AGRARIAN STRUCTURE: SOUTH INDIA

In the present Section we would be discussing the village structure and the nature of land rights in South India.

14.8.1 Village Structure and Agrarian Relations

In the 17th and 18th centuries, reports were prepared by the British administrators on the land-tenure in South India. Stone inscriptions and local village documents (*kaifiyat*), resolutions adopted at the village level written on palm leaves and contained in Mackenzie collections, Christian missionary documents, foreign travellers accounts are the various sources which throw light on the land system of South India.

The reports of the British officers refer to communal holding of land in South Indian villages. In the pre-modern period, land holding and cultivation were the basis of production. There were two types of villages in South India: *brahmadeya* and non-*brahmadeya*. The Brahmins were granted villages by the rulers called *Brahmadeya*. In these villages the Brahmins established a communal self-governing body called *sabha*. These villages were mostly established during the Pallava and Chola times. Non-*brahmadeya* villages were more ancient and numerically more than the *brahmadeya* ones. From a study of inscriptions of the same locality and of the same period the following points emerge: 1) individual (big landlords held many villages) landholding prevalent in *brahmadeya* and communal landholding among *urar* (peasants) in non-*brahmadeya* villages. 2) *Ur* was the assembly in non-*brahmadeya* villages. 3) In the Vijaynagara period, the village was the major unit in which land rights were vested. 4) There was a shift in focus from *nadu* (locality) called *nattar* and *okkul* (in Karnataka) during the Chola period to village as the prime unit in the Vijaynagara kingdom. 5) The autonomous bodies like *sabha*, *ur*, and *nattar* declined and later disappeared in the Vijaynagara period giving place to *nayak* or independent chieftain.

The village servants (*ayagars*) were given *manya* or tax-free land, or subject to quit rent. Land tenures for Brahmins and temples were called *Ekobhogam* and *devadana* respectively. Private right (income shares) accruing from increased productivity due to investment in agriculture was called *dasavanda* or *katku-kodage* in Karnataka. An important change in the landholding system and agrarian structure occurred in the 16th century. The warrior chieftains (*nayaks*) of Vijaynagara penetrated into the local kin-based peasant societies in the Tamil country. Temples in the Tamil region had functioned as autonomous landholders and corporate institutions for a long period. The Vijaynagara chieftains took over the management of temples. The agrarian economy

underwent a drastic change since the temple lands were transformed into contractual tenures. By acquiring control over these tenures, the chieftains got metamorphosed into agrarian magnates.

14.8.2 Nature of Land Rights

The various categories of agrarian rights (*kaniyatchi*) that existed in the rural society will throw valuable light on the interaction between the *nayaks* and the peasants. The agrarian surplus produced by the peasantry and successfully extracted by the Telegu *nayaks* was the basis of the power of the Vijaynagar state. The dry plains of the Tamil country were settled by migrant Telegu warrior clans like Thottian, Panta

Reddi, Naidu and Kambalattar. The traditional Tamil peasant elites and their groups like *nattavar* (villages) and *uravai* (peasant settlements) were displaced by Telegu-speaking groups who transformed this area into a peripheral zone.

The warrior-chieftains promoted agricultural development by bringing hitherto populated (*kongu*) region under intensive cultivation. Tank irrigation was introduced in the black soil belt of *kongu*, and cultivation of cash crops like sugarcane was encouraged.

The later 15th century witnessed the conversion of temple lands (*devadana*) into semi-private landed estates (*kaniparru*) of the warrior chieftains. There is an inscription of CE 1511 which refers to conversion of a peasant settlement with a temple tenure (*tirunamathukkani*) into a *kaniparru* of a warrior chieftain. The right to cultivate as well as levy taxes was transferred to the grantee. Various land and fiscal rights were contained in these land transactions of the 16th century. The traditional peasant elites, viz., *uravar* and *nattar* and the peasant assemblies such as *ur* were replaced by the dynamic and expanding *nayak* created agrarian political structure.

Many towns or fortified settlements were established in this period by the *nayaks*. They served as both political and economic centres. They were conspicuous by their absence in the Kaveri delta. *Palaiyan* was reclaimed land held by the warrior chieftains where peasants, artisans, and merchants were integrated into the political and economic network established by the *nayak* chief. They extracted *kudanai* (local dues) and *sittayam* from the peasants and artisans respectively.

The land tenure of the *nayaks* is referred to as *kaniparru*. It probably refers to rights in lands, i.e., to buy and sell without the absolute right of ownership. It also refers to a variety of taxes. An inscription dated CE 1522 testifies to the transfer of temple land and the rights associated with land to the *nayak*. The rights were as follows:

- 1) to collect dues from the peasants;
- 2) to cultivate the land and settle people; and
- 3) to receive *prasadam* (sacred food) from the temple.

However, the transfer of land to the *nayak* did not imply transfer of the right of ownership. The *nayak* could use the land and collect taxes, but the temples reserved the right of ownership to themselves.

Kaniparru was a conditional and contractual tenure or a lease between the warrior chieftains and temples. The temples retained the right of ownership and imposed obligations on the *nayaks* to pay the temples a certain amount in cash or kind.

The process of transfer of land did not lead to eviction of peasants. They retained their share (*karai*) of land. In case of transfer of temple lands to the peasants, the peasant leaders (*mudalis*) took over the cultivation of the land. They paid *vadavathi* (tribute) to the temple. This kind of peasant land-tenure was called *kudiningadevadanam*. The peasants in such villages had a permanent share in land and could not be displaced.

The rate of taxation was high. Besides, peasants were pressed to maintain irrigation facilities. Agrarian stress was building up but was held back due to the availability of land in the *kongu* area. Later, in the 17th century, when this area ('the frontier') was closed, peasant discontent increased. This was an outcome of the agrarian policies of the Vijaynagara *nayaks*.

Land was leased out to individuals other than the *nayaks* and to institutions. The lease included houses, wet and dry land. In certain instances, the descendants of the leaseholder also enjoyed the right of sale, mortgage, etc.

Taxes imposed by the central and local governments on the land leased out by the temples were paid to the temple authorities by the leaseholders. Land leased out by

temples were not totally exempt from taxes. The taxes received from the leaseholders were remitted by the temple authorities to the state while retaining certain other taxes like *kadamai* for themselves. The leaseholders were given the right of cultivation and reclamation and colonisation of land. Generally, leaseholders did not cultivate themselves; they got it done by others. They paid taxes to the temple treasury in cash or kind. Cultivators also got a share of the produce. The leaseholders were almost the owners of the leased land.

The *mirasi* right was an important component of the land system in South India. The *mirasdars* held tax-free land called *maniyam*. They were entitled to a share of the produce (*kuppattam*) from these lands.

In certain cases, several *mirasdars* held village land jointly. The cultivators were called *payakari* who were divided into two groups – *ulkudis* and *parakudis*. The former stayed in the village. Their rights were not transferable and could not be infringed upon. The *parakudis* were tenants-at-will whose right of cultivation was contractual. Taxes paid by the *mirasdar* or the government were referred to as *pannu*, *irai*, *vari*, etc. There were two categories of the *mirasdars* – resident and non-resident. Slave labour was also employed by the *mirasdars* to cultivate land. The *mirasdars* acted as intermediaries between the government and villagers.

Thus, *mirasi* right though hereditary was not uniform. Its nature varied from place to place. It could be transferred through sale, mortgage or gift.

Check Your Progress-8

- 1) Discuss the nature of *kaniparru* rights.

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- 2) What were the chief characteristics of *mirasi* rights in South India?

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14.9 SUMMARY

Contemporary foreign observers remark about the primitiveness and simplicity of agricultural implements, but they were well suited to the needs of Indian agriculture. Agriculture was dependent mainly on rain water, but means and methods of artificial irrigation were also employed. Wells fitted with various devices like, *dhenkli*, *charas* and *saqiya* (Persian Wheel) to lift water, and tanks, reservoirs and to, a limited extent, canals were the main source for irrigation.

The Indian peasants raised a number of food and cash crops. Some land was used for two or more crops. Rotation of crops and cultivation of cash crops according to market needs was a special feature of the period. Production of fruits both in quality and quantity reached new heights.

The productivity and yield of crops compares well with the late 19th century modern yields and productions. Cattle and livestock seem to have higher per capita population in the Mughal period.

In this Unit, we have also studied that

- on behalf of the state, the *jagirdar* appropriated a major share in the agricultural surplus;
- the revenue grantees enjoyed revenue-free lands granted to them by the state;
- the *zamindar* was not the owner of the land but had hereditary rights in the produce of soil. These rights were salable;
- when the *zamindar* collected revenue for the state, he was entitled to *nankar*. When the state directly collected the revenue, the *zamindar* was paid a share called *malikana*. The *zamindars* were entitled to a number of other petty perquisites;
- the *zamindars* maintained troops;
- caste and kinship ties divided the *zamindars* and prevented its growth as the governing class of India;
- village headman and other officials also appropriated a part of agrarian surplus;
- the peasants had to pay larger part of his produce to the state, *zamindar* and other intermediaries,
- the peasantry was not a homogenous group but was divided on the basis of their income and holdings. Kinship and caste ties also divided them;
- landless peasants or village menial workers were the most oppressed class in the agrarian society; and
- there was a serious clash of interests between the *jagirdar* and the *zamindar*. In case of conflicts between the two, the peasants were generally on the side of the *zamindars* and suffered most in these clashes.

In this Unit we have also outlined the chief features of medieval Deccan village. The debate regarding ownership of land in medieval Deccan has been discussed. The nature of the village community as well as the various components constituting village community have been dealt with. The *watan* system which was peculiar to the Deccan has been analysed in detail. The unit also deals with the land system of South India. The various land rights as well as the agrarian relations arising out of these rights in land have been highlighted.

14.10 KEYWORDS

<i>Bigha-i Ilahi</i>	The area of 60 square <i>gaz-i Ilahi</i> (yards of Akbar), the length of <i>gaz-i Ilahi</i> was around 32 inches. One <i>bigha-i Ilahi</i> was around .60 of an acre
Cash-crops	Crops produced for markets
<i>Dastur Circles</i>	The territory within which some cash revenue rates were applied for different crops, the whole province was divided into number of <i>dastur</i> circles with separate revenue rates
<i>Dartur Rates</i>	Cash revenue rates for different crops per unit of area
Distillation	Lit. substance was turned to vapour by heating, then the condensed vapour was collected
<i>Gaon Shiwan</i>	Village fields
<i>Gatkul</i>	Land of a family in a village who had left the village for some reason or had become extinct
<i>Jama</i>	The estimated income
<i>Kroh/Kuroh</i>	Used for measuring distance. 1 <i>Kuroh</i> = 2.5 miles
<i>Kharif</i>	Autumn crop
<i>Kharaks</i>	Cattle-pens
<i>Kul Ghadani</i>	Village ledger
<i>Man-i Akbari</i>	The measure of weight which was around 55 pounds
<i>Nibandhas</i>	Emoluments received by holder of <i>vrittis</i> (indigenous term; a variant of <i>watan</i>)
<i>Pandhari</i>	Soil unfit for cultivation
Ploughshare/coulter	The pointed tip of the plough which was used for digging the ground. It was made up of iron or hardwood.
<i>Rabi</i>	Winter crop
<i>Raiyat</i>	Ordinary Peasants
<i>Thal</i>	Fields belonging to a single family

14.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 14.2
- 2) You can write use of various types of manure and rotation of crops etc. See Sub-section 14.3.1
- 3) You can leave out methods which were employed to draw smaller quantities. See Sub-section 14.3.2
- 4) See Sub-section 14.3.2

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sub-section 14.4.1
- 2) Cash crops were those crops which were grown mainly to be sold in market. While food crops were for personal consumption and market, the oil yielding crops were grown to extract edible oils. See Sub-sections 14.4.1,14.4.2
- 3) See Sub-section 14.4.2
- 4) See Sub-section 14.4.3

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Sub-section 14.6.1
- 2) See Sub-section 14.6.1

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) Discuss *zamindar*'s rights were over the produce of the land. See Sub-sections 14.6.2
- 2) See Sub-section 14.6.2, 14.6.3

Check Your Progress-5

- 1) Peasants can be divided into a number of categories on the basis of their land holdings, resources and nature of rights. See Sub-section 14.6.4
- 2) The common body of residents in a village worked as village community. See Sub-sections 14.6.5
- 3) The *zamindars* had permanent interests in their areas while *Jagirdars* were transferable. The latter were interested in the maximum exploitation of peasantry while *zamindars* were scared of the desertion of land by peasantry and losing their share of the revenue. See Sub-section 14.6.6

Check Your Progress-6

- 1) See Sub-section 14.7.1

- 2) See Sub-section 14.7.2
- 2) See Sub-section 14.7.3

Check Your Progress-7

- 1) See Sub-section 14.7.4
- 2) See Sub-section 14.7.4
- 2) See Sub-section 14.7.5

Check Your Progress-8

- 1) See Sub-section 14.8.2
- 2) See Sub-section 14.8.2

14.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

Fukazawa, H., (1991) *The Medieval Deccan: Peasants, Social Systems and States, 16 to 18 Century* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Habib, Irfan, (1990; Revised) *Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

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Moosvi, Shireen, (1990) *Economy of the Mughal Empire c. 1595. A statistical study* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Raychaudhuri, Tapan and Irfan Habib, (1982) *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I (Delhi: Cambridge University Press).

14.13 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Agricultural Production in Mughal India - I

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzJbp2uRhoc>

Agricultural Production in Mughal India – II

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TO_2hyR7nmo

Mughal Empire - System of Agricultural Production

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogXCHKbpHW4>

Agrarian Structure in Mughal India - I

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEf15hoqwqw>

Agrarian Structure in Mughal India - I

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1oL3k9-hn8>

Agrarian Structure in Mughal India - II

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RODmiEY39k

Zamindari System

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hp7NPo0T90Q>

The Village Community: Zamindars and Peasants

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZH2b8hmcTxI>

UNIT 15 EXCHANGE ECONOMY: MONEY AND CURRENCY *

Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 The Mughal Coinage
- 15.3 The Mughal Minting System
- 15.4 Prices and Wages
- 15.5 Summary
- 15.6 Keywords
- 15.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 15.8 Suggested Readings
- 15.9 Instructional Video Recommendations

15.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will discuss some important aspects of Mughal money and currency system. After going through this Unit you will be able to learn about the:

- increasing use of money in economy,
- currency systems of the Mughals,
- working of the Mughal mints, and
- prices trends during the Mughal period.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will discuss the monetary system of the Mughals. The Mughals had a developed system of metallic currency. The Empire was dotted with mints issuing coins of gold, silver and copper. Here we will discuss the relative value of various currencies, system of minting and the location of mints. In the third section, we will take note of prices. Among other things, we will also discuss the impact of price fluctuation on the production and commercial activities of the period.

15.2 THE MUGHAL COINAGE

Under the Mughals, the currency system was very well organised. A high level of purity of metals was also achieved.

The Mughal currency system may be termed as trimetallic. Coins were of three metals, viz, copper, silver and gold. However, the silver coin was the base of the currency.

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The silver coin has a long pre-Mughal history. It was used during Delhi Sultanate for long as *tanka*. Sher Shah for the first time standardized the silver coin. It was called *rupaya* and had a weight of 178 grains (**troy**). For minting purposes, an alloy was added which was kept below 4 per cent of the weight of the coin. Akbar continued the *rupaya* as the basic currency with more or less the same weight. Under Aurangzeb the weight of the *rupaya* was increased to 180 grains (troy). The silver *rupaya* was the main coin used for business and revenue transactions.

The Mughals issued a gold coin called *ashrafi* or *muhr*. It weighed 169 grains (troy). This coin was not commonly used in commercial transactions. It was mainly used for hoarding purposes and also for giving in gift.

The most common coin used for small transactions was the copper *dam* which weighed around 323 grains. The weight of the copper *dam* was reduced by one third during Aurangzeb's reign presumably because of the shortage of copper.

Further, for very petty transactions *kauris* (sea-shells) were used in coastal areas. These were brought mainly from the Maldivian islands. Around 2500 *kauris* equalled a *rupaya*.

Apart from the silver *rupaya* other types of coins were also used. The most important of these were *mahmudis*, a long standing silver coin of Gujarat. Even after the establishment of the Mughal rule in Gujarat it continued to be minted and used in Gujarat for commercial transaction.

In the Vijaynagar Empire, a gold coin called *hun* or *pagoda* was used. After the disintegration of Vijaynagar, its circulation continued in the kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda. In many Deccan kingdoms, an alloy of copper and silver called *tanka* was in use. After the expansion of the Mughals in the Deccan a number of mints were established in that region to produce Mughal silver coins.

Exchange Value of Coins

The exchange value of gold, silver and copper coins kept fluctuating depending on the supply of these metals in the market. The silver value of gold kept fluctuating throughout the Mughal period, ranging from 10 to 14 *rupaya* for one gold coin.

As for copper coin, taking 1595 as the base year, Irfan Habib shows that by the early 1660s it rose to 2.5 times, but by 1700 it came down to the double and again by 1750 it reached the level of the 1660s.

For transaction purposes during Akbar's period, 40 copper *dams* were considered equal to one *rupaya*. After his death, as the rate of copper appreciated sharply, this ratio could not be maintained. Since all the land revenue assessment and calculations were done in *dams*, it became necessary to use it as notional fractional units of *rupaya*. Silver coins of small fractions called *ana* were also used. It was one-sixteenth of a rupee.

In the above account, we have not gone into the details of the complexities and the debates among historians about the Mughal currency system. We have only tried to present before you in a simplified manner the basic features of Mughal coinage.

15.3 THE MINTING SYSTEM

The Mughals had a free coinage system. One could take bullion to the mint and get it coined. The state had the sole authority to issue coins and no other person

could issue them. A very strict standardization was followed to maintain the purity of coins.

A large number of mints were established throughout the Empire. Attempts were made to have these mints in big towns and ports so that the imported bullion could be taken to mints easily. Every coin carried the name of the issuing mint, and the year of minting and ruler's name.

The newly minted coin in the current or previous year was called *taza sikka* (newly minted). The coins issued and in circulation in the reign of an emperor were called *chalani* (current). While the coins minted in the earlier reigns were called *khazana*. Except for the *taza* all other coins were subjected to reduction in value.

A certain amount was deducted on the value of the coin for successive years from the year of issue. If a coin was for more than one year in circulation around 3 per cent was deducted; if it was for more than 2 years then 5 per cent was to be reduced.

Apart from the factor of age, a deduction in the value was made on account of the loss of weight of coin. Abul Fazl says that if the loss of the weight was less than one *rati* it was to be overlooked and the coin was treated as standard. If the loss of weight was between 1 and 2 *ratis*, a deduction of two and a half per cent was made; and if it exceeded 2 *ratis* the coin was treated as bullion.

The above stated deductions were decided by the state, but in actual practice arbitrary deductions were decided by *sarrafs* (money changers) depending on the market.

Working of Mints

Any person desirous of getting money minted was to carry bullion or old currency for reminting to a mint. The quality and purity of the metal was scrutinized. The currency was minted and delivered to the concerned person. A specific sum was charged as minting charges. This amounted to around 5.6% of the bullion minted.

In the process of minting a large number of personnel and craftsmen were involved.

A mint was headed by an officer called *darogha-i darul zarb*. The duties of this officer were to supervise the overall working of the mint. He was assisted by a number of officials, skilled artisans and workmen. The *sarrafs* were employed by the mint as assessors. He was to judge the purity, weight and age of the coin and fix deductions on their value. The *mushrif* was to maintain accounts. The *tahvildar* kept accounts of daily profit and kept coins and bullion in safe custody. The *muhr kan* (engraver) was a person who engraved and made dies. The *wazan kash* (weightman) weighed the coins. There were many artisans like the *zarrab* (coin maker), *sikkachi* (stamper), etc.

It is difficult to estimate the output of mints because it depended on the size of the mint and the commercial activities of the area where the mint operated. By the close of the 17th century, the output of Surat mint was estimated around 30,000 *rupaya* per day. Aziza Hasan studied the pattern of the issue of coins in 16th and 17th century. According to her estimates in 1639 the total rupees in circulation were three times than that of 1591. After 1639 there is a decline and by 1684 the total was double of 1591. After 1684 there is an ascent again and by 1700 the total coins in circulation were three times than those of 1591.

Location of Mints

Abul Fazl gives a list of mints in the *Ain-i Akbari*. According to him, copper coins

were issued by forty-two mints, silver coins by fourteen and gold coins by four mints. The number of mints issuing silver coins increased by the end of the 17th century to forty.

M.P. Singh has compiled a detailed list of mints on the basis of a large number of numismatic sources. According to him, a large number of mints which figure on coins do not find a mention in either the *A'in* or other literary sources. We reproduce below the list prepared by him.

Reign	No. of mints coining gold, silver and copper	No. of mints coining gold only	No. of mints coining gold and silver	No. of mints coining gold and copper	No. of mints coining silver only	No. of mints coining silver and copper	No. of mints coining copper only	Total
Akbar	13	4	3	1	14	14	35	84
Jahangir	6	2	7	-	11	3	3	32
Shahjahan	10	1	12	-	13	-	5	41
Aurangzeb	18	1	24	-	36	3	3	85

Source: Singh, M.P., (1985) *Town, Market, Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire, 1556-1707: An Administrative-cum-Economic Study* (Delhi: Adam Publishers), p. 173

At times, mints accompanied the Imperial camps also that issued coins en route.

Check Your Progress-1

1) Write a note on the nature of Mughal currency system.

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2) Elaborate on the system of minting under the Mughals.

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15.4 PRICES AND WAGES

Prices

The prices for a large number of commodities are listed in the *Ain-i Akbari*. These prices generally relate to the Agra region around the end of the 16th century. For the subsequent period, there are no systematic records of prices for comparison purposes.

For the seventeenth century, the prices available pertain to different areas of the Empire in different years. In such a situation, it becomes difficult to trace a definite trend in the movement of prices of different commodities throughout the Mughal period. Irafan Habib (Raychaudhuri and Habib 1982) has studied the movement

of prices in 16th and 17th centuries. We give below a brief account of price movements as provided by Irfan Habib.

Gold, Silver and Copper

We have already referred to the relative prices of these metals in **Section 15.2**. Around 1580s, the value of gold to silver was 1:9, by 1670s, after various fluctuations, it reached 1:16, but it came down again to 1:14 by 1750.

The silver price of copper coins also increased from the end of the 16th century to 1660s by 2.5 times; by 1700 it came down to double of the 16th century. Again by 1750 it rose to the level of 1660s.

Agricultural Produce

The main problem in analysing the prices of food grains is that they had a lot of fluctuations and variations. The prices depended on the cultivation of the specific food grains in a particular region. Again, the prices varied due to the level of production in a particular year. There could be large variations in the prices of the same commodity at two places at the same time, depending on how far it was carried from the place where it was grown.

The prices of some food grains recorded in the A'in are given below:

Wheat per <i>man</i> (maund)	12 <i>dams</i>	Sada Paddy per <i>man</i>	100 <i>dams</i>
Black gram per <i>man</i>	8 <i>dams</i>	Dewzira Rice per <i>man</i>	90 <i>dams</i>
Lentils gram per <i>man</i>	12 <i>dams</i>	Sathi rice per <i>man</i>	20 <i>dams</i>
Barley gram per <i>man</i>	8 <i>dams</i>	Mash Dal per <i>man</i>	16 <i>dams</i>
Moth gram per <i>man</i>	12 <i>dams</i>	mung per <i>man</i>	18 <i>dams</i>

The prices of food grains doubled between 1595 and 1637. Between 1637 and 1670, the increase was about 15 to 20 per cent. By 1670 the prices were 230 per cent of 1595. A systematic data is available for Eastern Rajasthan. Here the agricultural prices show a small increase between 1660s and 1690s, but a sharp increase by the second decade of the 18th century. After this, they maintained a level more than twice of that in the 1690s.

Sugar and Indigo

Two widely grown cashcrops in Mughal India were sugar and indigo. In northern India, the rise in the sugar prices is negligible till 1615; it rose to 140 per cent by 1630 and remained high till 1650s; while in Gujarat, the price of sugar doubled by 1620.

The price movement of indigo shows separate trends for two major varieties, i.e., Bayana indigo and Sarkhej indigo. The price for Bayana indigo given in the A'in (1595) is Rs. 16 per *man-i Akbari*. Till around the first quarter of the 17th century, the prices remained more or less at this level. In the 1630s we notice a sudden rise which declined after a short period but remained much above than those of the 1620s. Again, there came a sharp rise in the 1660s which came down a bit but remained around 3 times than those of 1595.

The prices of the Sarkhej indigo increased by 1.5 times by 1620. By the 1630s, there was a sharp rise followed by a decline by the 1640s, but it remained at the

double level compared to that of 1595. Fluctuations in indigo prices were affected by overseas demand also.

Wages

The *A'in-i Akbari* provides figures for the wages of a large category of workers. In the absence of any such data for the 17th century, it is difficult to discover any definite wage trend over a period of time. The scattered figures for the 17th century do show that by 1637 an increase of 67 to 100 per cent takes place; but these are not enough to draw broad conclusions.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) What are the major problems encountered to assess the agricultural prices prevalent in the Mughal period?

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- 2) Comment briefly on the relative movement of prices in the seventeenth century.

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- 3) Briefly provide the artisanal wages prevalent in the Mughal empire.

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15.5 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have studied the nature of currency system under the Mughals. The Mughal currency was trimetallic i.e., gold, silver and copper. The Mughal coinage was free and it was open to everybody to take the bullion to the mint. A large network of mints was established throughout the Empire. A high degree of purity and standardization was followed.

The movement of prices was four-fold in a period of 150 years. The annual rate of price rise was around 1.9 per cent. The quantitative data for wages is very limited. We get some detailed information on wages mainly from the *A'in-i Akbari* (1600).

15.6 KEYWORDS

Ana Small fractions of a silver coin of the Mughals; One silver *rupiya* of the Mughals was subdivided into 16 *anas*; while each *ana* consisted of 4 *paisa*

Chalani Coin current in the reign of an emperor

<i>Dam</i>	Copper coin of the Mughals; 40 <i>dams</i> =1 silver <i>rupiya</i> of the Mughals
<i>Hun/Pagoda</i>	Gold coin of the Vijayanagara empire
<i>Khazana</i>	Coins minted in the previous reigns
<i>Mahmudis</i>	Prevalent silver coin of Gujarat
Troy	Troy weight is a British system of weights used for gold, silver and jewels in which 1 pound = 12 ounces = 5760 grains
<i>Tanka</i>	Silver coin prevalent in the Deccan
<i>Taza Sikka</i>	Coin minted in the current or previous year

15.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) The Mughals had an open system of minting of coins. It was a trimetallic currency. See Section 15.2
- 2) You should write about the officers of mints and their working. See Section 15.3

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Section 15.4
- 2) See Section 15.4
- 3) See Section 15.4

15.8 REFERENCES

Deyell, John, (1990) *Living without Silver: The Monetary History of Early Medieval North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Habib, Irfan, (1990; Revised) *Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

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Richards, John F., (1987) *The Imperial Monetary System of Mughal India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Singh, M.P., (1985) *Town, Market, Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire: An Administrative-cum-Economic Study* (Delhi: Adam Publishers).

15.9 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Mughal Monetary System

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWUFgxLEGTg>

Mughal Empire - Trade and Monetary System

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIL-adfuybI>

Mughal Monetary System

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rmyjK-cHi4>

What Mughal Coins Tell Us About the Great Empire

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrfgWYb-cRw>

**Exchange Economy: Money
and Currency**



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UNIT 16 TOWNS, CITIES AND GROWTH OF URBAN CENTRES*

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Approaches to Study the Medieval Towns
- 16.3 Urban Landscape under the Mughals
- 16.4 Composition of Population (Urban Classes)
- 16.5 Urban Demography
- 16.6 Urban Life
 - 16.6.1 Standard of Living
 - 16.6.2 Social Life
 - 16.6.3 Entertainment and Festivities
- 16.7 Summary
- 16.8 Keywords
- 16.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 16.10 Suggested Readings
- 16.11 Instructional Video Recommendations

16.0 OBJECTIVES

The study of urban history of medieval India is an important and equally fascinating subject. In this Unit, you will study the development of urban economy and urban centres during the medieval period. After reading this Unit, you should be able:

- to have an idea of urbanisation in medieval India along with some of the most talked about theories on urbanisation;
- be able to list the general physical characteristics of medieval towns,
- discuss the various features of medieval urban life in India.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

The urban history of Mughal India, despite being a subject of great importance, has not received adequate attention by the scholars. That the subject has multifarious facets is evident from the range of topics that possibly form its domain. The expansion of urban centres, their actual size, urban economy and the society that an urban centre seems to have, are some of the notable examples.

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In this Unit we propose to introduce you to the urban history of Medieval India. Besides the theoretical generality such as approaches to the problem of urbanisation, we have mainly focussed on the description pertaining to the urban landscape and life. It should be understood here that in this kind of problem-oriented study our approach would mainly be decided by the type of questions we attempt to answer. You would thus find that the details of town life and society as well as their layout given by us have emanated mainly from the way we have tackled the question of urbanisation in Medieval India.

16.2 APPROACHES TO STUDY THE MEDIEVAL TOWNS

Urbanisation has been seen by scholars both in terms of the physical growth of a town as well as a particular way of life. Of late, much work along both these lines of enquiry has been done in the West. Unlike this, however, the study of urban history in India is still in the developing stage. In the following Sections, we offer a brief account of the main theoretical development and the major lines of enquiry followed to date.

The town, in contrast to a village, is now, by consensus, seem to possess two basic features: dense concentration of population within a defined and also limited space, and a predominantly non-cultivating character of this population. A town thus has a definite man-space ratio and an essentially heterogeneous occupational pattern.

For the emergence of towns, in medieval India, several explanations have been put forward. The causative factors inherent in these explanations postulate the emergence of mainly four types of urban centres:

- i) administrative
- ii) religious
- iii) military/strategic
- iv) market

The administrative towns obviously functioned primarily as seats of governance. For the Mughal Empire, towns like Delhi and Lahore, come under this category. The religious centres were pre-eminent pilgrim attractions, e/g., Varanasi and Mathura. The military or strategic towns developed essentially as military cantonment, and, in due course of time attracted civilian population also. The towns like Attock and Asirgarh fit this description. Finally, there were urban centres as the focus of large-scale commercial activities or were predominantly production centres. Sometimes both these activities together characterised an urban centre. We have, for the Mughal Empire, towns like Patna and Ahmedabad falling under this category.

Here two things should be noted. An average town in the Mughal Empire was in fact an extension of the village in the sense of social unities and attitudes. This rural-urban continuum is thus a notable feature of urbanisation during the Mughal period. Moreover, given the diversity of urban economies in the Mughal Empire, the stereo type of an Indian town would be a misnomer. Thus, the other important thing to note is that the character of two apparently similar cities (at least functionally) would often be different. The emergence of an urban centre, therefore, was dependent on a variety of factors relating to its geographical location and historical situation.

16.3 URBAN LANDSCAPE UNDER THE MUGHALS

Even while accepting the caveat about Mughal towns as stated in the preceding Section, it is possible to identify some common features. We discuss them below:

Physical Configuration

Most of the towns had some sort of a fortification wall with one or more gates. The main population of the city lived within these walls. With the expansion of towns at times the cities outgrew their walls. The example of a typical Mughal town can be found in the description of Agra by John Jourdain at the beginning of the 17th century: “The citie is 12 courses long by the river side, which is above 16 miles; and at the narrowest place it is three miles broad. It is walled, but the suburbs are joined to the walls, that were it not for the gates you could not know when you were within the walls or without”. Generally, the nobles or princes would build their mansions or gardens outside the gates of the town. Thus, in many cities like Delhi, Agra, Patna, Ahmedabad and Allahabad these settlements developed as suburbs.

In planned towns markets were properly laid. In others shops could be found on both sides of the main roads; with shopkeepers living behind these shops or on the first floor of the shops. Most of the towns could boast of a number of markets. Many of these markets specialised in a particular commodity. Names of various areas suggest their speciality for example in Agra *6 Loha Gali* (iron objects), *cheenitole* (sugar mart), *ghallamandi* (grain market), *dal mandi* (market for pulses), *sabunkatra* (soap market) *nil para* (indigo market). In Delhi. *Jauhri bazar* (jewellery market), *sabzimandi* (vegetable mart), *churiwala* (bangles market), etc. Paharganj was a wholesale market for grain.

The residential areas of towns called *mohalla* were often identified by the professional groups that resided there. A few names like *mahalla kunjrah*, *mochiwara* (shoemakers), *mahalla zargarani* (goldsmiths) *kucha rangrezan* (dyers) are notable instances. Such caste or professional names for different wards of the Mughal towns can be found in almost all the towns. In some cases these *mohallas* or wards were known by the names of influential men who resided there.

Another important feature of the town was the presence of *sarais* which were halting places for merchants or travellers. Even the smallest towns had one. The larger towns like, Delhi, Agra, Patna, Lahore or Ahmedabad had *sarais* by the dozens. Generally, nobles, royal ladies, big merchants or the state itself took up the job of constructing these *sarais*. The travellers were provided with amenities including storage space to stock merchandise. These were managed by the families of *bhatiyaras* who specialised as keepers of *sarais*. The foreigners visiting the towns were supposed to inform the city administration about their arrival and departure.

On the whole, most of the towns lacked any detailed town planning. Except the major street, other lanes and bylanes were congested and muddy. The city had its own administrative machinery and regulations to run the day-to-day administration.

16.4 COMPOSITION OF POPULATION: URBAN CLASSES

The urban population was not a homogenous one. In our sources we come across various categories of people residing in towns. These can be classified into four broad groups:

- i) Nobles and their retainers, officials of the state and troops;
- ii) Persons engaged in merchantile activities (merchants, *sarrafs*, brokers, etc.);
- iii) People involved with religious establishments, musicians, painters, poets, physicians, etc.; and
- iv) Artisans, menials and workmen of sundry sorts.

The composition of different categories of people in different towns depended on the nature of towns, i.e., administrative centres, or commercial centres. In case of imperial headquarters, perhaps the biggest group was that of the retainers and troops of the king and nobles. Bernier (1658) estimated the total strength of Shah Jahan's great camp around 3-4 lakhs.

The situation in other administrative headquarters was also the same. The provincial governors, high nobles and other administrative officers all had their contingents, official hangers-on, servants, slaves and their families.

As most of the big towns were commercial centres of importance, the mercantile community of the towns was quite important. At Ahmedabad it was estimated that there were around 84 castes and sub-castes of Hindu merchants alone. In 1640 there were 600 brokers in Patna. Our sources mention that in big towns all the roads were lined with shops for miles. The number of grocers in Patna, a moderate town, was around 200. In a comparatively smaller town Jodhpur more than 600 shops were owned by Mahajans.

Another important group in town comprised of people associated with the professions of medicine, learning, literature, art and music. Generally, the religious and charitable grants were given in the vicinity of towns. Besides, a large number of poets, musicians, physicians also made their abode in towns because here money could be earned or patronage of the king and nobles was available. Artisans, workmen and labourers formed one of the biggest groups in towns having large commercial activities. We have already discussed the large number of crafts practised in India during this period in Unit 14. The people working as artisans in various crafts may be divided in many groups:

- i) The individual artisans working at their own places and selling their wares.
- ii) Artisans working in the *karkhanas* of the kings and nobles, and in large-scale building construction undertaken by the kings and nobles. There was a large workforce of semi-skilled and unskilled workmen who would assist artisans or work in such large-scale enterprises as shipbuilding, diamond-mining, saltpeter and salt-making. A number of workmen were employed as domestic help and daily wage labourers.

16.5 URBAN DEMOGRAPHY

The Tabqat-i Akbari (c. 1593) says that during Akbar's period there were around 120 big cities and 3200 qasbas (small towns). In the 17th century, with the increasing trade and commerce this number would have grown further. In the absence of records, it is not possible to find out the population of different urban centres. Irfan Habib estimates that around 15 per cent of the total population in Mughal India lived in towns.

As for the size of the individual towns is concerned, scattered references are provided by some European travellers. Sometimes an estimate is provided while at other places the size of Indian towns is compared with European towns. But these figures are available for only a few towns.

For a few important towns we provide the figures below:

Towns	Year of Estimate	Population
Agra	1609	5,00,000
	1629-43	6,66,000
	1666	8,00,000
Delhi	1659-66	5,00,000
Lahore	1581	4,00,000
	1615	7,00,000
Thatta	1631-5	2,25,000
Ahmadabad	1613	1,00,000-2,00,000
Surat	1663	1,00,000
	1700	2,00,000
Patna	1631	2,00,000
Dacca	c.1630	2,00,000
Masulipatam	1672	2,00,000

Source: Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, (1982) *Cambridge Economic History of India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), Vol.1, p. 171

The above estimates show that the big towns in India would have compared favourably with the towns of contemporary Europe.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) What are the major approaches to study the medieval towns?

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Discuss physical configuration of medieval towns.

.....

.....

.....

- 3) Write a note on *sarais* in fifty words.

.....

.....

.....

- 4) Tick mark against the true (✓) and false statements (×):
- i) *Bhatiyaras* were among the chief custodians of the *sarais*. ()
 - ii) The *Tabaqat-i Akbari* mentions that during Akbar's reign there were 120 big cities and 3200 *qasbas*, ()
 - iii) Irfan Habib estimates that 12 per cent of the population resided in the towns in Medieval period. ()

16.6 URBAN LIFE

It is an interesting fact that our sources for the study of the Mughal Empire abound with descriptions of urban life. The following Sub-sections are thus based on such details.

16.6.1 Standard of Living

Standard of living in a Medieval city shows striking contrast. While the upper strata led a life-style akin to the royalty, the urban poor found it difficult to achieve the bare subsistence level. Commenting on the life-style of the common populace at Goa, Linschoten says that they 'are so miserable that for a penny they would endure to be whipped and they eat so little that it seemeth they live by the air; they are likewise most of them small and weak of limbs.' Similar observation was made by De Laet as well. He comments that 'the condition of the common people in those regions is exceedingly miserable; wages are low; workmen get one regular meal a day; the houses are wretched and practically unfurnished, and people have not sufficient covering to keep warm in winter.'

The *Ain-i Akbari* and other contemporary European travellers' (Pelsaert, Pietro della Valle, etc.) accounts show that an average monthly wage of the urban workers ranged between Rs. 3 to 4.

Shireen Moosvi has shown that the purchasing power of an unskilled worker was significantly higher in 1595 than in 1867-1871-2. An unskilled worker during Akbar's reign was able to purchase much more wheat, inferior foodgrains, *ghi*, sugar, etc. than his successors did in 1867. Thus, he could have afforded better food-stuff than his counterparts did in the latter half of the 19th century. However, his purchasing power was poor in terms of clothing. The fall in the purchasing power of skilled workers in terms of foodgrains seems even more marked than it was in the case of unskilled wages in the latter half of the 19th century. Thus, the urban wages were much higher in c. 1600 than in 1867.

Middle classes, specially the petty revenue officials, lower rank *mansabdars* and the physicians appear to be fairly prosperous. However, intellectuals were, in general, poor and depended for their livelihood solely upon their patrons.

The nobles and other upper classes in Mughal India led a luxurious life-style. We are told that an *amir's* son spent 1 lakh rupees in a day in Chandni Chowk to buy the necessities. Moreland comments that "spending not hoarding was the dominant feature of the time". Shireen Moosvi has analysed the pattern of consumption of the 'Royalty' and the nobles which clearly reflects the nature of the life-style the 'Royalty' and the Mughal nobles.

Head of Expenditure	Imperial Household (in per cent)	Noble (in per cent)
Harem	18.68	14.25
Kitchen	7.28	7.04
Wardrobe	8.93	7.32
Building	8.01	6.57
Encampment Material	5.53	4.54
Utensils	7.97	6.54
Trappings of Animals	1.41	1.16
Books and Paintings	3.60	2.96
Ornaments and Gems	23.65	19.40
Hunting Animals and Pets	6.94	5.69
Miscellaneous	1.33	1.09
Cash Grants	6.67	-
Foot Retainers	-	8.43
Arsenal and Armour	-	9.67
Beasts of Burden	-	2.65
Display Animals	-	2.69

This clearly shows that a Mughal noble spent almost 75 per cent on luxury and comforts. The luxurious life-style of the Mughal nobles resulted in their impoverishment. Bernier states that ‘... Omrahs: on the contrary most of them are deeply in debt; they are ruined by the costly presents made to the king and by their large establishment.’ ‘This, in turn, pressed them to extract more from the peasants than the required dues.’

However, nobles appear to help the development of craft production. Shireen Moosvi has calculated that 63.26 per cent of the nobles’ salaries were spent to support the craft sector. The average estimated expenses on craft production amounted to 37.38 per cent of the *jama*. Thus, the investments on craft production were rather large. But, this was more for personal consumption than for the market. Therefore, in spite of large investments it failed to generate a ‘home-market’.

Clothing

The style of clothing of the middle and upper strata was by and large similar. Both could be distinguished on the basis of the quality of cloth they wore. Men wore drawers (*shdwnr*) and breeches (*churidar payjama*), and a shirt. In the winter they also wore *arcabick* (vest stuffed with cotton) and a long loose fitting coat (*qaba*). Besides, they put a shawl on shoulders and a *patka* round the waist and a turban. Humayun is reported to have introduced a new design of overcoat which was cut at the waist and was open in front. He used to wear it over the *qaba*. This coat was also presented as *khi'lat* (robe of honaur) to the nobles. Women wore a long *chadar*

and a bodice (*choli*). In the doab area, *lahanga* (a long loose skirt) and *choli* and a long scarf was quite popular. The Muslim ladies usually wore loose drawers, a shirt and long scarf together with their usual veil.

The cloth used was mostly cotton, plain and printed, and silk, plain and striped. Akbar paid special attention to his clothing. Abul Fazl mentions that every year 1000 suits were made for him. Akbar is reported to distribute his entire wardrobe among his servants.

Bernier, however, comments that rich merchants had a tendency to look indignant for ‘lest that they should be used as filled sponges’. But Barbosa applauds the rich dress style of Muslim merchants of Calicut. Similarly, Delia Valle commented on the splendour of Surat merchants. The Hindu nobles followed the Muslim counterparts in their dresses. The Brahmans put *tilak* on their forehead and Rajput wore earrings.

Lower strata for most part were scantily clothed. Salbanke comments about the common populace between Agra and Lahore that “the Plebeian sort is so poor that the greatest part of them go naked”. Similar observations are given by the European travellers for the South. Barbosa remarks about the common masses of the Vijaynagar Empire that they ‘go quite naked with the exception of a piece of cloth about their middle’. Linschoten (1580-1590) mentions that common people of Goa, ‘live very poorly; go naked’ Babur remarks that ‘peasants and people of low standing go about naked. They tie lunguta, a decency cloth, which hangs two spans below the navel...another cloth is passed between the thighs and made fast behind.’ ‘Women also tie on a cloth (*lung*), one half of which goes around the waist, the other is thrown over the head. In winter men wear quilted gowns of cotton ... and quilted caps.’ In the South most of the people went barefoot.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Compare the standard of living of urban workers with their 19th century counterparts.

.....

- 2) Discuss the clothing pattern of the urban poor during the Mughal period.

.....

16.6.2 Social Life

Joint family system was common. Woman was subordinate to man. The higher class women observed *purdah*. Barbosa comments that in Khambayat, though, women observed *purdah*, they frequently visited their friends. There was ample freedom of social intercourse within the limits of the *purdah*.

The custom of *jauhar* was almost entirely confined totally among the Rajputs. Their women, in time of despair (during war, etc.), seeing the imminent defeat, to save their pride, used to set themselves afire. Babur gives a vivid description of the *jauhar* performed by Medini Rai’s ladies at Chanderi.

Among the upper caste Hindus, the practice of *sati* or self-immolation was quite common. Akbar took a serious view when the daughter of Mota Raja of Marwar was compelled to burn herself against her wishes. Akbar appointed observers in every town and district to ensure that while those who on their own impulse wished to commit *sati* might be allowed to do so, they should prohibit and prevent an forcible *sati*. Akbar also took steps of permitting widows to remarry (1587).

Both Hindus and Muslims favoured an early marriage age for boys and girls. Akbar criticised child marriage. He raised the minimum age limit for boys to 16 and for girls to 14 years.

Birth ceremony was of great importance. Among the Muslims, the rite of *aqiqa* (shaving the hair of the head) was performed. The Hindu child was placed in the charge of a *guru* at the age of five while, as per Muslim traditions, a child was put in a school (*maktab*) after the completion of four years, four months and four days. The ceremony was known as *bismillah khwani*. Usually in the 7th year, the Muslim child was circumcised and the occasion was celebrated with great rejoicing. Akbar prohibited circumcising before the age of 12 and even then left it to the option of the grown up boy. The Hindus performed *upanayana samsakara*, i.e., tying of the tripple sacred thread at the completion of the 9th year.

Marriage ceremony hardly differed from the present day celebrations. A Hindu marriage began with *tilak* or *mangni*, and then a marriage date (*lagan*) was fixed. Songs were sung. Marriage was performed with elaborate rites.

Elaborate ceremonies were performed at the time of death also. Priests chanted mantras, distributed alms, etc., put sacred Ganga water followed by *shraddha* ceremony after a year. The practice of burning dead was quite common among the Hindus. Muslims performed *siyum* ceremony on the 3rd day of death.

Nobles and rich merchant spent huge amount of money on marriages. Khemchand, a rich merchant, intended to spend 15 lakhs rupees on the marriage of his daughter, but he was robbed on the way. Thirty two lakhs rupees were reported to have been spent on the marriage of Prince Dara Shukoh. A 17th century traveller to Sindh, Boccario, reports that even an ordinary Hindu spent 4000-5000 rupees on a marriage. On a marriage in his family, Raja Bhagwan Das provided a number of houses, one hundred elephants and boys and girls of Abyssinia, India and Caucassia, and all sorts of jewel studded golden vessels and utensils, etc.

Education

In general, education was beyond the reach of a common woman. But women of elite class got opportunity to study. Princesses were taught to read and write. Akbar was greatly interested in female education. Badauni comments that he recommended a new syllabus. He established a school for girls at Fatehpur Sikri. Some royal ladies were also interested in promoting education. Bega Begum, Humayun's consort, founded a "college" near the mausoleum of Humayun. Maham Anaga, the foster mother of Akbar, established a school at Delhi. Gulbadan Begum was well versed in Persian and Turki and wrote the Humayunama. She had a library of her own. Similarly, Nur Jahan, Jahan Ara and Zaibunnisa (daughter of Aurangzeb) were literary figures of their age. Aurangzeb educated all his daughters well. But dance and music were frowned upon. Nur Jahan and Jahan Ara (daughter of Shah Jal'an) played an active role in Mughal politics. The mansabdars were generally well versed in Persian. Some also studied mathematics, knew little bit

of medicine and practised calligraphy. In Mughal India, the nobles maintained their personal libraries. Abdul Rahim Khan Khana had a huge library manned by 95 calligraphers, guilders, bookbinders, painters, cutters, illuminators, etc.

Babur himself was a great scholar of Turkish. His autobiography, the Baburnama, is still considered one of the masterpieces of Turkish prose. He also knew Persian and was also a skilled calligrapher. Humayun and all other later Mughal Emperors knew good Persian. Though circumstances did not allow Akbar to have formal education, he patronised poets, philosophers, painters, physicians, etc.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) Discuss Akbar’s attitude towards social evils prevailing in the contemporary society.

.....

- 2) Write a note on the position of education of the Mughal Princesses.

.....

16.6.3 Entertainment and Festivities

Gambling, elephant fights, *chaupar*, *chandal-mandal*, chess, cards, polo, etc., were the sports greatly indulged in by the higher strata. *Chaupar* playing was very popular among the Hindus, specially the Rajputs. Akbar later substituted human figures for the pieces of *chaupar* and turned it into the amusing game of *chandal-mandal*.

Cards (*ganjifa*) appears to have been first introduced in India by Babur. It became quite popular during Akbar’s reign. Gambling was common. Pigeon-flying and cock-fighting were common. Akbar used to feed his own birds and call the game (pigeon flying) by the romantic term *ishqbaazi* (love affair).

Hunting was the most popular pastime of the royalty. The Mughals organised *qamargah* hunts. This was large scale manoeuvre organised in one of the imperial hunting preserves. Sometimes around 50,000 cavalrymen and others encircled the hunting preserve and they gradually came closer to a point when the animals were confined into a sort of ring. The Emperor and other big nobles then entered the ring and hunted the animals. Deer, goats, elephants, etc., were also domesticated for the sake of hunting. Cheetahs were trained for hunting deer, etc. In many parts of Northern and Central India, imperial hunting preserves had been established. Hunting tigers, lions and elephants was royal prerogative.

Generally, ladies of harem did not participate in outdoor games. But some played *chaugan* (polo). Nur Jahan is the lone example who shot tigers and lions. But pigeon-flying, and blind man’s buff (*ankhmicholi*) were common pastimes.

Festivals and Fairs

Religious festivals and pilgrimages to holy shrines were popular means of amusement. Huge urs celebration were organised at the tomb of the sufis. At

Delhi such celebrations were held at the tombs of Bakhtiyar Kaki and Nizamuddin Auliya. At the tomb of Hazrat Nasiruddin Chiragh Delhi, (Nizamuddin Auliya’s successor) on I every Sunday, both Hindus and Muslims gathered, specially during the month of Dipawali.

‘Id-ul fitr, ‘id-ul zuha, nauroz, shabbarat, holi, dashehra, dipawali, rakshabandhan, basant panchami, etc. were also celebrated with great pomp and show.

Fairs were also organised. The famous Garh Mukteswar fair, still celebrated in the traditional style, can be traced back to the medieval times. *Dashehra* was popular I among the kshatriyas and all agricultural classes. The *Kumbha* fairs on the river Ganga was most famous of all the fairs. On the occasion of Muharram, *taziya* (imitation rnausolenms of the martyrs of *karbala*) processions were taken out through the streets of the town.

Music

Big amirs arranged “mushairas” (literary evenings) in their mansions where poets recited their compositions. Singers and musicians performed their recital in the harem every day. Shah Jahan’s favourites were Kavindra, Chitra Khan, La1 Khan and Sriman. Shah Jahan’s amir Shah Nawaz Khan had a large number of musicians and singers. Muhammad Shah was also fond of music. Boli Khan, Jallah, Chamani and Kamal Bai were the most celebrated ones during his reign. Nia’mat Khan was the bin (flute) player and an expert in the khayal form of singing. Panna Bai, his disciple, possessed good voice. Taj Khan Qawali and Muinuddin, experts in Qawali, were other famous singers of Muhammad Shah’s reign.

Eunuchs performed dances in public. Miyan Haiga used to dance in the square of the Urdu Bazar, in front of the Shahjahanabad fort. A hule crowd assembled to watch him. Asa Pura, a Hindu dancing girl was also a great name.

Alhakhand and the stories of Nala-Damayanti were recited by the balladeers. Sravana songs (Hindola and Sravani) were quite popular. Garabha, the Gujarati dance, was popular on the west coast. Puppet shows, antics of the monkeys, snake-charmer shows, tight-rope walker, etc. were eye-catchers.

Indoor entertainment parties (jashn) were organised which were accompanied with dance and banquet. Humayun introduced the system of river picnics on the Jamuna. He also started the practice of MLna Bazar for royal ladies which flourished and developed greatly under his successors.

Drinking was common. Akbar believed that moderate drinking was good for health. Opium eating was also quite common. Bhang was another favourite drug.

Prostitution was prevalent. During the 16th century, tobacco smoking was unknown. When in the early 17th century tobacco was introduced, its use became widespread.

Check Your Progress-4

1) Define the following:

Ishq Bazi

.....

Chandal-Mandal.....

.....

- 2) Write a note on *urs* celebrations.

.....

16.7 SUMMARY

During the medieval period urban centres and urban life were fairly well developed. In India, urban centres represented the fine blend of urban-rural mix for the obvious reason that most of the towns were extension of village. Urban population was quite heterogenous. On the one hand we find royalty and upper strata leading luxurious life; on the other, the urban poor barely attained the subsistence level. But, interestingly, if one compares the purchasing power of the urban unskilled and skilled workers they look certainly better off in terms of their capacity to buy food, stuff compared to their counterparts during the 19th century, During the Mughal period one finds the continuation of evil customs of *sati*, *purdah*, *jauhar*, child sacrifice, early marriage, etc. However, Akbar introduced certain reforms. He attempted to ban *sati*. Education was not within the reach of most of the women folk. But royal ladies were given some formal education. The Mughal Emperors' were also innovative. They introduced new games (cards, etc.) and modified many (*chaupar*, etc). Religious festivals and fairs were organised with gaiety and pomp as is done today. Origins of many modern fairs can be traced back to the Mughal period.

16.8 KEYWORDS

Jauhar Honorific self-immolation; in the medieval period practice of collective self-immolation to save themselves from the disgrace at the hands of conquering enemies in the wake of imminent defeat and expected death of their husbands/rulers in the battlefield **Karkhanas** Lit. factory; In the medieval period *karkhanas* were not necessarily production centres. There were two types of *karkhanas*: a) Production centres where like the modern factories actual production was taken place; b) Served as warehouses/stores where articles for royal consumption were stored. They mainly cater to the ruler's demand for his household and army in the form of articles of luxury goods and war auxiliaries **Sarrafi** Money changer.

16.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Analyse the reasons for the emergence of various towns. See Section 16.2
- 2) See Section 16.3
- 3) See Section 16.3
- 4) (a) ✓ (b) ✓ (c) ×

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Find out whether the Medieval worker was better off. See Sub-Section 16.6.1
- 2) See Sub-Section 16.6.1

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) Discuss Akbar's sensitivity towards the prevailing ills in the Medieval society. He -tried to reform evil customs that prevailed amongst the Hindu and the Muslim, social structure. See Sub-section 16.6.2
- 2) See Sub-section 16.6.2

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) Read Section Entertainment and Festivities See Sub-Section 16.6.3
- 2) Read Section Festivals and Fairs See Sub-Section 16.6.3

16.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

Banga, Indu, (2005) *The City in Indian History* (New Delhi: Manohar).

Moosvi, Shireen, (1987) *Economy of the Mughal Empire c. 1600* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Raychaudhuri, Tapan and Irfan Habib, (1982) *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I (Delhi: Cambridge University Press).

Sharma, Yogesh and Pius Malekandathil, (2014) (ed.) *Cities in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Primus Books).

16.11 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Morphology of the Mughal Cities: Agra and Delhi
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLBVnOErC8E>

Morphology of Cities
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGIchFhIQXE>