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# URBAN FORMATION AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN MUGHAL INDIA

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India was comprised of many villages before the arrival of Muslim. Those Muslim invaders, who conquered India and established their rule, essentially belonged to the urban ruling classes. In early Turkish Empire (1206 – 1266), ruling classes have developed numerous urban centers in town across India. In Muslim period, Iqta system provided opportunities to Turko – Afghan communities to have luxurious life style which provoked skill workers, artesian and architect to migrate from villages to urban centre. Early towns and cities flourished around the military garrison. These towns also emerge as cultural centers with the passage of time. Early cities like Daultabad, FatehpurSikri and Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi) were royal capital cities. Some of the major cities like Kabul, Agra, Allahabad, Lahore, Attock and Multan were developed near major roads (Grand Trunk Road ).Many of the Mughal cities and towns still exist in spite of many natural disasters. European travelers compared Indian cities with Europe, like FatehpurSikri was larger than London and Delhi was not less urbanized than Paris. Many factories in Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri supplied many precious articles in the King's wardrobe. Capital cities always had the excess of fruits and food for the Royal kitchen. People brought their master pieces in the capital city just to get the acknowledgement of kings and nobles. This paper analyzes the development of major urban centers in Mughals India. It also high lights the cultural transformation of Muslims under the influence of native rulers.

**Keywords**

cross-cultural relations, riots and urban confrontations, urban and architectural hybridization, port cities, foreign concessions, foreign enclaves

## INTRODUCTION

Cities were normally developed due to some reason i.e. administrative hub like capital cities. Sometimes economic and commercial activities converted small towns into big cities. Some places served as pilgrimage centers and it helped in urban growth. Coastal line also made towns they ultimately turned into urban centers. Max Weber defined city, a place where trade and commerce dominates agriculture. One aspect of the city highlighted that was urban economy. Cities were normally centralized and bureaucratized. But Karl Marx considered urbanization is a launching pad for sustainable development of productive forces. Marx never alienated rural life from city. There are always some impact of agriculture upon urbanization. Weberian notion identifies the influences of administrative political classes. Marx argued about the class struggle in the capital city structure. In case of Indian urbanization Max Weber's ideas are more relevant specially in case of Mughal India.<sup>1</sup> Hasler identifies six factors after analyzing Weber's concept of Medieval city.<sup>2</sup> Mughals held the regulation of markets. They were and independent to levied tax duties on import and export. Muslim state was a military state. Last but not least non-urban political and feudal-manorial structure of Muslim state.<sup>3</sup> S.N Mukherjee started the idea of Indian urban history in 1977.<sup>4</sup> According to S.C Misra, in the study of urbanization the urban centers expand with the passage of time. It promoted growth and ecology which was generated by the towns in various dimensions; in the economic system, in natural environment, in political system, in social network and even in the minds of the people who lived in a particular area.<sup>5</sup> Satish Chandra<sup>6</sup> and J.S Gerwal<sup>7</sup> discusses the avenues of urban development in medieval India.<sup>8</sup> Indu Banga analyzed the rural urban interaction in upper Bari Doab. K. N Chaudhary also contributed in the approaches of urban heritage in Indian history.

The first phase of Indian urbanization found in Indian in form of twin cities of Indus valley civilization (city of Harappa and Mohenjodaro). After the arrival of Aryan Indian economy grew into agrarian economy. Aryan began to colonize Ganganatic plains. 2nd phase of urbanization started in later Vedic period (1000-600 B.C). Approximately sixty cities existed in India in age of Buddha including known religious centers Varanasi, Rajagraha, Champa, Vaishali, Sakat and Sravastietc.<sup>9</sup> 3rd major development occurred in Mauryan and post Mauryan era in north and south India. Urban process was also depend upon political stability. Gupta period also contributed in evolution of urbanization. Turkish rule (1206-1526) was considered a revival of urbanization in India. The state deployed all available potentialities to build-up urban complexes.<sup>10</sup> The state of Sultans possessed ample resources to take all vigorous steps for the urban growth in India. Sultans of Delhi introduced Iqtasystem (a piece of land granted to some official by the state). This system encouraged labor classes and artisan to settled in those towns which were under the rule of Iqta holders. Sultans were in need of frequent urban centers which could form administrative bases for covering those territories under their jurisdiction. These urban centers were "nuclei" ultimately grew into urban complexes from 13th century to onwards.

When Babar (the founder of Mughal Empire) arrived in India many older towns like Badaon, Bayana, Kalpi, Sambhal, Qanauj, Ajodhya, Etawah, Chunar, Lucknow, Banaras were still there.<sup>12</sup> The urban progress was higher on the western parts of India at that time. Ain-i-Akbari provide us a list of industrial cities like Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Jaunpur, Burhanpur, Ahmadabad, Murshadabad and Lahore. Even coastal lines opened a way for European in India.<sup>13</sup> Ralph Fitch, who visited Agra in 1585 A.D found this city larger than London. Father Monserrate claimed "Burhanpur was large and populous city. Fitch praised sonarganon (Decca) for its finest cloth. The data of cities and towns indicates one hundred and twenty cities and thirty two hundred towns were included in Mughal Empire. It comprised off trade centers, coastal towns, administrative units and commercial centers as well.<sup>14</sup> Manucci, Italian traveler spend most of his life time in India considered Surat, a largest coastal line served European and Chinese Jesuits and Asian travelers.<sup>15</sup>

This coast generated a great economic activity in Mughal Empire. Goa, Kochin, Calicut, Nagappatinam, Masulipattam, Sripur, Cattagong and Satgoan were also used for sea trade in India. Cattagong was attached with Bay of Bengal. As for as the matter of commercial areas were concerned Allahad, Ajmer, Kashmir, Khandash, Thatta, Kanniyakumari and Coromandal were the largest centers in India.

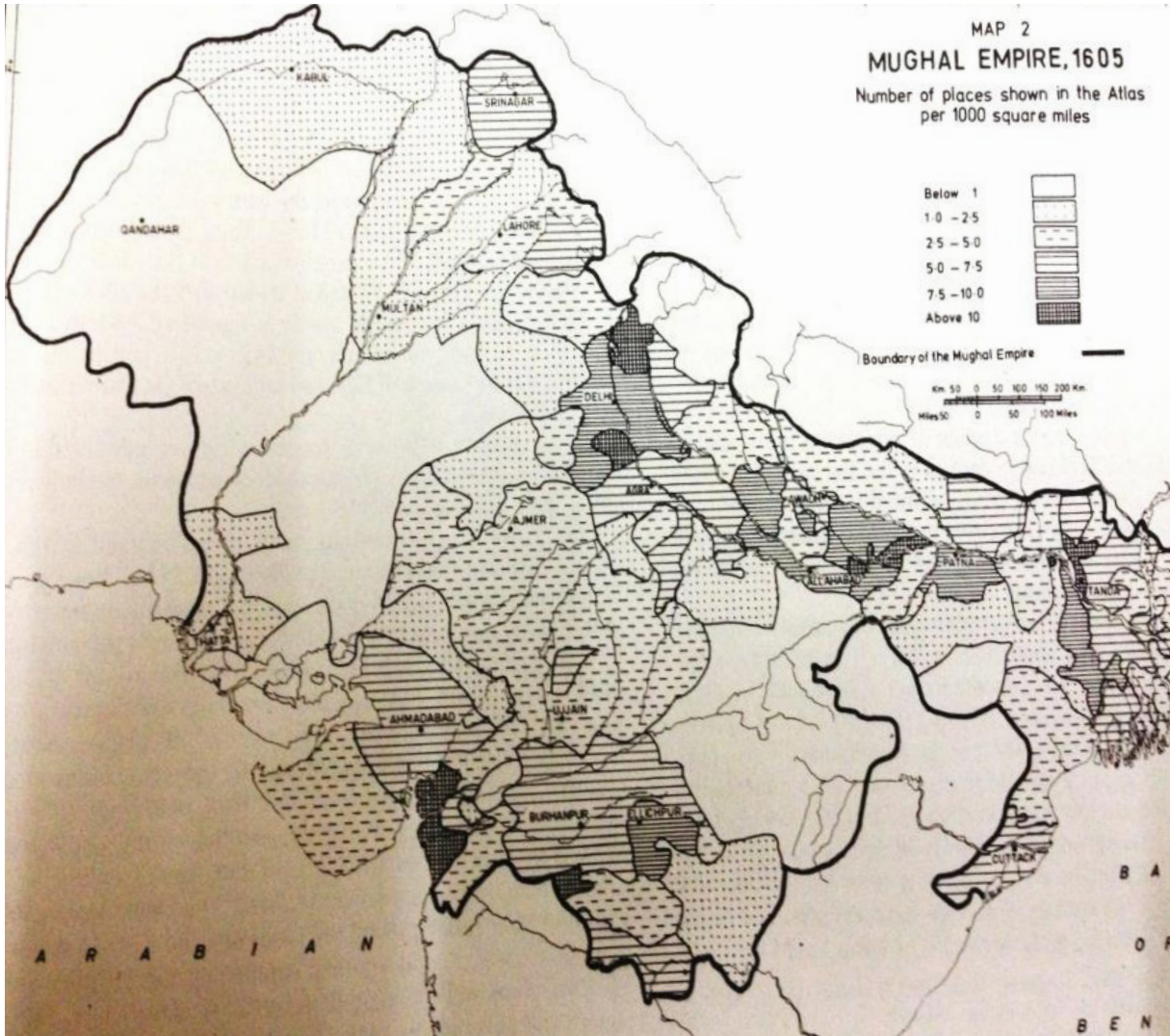


FIGURE 1 The Mughal Empire in 1605

Emperor Akbar (1556-1605 A.D) took daring steps for the urban development.<sup>16</sup> Imperial factories of Mughal India also attracted urbanization as AbulFazal mentioned that Akbar maintained hundred imperial factories and each of them resemble with a big city. Hundreds of workers busy in making of those thing which were off royal consumption. When Akbar conquered Gujarat and Bengal took up the challenge to strengthened urbanization in India<sup>17</sup>. When Akbar introduced Mansabdari System it helped in forming new garrisons which later converted into towns.<sup>18</sup>

**Major cities were:**

- **Coastal cities:** Cambay, Broach, Surat ,Calicut
- **Defense lines:** Attock, Sehwan, Thatta,Kabul,
- **Industrial and commercial towns:** Lahore , Multan Gujarat, Sialkot, Sultanpur, Hoshiarpur, Machhiwara, Sarhind,Saharam, Jalalpur, Panipat,Samana,Delhi. Faridabad, Kishangarh,Mathura, Jainagar,Udaipur, Ahmadabad, Agra, Kalinjar, Kalpi, Lucknow,Daryabad, Faizabad, Tanda, Akbarpur,Kanah, Jaunpur, Allahabad, Banaras, Mirpur, Ghazipur, Baxar, Chappra, Patna, Fattu,Daudnagar, Calcutta.

## RESILIENCE OF MAJOR CITIES OF MUGHAL INDIA:

**Delhi:** the envy of the world, was one the pulpous city remained capital for centuries. The city is religious cum political center. The seventh city of DelhiShahjahanabad still survived. It became the capital of Shahjahan, the Mughal emperor in 1638.Delhi is known due to various commodities like indigo, spices jiggerycoarse and Muslin. Delhi is famous trading center of cloth. Delhi is a source of attraction for traders, travelers and tourist from centuries.<sup>19</sup>

**Agra:** Ralph Fitch declared Agra and Fathpurskiri great cities and each of them was lager then London. Akbar made this city the capital of his empire. This was a grand market of various commodities like cotton, carpets, salt, animals and other goods. Agra was considered as an important exchange center of 17th century India. Agra remained the center of attraction for local and international traders. The capital trade and commerce provided a proof of the stability of Agra.<sup>20</sup>

**Kabul:** This town was incorporated in Mughal empire after the death of Mirza Hakim in 1585. The chief ton of the Kabul remained the part of empire unlike Qandahar. Kabul was ancient town known for its trade activities. In Mughal era Kabul got both commercial and strategic importance. Kabul led to central Asia like Badakshan, Balkh and kashghar. Tavernier estimated the cost of annual trade amounted 50,000 annual through Kabul. The central Asian merchants invested their trading goods in Lahore, Delhi, Agra. Sometimes it reached Patna in the East.<sup>21</sup>

**Allahabad:** The ancient name of this city was “Parag”. Emperor Akbar constructed an fort near this city and named it “Allahbas” His grandson Shahjahan renamed it “Allahabad”. Ain-Akbari only mentioned the name of this city founded by king Akbar.

**Lahore:** Akbar made Lahore the capital city of Hindustan due to his north-west frontier policy. Attock was declared the headquarter of this defense baseline. Akbar gave orders to repair and enlarged the Lahore fort and the town situated near the wall. Lahore rapidly grew in form of area and population under Akbar. In 1598 A.D Akbar left Lahore. His governor maintained his administration. Skilled workers, artisans,singer and dancers occupied the space in this city due to aristocracy.

**Ahmadabad:** Tavernier writes it, “ one of the largest towns in India”. Ahmadabad was a center of national and international trade. The size of population was extraordinary. The Bohra Bankers of Ahmadabad were known for their wealth. Many markets were established in Ahmadabad like indigo, saltpeter, and cotton were established in

which Asian, Armenian, Persian and European merchants exerted themselves to invest money. Ahmadabad was most eminent town of the Mughal empire especially from the business point of view.

**Banaras:** a Hindu religious center, which turned into commercial market was known for silk stuff, silver and gold embroidery, sugar and many varieties of cloth. Tavernier calls it “Athens of India”. Manucci wrote, everything made up of gold and silver in this first distribute in Mughal realm and then export to the temples extend the commercial traffic of this city.

**Khambat:** Tavernier recorded, “these ships are full of aromatic perfumes, spices and silk stuff. This region had direct link with Persian gulf and red sea in Mughal period. It became a main port of Gujarat when Akbar conquered it in 1572 A.D. Major ports of Gujarat like cam bay, Goa became the emporia of trade.. Portuguese were so powerful in these areas as Akbar had to made agreement to send a ship of pilgrimage to Mecca with these Portuguese.

**Surat:** another coastal city of Mughal India, it attained prominence in Jahangir period(1610 A.D). Due to the shifting of silver mint industry from Ahmadabad to Surat. Most of labor of the mint industry shifted in Surat. It made a triangle of trading industry from Surat to Ahmadabad and Agra. All Hindustani goods like indigo, iron, Opium, spices, sugar, sandal and even slaves etc reached Surat by the way of Burhanpur.

**Bruhanpur:** this town was name after the holy saint Burhan-ud-din Darvaish. This town was founded in 1401 A.D. on the bank of river Tapti. It acted as great gateway to Deccan and a garrison area. The imperial army always remained in this area. Deccanigoods such as pepper, ginger and copper reached Agra. Burhanpur and Ahmadabad two district dealing with each other.

**Thatta:** an ancient town situated at the west bank of river Indus. The fall of Hurmaz and naval supremacy of Portuguese weakened the trade activities in LahiriBander. This situation was recovered in 1640-41A.D.and the mercantile activities were revived on this port. Those merchants arrived at Thatta reached Multan, Lahore and Agra. Thatta was a rich town, well stocked with all kinds of provisions received from the neighboring districts.

**Aurangabad:** Emperor Aurangzeb himself laid the foundation of this city when he was nominated as the governor of Deccan.

**Bahkkar:** This city is still there in Pakistan. Syed Muhammad Shuja reached this town early in the morning and named this town after an Arabic word”Bakkar” means early in the morning. Now after the use of centuries this word became Bahkkar.<sup>22</sup>

These Medieval towns acquired different status with the passage of time. Delhi is considered the NCT(national capital territory) . It the 2nd most populated city of India and 8th most populated city of the world. Delhi urban population had a special status after 1991. It is also considered an industrial area. Agra is considered the most populous city of U.P. Agra was the capital of Mughal empire remained industrial city for centuries. Being the capital of the largest state of India Gujarat, Ahmadabad is the Manchester of the East. The urban population is involved into the great economic activities of India. Ahmadabad was the entrepot of Mughal India. Today , Ahmadabad is one of the important industrial city where the cotton, steel, cement, chemical, silk, glasswork , paper and rubber industries constitute the urban elite culture. The harbor of cam bay has silted up and maritime trade also shifted to other areas. Now this city has few industry like textile and paper. Banaras is still a religious center for Hindus. The Urban population attached with those industries which facilitate the tourists.

There were 32 urban centers of cotton only in the age of great Mughals. Agra was one of them. In 1640 the approximate population of Agra was seven lacs. In 17th century western India was more advance in term of

industry. So, the industrial cities attracted more merchants, shopkeepers, grain dealers, clerks, brokers, transport personal ,servicemen and so on.



FIGURE 2 Map of India in 1601

Merchants and travelers also lived under the influence of some nobles or jagirdars. Among Europeans Bernier and Manucci come under this category. Many of travelers or merchants lived in coastal cities like Christian missionary of Akbar period lived in Goa. These European formed the cultural of coastal cities.

The major population of Indian region belonged to the classes of artisans, slaves and servants, laborers, small traders and shop-keepers. Peasants were also part of these communities. They lived on the mercy of land owners and mansabdars.<sup>23</sup>

Some of the ideas of Max Weber are considered viable in the academic studies of the cities in Mughal India. The bureaucratic and warrior classes were dominant in the urban life as merchants and traders had lower status in the social set-up. Bureaucratic empire held to prevent the emergence of corporate bodies. If they did not exist in a society then urban and mercantile solidarity might come into being. As Weber mentioned,

“In India during the period of great salvation, religious groups appeared with hereditary elders uniting in many cities into an association. As residues from this period there are at present, some cities (Allahabad) with a mutual urban elder corresponding to the occidental mayor.”<sup>24</sup>

Caste distinction irreparably fragmented Urban and mercantile communities in India. Even the matrimonial alliances strengthened the mercantile communities. It also consolidated the political solidarity as well. The boundaries of caste system even extended to the local defense associations and festivals. The caste restriction prevailed in all activities, lower caste are not allowed to enter into the festivities and mornings and other communities. The common dining and marriage alliances should not be the basis of corporate activity in Weberian assumption in Indian environment. In Muslim law town term was applied to a place with an urban status where a mosque, a public bath and a Qazi had to be placed. In Muslim towns (Qasbahs) the service gentry was very successful in the period under review. One thing was very much common between service gentry and mercantile groups of Hindus that they worked beyond the boundaries of small principalities. They grasped all economic resources, power politics, credits, marketing and banking. Muslim schools, mosque and shrines of Sufis gave small gentry towns, a different quality to Hindu bazaars. There were different societies in Kasbahs/towns like Sheikhs of Kekori, the Barah Sayyid and Sayyid of Jansath. Political gentry could sell their skills as administrators, literati and soldiers to one regime to another. Ain-i-Akbari attested the slow consolidation of Zamindars (landed services communities) around many towns in Mughal India.<sup>25</sup>

The soldiers and administrator who served in Mughal empire had a tribal genealogy and association with Islamic ethnicities such as Irani and Turani. In Mughal military culture both state and non state actors played a role. Mughal Mansabdars promoted urbanization after engaging various social forces especially in those areas which are now known as garrison cities. But these elite had more secure base and tradition in India”. H.K Naqvi mentioned, “Mauza is a place where 200-300 able bodies men stayed together in a close cluster.”<sup>26</sup> But these Puras were larger than Mauzas. Every Pura was resemble with a city. In Tuzrait-ul-Muluk the author mentioned in Usmanpura there were 12 thousand shops. When Akbar conquered many areas of Hindustan than population of these had changed. Many of the villages were habituated again.<sup>27</sup>

The small towns were deeply rooted in the fabric of rural Indian society. They supported the local temples and tombs of the Sufi saints which were linked with popular religion of the town like Hinduism and Islam.<sup>28</sup> In small towns new politicians and leaders of the religious movements build-up their first social alliance. Peasants market places (haths) grew in numbers with the expansion of population. These centers were clustered in the upper Doab and the western part of Awadh. In these urban Island the families of soldiers, administrators and learned men expand into Hindu hinterlands.<sup>29</sup> They were virtually became the landed gentry of 17th century India.<sup>30</sup>

The appointment of Qazi and Mufti in small town provided legal business of the Muslim state in Indian locality. Qazi was the expert of Muslim jurisprudence who had linked with the Sufi seminaries.<sup>32</sup> This three ways link of the state, the disciple of the Muslim law and Islamic mystic persisted in Mughal period especially in Muslim Qasbah. In history of Awadh towns such as Bilgram, Makanpur and Kara the penetration of mysticism and the concept of grant-free land was minimal.<sup>33</sup> Muslim saints came into contact with popular Hindu Rajas in the agrarian set-up of India. Both these connection survived in the Muslim revivalist movements of 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>34</sup>

The local service gentry was another element of urban sector of Mughal India. In late 16th century towns were already flourishing centers scholars, artisans and office- holders. In 1590 Muslims were the simple patch holders in Doab an Awadh. In the time of King Akbar(1556-1605) the existence of remarkable number of towns was not there in Hardio district. it seem that the Muslims of western Ahawd had less interest in acquiring property rights in the latter end of Akbar's period.<sup>35</sup> After the period of Akbar Sayyid families rapidly gained property throughout Doab. Rajput excelled in the northern India. It was easy for the Muslim families to expand their land ,properties ,deeds and advantages. The first Mughal emperors were hostile toward their service gentry to acquired lands and transfer their revenue to control over the usufruct lands. In Aurangzeb's period the state gave recognition to service gentry. In 1690 a Farman was issued with a recognition of service free charitable land to be inheritable within the family. There was no "sprouts of capitalism" arising out of Indian mercantile economy in the years 1600-1800 A.D..<sup>36</sup> The growth of more commercial and bureaucratic style of government paved a way for groups between state and rural society. The "middle class" of those inferior revenue officials and professional servants of Mughal nobility grew when the empire had passed its peak.<sup>37</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The study of Indian towns and urban centers shows that urban process was on full swing before the arrival of foreign companies in Hindustan. The Mughal dynasty gathered the support of local corporate structure and give a way to foreign merchant after reducing the import duties. The emperors, nobility and service gentry develop a bond with devotional network, craftsmen, laborers. The towns will be seen as much as places to store and transact information and ideas of hard-edge economic classes and inclusive communities. The relationship created by indigenous notion of arbitration, by property rights by criminal and civil laws made the idea of the city blurred in Hindustan at that time.From bleeding politics to social history.urban history gave fresh look to Indian towns and bazaars. It is trace the answers of many questions in Indian history such as the origin of communalism, poverty, nationalism and may be the role of towns and cities in the decline of the empire.



