

DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

MASTER OF ARTS- HISTORY

SEMESTER -IV

HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL BENGAL

(1206 A.D.-1757 A.D.)

ELECTIVE 404

BLOCK-1

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

Postal Address:

The Registrar,

University of North Bengal,

Raja Rammohunpur,

P.O.-N.B.U., Dist-Darjeeling,

West Bengal, Pin-734013,

India.

Phone: (O) +91 0353-2776331/2699008

Fax: (0353) 2776313, 2699001

Email: regnbu@sancharnet.in ; regnbu@nbu.ac.in

Website: www.nbu.ac.in

First Published in 2019



All rights reserved. No Part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from University of North Bengal. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this book may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

This book is meant for educational and learning purpose. The authors of the book has/have taken all reasonable care to ensure that the contents of the book do not violate any existing copyright or other intellectual property rights of any person in any manner whatsoever. In the even the Authors has/ have been unable to track any source and if any copyright has been inadvertently infringed, please notify the publisher in writing for corrective action.

FOREWORD

The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject.

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL BENGAL

(1206 A.D.-1757 A.D.)

BLOCK-1

Unit 1: Agrarian Economy And The State / Subah.....	6
Unit 2: Control Over Land And Relations Of Production	36
Unit 3: Resource Base And Pattern Of Resource Use In Agrarian Production.....	68
Unit 4: Nature And Magnitude Of Taxation And Agrarian Relations	91
Unit 5: Industries, Production Technologies, Trade, Commerce And Monetary System.....	115
Unit 6: Inland And Maritime Trade, Role Of Arab And European Traders	162
Unit 7: Indian Merchants And Their Commercial Practices, Medium Of Exchange, Currency, Coinage And Banking.....	184

BLOCK-2

Unit – 8 Process Of Urbanisation – Nature And Classification	
Unit 9 – Urbanisation From 16th Century In Bengal	
Unit 10 – Islamic Architecture	
Unit-11. Temple Architecture	
Unit 12 – History Of Bengali Language	
Unit 13 – Bengali Literature – History	
Unit 14 – History Of Bengali Literature Post 18th Century	

BLOCK-1 HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL BENGAL (1206 A.D.-1757 A.D.)

Introduction to the Block

Unit 1 deals with Agrarian Economy and the State / Subah. An agrarian society, or agricultural society, is any community whose economy is based on producing and maintaining crops and farmland.

Unit 2 deals with Control over land and relations of production, Respondents defined access to land as the right to enter upon and use land.

Unit 3 deals with Resource base and pattern of resource use in agrarian production. Here in Unit 3, we focus on three major concepts which constitute the core of that theory.

Unit 4 deals with Nature and magnitude of taxation and agrarian relations

Unit 5 deals with Industries, production technologies, Trade, Commerce and Monetary System

Unit 6 deals with Inland and maritime trade, role of Arab and European traders,

Unit 7 deals with Indian merchants and their commercial practices, medium of exchange, currency, coinage and banking

UNIT 1: AGRARIAN ECONOMY AND THE STATE / SUBAH

STRUCTURE

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Agrarian society
- 1.3 Agrarian Economy
- 1.4 Subsistence Agriculture
- 1.5 The State/Subah
- 1.6 Let us sum up
- 1.7 Key Words
- 1.8 Questions for Review
- 1.9 Suggested readings and references
- 1.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

- To know about the Agrarian society
- To discuss about the Agrarian Economy
- To discuss about the Subsistence Agriculture
- To converse the State/Subah

1.1 INTRODUCTION

An agrarian society, or agricultural society, is any community whose economy is based on producing and maintaining crops and farmland. Another way to define an agrarian society is by seeing how much of a nation's total production is in agriculture. In an agrarian society, cultivating the land is the primary source of wealth. Such a society may acknowledge other means of livelihood and work habits but stresses the importance of agriculture and farming. Agrarian societies have existed in various parts of the world as far back as 10,000 years ago and continue to

exist today. They have been the most common form of socio-economic organization for most of recorded human history.

1.2 AGRARIAN SOCIETY

History

Agrarian societies were preceded by hunter and gatherer and horticultural societies and transition into industrial society. The transition to agriculture, called the Neolithic Revolution, has taken place independently multiple times. Horticulture and agriculture as types of subsistence developed among humans somewhere between 10,000 and 8,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent region of the Middle East. The reasons for the development of agriculture are debated but may have included climate change, and the accumulation of food surplus for competitive gift-giving. Most certainly there was a gradual transition from hunter-gatherer to agricultural economies after a lengthy period when some crops were deliberately planted and other foods were gathered from the wild. In addition to the emergence of farming in the Fertile Crescent, agriculture appeared in: by at least 6,800 B.C.E. in East Asia (rice) and, later, in Central and South America (maize and squash). Small-scale agriculture also likely arose independently in early Neolithic contexts in India (rice) and Southeast Asia (taro). However, full dependency on domestic crops and animals, when wild resources contributed a nutritionally insignificant component to the diet, did not occur until the Bronze Age.

Agriculture allows a much greater density of population than can be supported by hunting and gathering and allows for the accumulation of excess product to keep for winter use or to sell for profit. The ability of farmers to feed large numbers of people whose activities have nothing to do with material production was the crucial factor in the rise of surplus, specialization, advanced technology, hierarchical social structures, inequality, and standing armies. Agrarian societies thus support the emergence of a more complex social structure.

In agrarian societies, some of the simple correlations between social complexity and environment begin to disappear. One view is that humans with this technology have moved a large step toward controlling

Notes

their environments, are less dependent on them, and hence show fewer correlations between environment and technology-related traits. A rather different view is that as societies become larger and the movement of goods and people cheaper, they incorporate an increasing range of environmental variation within their borders and trade system. But environmental factors may still play a strong role as variables that affect the internal structure and history of a society in complex ways. For example, the average size of agrarian states will depend on the ease of transportation, major cities will tend to be located at trade nodes, and the demographic history of a society may depend on disease episodes.

Until recent decades, the transition to farming was seen as an inherently progressive one: people learnt that planting seeds caused crops to grow, and this new improved food source led to larger populations, sedentary farm and town life, more leisure time and so to specialization, writing, technological advances and civilization. It is now clear that agriculture was adopted despite certain disadvantages of that lifestyle. Archeological studies show that health deteriorated in populations that adopted cereal agriculture, returning to pre-agricultural levels only in modern times. This is in part attributable to the spread of infection in crowded cities, but is largely due to a decline in dietary quality that accompanied intensive cereal farming. People in many parts of the world remained hunter-gatherers until quite recently; though they were quite aware of the existence and methods of agriculture, they declined to undertake it. Many explanations have been offered, usually centered on a particular factor that forced the adoption of agriculture, such as environmental or population pressure.

In the modern world

Agrarian societies transition into industrial societies when less than half of their population is directly engaged in agricultural production. Such societies started appearing because of the Commercial and Industrial Revolution which can be seen beginning in the Mediterranean city-states of 1000-1500 C.E. As European societies developed during the Middle Ages, classical knowledge was reacquired from scattered sources, and a new series of maritime commercial societies developed again in Europe.

The initial developments were centered in Northern Italy, in the city-states of Venice, Florence, Milan, and Genoa. By about 1500 a few of these city-states probably met the requirements of having half of their populations engaged in non-agricultural pursuits and became commercial societies. These small states were highly urbanized, imported much food, and were centers of trade and manufacture to a degree quite unlike typical agrarian societies.

The culminating development, still in progress, was the development of industrial technology, the application of mechanical sources of energy to an ever-increasing number of production problems. By about 1800, the agricultural population of Britain had sunk to about 1/3 of the total. By mid-19th Century, all the countries of Western Europe, plus the United States of America had more than half their populations in non-farm occupations. Even today, the Industrial Revolution is far from completely replacing agrarianism with industrialism. Only a minority of the world's people today live in industrialized societies although most predominantly agrarian societies have a significant industrial sector.

The use of crop breeding, better management of soil nutrients, and improved weed control have greatly increased yields per unit area. At the same time, the use of mechanization has decreased labor input. The developing world generally produces lower yields, having less of the latest science, capital, and technology base. More people in the world are involved in agriculture as their primary economic activity than in any other, yet it only accounts for four percent of the world's GDP. The rapid rise of mechanization in the 20th century, especially in the form of the tractor, reduced the necessity of humans performing the demanding tasks of sowing, harvesting, and threshing. With mechanization, these tasks could be performed with a speed and on a scale barely imaginable before. These advances have resulted in a substantial increase in the yield of agricultural techniques that have also translated into a decline in the percentage of populations in developed countries that are required to work in agriculture to feed the rest of the population.

Demographics

Notes

The main demographic consequences of agrarian technology were simply a continuation of the trend toward higher population densities and larger settlements. The latter is probably a more secure consequence of agrarian technology than the former. In principle livestock compete with humans for food and in some environments, advanced horticultural techniques can probably support more people per square kilometer than agrarian techniques.

Aside from average density, agrarian technology permitted urbanization of population to a greater extent than was possible under horticulture for two reasons. First, settlement sizes grew with agrarian technology because more productive farmers freed more people for urban specialty occupations. Second, land and maritime transportation improvements made it possible to supply great cities of 1,000,000, plus inhabitants such as Rome, Baghdad, and the Chinese capital cities. Rome, for example, could draw grain and other bulk raw materials from Sicily, North Africa, Egypt, and Southern France to sustain large populations, even by modern standards, using maritime transport on the Mediterranean. It is productivity per unit of labor and transport efficiency improvements of agrarian technology that had the widest impact on the more peripheral culture core features of agrarian societies.

The populations of agrarian societies also have historically fluctuated substantially around the slowly rising trend line, due to famines, disease epidemics and political disruption. At least at the high points, population densities often seem to have exceeded the level at which everyone could be productively employed at current levels of technology. Malthusian deterioration, under-employment and a decline in rural and lower-class urban standards of living, ensued.

Social organization

Agrarian societies are especially noted for their extremes of social classes and rigid social mobility. As land is the major source of wealth, social hierarchy develops based on landownership and not labor. The system of stratification is characterized by three coinciding contrasts: governing class versus the masses, urban minority versus peasant majority, and literate minority versus illiterate majority. This results in

two distinct subcultures; the urban elite versus the peasant masses. Moreover, this means that cultural differences within agrarian societies are greater than the differences between them.

The landowning strata typically combine government, religious, and military institutions to justify and enforce their ownership, and support elaborate patterns of consumption, slavery, serfdom, or peonage is commonly the lot of the primary producer. Rulers of agrarian societies do not manage their empire for the common good or in the name of the public interest, but as a piece of property they own and can do with as they please. Caste systems, as found in India, are much more typical of agrarian societies where lifelong agricultural routines depend upon a rigid sense of duty and discipline. The emphasis in the modern West on personal liberties and freedoms was in large part a reaction to the steep and rigid stratification of agrarian societies.

Energy

Within agrarian societies, the primary source of energy is plant biomass. This means that like hunter-gatherer societies, agrarian societies are dependent on natural solar energy flows. Thus agrarian societies are characterized by their dependence on outside energy flows, low energy density, and the limited possibilities of converting one energy form into another. Energy radiating from the sun is primarily caught and chemically fixed by plant photosynthesis. Then it is secondarily converted by animals and, finally, processed for human use. However, unlike hunter-gatherers, agrarianism's basic strategy is to control these flows. For this purpose, agrarians system mainly uses living organism which serve as food, tools, building material. Mechanical devices making use of wind or running water also can be used to convert natural energy flows. The amount of energy an agrarian society can use is restricted due to the low energy density of solar radiation and the low efficiency of technology.

In order to increase production an agrarian society must either increase the intensity of production or obtain more land to expand into. Expansion may take place either by claiming territories occupied by other communities, but expansion also may take place by claiming new

Notes

ecological niches from other living species. However, societies are still limited by a diminishing margin of utility in that the best lands for farming are usually already under cultivation, forcing people to move into less and less arable lands.

Agrarianism

Agrarianism most often refers to a social philosophy which values agrarian society as superior to industrial society and stresses the superiority of a simpler rural life as opposed to the complexity and chaos of urbanized, industrialized life. In this view the farmer is idealized as self-sufficient and thus independent as opposed to the paid laborer who is vulnerable and alienated in modern society. Moreover, Agrarianism usually links working the land with morality and spirituality and links urban life, capitalism, and technology with a loss of independence and dignity while fostering vice and weakness. The agricultural community, with its fellowship of labor and cooperation, is thus the model society.

Agrarianism is similar but not identical with back-to-the-land movements. Agrarianism concentrates on the fundamental goods of the earth, communities of more limited economic and political scale than in modern society, and on simple living—even when this shift involves questioning the "progressive" character of some recent social and economic developments. Thus agrarianism is not industrial farming, with its specialization on products and industrial scale.

1.3 AGRARIAN ECONOMY

We are fairly sure by now that the upcoming Budget would be the first government instrument towards the prime minister's ambitious plan of making India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024. Currently, India is nearly a \$2.8 trillion economy. It is obvious we don't need just economic growth to achieve this target but must also ensure a fair distribution of the bounty among all.

There are indications that Modi's second term focuses on not just overall growth but also aims to give a fillip to the sluggish agriculture sector, besides investing heavily in infrastructure, and reviving the

manufacturing and service sectors. There is no doubt the agriculture sector, which employs 50 per cent of the population, faces a severe crisis.

Similarly, with the exception of investments in the infrastructure sector (mostly led by public spending), the others are not doing so well. To attain the 2024 landmark, all these sectors have to be given the investment steroid and in high doses.

In this overdrive for economic growth, where does the agriculture sector fit in? This is not to emphasise the importance of the sector to rural Indians, but to raise a political and economic question in a new structural context.

Rural India is no more agrarian, in economic and employment terms. In a research paper for the Niti Aayog, economist Ramesh Chand (also a member of the government think tank) has analysed the transformation in the rural economy. His verdict: since 2004-05, it has become a non-farm economy.

Farmers are quitting agriculture and joining non-farm jobs. It is an economic decision they have taken because they earn more from the latter. This structural change came after the economic reforms in 1991-92. Chand's research shows that between 1993-94 and 2004-05, "growth in agricultural sector decelerated to 1.87 per cent, whereas growth rate in non-farm economy accelerated to 7.93 per cent."

This coincided with a sharp decline in agriculture's contribution to rural economy: 39 per cent in 2004-05 from 57 per cent in 1993-94. "Thus, rural economy became more non-agricultural than agricultural by the year 2004-05." The trend has continued.

This is what any plan for rural India needs to take note of. For decades, most government policies have focussed on non-farm sectors to absorb the people quitting farming. The focus of Modi 2.0 is also on these

Notes

sectors to tide over unemployment and also to ensure livelihoods to those who have not been able to survive on agriculture.

For example, the construction sector accounted for 74 per cent of the jobs created in non-farm sectors in rural areas between 2004-05 and 2011-12. The government's political grandstanding on its investment in infrastructure is because it is this sector that absorbs rural work seekers. But there is a catch here.

Despite the change in the rural economy, the non-farm sectors are not able to absorb job seekers because they are not able to generate jobs at the required rate. For example, during the pre-reform phase, rural employment had 2.16 per cent annual growth. This reduced in post-reform phase, despite a high economic growth.

So, the \$5 trillion economy, even if achieved, will not create jobs in sectors where they are needed. Mostly, it will be a "jobless" growth. And it will unfold into a crisis: where would the people who quit farming be absorbed? Currently, they account for a large number of underemployed and also the unemployed. They stick to agriculture despite knowing it is not remunerative. But how long can one sustain a loss-making sustenance?

Imagine you planted a garden in your back yard and soon there are ripe tomatoes and peppers ready to be picked. You realize you have a few options: You can keep the tomatoes and peppers and eat them yourself, or you can sell them at the local farmers' market. Or, if you turn your small garden into a large, multi-acre farm, you could sell the produce in a bigger market--regional, national, or even international. These options represent the main features of an agrarian economy. An agrarian economy is rural rather than urban-based. It is centered upon the production, consumption, trade, and sale of agricultural commodities, including plants and livestock.

What Are Agrarian Societies?

Imagine a society of farmers and you'll have a pretty good idea of what an agrarian society is all about. An agrarian society is a society whose economy and wealth is primarily based upon agriculture. Agrarian societies have been around for at least five thousand years. In fact, they still exist today. Nearly every civilization has spent some time as an agrarian society. The ancient Egyptian, Indian, Chinese and Mayan societies were agrarian. Today, the poorest of the lesser-developed countries are pretty much agrarian societies.

Characteristics of Agrarian Societies

Agrarian societies share many common characteristics. As we've already mentioned, the society's economy is almost exclusively based on agricultural production. Keep in mind that agrarian societies can be involved in other economic activities, but the primary activity, and the primary form of wealth, is in agriculture. Agricultural production relies primarily upon human and animal labor as opposed to mechanized tools. For example, a farmer in an agrarian society is likely to plow a field with a plough powered by horse, oxen or even just himself. An industrial society would utilize a tractor to till the field.

A division of labor among its members also characterizes agrarian societies. While many are engaged in direct cultivation of the fields, other artisans support the process, such as blacksmiths, who make and repair tools, and potters, who create storage containers. In more developed agrarian societies where there is a sufficient surplus of food, some members of the society will become specialized in arts, crafts and professions that are not agriculturally related.

That perhaps most of my discomfort could be remedied by committing to a particular place is radical. I thought I'd use this forum to talk about Agrarian (land based) vs. Industrial Society, for this difference between industrialism and agrarianism now defines the most fundamental human difference. It divides not just two nearly opposite concepts of agriculture and land use, but also two nearly opposite ways of understanding our fellow creatures, our world, and ourselves.

Notes

becky and mundo verde - smallAn agrarian society is a society that depends on agriculture as its primary means for support and sustenance. Wealth comes from the land. This type of society acknowledges other means of livelihood and work habits, but stresses the importance of agriculture and farming. Agrarian values see rural society as superior to urban society, the independent farmer as superior to the paid worker, and see farming as a way of life that can shape the ideal social values. The Agrarian model was the most common form of socio-economic organization for most of recorded human history.

Then came the Industrial Revolution. Industrial society refers to a society driven by the use of technology to enable mass production, supporting a large population with a high capacity for division of labor. Industrial society is characterized by the use of external energy sources, such as fossil fuels, to increase the rate and scale of production. The production of food is shifted to large commercial farms where the products of industry, such as combine harvesters and fossil fuel-based fertilizers, are used to decrease required human labor while increasing production. No longer needed for the production of food, excess labor is moved into factories where mechanization is utilized to further increase efficiency. As populations grow, and mechanization is further refined, often to the level of automation, many workers shift to expanding service industries. Value shifts from land to the ability to purchase goods. Industrial society gives rise to consumerism where specialization and urbanization are seen as desirable, in part so that workers are closer to centers of production. Industrial society provides labor to those that benefit financially from it. The ability to purchase goods defines one's worth in Industrial society.

Industrialism prescribes an economy not connected to land, and economy that is placeless and displacing. Meaning it does not distinguish one place from another. It applies its methods and technologies indiscriminately all over the globe. It thus continues the economy of colonialism. The shift of colonial power from European monarchy to global corporation is perhaps the dominant theme of modern history. All along, it has been the same story of the gathering of an exploitative

economic power into the hands of a few people who are alien to the places and the people they exploit. Such an economy is bound to destroy locally adapted agrarian economies everywhere it goes.

In contrast, everything that happens on an agrarian farm is determined or conditioned by the understanding that there is only so much land, so much water in the cistern, so much hay in the barn, so much firewood in the shed, so much food in the cellar or freezer, so much strength in the back and arms—and no more. This is the understanding that induces thrift, family coherence, neighborliness, AND local economies. Within accepted limits, these become necessities. The agrarian sense of abundance comes from the experienced possibility of frugality and renewal within limits.honeybees - small

This is exactly the opposite of the industrial idea that abundance comes from the violation of limits: by personal mobility, extractive machinery, long-distance transport, and scientific or technological breakthroughs. If we use up the good possibilities in this place, we will import goods from some other place, or we will go to some other place. If nature releases her wealth too slowly, we will take it by force. In the industrial society, if we make the world too toxic for honeybees, some specialized corporation will invent tiny robots that will fly about pollinating flowers and making honey. It conceives of farming and forestry as forms of mining; it cannot use the land without abusing it.

Industrial mindset also has contempt for anything small, rural, or natural and that translates into contempt for uncentralized economic systems, any sort of local self-sufficiency in food or other necessities. The industrial “solution” for such systems is to increase the scale of work and trade. It brings Big Ideas, Big Money, and Big Technology into small rural communities, economies, and ecosystems—the brought in industry and the experts being invariably alien to and contemptuous of the places to which they are brought in. The result is that problems correctable on a small scale are replaced by large-scale problems for which there are no large-scale corrections.

Notes

Meanwhile, the large-scale enterprise has reduced or destroyed the possibility of small-scale corrections.

What's the way out of this predicament? How about promoting the old ideal of personal independence. Not the kind of independence that makes people act without regard for other people or that makes them assume they can get along without other people. The type of independence by which a person provides some of his or her own needs and which permits him or her to do what he or she sees to be right without the approval of consumer culture. We are talking about the type of independence that comes through connection to land and place. Maybe that's why Thomas Jefferson was an advocate for keeping as many people as possible on the land. He thought keeping people "landed," independent in the way that the ownership and care of a piece of land can make them, was the best thing for our world.

So then everybody needs to own some land in order to be empowered and independent? How's that going to work? Here's a simple solution: don't think that being landed necessarily means owning land. It definitely means being connected to a home landscape from which one may live by the interactions of a local economy (and without the routine intervention of governments, corporations, or charities), but one doesn't have to be the owner in order to cultivate the connection, does she? Connecting to the land without owning it is vulnerable, but not impossible.

The agrarian population among us is growing, and by no means is it made up merely of some farmers and some country people. It includes urban gardeners, urban consumers who are buying food from local farmers, consumers who have grown doubtful of the healthfulness, the trustworthiness, and the dependability of the corporate food system—people, in other words, who understand the value of being connected to land and place. Going forward, may all of us who hold Agrarian ideals, but no title to land, have the faith to cultivate connection to a particular place and find ourselves "landed" regardless of who owns what.

Agricultural economics, study of the allocation, distribution, and utilization of the resources used, along with the commodities produced, by farming. Agricultural economics plays a role in the economics of development, for a continuous level of farm surplus is one of the wellsprings of technological and commercial growth.

In general, one can say that when a large fraction of a country's population depends on agriculture for its livelihood, average incomes are low. That does not mean that a country is poor because most of its population is engaged in agriculture; it is closer to the truth to say that because a country is poor, most of its people must rely upon agriculture for a living.

Agriculture And Economic Development

As a country develops economically, the relative importance of agriculture declines. The primary reason for that was shown by the 19th-century German statistician Ernst Engel, who discovered that as incomes increase, the proportion of income spent on food declines. For example, if a family's income were to increase by 100 percent, the amount it would spend on food might increase by 60 percent; if formerly its expenditures on food had been 50 percent of its budget, after the increase they would amount to only 40 percent of its budget. It follows that as incomes increase, a smaller fraction of the total resources of society is required to produce the amount of food demanded by the population.

Progress in farming

That fact would have surprised most economists of the early 19th century, who feared that the limited supply of land in the populated areas of Europe would determine the continent's ability to feed its growing population. Their fear was based on the so-called law of diminishing returns: that under given conditions an increase in the amount of labour and capital applied to a fixed amount of land results in a less-than-proportional increase in the output of food. That principle is a valid one, but what the classical economists could not foresee was the extent to which the state of the arts and the methods of production would change.

Notes

Some of the changes occurred in agriculture; others occurred in other sectors of the economy but had a major effect on the supply of food.

In looking back upon the history of the more developed countries, one can see that agriculture has played an important part in the process of their enrichment. For one thing, if development is to occur, agriculture must be able to produce a surplus of food to maintain the growing nonagricultural labour force. Since food is more essential for life than are the services provided by merchants or bankers or factories, an economy cannot shift to such activities unless food is available for barter or sale in sufficient quantities to support those engaged in them. Unless food can be obtained through international trade, a country does not normally develop industrially until its farm areas can supply its towns with food in exchange for the products of their factories.

Economic development also requires a growing labour force. In an agricultural country most of the workers needed must come from the rural population. Thus agriculture must not only supply a surplus of food for the towns, but it must also be able to produce the increased amount of food with a relatively smaller labour force. It may do so by substituting animal power for human power or by gradually introducing labour-saving machinery.

Agriculture may also be a source of the capital needed for industrial development to the extent that it provides a surplus that may be converted into the funds needed to purchase industrial equipment or to build roads and provide public services.

For those reasons, a country seeking to develop its economy may be well advised to give a significant priority to agriculture. Experience in the developing countries has shown that agriculture can be made much more productive with the proper investment in irrigation systems, research, fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides.

Fortunately, many advances in applied science do not require massive amounts of capital, although it may be necessary to expand marketing and transportation facilities so that farm output can be brought to the entire population.

Advertisement

One difficulty in giving priority to agriculture is that most of the increase in farm output and most of the income gains are concentrated in certain regions rather than extending throughout the country. The remaining farmers are not able to produce more and actually suffer a disadvantage as farm prices decline. There is no easy answer to that problem, but developing countries need to be aware of it; economic progress is consistent with lingering backwardness, as has been seen in parts of southern Italy or in the Appalachian area of the United States.

Peasant agriculture

One characteristic of undeveloped peasant agriculture is its self-sufficiency. Farm families in those circumstances consume a substantial part of what they produce. While some of their output may be sold in the market, their total production is generally not much larger than what is needed for the maintenance of the family. Not only is productivity per worker low under those conditions, but yields per unit of land are also low. Even where the land was originally fertile, the fertility is likely to have been depleted by decades of continuous cropping. The available manures are not sufficient, and the farmers cannot afford to purchase them elsewhere.

Peasant agriculture is often said to be characterized by inertia. The peasant farmer is likely to be illiterate, suspicious of outsiders, and reluctant to try new methods; food patterns remain unchanged for decades or even centuries. Evidence, however, suggests that the apparent inertia may be simply the result of a lack of alternatives. If there is nothing better to change to, there is little point in changing. Moreover, the self-sufficient farmer is bound to want to minimize risks; since a crop failure can mean starvation in many parts of the world, farmers have

Notes

been reluctant to adopt new methods if doing so would expose them to greater risks of failure.

The increased use worldwide of high-yielding varieties of rice and wheat from the 1960s showed that farmers were willing and able to adopt new crops and farming methods when their superiority was demonstrated. Those high-yielding varieties, however, required increased outlays for fertilizer, as well as expanded facilities for storage and distribution, and many developing countries were unable to afford such expenditures.

The labour force

As economic development proceeds, a large proportion of the farm labour force must shift from agriculture into other pursuits. That fundamental shift in the labour force is made possible, of course, by an enormous increase in output per worker as agriculture becomes modernized. That increase in output stems from various factors. Where land is plentiful, the output per worker is likely to be higher because it is possible to employ more fertilizer and machinery per worker.

Land, Output, And Yields

Only a small fraction of the world's land area—about one-tenth—may be considered arable, if arable land is defined as land planted to crops. Less than one-fourth of the world's land area is in permanent meadows and pastures. The remainder is either in forests or is not being used for agricultural purposes.

There are great differences in the amount of arable land per person in the various regions of the world. The greatest amount of arable land per capita is in Oceania; the least is in China. No direct relationship exists between the amount of arable land per capita and the level of income.

The relationship between land, population, and farm production is a complex one. In traditional agriculture, where methods of production have changed little over a long period of time, production is largely determined by the quality and quantity of land available and the number

of people working on the land. Until the early years of the 20th century, most of the world's increase in crop production came either from an increase in land under cultivation or from an increase in the amount of labour used per unit of land. That generally involved a shift to crops that would yield more per unit of land and required more labour for their cultivation. Wheat, rye, and millet require less labour per unit of land and per unit of food output than do rice, potatoes, or corn (maize), but generally the latter yield more food per unit of land. Thus, as population density increased, the latter groups of crops tended to be substituted for the former. That did not hold true in Europe, where wheat, rye, and millet expanded at the expense of pasture land, but those crops yielded more food per acre than did the livestock that they displaced.

As agriculture becomes modernized, its dependence upon land as well as upon human labour decreases. Animal power and machinery are substituted for human labour; mechanical power then replaces animal power. The substitution of mechanical power for animal power reduces the need for land. The increased use of fertilizer as modernization occurs also acts as a substitute for both land and labour; the same is true of herbicides and insecticides. By making it possible to produce more per unit of land and per hour of work, less land and labour are required for a given amount of output.

Efforts To Control Prices And Production

In the second half of the 20th century, governments undertook to control both prices and output in the agricultural sector, largely in response to the pressures of the farmers themselves. In the absence of such control, farm prices tend to fluctuate more than do most other prices, and the incomes of farmers fluctuate to an even greater degree. Not only are incomes in agriculture unstable, but they also tend to be lower than incomes in other economic sectors.

The problem

Instability of prices

Notes

The instability of farm prices results from several factors. One is the relative slowness with which farmers are able to respond to changes in the demand for their product. Farmers generally must produce on the basis of expectations, and if their expectations turn out to be wrong, the resulting surplus or shortage cannot be corrected until the beginning of the next production cycle. Once a crop is planted, very little can be done to increase or decrease production in response to market prices. As long as prices cover current operating costs, such as the cost of harvesting, it pays farmers to carry through their production plans even if prices fall to a very low level. It is not unusual for the prices of particular farm products to vary by a third or a half from year to year. That extreme variability results from the relatively low responsiveness of demand to changes in price—i.e., from the fact that in order to increase sales by 5 percent it may be necessary to reduce the price by 15 percent.

Instability of income

The instability of farm prices is accompanied by instability of farm income. While gross income from agriculture generally does not vary as much as do individual farm prices, net income may vary more than prices. In modern agriculture, costs tend to be relatively stable; the farmer is unable to compensate for a drop in prices by reducing his payments for machinery, fertilizer, or labour.

The incomes of farm workers are generally below those of other workers. There are two major reasons for that inequity. One is that in most economies the need for farm labour is declining, and each year large numbers of farm people, especially young ones, must leave their homes to seek jobs elsewhere. The difference in returns to labour is required to bring about that transfer of workers out of farming; if the transfer did not occur, farm incomes would be even more depressed. The second major reason for the income differences is that farm people generally have less education than do nonfarm people and are able to earn less at nonfarm jobs. The difference in education is of long standing and is found in all countries, developed and undeveloped; it also exists whether the national

education system is highly decentralized, as in the United States, or highly centralized, as in France.

Government intervention

Governments have employed various measures to maintain farm prices and incomes above what the market would otherwise have yielded. They have included tariffs or import levies, import quotas, export subsidies, direct payments to farmers, and limitations on production. Tariffs and import quotas can be effective only if a country normally imports some of its supply. Export subsidies result in higher prices to domestic consumers than to foreign purchasers; their use requires control over imports to prevent foreign supplies from entering the domestic market and bringing prices down. Direct payments to farmers have been used to maintain prices to consumers at reasonable levels, while assuring farmers a return above world-market levels. Limitations on production, intended to reduce supply and thus increase prices, have been used in Brazil (for coffee) and in the United States (for major crops).

Accomplishments

The effects of price and income policies are difficult to assess. The policies have unquestionably worked to raise agricultural production in the countries where they have been applied, but their usefulness as a means of enhancing the economic well-being of farm people is debatable. The governments of the industrial countries have been able to raise the returns from agriculture above the levels that would have prevailed in the absence of such intervention. In addition to maintaining prices, they provide subsidies for agricultural inputs such as tractor fuel and chemical fertilizers; they also gave assistance in consolidating small farms into larger ones and in improving farm buildings.

The level of income and the economic well-being of farm people in general are determined by many factors, including not only the prices they receive for their output but also the rate at which the economy in general is growing, the ease with which people can move from farm to

Notes

nonfarm jobs, the prices they must pay for their productive inputs, and their level of education. With respect to average income per person, as distinguished from total income, the prices received and paid are probably less important than the other factors mentioned. That becomes obvious when one compares farm incomes in developed countries with those in less-developed ones; the differences in real income have to do mainly with the levels of economic development and not with farm prices or subsidies. Government efforts to increase farm prices are likely to be offset, in the long run, by an increase in the number of persons engaged in farming, and that tends to keep the returns to farm labour from rising much faster than they would in the absence of such policies.

There are two other reasons for believing that the income effects of higher farm prices or subsidies are relatively insignificant in the long run compared with other factors affecting incomes of farm workers. One is that an increase in farm prices induces farmers to use more fertilizer, machinery, fuel and oil, and other items. If a significant part of any increase in gross income is used for such things, the absolute increase in net farm income is much smaller than the increase in gross farm income. The second reason is that a given increase in government-supported farm prices generally occurs only once. After the increase in returns has been realized, the higher farm prices contribute nothing further to incomes. In contrast, general economic growth along with the continued reduction of the farm labour force has cumulative effects on the return to farm labour. If the returns to farm labour were to grow at an average annual rate of about 3 percent, for example, farm prices would have to increase at least 3 percent annually (assuming other prices did not change) to have the same effect on returns to farm resources.

Costs

The costs of the agricultural price and income policies of industrial countries are substantial; they include not only direct governmental outlays but also the increased costs to consumers in those countries, as well as the losses to developing countries of potential export markets.

1.4 SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE

Just as you might choose to eat the produce you grew in your own garden, the first farmers of the world did just that. Subsistence agriculture, as it is called, first emerged from the transition from hunting and gathering, around 12,000 to 10,000 years ago, to settled agriculture. This taming of nature--or 'domestication'--allowed people to settle in one place because now there was a sufficient and reliable food source. Whether the planting and harvesting of wheat in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East, or the growing of maize (corn) in the Americas, or the harvesting of rice in the river valleys of eastern China, the first agrarian economies produced food for themselves, not necessarily for sale or large-scale trade.

Between this Agricultural Revolution and the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, agrarian economies did not change significantly, though agrarian societies did become more connected with one another and increased trade. From a basis of subsistence agriculture, agrarian societies might then produce a surplus of goods and thus be able to trade it with neighbors or sell it at a relatively local level. For example, Chinese farmers took rice agriculture and transplanted it in areas of Southeast Asia, and the Roman Empire transferred grain throughout its provinces. Such trade connections expanded as well through the Silk Road across Eurasia and through the maritime trading routes of the Indian Ocean.

Despite these many links connecting agrarian economies between the time of the Agricultural Revolution and the modern period, most people still produced primarily for their own consumption rather than for the market. One reason for this is that transportation costs and technological limitations remained barriers to the creation of a truly continental or global market for agricultural goods. But all this began to change after 1500, and especially with the Industrial Revolution.

Industrial Age Agrarian Economies

Notes

The first important change in agrarian economies came with the development of new agricultural technologies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries during the Industrial Revolution. Such technologies allowed the production of larger and larger surpluses. For example, both the cotton gin and the mechanical grain reaper provided for harvests on a massive scale. New strains of seeds and plants allowed crops to grow more efficiently and in marginal areas.

The Organization Of Farming Ownership

Except in the few countries with communist governments, most farmland is privately owned. That does not mean, however, that the land is owned by those who farm it. In most countries a major aspiration of farm people has been to achieve the ownership of the land they work. After World War II, for example, Japan and Taiwan underwent land reforms that were intended to broaden ownership, and similar reforms have been advocated in other countries.

On a cooperative farm the land is owned jointly by the members of the group who farm it. The cooperative generally also owns all the major means of production, and the members supply all or most of the labour. While there are examples of cooperative farms in many countries, they loom large only in Israel, where the kibbutzim control about one-tenth of all agricultural land.

In a collective farm, at least as organized in the former Soviet republics, the land was owned by the state but was permanently leased to the kolkhoz (collective farm). The kolkhoz owned its own equipment and livestock and was required to meet certain commitments to the state in the form of deliveries of farm products. In theory, the members of the kolkhoz were to elect the officers of the farm and establish the procedures by which the net product was to be divided among the members for services performed. In practice, however, their autonomy

was severely limited by the economic plans. In most cases these plans were incredibly detailed, specifying the crops to be grown, the times of plowing, planting, and harvesting, the quantities of fertilizer and manures to be used, and the kinds of livestock to be maintained.

On state farms the land and all other means of production are owned by the state. The workers are paid in wages, and management decisions are made by individuals directly responsible to the state.

Kinds of farm operation

If a family farm is defined as one for which the farm operator and family members supply at least half of the labour, the majority of farms in the world are family farms. Family farming is carried on under a wide range of conditions, from the small farms of Asia to the highly mechanized farms of Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

The family farm may be owned by the farmer or rented. The most rapidly expanding type of tenure in the United States is that in which the farmer owns part of the land and rents the remainder; almost one-third of all farmland in the United States consists of part-owner farms. This arrangement enables the farmer to increase the size of the farm through renting and to invest capital in machinery and livestock.

Family farms may be large in terms of total assets or sales. The relative importance of family farms among the largest farms in the United States has increased over the past few decades. One of the more striking changes in industrial countries has been the increased importance of nonfarm income received by farm families. In the United States, Canada, and Japan more than half of the total income of farm families comes from nonfarm sources, while in most western European countries at least a third of the income of farm families is earned outside of agriculture.

A system of tenant farming known as sharecropping developed in the South of the United States following the freeing of the slaves in the 19th century. It was essentially an adjustment of the plantation system created

Notes

to permit the owners to maintain a large measure of control over farm operations. The sharecroppers usually supplied only the labour, while the owners provided animal power, machinery, and most of the other inputs in the form of an advance. The sharecroppers received what was left after they had paid back the owners—generally about half of what had been produced.

For various reasons, including the exodus of blacks from American agriculture, the introduction of farm machinery, and the reduction in the acreage of cotton, the number of sharecroppers in the South has diminished drastically since 1935.

In the second half of the 20th century, there began a growth of large-scale farming run as a business enterprise. Such “industrial farms” are of growing significance in world agriculture. There are farms covering extensive areas of land in Africa, South America, Australia, and the United States, where farms became larger as their numbers grew smaller. Such large farms tend to specialize in the production of vegetables, fruits, cotton, poultry and poultry products, and livestock.

Comparative strengths and weaknesses

If they were free to choose, most farm families would want to own the land they farm. Wherever collectivization of private farmers has been carried out, it has required the use of force or the threat of force. But if family farming is to be viable, it must function efficiently, which means that farmers must have access to adequate sources of credit; must be able to obtain fertilizers, machinery, and other equipment; and must be able to market their produce easily. Laws and institutions must be sufficiently flexible to permit the average size of farms to increase as economic growth occurs.

Collective farming did not fulfill the hopes of its early advocates. In the Soviet Union the collective farm was used by Joseph Stalin as a means of exploiting the rural population in order to finance the expansion of industrialization. In the post-Stalin era the incomes of collective farm

members increased, and it was believed that many remaining difficulties could be eliminated if the farms were given greater freedom in running their affairs. Nothing in the concept of the collective farm required the imposition of delivery quotas, centralized control of farm investment, or a particular organization of farm labour. Another weakness of collective farms was the failure to provide adequate incentives for individual members. Because of the difficulties involved in rewarding members for their individual work on the common land, the household plots of the members all too often tended to flourish at the expense of the collective.

There is no ideal form of organization that fits all farming. Under some circumstances the ownership of land may absorb so much capital that other investments, such as machinery and livestock, are neglected. Land rental may be a better alternative for many families, especially those with limited capital. The Israeli kibbutz has made it possible for many people with little or no agricultural experience to learn farming techniques quickly and efficiently. The most important consideration is whether the other institutions—economic, political, and social—are adequate to provide farmers with a wide range of resources and alternatives.

1.5 THE STATE/SUBAH

A Subah was the term for a province in the Mughal Empire. The word is derived from Arabic and Persian. The governor/ruler of a Subah was known as a subahdar (sometimes also referred to as a "Subeh"), which later became subedar to refer to an officer in the Indian Army. The subahs were established by badshah (emperor) Akbar during his administrative reforms of years 1572-1580; initially they numbered to 12, but his conquests expanded the number of subahs to 15 by the end of his reign. Subahs were divided into Sarkars, or districts. Sarkars were further divided into Parganas or Mahals. His successors, most notably Aurangzeb, expanded the number of subahs further through their conquests. As the empire began to dissolve in the early 18th century, many subahs became effectively independent, or were conquered by the Marathas or the British.

Notes

In modern context subah (Urdu: صوبہ) is a word used for province in Urdu language.

History

Initially, after the administrative reforms of Akbar, the Mughal empire was divided into 12 subahs : Kabul, Lahore, Multan, Delhi, Agra, Avadh, Illahabad, Bihar, Bangalah, Malwa, Ajmer and Gujarat. After the conquest of Deccan, he created three more subahs there : Berar, Khandesh (initially renamed Dandesh in 1601) and Ahmadnagar (in 1636 renamed as Daulatabad and subsequently as Aurangabad). At the end of Akbar's reign, the number of subahs was thus 15. It was increased to 17 during the reign of Jahangir. Orissa was created as a separate subah, carved out of Bangalah in 1607. The number of subahs increased to 22 under Shah Jahan. In his 8th regnal year, Shah Jahan separated the sarkar of Telangana from Berar and made it into a separate Subah. In 1657, it was merged with Zafarabad Bidar subah. Agra was renamed Akbarabad 1629 and Delhi became Shahjahanbad in 1648. Kashmir was carved out of Kabul, Thatta (Sindh) out of Multan and Bidar out of Ahmadnagar. For some time Qandahar was a separate subah under the Mughal Empire but it was lost to Persia in 1648. Aurangzeb added Bijapur (1686), Sira (1687) and Golkonda (1687) as new subahs. There were 22 subahs during his reign. These were Kabul, Kashmir, Lahore, Multan, Delhi, Agra, Avadh, Illahabad, Bihar, Bangalah, Orissa, Malwa, Ajmer, Gujarat, Berar, Khandesh, Aurangabad, Bidar, Thatta, Bijapur, Sira and Haidarabad (Golkonda). During the reign of Bahadur Shah, Arcot became a Mughal subah in 1710.

Current usage

In modern usage in Urdu language, the term is used as a word for province, while the word riyasat (Urdu: ریاست) ("princely state" in English) is used for (federated) state. The terminologies are based on administrative structure of British India which was partially derived from the Mughal administrative structure. In modern times, the term subah is mainly used in Pakistan, where its four provinces are called "Subah" in Urdu language.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What do you know about the Agrarian society?

.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss about the Agrarian Economy.

.....
.....
.....

1.6 LET US SUM UP

An agrarian society, or agricultural society, is any community whose economy is based on producing and maintaining crops and farmland. Another way to define an agrarian society is by seeing how much of a nation's total production is in agriculture. In an agrarian society, cultivating the land is the primary source of wealth. Such a society may acknowledge other means of livelihood and work habits but stresses the importance of agriculture and farming. Agrarian societies have existed in various parts of the world as far back as 10,000 years ago and continue to exist today. They have been the most common form of socio-economic organization for most of recorded human history.

1.7 KEY WORDS

Subah: A Subah was the term for a province in the Mughal Empire. The word is derived from Arabic and Persian. The governor/ruler of a Subah was known as a subahdar (sometimes also referred to as a "Subeh"), which later became subedar to refer to an officer in the Indian Army

Agrarian: relating to cultivated land or the cultivation of land.

1.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Discuss about the Subsistence Agriculture.
2. Converse the State/Subah.

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Barth, F. 2001. Features of Person and Society under Agrarianism: Collected Essays. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Brown, D.E. 1988. Hierarchy, History, and Human Nature: The Social Origins of Historical Consciousness. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Cohen, M. N. 1989. Health and the Rise of Civilization. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Johnson, A. W. 2000. The Evolution of Human Societies: from Foraging Group to Agrarian State. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Langlois, S. 2001. "Traditions: Social." In Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, Editors, International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, Pergamon, Oxford, 15829-15833.
- Lenski, Gerhard. "Agrarian Societies [Parts I & II]." In Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification, 189-296. 1966. Reprinted, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Nolan, Patrick, and Gerhard Lenski. 2014. "The Agricultural Economy." In Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology, 156-201. 12th ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pryor, F. L. 2006. "The Adoption of Agriculture: Some Theoretical and Empirical Evidence." American Anthropologist 88:879-97.
- Renfrew, C. (ed.) 1993. The Explanation of Culture Change. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Thompson, Paul B. 2010. The Agrarian Vision: Sustainability and Environmental Ethics. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- George Clifford Whitworth. Subah. An Anglo-Indian Dictionary: A Glossary of Indian Terms Used in English, and of Such English Or

Other Non-Indian Terms as Have Obtained Special Meanings in India. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. 1885. p. 301.

- Mahajan, V.D. (1991, reprint 2007). History of Medieval India, Part II, New Delhi: S. Chand, ISBN 81-219-0364-5, p.236n
- Habib, I (2003). The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-565595-8, pp.8n, 451
- Imperial Gazetteer of India: Provincial Series 1908, pp. 175–176
- Habib, I (2003). The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-565595-8, p.4

1.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 1.2
2. See Section 1.3

UNIT 2: CONTROL OVER LAND AND RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

STRUCTURE

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Relations of Production
- 2.3 How Marx uses the concept
- 2.4 Social/technical distinction and reification
- 2.5 Relations of production and relations of distribution
- 2.6 Criticism of Marx's concept
- 2.7 Let us sum up
- 2.8 Key Words
- 2.9 Questions for Review
- 2.10 Suggested readings and references
- 2.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

- To know about Relations of Production
- How Marx uses the concept?
- To discuss about the Social/technical distinction and reification
- To discuss about the Relations of production and relations of distribution
- To criticize of Marx's concept

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Respondents defined access to land as the right to enter upon and use land. These rights are usufruct rights and can be granted to male and female members of the family, lineage or stool.

Respondents defined control over land as one's ability to take decisions with regard to the land (e.g. to determine the size of land used for farming activities and whether the land will be used for food or cash crop production) and the ability to transfer land titles, whether by sale or inheritance (land ownership).

The control definition was determined based on the outcomes of eleven "control" related questions. These questions revealed that in comparison to women:

- Men had greater decision making power to determine the size of the land used for farming activities;
- Men had more rights to transfer rights in land to their children;
- Men had more opportunities to register land in their names as they had more secure access to land and they were in a better position to defend their land rights;
- Men had greater rights to grow perennials and cash crops, an activity that enhances one's control over land and is allowed only if one has reasonably secure access to the land;
- Men were more involved in forest clearing for agricultural use, a primary determinant of initial access to land and land ownership; and
- Men were said to have greater potential to be leaders (e.g. of the family and lineage) and therefore were considered to be better qualified to take decisions affecting land.

Assessing the nature and direction of economic development in India is an important theoretical and practical task with profound political and social implications. After all, any serious attempt at a radical restructuring of Indian society, if it is not to fall prey to empty utopianism, will need to base its long-term strategy on the historical trends in the evolution of the material conditions of life of the vast majority of the population. Attempting to build on past debates and as part of on-going attempts at radical transformation of Indian society, this paper tries to provide a summary account of the evolution of some key structural features of the Indian economy over the last few decades. In providing this summary account, we connect with and speak to issues thrown up by earlier work on characterizing Indian society. The primary,

Notes

though implicit, reference point for this paper is the “mode of production” debate that occupied scholars and activists in India during the 1970s and 1980s.ⁱ This paper is an attempt to revisit that debate in the light of new data that has since become available; it is also an attempt to widen the analytical and empirical focus beyond the agricultural sector, the sole concern of the “mode of production” debate. While it is true that agriculture continues to “employ” the vast majority of the working people in India, the last few decades have also witnessed the slow but steady growth of an industrial and services sector. A large part of the working class now constantly shuttles between these sectors, as much as it physically moves between regions and states. Hence it is important to include this growing nonagricultural sector in any analysis of the evolution of the Indian economy, not least because the availability of non-farm employment opportunities has profound implications for the material and social lives of the vast majority of the rural poor.

The principal questions that motivate this study are: what types of production relations does the vast majority of the working population in Indian agriculture and industry labor in? How is economic surplus appropriated from the direct producers? The aim is to understand the material conditions under which the working population labors, the manners in which it is exploited, the relations into which they enter during the process of production, the conflicting interests that arise among economic actors from contradictory locations that they occupy within the web of production relations, and to indicate the possibilities of fruitful political mobilization that this emerging set of class positions throw up. This paper combines an analysis of aggregate-level trends as revealed by the successive rounds of the National Sample Survey with micro-level studies (village-level studies for the agrarian sector and industry-level studies for the informal manufacturing sector). While a study of the structural evolution of the Indian economy is of interest in itself, this paper uses trends in the structural evolution to make inferences about the mode of generation, appropriation and use of the surplus product in Indian society.ⁱⁱ The focus on surplus appropriation, in turn, is motivated by the idea that the form of extraction of unpaid surplus labour

from the direct producers and the manner of its distribution among the dominant classes provides the key to understanding the structure and evolution of any class-divided society (Marx, 1993). Accepting the centrality of the notion of economic surplus, this study attempts to identify the evolution of the modes of appropriation of surplus labour in India indirectly by studying the evolution of key structures of the Indian economy. The underlying assumption of the whole study is that the evolution of the key economic structures, like ownership patterns in the agrarian economy, the evolution of labour forms like tenancy, wage-labour, bonded labour, the sizedistribution of firms in the informal sector, the patterns of employment and migration, the importance of merchant and finance capital, etc., can provide useful and reliable information about the mode of surplus extraction. While it is possible to form a picture of the aggregate evolution of the Indian economy using data available from sources like the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), the Agricultural Census, the Census of India – and that is precisely what we do in this study - we are fully aware of the limitations of such aggregate accounts. Many micro-level variations are lost in the aggregate story and so, at every crucial point in the analysis and subject to the availability of data, the aggregate picture is complemented with case studies. It is hoped that the combination of aggregate-level trends with micro-level, often qualitative, evidence will help in forming a comprehensive, historically grounded picture of the political economy of India. Apart from a concluding section that raises some philosophical and political questions for further discussion, the paper is broadly divided into two parts, one dealing with the agrarian economy and the other with what has come to be called the “informal” industrial sector. This twin focus is motivated by the following considerations. First, the agrarian economy accounts for the largest section of the country’s workforce and population. Second, in the non-agrarian economy the majority of the workforce is found in what has been called the “informal” sector. Third, to the extent that an understanding of the relations of production (and forms of surplus extraction) is at issue, most serious scholars and activists would agree that the “formal” sector is characterized by capitalist relations of

production. On the other hand, the informal sector is much more complex and thus the focus of our study. One final caveat is in order. Based largely on NSSO data and to some extent on commissioned studies, the Sengupta Commission Reports (NCEUS 2007a and NCEUS 2009) have given a comprehensive picture of the recent trends in informal employment, conditions of work, and regional variations for all three sectors. It is not our intention here to reproduce the same data. Rather we wish to offer some theoretical interpretations based on our as well as the Sengupta Commission's analysis of the NSSO data.

2.2 RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

Relations of production (German: Produktionsverhältnisse) is a concept frequently used by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their theory of historical materialism and in *Das Kapital*. It is first explicitly used in Marx's published book *The Poverty of Philosophy*, although Marx and Engels had already defined the term in *The German Ideology*.

Some social relations are voluntary and freely chosen (a person chooses to associate with another person or a group). But other social relations are involuntary, i.e. people can be socially related, whether they like that or not, because they are part of a family, a group, an organization, a community, a nation etc.

By "relations of production", Marx and Engels meant the sum total of social relationships that people must enter into in order to survive, to produce, and to reproduce their means of life. As people must enter into these social relationships, i.e. because participation in them is not voluntary, the totality of these relationships constitutes a relatively stable and permanent structure, the "economic structure" or mode of production.

The term "relations of production" is somewhat vague, for two main reasons:

The German word *Verhältnis* can mean "relation", "proportion", or "ratio". Thus, the relationships could be qualitative, quantitative, or both. Which meaning applies can only be established from the context.

The relations to which Marx refers can be social relationships, economic relationships, or technological relationships.

Marx and Engels typically use the term to refer to the socioeconomic relationships characteristic of a specific epoch; for example: a capitalist's exclusive relationship to a capital good, and a wage worker's consequent relation to the capitalist; a feudal lord's relationship to a fief, and the serf's consequent relation to the lord; a slavemaster's relationship to their slave; etc. It is contrasted with and also affected by what Marx called the forces of production.

Remedying the exclusion of the majority of women from access to and control of rural land in India is one of the most significant steps that could be taken toward enhancing the country's rural livelihoods. It is also among the most challenging. While women in India have the legal right to own land, very few do. For those women who do own land, ownership rarely translates into control of the land or of the assets flowing from the land.

From a purely legislative standpoint, equalization of land rights for rural women appears a straightforward task: put teeth to the Constitutional pronouncements against gender discrimination, revise inheritance laws, expose customary laws and traditional practices to scrutiny and redesign, and then sit back and wait for market forces to operate.

But the wait could potentially be eternal. Without more, legislation and policy pronouncements seldom penetrate the surface of rural livelihoods and are ultimately impotent against the undertow of the established power structures inherent in most rural Indian households and villages. To date, the patriarchal currents running through rural lives and institutions of local governance have proved far more influential and

Notes

persistent than any law or policy. Interventions hoping for genuine change in the extent to which women control land must be directed at the multiple, interrelated institutions (political, legal, religious, and social) that have established - and continue to reflect and reaffirm - the patriarchal ideology that dominates India's rural society.

The impact of gender inequality on livelihoods

The debilitating effect of women's unequal rights to access and control rural land has been well documented. The impact on livelihoods is particularly marked in India, where men migrate to expanding non-agricultural employment opportunities and women comprise a growing percentage of the rural population. Women's literacy rates, child rearing obligations, and cultural constraints make them less qualified than men for non-agricultural employment. Eighty-six percent of female workers in rural India are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods.

Despite this growing dependence on agriculture, rural women's ability to access and manage the benefits from the land to which they are tied remains highly restricted. The cost of excluding women from control of land and its resources is significant: where women direct the use of income from productive land, they tend to spend the money to meet the basic nutritional, welfare, and educational needs of their children and family. Conversely, where men control the use of household assets, they tend to spend money on personal goods and to fulfill individual desires. Gender equality in land rights is thus both a livelihood objective in itself and a powerful means of eradicating poverty. Increasing women's control over land can positively and significantly influence the welfare of the country's next generation.

Rural women's lack of land rights also limits their access to the other livelihood assets that flow from the control of land. Few women have control over the income generated from the land their households cultivate. Fewer still are able to obtain loans or credit based on the household's land, or to exercise significant bargaining power within their communities. Instead, women are dependent on their relationships with

male family members for their economic security and social status. If those relationships terminate by death, divorce, or other circumstances, the women are left without any assets on which they can rely to sustain their livelihoods.

Consideration of methods for addressing the disenfranchisement of women requires a review of the avenues by which women are most likely become landowners and attain control of the assets that flow from land, the limitations of those means, and possible alternative approaches to achieving gender equity in land rights.

The narrow path to women's land ownership

The channels through which India's rural poor are most likely to become landowners (and thus be in a better position to control and manage land) are

a) laws relating to inheritance;

b) government land distribution programmes; and

c) the land market. All three sources of land rights are skewed - in structure, operation, or both - against the equal participation of women. That said, with some revision to the structural underpinnings and execution, all three sources offer potential for an increasing women's participation in the future.

Inheritance laws

India's Constitution mandates gender equality, but the command of non-discrimination does not reach the religious and customary laws that dictate most property rights relative to marriage, divorce, and inheritance. For the 82 percent of India's population that is Hindu, the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 governs rights relating to intestate succession, i.e. inheritance in the absence of a will. The Succession Act provides for the devolution of separate (usually self-acquired) property in equal shares to the male and female children and widow of the deceased,

Notes

and if the deceased is male, his mother. In contrast, joint family property, i.e. ancestral property and property owned by the family as a unit, devolves by survivorship. Traditionally, male family members became "co-parcenars" and received an undivided share of the joint family property at birth; female family members were excluded from sharing in the joint family property.

Some states acted to equalize the intestate inheritance rights of women under the Succession Act. Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra extend co-parcener rights at birth to daughters, and Kerala abandoned the concept of joint family property altogether. However, the amendments do not reach daughters who married before the amendments came into effect, and wives are not granted any right to joint family property. Furthermore, nothing in the Succession Act precludes a testator from disinheriting his wives and daughters by will. Thus, the rights these state amendments intended to bestow can be circumvented and may ultimately be illusory.

The intestacy rights of Muslims, who constitute approximately 12 percent of the population^[102], are governed by Muslim Personal Law, as set forth in the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937. The Act grants widows and daughters who are in the same relation as a male family member to the deceased half the share of property received by the male family member. The Act prohibits a Muslim man from bequeathing more than one-third of his property by will, so he cannot completely disinherit his spouse and female children. The Act does not extend to agricultural land, however, leaving agricultural land to devolution by state law or, if state law is silent, custom.

The various state amendments unquestionably reflect progress toward gender equality in land rights. On another level, however, the patchwork of laws and policies aggravate the problem of inequality by their varied nature, lack of uniformity, and complexity of application. These often half hearted (or at least half realized) efforts at legislative reform only truly succeed in one aspect: they effectively push the issue of female

inheritance down to the local level for recognition and enforcement - with predictable results. Fieldwork conducted in Karnataka suggests that the amendment to include Hindu daughters as co-parcenars has had little practical effect on female inheritance patterns. Most women interviewed stated that daughters considered their dowry and wedding costs as their fair share of family resources, and they rarely claimed their legal right to a share of the family property. Similarly, while Muslim women noted that their daughters could inherit agricultural land (presumably under local custom), they reported that daughters usually elected not to claim a right to the land in order to be free to turn to their brothers for assistance as necessary.

The fieldwork suggests that amendments to the inheritance laws are not sufficient in themselves to change the patterns of rural land ownership. This discovery is hardly surprising. In order for legislative amendments to change patterns of inheritance, the social and religious norms that impact inheritance (like dowry practices) must be considered, the public must be educated as to the purpose of the amendments, a plan must be developed for their enforcement, and an effort made to assure that inheritance practices change in accordance with the amendments. Absent a comprehensive education, implementation, and enforcement programme, the legislative amendments have no traction in rural lives and are easily ignored.

Government land distribution programmes

In comparison to the amount of privately owned land in India, the amount of land available for distribution by the government is minimal. However, the effect of prior land distribution programmes on women's land ownership is worth reviewing both as a cautionary tale and because opportunities may still exist in some states to amend title for land already distributed.

The majority of land distributed by states has been government wasteland and ceiling surplus land. According to government estimates, as of 2000, states distributed more than five million acres of ceiling

Notes

surplus land and over 14 million acres of wasteland to selected beneficiaries. Men received title to the vast majority of the land distributed because they were deemed to be the heads of households or the cultivator of the land.

Belated government efforts to address the gender imbalance in land ownership through policies dictating how title should be granted in land distribution programmes have suffered from the same lack of enforcement as revisions to discriminatory inheritance laws. For example, West Bengal issued a circular in 1992 requiring government land to be issued jointly in the name of husbands and wives, or to women individually, "to the extent possible." West Bengal issued the circular 14 years after the land distribution programme began and while the state did issue a second circular restating the joint title requirement, it did not require retroactive application of the policy. As a result, joint titling was not a requirement for the majority of land distributed.

Moreover, local officials have not uniformly implemented the policy even with regard to land distributed after its adoption.. In three rounds of field research, RDI encountered few cases of government-granted land allocated in the joint names of husband and wife or in the independent name of a woman. RDI found several examples of families that had received government-allocated land after the adoption of this policy who stated that the land was granted solely to the male head of household.

West Bengal is not alone in its implementation challenges. As another example, in Assam the government issued a policy in 1989 that all government land would be titled in the name of both spouses, "conferring joint title to the husband and the wife of a family."To date however, the government continues to grant pattas in the name of the husband only. During interviews, officials explained that they had not issued joint pattas because they did not receive a form necessary to convert individual pattas to joint pattas. They also confessed that they did not believe the requirement was mandatory, and joint pattas would be issued

only on request.[Not surprisingly, based on results, few requests were made.

While opportunities to increase the number of women landowners have been lost in West Bengal, Assam, and other states, the situation is not completely irredeemable. There is still surplus land available for distribution in these and other states and to which a joint title requirement can be applied. In addition, in West Bengal, RDI encountered significant numbers of land reform beneficiaries who had already received possession of vested land (sometimes several decades ago) but had not yet received their pattas. (This may also be the case in Assam and other states.) There is still an opportunity, therefore, to issue these documents in accordance with policy pronouncements. Finally, state governments contemplating legislation requiring vested land to be titled jointly in the name of husband and wife, or independently in the name of a woman, should consider requiring retroactive application of such legislation.

The land market and the dowry connection

Approximately 86 percent of India's arable land is privately owned and theoretically the most likely source for women to obtain land. However, entry into the land market requires a variety of assets, including money (or something of value), bargaining power, the confidence and skills required to manage the land, or the ability to enter into relationships that allow third parties to manage the land. Few rural women have the financial, social, and human assets needed to enter the land market. Without intervention, it is unlikely that women will gain significantly in land ownership simply through operation of the land market.

Given these restrictions to women's participation in the land market, it is ironic that the rural land market in India is in large measure driven by the lives of women. The marriages that transition women from their families of origin to their husbands' families provide the impetus for a high percentage of rural land sales. Faced with dowry and wedding costs that may rival the price of an acre of land, families with small holdings are often forced to sell or mortgage their land to support a daughter's

Notes

transition to married life. The financial assets transfer as a result of the marriage, but women are no more able to control those assets in their new roles as wives than they were in their prior incarnation as daughters.

The problem raised by the practice of dowry and high price of weddings can be combated at its source, as was effectively done among pastoralists in Gujarat. See box.

Community Returns to Tradition to Combat High Wedding Costs

In Gujarat, the high cost of marriage created an economic strain on Maldhari communities. Local leaders noted that the communities had traditionally held group weddings; the practice of having costly individual weddings had only become commonplace in the last 30 years. The leaders agreed to revive the practice of group weddings, and after numerous meetings and a door to door campaign, 12 villages agreed to participate. Village women set the standards for gifts and other costs, and the resulting group wedding was less than the average cost of a single individual wedding.

Source: MARAG publication, *March of the Marginalized* (2003).

To the extent that rural communities are unable to alter the practice of costly weddings and dowry, the problem could be confronted at a legislative level. The concept of co-ownership of marital property (known in many western countries as common property) is a means of addressing the unequal ownership of assets within marriage. Under most co-ownership systems, the husband and wife own an undivided one-half interest in the property acquired during marriage, unless the property is a spouse's separate property obtained prior to the marriage or received by one spouse as a result of gift or inheritance during the marriage. A co-ownership system could give the spouses a joint interest in any dowry received and prevent a husband from disinheriting a wife since he can only control his one-half share of marital property.

At the same time that the inequities are addressed at the legislative source, programmes can also take advantage of the small plots of land

entering the market as a result of marriages by redirecting the land to benefit women who do not have the economic and social independence to enter the land market themselves. For example, the government or an NGO could make grants or subsidized loans to landless women to allow them to purchase land that comes on the market. An NGO could also purchase land and offer it on lease to a women's group or cooperative as a means of providing women with security and the assets attendant to land rights while also providing a steppingstone to ownership. While these types of projects do not strike at the source of the problem created by escalating dowry costs or the unequal ownership of property within a marriage, they do make use of the situation to the benefit of women.

Toward an equitable future: opportunities for donors and NGOs

Numerous opportunities exist for advancing an objective of gender equity in land rights. The categories of interventions build on each other: research results provide a foundations for policy consensus-building and advocacy, which in turn can identify appropriate players and projects for development and implementation of NGO activities.

Research

Legal issues

Questions regarding the impact of various methods of increasing women's access to land remain at the level of highly academic discussions without much supporting data, particularly from India. One of the most visible debates involves whether women should seek individual or joint title to land. Proponents of individual title consider it the most useful to women: individual title provides women the flexibility to make decisions about the land, and women with individual title can explore alternative arrangements for the cultivation and management of the land. Individual title advocates also point to the limitations of joint title. There is no evidence that women with joint title have any more control over the land than those with no title. What benefits does a woman with joint title receive? How does a woman exercise her right to a half interest in land in the event of divorce? How is the ownership transferred at death?

Notes

On the other side of the debate, those arguing for joint title note that it provides women with the resources to be able to invest in the land, it may preserve plots at a sustainable size, and it protects women from seizure of land by male relatives. These champions of joint title recognize its limitations but consider joint title for women an achievable objective: joint title is acceptable to more of society because it does not appear to break up the family unit through individual property rights. Joint title may have limited value, but it is a step toward reducing gender inequality in land ownership, and a small step is better than no step. In turn, advocates of individual title of course worry that small, symbolic steps will preclude larger, meaningful steps. And so the debate continues, almost entirely on a theoretical level. Neither side has the benefit of useful amounts of concrete, village-level data.

There is a similar lack of practical information about the necessary components to amend inheritance laws to place women on an equal footing with men. For example, how often is a women able to exercise her right to a share of the undivided land of a family? How often do women exercise a right to partition? What are the social and other factors that prevent women from exercising their legal rights and how can they be overcome? What is the impact on women when they assert their rights? What are the best methods for reducing the possibility of land being tied up in probate proceedings?

Until concrete information on these issues can be laid out and analyzed, decisions regarding women's rights to land - whether at policy or project level - will be built on little more than supposition and speculation. Field research in selected communities in one or more states will go a long way toward providing the missing foundation. For example, in Andhra Pradesh, legislation currently prohibits a husband and wife from owning land jointly, and the state is, therefore, a good place to obtain information about the effects of individual title and opinions about the possible value (or lack of value) of joint title. In separate interviews, men and women could be queried about their views of the benefits and responsibilities of land ownership, how social and religious norms impact control of land,

how men and women have leveraged individual title, and whether joint title is desired. Local credit institutions can supply information about the extent to which land is used as collateral for loans and the impact of particular titling practices on the terms of the loans.

In states where joint title is permitted, in addition to interviews with men and women in villages and credit institutions, local lawyers familiar with rural property matters could be interviewed about the effect of joint versus individual title on probate proceedings, the procedures for and frequency of partition actions, and community practices regarding wills and other less formal devices of estate planning. Information received from these interviews and from meetings with local NGOs and governing bodies can provide the type of concrete information necessary to inform recommendations for legislative change and design appropriate education programmes.

Analytical inventory and review of projects

In addition to research into these types of legal issues, progress toward gender equity in land rights will be aided by a compilation of a comprehensive list and description of land-based, gender-focused, rural poverty-alleviation projects designed and implemented by governments, NGOs, or other actors in India. Such a list will allow future projects to benefit from the experiences of others, provide a resource bank for projects to draw on, and perhaps reveal patterns of successes and failures that can inform future efforts.

Policy and consensus-building advocacy

Workshops and policy forums can serve as a means to gather input on issues and mobilize interested parties to act on matters that have been neglected or have not yet been fully realized. Workshops that include policy makers, legal experts, and NGOs representing women's interests could be a useful process to inform the recommendations outlined in this section. Specifically, workshops could assist in the process of drafting and supporting proposals for amendments to legislation relating to inheritance rights and, potentially, co-ownership of marital property.

Notes

In addition to providing support for the amendment of laws and policies, state-level workshops can also provide a forum for floating and discussing administrative and procedural issues. For example, a workshop that included government officials and local block or district level leaders could address the issuance of outstanding pattas in West Bengal in accordance with the policy directive regarding joint title. Discussion of the policy's legal authority and steps needed for compliance could assist in removing any remaining roadblocks to implementation and mobilizing the support of local officials and NGOs.

NGO activities

Legislative changes do not themselves create real rights; technical land ownership does not translate into control of the land nor of any assets that flow from such ownership. In order to address the gender inequities in access to and control of land effectively, the problem must be confronted at the level of institutional control of land.

The dominant institution of land ownership and control in rural India is the household. In order to challenge the principles that inform that institution (e.g. male dominance, skill limitations of women, traditional gender roles), alternative institutions that own and cultivate land must be created. Any number of non-household-based institutions of land ownership and cultivation are possible: individual ownership with joint investment, individual ownership with joint cultivation, group ownership and group cultivation schemes, and group leasing and cultivation management programmes. Through these types of arrangements, women's actual control over land can be increased and the assets attendant to that control realized - all without direct challenge to existing power bases.

An example from Bihar. In the Muzaffarpur district, male migration to jobs in other areas is high and women historically worked the agricultural fields as labourers. The wages were low and the women were vulnerable to exploitation by employers and moneylenders. An NGO,

Adithi Mahila Vigayan Kendra, evaluated the situation and negotiated with landowners on behalf of a group of women to grant the women land on batai, a sharecropper tenancy arrangement. The NGO stood as guarantor for the women, and the landowners agreed. The NGO provided the women with training and support, agricultural production increased, and all parties consider the project a success.

This type of group arrangement allows the women to cultivate land under more economically favorable conditions than they could negotiate individually. With very little expenditure of time and resources by the NGO, the arrangement provides high returns to the women in terms of human, financial, and social assets. The women are in a position to receive the benefit of increased production from the land and protection from abuse by landowners and moneylenders. The land project supplies a structure for sharing of knowledge and resources, and a means through which the women can increase their skills, experience, and confidence.

Behaviors and attitudes change as a result of personal experience. Reducing gender inequality in land rights is, in part, therefore, a numbers game. Through interventions such as Adithi Mahila Vigayan Kendra's efforts in Bihar, individuals, their households, and ultimately whole communities experience enhanced benefits flowing from the land as the result of an alternative institutional design for land management. Similar programmes can be created and supported throughout India, and programme by programme, men and women will have opportunities to experience and evaluate alternative institutions and methods for accessing, controlling, and managing land.

2.3 HOW MARX USES THE CONCEPT

Here are four famous quotations showing Marx's use of the concept of relations of production:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their

Notes

material forces of production. The totality of these **relations of production** constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing **relations of production** or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the **property relations** within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. - 1859
Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy

Economic categories are only the theoretical expressions, the abstractions of the social relations of production, M. Proudhon, holding this upside down like a true philosopher, sees in actual relations nothing but the incarnation of the principles, of these categories, which were slumbering – so M. Proudhon the philosopher tells us – in the bosom of the “impersonal reason of humanity.” M. Proudhon the economist understands very well that men make cloth, linen, or silk materials in definite **relations of production**. But what he has not understood is that these definite social relations are just as much produced by men as linen, flax, etc. Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist. The same men who establish their social relations in conformity with the material productivity, produce also principles, ideas, and categories, in conformity with their social relations. Thus the ideas, these categories, are as little eternal as the relations they

express. They are historical and transitory products. (...) The **production relations** of every society form a whole. - The Poverty of Philosophy.

We have seen that the capitalist process of production is a historically determined form of the social process of production in general. The latter is as much a production process of material conditions of human life as a process taking place under specific historical and economic **production relations**, producing and reproducing these production relations themselves, and thereby also the bearers of this process, their material conditions of existence and their mutual relations, i.e., their particular socio-economic form. For the aggregate of these relations, in which the agents of this production stand with respect to Nature and to one another, and in which they produce, is precisely society, considered from the standpoint of its economic structure. Like all its predecessors, the capitalist process of production proceeds under definite material conditions, which are, however, simultaneously the bearers of **definite social relations** entered into by individuals in the process of reproducing their life. Those conditions, like these relations, are on the one hand prerequisites, on the other hand results and creations of the capitalist process of production; they are produced and reproduced by it. - Das Kapital, Vol. III, Ch. 48

...Wakefield discovered that in the Colonies, property in money, means of subsistence, machines, and other means of production, does not as yet stamp a man as a capitalist if there be wanting the correlative — the wage-worker, the other man who is compelled to sell himself of his own free-will. He discovered that **capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons**, established by the instrumentality of things. Mr. Peel, he moans, took with him from England to Swan River, West Australia, means of subsistence and of production to the amount of £50,000. Mr. Peel had the foresight to bring with him, besides, 3,000 persons of the working-class, men, women, and children. Once arrived at his destination, “Mr. Peel was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river.” Unhappy Mr. Peel, who provided for

Notes

everything except the export of English modes of production to Swan River!

— Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, Vol. I, Ch. 33, courtesy of www.marxists.org
(In other words, the English relations of production did not exist in Australia; there was no system of property rights and legal obligations and no economic necessity compelling workers to work for their boss. The servants therefore could leave Mr. Peel in order to find work or occupy free land to make a better living.)

A social relation can be defined, in the first instance, as

- a relation between individuals insofar as they belong to a group,
or
- a relation between groups, or
- a relation between an individual and a group

The group could be an ethnic or kinship group, a social institution or organisation, a social class, a nation or gender etc.

A social relation is therefore not simply identical with an interpersonal relation or an individual relation, although all these types of relations presuppose each other. A social relation refers to a common social characteristic of a group of people.

Society for Marx is the sum total of social relations connecting its members.

Social relations of production in Marx's sense refer to

- (often legally encoded) ownership & control relations pertaining to society's productive assets,
- the way people are formally and informally associated within the economic sphere of production, including as social classes,
- co-operative work relations (including household labor),
- socio-economic dependencies between people arising from the way they produce and reproduce their existence,
- relationships between different worksites or production sites
- the quantitative proportions of different aspects of the sphere of production, considered from the point of view of society as a whole.

The totality of social relations of production constitute the social structure of the economy, which according to Marx determine how incomes, products and assets will be distributed.

2.4 SOCIAL/TECHNICAL DISTINCTION AND REIFICATION

Combined with the productive forces, the relations of production constitute a historically specific mode of production. Karl Marx contrasts the social relations of production with the technical relations of production; in the former case, it is people (subjects) who are related, in the latter case, the relation is between people and objects in the physical world they inhabit (those objects are, in the context of production, what Marx calls the "means of labor" or means of production).

However, Marx argues that with the rise of market economy, this distinction is increasingly obscured and distorted. In particular, a cash economy makes it possible to define, symbolise and manipulate relationships between things that people make in abstraction from the social & technical relations involved. Marx says this leads to the reification (thingification or *Verdinglichung*) of economic relations, of which commodity fetishism is a prime example.

The community of men, or the manifestation of the nature of men, their mutual complementing the result of which is species-life, truly human life - this community is conceived by political economy in the form of exchange and trade. Society, says Destutt de Tracy, is a series of mutual exchanges. It is precisely this process of mutual integration. Society, says Adam Smith, is a commercial society. Each of its members is a merchant. It is seen that political economy defines the estranged form of social intercourse as the essential and original form corresponding to man's nature.

— Karl Marx, Notes on James Mill

Notes

The marketplace seems to be a place where all people have free and equal access and freely negotiate and bargain over deals and prices on the basis of civil equality. People will buy and sell goods without really knowing where they originated or who made them. They know that objectively they depend on producers and consumers somewhere else, that this social dependency exists, but they do not know who specifically those people are or what their activities are. Market forces seem to regulate everything, but what is really behind those market forces has become obscured, because the social relationship between people or their relation with nature is expressed as a commercial relationship between things (money, commodities, capital) (see also value-form).

Some social relations of production therefore exist in an objective, mind-independent way, not simply because they are a natural necessity for human groups, but because of the mediation of social and technical relations by commerce. In addition to creating new social and technical relations, commerce introduces a proliferation of relationships between tradeable 'things'. Not only do relationships between 'things' (commodities, prices etc.) begin to indicate and express social and technical relations, the commercial relations also begin to govern and regulate the pattern of human contact and technique.

The fact therefore that particular social relations of production acquire an objective, mind-independent existence may not be due to any natural necessity asserting itself but only to a purely social necessity: commodity exchange objectifies social relations to the point where they escape from conscious human control, and exist such that they can be recognised only by abstract thought.

2.5 RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION AND RELATIONS OF DISTRIBUTION

One of the theoretical problems in Marxian economics is to distinguish exactly between relations of production and relations of distribution, determining the significance of each in the allocation of resources. According to the crudest and most vulgar interpretations of Das

Kapital, exploitation occurs only at the point of production. Marx himself obviously did not assert this at all, he only postulated the command over the surplus labour of others as the basis of the existence of capital and its economic power.

Marx discusses the theoretical problem in two main places: the introduction to the Grundrisse manuscript and in chapter 51 of Das Kapital. In the Grundrisse, where he defines the total economy to include production, circulation, distribution and consumption (similar to James Mill), he raises the following question:

In society... the producer's relation to the product, once the latter is finished, is an external one, and its return to the subject depends on his relations to other individuals. He does not come into possession of it directly. Nor is its immediate appropriation his purpose when he produces in society. Distribution steps between the producers and the products, hence between production and consumption, to determine in accordance with social laws what the producer's share will be in the world of products. Now, does distribution stand at the side of and outside production as an autonomous sphere?

— Karl Marx, Grundrisse

He answers his own question negatively:

The structure [German: Gliederung] of distribution is completely determined by the structure of production. Distribution is itself a product of production, not only in its object, in that only the results of production can be distributed, but also in its form, in that the specific kind of participation in production determines the specific forms of distribution, i.e. the pattern of participation in distribution.

— Karl Marx, Grundrisse

Disagreeing with David Ricardo, who regarded distribution as the proper object of study for economics, Marx argues that the mode of production largely determines the mode of distribution: the source of income &

Notes

products in production, and their distribution among the population must be analysed within one framework:

In the shallowest conception, distribution appears as the distribution of products, and hence as further removed from and quasi-independent of production. But before distribution can be the distribution of products, it is: (1) the distribution of the instruments of production, and (2), which is a further specification of the same relation, the distribution of the members of the society among the different kinds of production. [...] To examine production while disregarding this internal distribution within it is obviously an empty abstraction; while conversely, the distribution of products follows by itself from this distribution which forms an original moment of production.

— Karl Marx, Grundrisse

In the last chapters of *Das Kapital* Vol 3, he develops the argument, defining relations of distribution as the "forms" which "express the relationships in which the total value newly produced is distributed among the owners of the various agents of production" (as income and products).

His critique of political economy in this regard was (1) that relations of production or distribution are posited as "natural and eternal" rather than as historically specific relations, (2) that forms of distribution of income and products are crucially determined by property relations pertaining to productive assets; (3) that by constantly reproducing the relations of production, the mode of production of capital also reproduces the relations of distribution corresponding to it.

Late in his life, Marx touches on the issue again:

Any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves. The latter distribution, however, is a feature of the mode of production itself. The capitalist mode of production, for example, rests on the fact that the material conditions of production are in the hands of nonworkers in the form of property in capital and land, while the masses

are only owners of the personal condition of production, of labor power. If the elements of production are so distributed, then the present-day distribution of the means of consumption results automatically. If the material conditions of production are the co-operative property of the workers themselves, then there likewise results a distribution of the means of consumption different from the present one. Vulgar socialism (and from it in turn a section of the democrats) has taken over from the bourgeois economists the consideration and treatment of distribution as independent of the mode of production and hence the presentation of socialism as turning principally on distribution. After the real relation has long been made clear, why retrogress again?

2.6 CRITICISM OF MARX'S CONCEPT

It is frequently objected by Weberian sociologists (those in the tradition of Max Weber) that Marx paid insufficient attention to the intersubjective dimension of social relations, i.e. the meanings consciously attached by people to their social interactions.

However, Marx's argument is that these subjective or intersubjective meanings permit of infinite variations, and therefore cannot be the foundation for a genuine science of society. Individual meanings depend on shared meanings, and these shared meanings arise out of objective circumstances which exist independently of individuals. So one must begin with understanding those objective interdependencies which by necessity shape and socialise human beings, i.e. those social relations which people as social beings must enter into, regardless of what they may think or wish.

In this context, the young Vladimir Lenin commented:

Hitherto, sociologists had found it difficult to distinguish the important and the unimportant in the complex network of social phenomena (that is the root of subjectivism in sociology) and had been unable to discover any objective criterion for such a demarcation. Materialism provided an absolutely objective criterion by singling out "production relations" as

Notes

the structure of society, and by making it possible to apply to these relations that general scientific criterion of recurrence whose applicability to sociology the subjectivists denied. So long as they confined themselves to ideological social relations (i.e., such as, before taking shape, pass through mans consciousness) - we are, of course, referring all the time to the consciousness of social relations and no others - they could not observe recurrence and regularity in the social phenomena of the various countries, and their science was at best only a description of these phenomena, a collection of raw material. The analysis of material social relations (i.e., of those that take shape without passing through mans consciousness: when exchanging products men enter into production relations without even realising that there is a social relation of production here)—the analysis of material social relations at once made it possible to observe recurrence and regularity and to generalise the systems of the various countries in the single fundamental concept: social formation. It was this generalisation alone that made it possible to proceed from the description of social phenomena (and their evaluation from the standpoint of an ideal) to their strictly scientific analysis, which isolates, let us say by way of example, that which distinguishes one capitalist country from another and investigates that which is common to all of them... Then, however, Marx, who had expressed this hypothesis in the forties, set out to study the factual (nota bene) material. He took one of the social-economic formations—the system of commodity production—and on the basis of a vast mass of data (which he studied for not less than twenty five years) gave a most detailed analysis of the laws governing the functioning of this formation and its development."

In fact, Marx devotes a great amount of attention in *Das Kapital* to explaining why economic relations appear in human consciousness in the way that they do, and why they might appear in a different way than they really are.

Another sort of criticism, from economists, consists of the observation that processes of distribution (of products and income) can to a

considerable extent develop independently or autonomously from what happens in production, with the aid of a developed credit system.

In fact, gross distortions between value added in production, and the distribution of products and incomes, might occur—for example, as a result of underdevelopment, imperialism, state intervention, unequal exchange, fictitious capital, credit bubbles, or capital gains from rising property values.

That is, a society or region might get much more or much less income than the value of what it produces. In that case, there are intermediary agencies between production and consumption influencing the allocation of resources.

Probably Marx would have acknowledged that, but he would presumably have argued that ultimately, the dissynchrony or distortion between production and distribution would cause a crisis and then a readjustment of distribution to the real structure of production relations.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What do you know about Relations of Production?

.....
.....
.....

2. How Marx uses the concept?

.....
.....
.....

3. Discuss about the Social/technical distinction and reification.

.....
.....
.....

2.7 LET US SUM UP

The study is designed to explore the status of rural women in access to and control over land in the current land administration system in two rural Kebeles in East Shewa Zone Ada'a Woreda of Oromia region on smallholder farmers' landholding registration. The Oromia National Regional State Rural Land Administration and Use Proclamation and its implementation procedure are examined from a gender perspective in terms of ensuring rural women's land holding rights and control they have over land. Historical overview on the land question in Ethiopia revealed that tenure systems evolved through historical periods. Land remained under men's control throughout history and men's control over land was strengthened by the rural land reform carried out by the Derg. This tenure reform applied rural land distribution using households as unit for rural land allocation and women were disadvantaged as most rural households were headed by men. The Oromia rural land proclamation is not discriminatory on basis of sex. However, policy gaps are evident in addressing women specific issues such as issues of FHHs and women under polygamous marriages. Gaps also exist between policy and implementation. Customary laws and practices have serious impacts on women's land rights at the level of implementation. The research applied both quantitative and qualitative methods in view of feminist research methodology to properly address issues from a gender perspective. Survey of 318 households was conducted administering questionnaires in the quantitative method. The qualitative method applied was interviews with relevant Woreda office and Kebele LACs, focus group discussions with rural women, case stories and observation. Triangulation method is applied in data collection, data presentation and in analysis of findings. Study findings reveal that women's access rights to land is less equal than legally provided. This study evidences gaps between policy and implementation. Customary laws and traditional practices generally have impacts on land access rights of single/unmarried, divorced, widowed women and on access rights of women in polygamous marriages. Women's control over land is not efficiently addressed by the regional rural land policy. This is a

significant policy drawback as women's equal rights on land could not be achieved without gaining control over land. The land administration system in general and the land registration process in particular has not considered women's participation in community activities and decision-making. Women are not represented in LACs and Sub-Committees in both Kebeles. Study findings indicate absence of autonomous institution as gap in addressing women's issues in the land administration system. This study also revealed loose linkages between the rural land policy and other regional legislations like the regional family law which provides women's equal rights on land in marriage and on its abandonment. This study forwards recommendation to address gender gaps identified to ensure women's equal access to and control over land in the study area. The Oromia rural land proclamation needs revision from a gender perspective to address women's specific issues and the land administration system should consider women's participation in the process, their contribution to the system as well as their equal benefits from policy outcomes.

Relations of production are not, as the English phrase suggests, simply the social relationships formed in the actual process of production. Rather, they are the de facto power relationships that both underlie and are the result of the division of the fruits of a society's total labor. Household head versus dependents, chief versus subjects, master versus slaves, feudal lord versus peasants, and capitalist versus workers – relations of production are basic asymmetries of power grounded in the organization of material life. In capitalism, relations of production rest upon actual control over productive forces in the process of production, but in other modes of production, as anthropologists and historians eventually showed, this is not necessarily the case.

In relation to the last point, consider the contrast between capitalism and precolonial chiefdoms in Africa. Capitalists put the production process into motion; they or their representatives oversee and supervise in order to ensure that a profit is produced at the end of the work cycle. In much chiefdom, chiefs did not control the production process itself. Yet,

Notes

having produced, subjects brought tribute, the fruits of their own labors, to the chief. This contrast illustrates the fact that relations of production, by definition, correspond to the basic structures of power in a society, however that power is constituted – whether by economic, coercive, or religious means (or some mix of these). This makes the reformed notion of modes of production quite different from what is often assumed of Marxism; most particularly, it is not a form of economic reductionism.

Why do productive inequalities occupy a central place in Marx's thought? The answer is that they locate the basic divisions within any society, the lines of potential opposition – of contradiction. Marx saw these as the potential fault lines along which tensions tend to build up and are routinely dissipated by small readjustments, and are sometimes violently resolved by radical realignments. These fault lines are structural; they do not necessarily lead to actual struggle and conflict (indeed, the function of the superstructure is precisely to prevent such occurrences). Nevertheless, contradictions always exist as potentialities; they lie just below the surface.

2.8 KEY WORDS

Production: Production is a process of combining various material inputs and immaterial inputs in order to make something for consumption. It is the act of creating an output, a good or service which has value and contributes to the utility of individuals.

Cost: In production, research, retail, and accounting, a cost is the value of money that has been used up to produce something or deliver a service, and hence is not available for use anymore. In business, the cost may be one of acquisition, in which case the amount of money expended to acquire it is counted as cost.

2.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Discuss about the Relations of production and relations of distribution
2. Criticize of Marx's concept.

2.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Vladimir Lenin, What the “Friends of the People” Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats.
- Göran Therborn, 'Science, Class and Society.
- Perry Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism.
- Herbert Gintis, Samuel Bowles, Robert T. Boyd and Ernst Fehr, Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: The Foundations of Cooperation in Economic Life.
- John McMurtry, The Structure of Marx's World-View

2.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 2.2
2. See Section 2.3
3. See Section 2.4

UNIT 3: RESOURCE BASE AND PATTERN OF RESOURCE USE IN AGRARIAN PRODUCTION

STRUCTURE

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Production
- 3.3 Forces of Production
- 3.4 Relations of Production
- 3.5 Mode of Production
- 3.6 Four Modes of Production
 - 3.6.1 Asiatic Mode of production
 - 3.6.2 Ancient Mode of Production
 - 3.6.3 Feudal Mode of Production
 - 3.6.4 Capitalist Mode of Production
- 3.7 Resource base
- 3.8 Pattern of resource use in agrarian production
- 3.9 Let us sum up
- 3.10 Key Words
- 3.11 Questions for Review
- 3.12 Suggested readings and references
- 3.13 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with forces, relations and modes of production. After studying it you should be able to:

- To explain each of the three concepts: force, relation and mode
- To distinguish the concepts from one another
- To locate the concepts in the overall Marxian view of society

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Here in Unit 3, we focus on three major concepts which constitute the core of that theory. These concepts, namely, forces, relations and modes of production have been introduced to you in Unit 6. The same concepts are now explained in greater detail so that you can appreciate how Marx used these ideas. The unit addresses itself to the concepts with which Marx constructed the theory of historical materialism. The core concepts and related concepts which this unit attempts to explain are more or less like tools with which Marx explained the laws of motion of capitalist society in particular and that of society in general. Using these concepts, Marx developed a theory aimed at understanding contemporary society. He also formulated a programme of action to change society.

In order to expose you to the Marxian concepts in a systematic manner, this unit is broadly divided into four sections in the following order: Firstly, section 3.2 provides a general understanding of the concept of production. Secondly, you learn in section 3.3 about the concept of forces of production. This section attempts to provide the meaning and significance of the concept. Thirdly, you will learn in section 3.4 about the concept of relations of production. The explanation emphasises the fact that these are social relations and must not be confused with the material, technical aspects of production. Fourthly, you will learn in section 3.5 about the concept of mode of production. In the last section that is section 3.6 we will discuss the four modes of production. The unit ends with separate sections on summary of the contents of the unit, key words, further reading and specimen answers to check your progress exercises.

Resource use efficiency in agriculture is defined to include the concepts of technical efficiency, allocative efficiency and environmental efficiency. Public investment, subsidies and credit for agriculture are used in an efficient manner. There are large scale inter regional as well as inter farm variations in factor productivity due to varying influence of different factors in different regions. A number of management factors

Notes

such as timeliness and method of sowing, transplanting, irrigation and application of right doses of inputs and input mix play an important role in influencing inter-farm variation in crop productivity. Growing marginalization and fragmentation of land holdings coupled with rising incidence of informal tenancies and poor rural infrastructure such as road, electricity, markets and education affect factor productivity. The availability of good quality irrigation water coupled with flexibility of irrigation and drainage system and appropriate methods of application as well as pricing of irrigation water is crucial for sustainable use of land and water resources.

Human expansion throughout the world caused that agriculture is a dominant form of land management globally. Human influence on the land is accelerating because of rapid population growth and increasing food requirements. To stress the interactions between society and the environment, the driving forces (D), pressures (P), states (S), impacts (I), and response (R) (DPSIR) framework approach was used for analyzing and assessing the influence of agriculture on land use, environment, and ecosystem services. The DPSIR model was used to identify a series of core indicators and to establish the nature of interactions between different driving forces, pressures, states, impacts, and responses. We assessed selected indicators at global, national, and local levels. Driving force indicators describe growing population trend and linking land-use patterns. The driving forces exert pressure on the environment assessed by indicators describing development in fertilizer and pesticides consumption, by number of livestock, and by intensification joined growing release of ammonia and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture, and water abstraction. The pressure reflects in the state of environment, mainly expressed by soil and water quality indicators. Negative changes in the state then have negative impacts on landscape, e.g., traditional landscape disappearance, biodiversity, climate, and ecosystem services. As a response, technological, economic, policy, or legislation measures are adopted.

3.2 PRODUCTION

People need food, clothing, shelter and other necessities of life in order to survive. They cannot get all these things ready-made from nature. To survive, they produce material goods from objects found in nature. Material production has always been and still is the basis of human existence. For Karl Marx, the history of human societies is the story of how people relate to one another in their efforts to make a living. He said, “The first historical act is...the production of material life. This is indeed a historical act, a fundamental condition of all history” (see Bottomore 1964: 60). According to Marx, economic production or production of material life is the starting point from which society as an inter-related whole is structured. He speaks of a reciprocity between economic factors and other aspects of historical development of mankind. The factor of economic production is all the same a key concept in explaining the changes that occur in society. He considers that forces of production along with relations of production form the basis of economic and social history of every society. In his Introduction to the Grundrisse (1857-58), Marx says that although the three processes of production, distribution and consumption are not one and the same, they represent a totality. It is so because after completion, each of the three processes creates the other process. In this way, one mediates the other. For example, production, once complete, becomes an object of consumption. Similarly, distribution and production are closely related processes. In this way, these economic categories carry definite relations between them. For Marx, a certain type of production creates a certain type of distribution, exchange and consumption. On the basis of all these economic categories are formed certain types of relations of production. Marx argues that production itself is based on other economic categories and clear-cut relation between production and other economic processes. What is evident is that material production is basic to human societies. For Marx, production is at once both a general and a historical category. In Capital (1861-1879) Marx has made use of the term ‘production’ as a general category to highlight specific forms of production in capitalist societies. On the other hand, speaking about production with definite social and historical characteristics, Marx discusses the concept of mode of production. About this you will read in the last section of this unit.

Notes

Here, we need to remember that the role of production in human history became a guiding thread in Marx's writings. Let us follow this thread in order to understand his thought. We begin with a consideration of forces of production.

Land cover and land-use patterns on Earth reflect the interaction of human activities and the natural environment. Human population growth together with competitive land use causes land scarcity, conversion of wild lands to agriculture and other uses. As we can see, the anthropogenic factor has an important impact on land use and land cover changes. Given this human influence, especially during the past 100 years, the recent period has been called the Anthropocene Age. Human influence on the land and other natural resources is accelerating because of rapid population growth and increasing food requirements. The increasing agricultural intensity generates pressure not only on land resources but also across the whole environment. These factors make agriculture a top-priority sector for both economic and environmental policy.

3.3 FORCES OF PRODUCTION

The forces of production express the degree to which human beings control nature. The more advanced the productive forces are, greater is their control over the nature and vice versa. You can say the forces of production are the ways in which material goods are produced. They include the technological know-how, the types of equipment in use and goods being produced for example, tools, machinery, labour and the levels of technology are all considered to be the forces of production. The forces of production, according to Marx, include means of production and labour power (see Box 7.1). The development of machinery, changes in the labour process, the opening up of new sources of energy and the education of the workers are included in the forces of production. In this sense science and the related skills can be seen as part of the productive forces. Some Marxists have even included geographical or ecological space as a productive force. Involuntary changes in technology, demography, ecology in 'material life' affect the mode of

production itself and perceptibly alter the balance of productive relations. But involuntary changes do not spontaneously restructure or reorganise a mode of production. Any restructuring of relations of power, forms of domination and of social organisation has been mostly the outcome of struggles. The condition and character of the struggle are determined by changes in material life. In every social order there is a continuous change in the material forces of production. Sometimes, as in tribal societies, this change is produced by some natural and ecological phenomena, such as the drying up of rivers, deforestation in or exhaustion of the soil etc. Usually, however, this change is produced by a development in the instruments of production. Human beings have always attempted to better their lives and overcome scarcity. The development of forces of production reflects the constant struggle of human beings to master nature through their labour. The development of the forces of production is primary because it results from a factor, which is, in a sense, exogenous. The motive force lies outside the forces and relations of production and acts first upon the former. The motive force is the rational and ever-present impulse of human beings to try to better their situation and overcome scarcity by developing the productive forces. Human beings are, above all, like animals producing society by acting upon nature through their labour. Productive forces transform nature into use values and exchange values. The productive forces compel the creation and destruction of successive systems of production relations between human beings. Productive forces have an intrinsic tendency to develop, as human beings' knowledge and mastery over nature increase. As these forces develop, successive social relations of production develop and consequently give way. At a particular point of development the productive forces and the production relations enter into conflict: the latter being unstable to contain the former. Society then enters a period of revolution. People become conscious of this by recognising the existence of class struggle, between those whose activity fits them for the new economic structure, and those who are guardians of the old. Different socio-economic organisations of production, which have characterised human history, arise or fall as they enable or impede the expansion of society's productive capacity. The growth of the

Notes

productive forces thus explains the general course of human history. The productive forces, however, include, as we have already noted, not just the means of production (tools, machines, factories and so on), but labour power, the skills, knowledge, experience, and other human faculties used in work. The productive forces represent the powers society has at its command in material production.

Box 3.1: Labour Power According to Marx, labour power is the capacity to do such useful work which increases the value of products. Workers sell their labour power i.e. their capacity to do work which adds value to commodities. They sell their labour power to capitalists for a wage paid in cash. We should distinguish labour power from labour. Labour is the actual exercise of one's power to add value to commodities. The category of labour power is used by Marx to explain the source of surplus value. Let us say that the capitalists invest money to buy goods and later sell them for more money than they invested. This is possible only if some value is added to those goods. Labour power, according to Marx, is precisely that capacity which adds value to a commodity. In buying and using labour power the capitalist is able to extract labour and labour is the source of value. The source of surplus value in capitalist system of production is located in the process whereby the value paid by capitalists for labour power is smaller than the value which labour power adds to a commodity

3.4 RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

The forces of production are not the only factors in material production. People are able to produce jointly by organising in a society. In this sense, labour is and always has been social in character. According to Marx, in order to produce, people enter into definite relations with one another. Only within these social relations does production take place. You can easily say that the relations of production are the social relations found among the people involved in the process of production. These social relations are determined by the level and character of the development of productive forces. 'Forces' and 'relations' of production are strongly interrelated. The development of one leads to a growing

incompatibility or contradiction with the other. In fact, the contradictions between the two aspects of production ‘act as the motor of history’ (Bottomore 1983: 178). The chain of causation in historical development runs like this. The forces of production determine the superstructure. There is, however, quite a good deal of controversy regarding the primacy of the forces of production over the relations of production. As we said earlier we shall not go into the detail of these interpretations of Marxism. In Marx’s own writings, you may like to remember, there is ambiguity on this matter. In places, he gives primacy to the relations of production while in other places he describes forces of production as the prime mover of social change. The relations of production, which are said to correspond to society’s productive level, link the productive forces and human beings in the process of production. These relations are of two broad types. The first refers to those technical relations that are necessary for the actual production process of products. The second refers to the relations of economic control, which are legally manifested as property ownership. They govern access to the forces of production and products. Relations of production are the social relations of production. As such they include both the relations between the direct producers or workers and their employers or those who control their labour, and the relations between the direct producers themselves. Relation of production is not merely the ownership of means of production. The employer’s relation to the worker is one of domination and the worker’s relation with co-workers is one of cooperation. The relations of production are relations between people and people whereas means of production are relations between people and things. The relations of production can influence the momentum and direction of the development of the productive forces. Relations of production are reflection in the economic ownership of productive forces. For example, under capitalism the most fundamental of these relations is the bourgeoisie’s ownership of means of production while the proletariat owns only its labour power. The relationships of production can also dominate and generate changes in the forces. For example capitalist relations of production often do revolutionise the instruments of production and the labour process.

Notes

Activity 1 Describe briefly in about 250 words the process of industrialisation in India in terms of forces and relations of production. Discuss this topic with your counsellor and fellow students at your study centre before completing this activity.

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production. The contradiction between forces and relations of production accounts for history existing as a succession of modes of production. The contradiction leads to the necessary decline of one mode and its replacement by another. Forces and relations of production, in any mode of production underline not just the economic progress, but a movement of the whole of society from one stage to another. Let us in the next section discuss Marx's concept of mode of production.

3.5 MODE OF PRODUCTION

In Marx's writing, stages of social history are differentiated not by what human beings produce but by how, or by what means, they produce the material goods for subsistence. In this way, we can say that historical periods are founded and differentiated on the basis of the modes of material production. In other words, at the basis of history are successive modes of material production. You can also say that the forces and relations of production are two aspects of mode of production. The productive forces of society reflect the degree to which human beings control nature. The more advanced the productive forces, the greater is their control over nature. In order to produce, people enter into definite relations with one another. This is the relations of production aspect of how material goods are produced. Production takes place within these social relations. You can say that any historical mode of production is an integral unity between the forces of production and the relations of production. You can also say that the forces of production shape the relations of production and the two together define the mode of production. That is the general economic frame or particular manner in which people produce and distribute the means to sustain life. In this sense, the successive modes of production are the basic element of a systematic description of history. Keeping aside the debate among the

Marxist scholars concerning the definition of ‘mode of production’, we can say that crucial element in defining mode of production is ‘the way in which the surplus is produced and its use controlled’ (Bottomore 1983: 337). Surplus means the amount that remains when use or need is satisfied. According to Marx, under capitalist mode of production, the surplus takes the form of profit. Surplus is produced by exploiting the working class and is sold for more than the wages given to the workers. Because production of surplus enables societies to grow and change, this factor is taken to be most important in defining mode of production. Each mode of production has its specific relations of production. These are not developed by chance or by accident. They are deliberately ordered because they help the property owning class extract the surplus from the working people. Take an example. The relations of production under feudalism, in which the serf is dominated in all respects by the feudal lord, are necessary to enable the feudal lord to appropriate the surplus from the serf. If such a relationship is continued under capitalism it will fail. Therefore a new set of production relations develops under capitalism that enables the capitalist appropriate surplus value from the workers. It should also be noted that neither the forces of production nor the relations of production are fixed and static. Even within a given mode of production the forces of production may change. In any society, we may find that over the years greater production follows improvements in technology. The capitalist nations are very different from what they were two to three hundred years ago, when capitalism was born. This change in the productive forces has resulted in changes in the relations of production. The workers in the twenty first century, may not be as exploited as the factory workers in the nineteenth century. Marxists would, however, argue that exploitation still remains, because the modern workers, with modern technology, produce more surplus value than their predecessors, and they do not proportionately earn that much more.

3.6 FOUR MODES OF PRODUCTION

More than one mode of production may exist within any particular society at a given point in time. But in all forms of society there is one determinate kind of production which assigns rank and influence to all

the others. Here we shall discuss each of the four modes of production, identified by Marx during his studies of human societies.

3.6.1 Asiatic Mode of production

The concept of Asiatic mode of production refers to a specific original mode of production. This is distinct from the ancient slave mode of production or the feudal mode of production. The Asiatic mode of production is characteristic of primitive communities in which ownership of land is communal. These communities are still partly organised on the basis of kinship relations. State power, which expresses the real of imaginary unity of these communities, controls the use of essential economic resources, and directly appropriates part of the labour and production of the community. This mode of production constitutes one of the possible forms of transition from classless to class societies; it is also perhaps the most ancient form of this transition. It contains the contradiction of this transition, i.e. the combination of communal relations of production with emerging forms of the exploiting classes and of the State. Marx did not leave behind any systematic presentation of the history of India. He set down his observations on certain current Indian questions which attracted public attention, or drew materials from India's past and present conditions to illustrate parts of his more general arguments. The concept of Asiatic mode of production is therefore inadequate for an understanding of Indian history and society

Box 3.2: Marx and Indian Society Marx made no full-scale study of Indian society. The ideology of Hinduism was to him an ideology of an outdated social milieu. He was most skeptical of a Hindu golden age of the bygone era. British rule in India was seen by Marx as a graft on to Asiatic despotism.

3.6.2 Ancient Mode of Production

Ancient Mode of Production refers to the forms which precede capitalist production. In some of these terms slavery is seen as the foundation of the productive system. The relation of masters to slaves is considered as

the very essence of slavery. In this system of production the master has the right of ownership over the slave and appropriates the products of the slave's labour. The slave is not allowed to reproduce. If we restrict ourselves to agricultural slavery (see box 7.3), exploitation operates according to the following modalities: the slaves work the master's land and receive their subsistence in return. The master's profit is constituted by the difference between what the slaves produce and what they consume. But what is usually forgotten is that beyond this, the slaves are deprived of their own means of reproduction. The reproduction of slavery depends on the capacity of the society to acquire new slaves, that is, on an apparatus which is not directly linked to the capacities of demographic reproduction of the enslaving population. The rate of accumulation depends on the number of slaves acquired, and not directly on their productivity. Slaves are different from the other members of the community in that they are rightfully deprived of offspring. Their status as 'foreigners' is permanent. A profit is made out of the 'foreigner'. Hence, if one wants the system to have a certain continuity and to become organic, then one must not allow the slave to have dependents. In each generation one must provide the means of introducing foreigners as replacements for worn-out slaves. We find an intimate and necessary liaison between these two levels of exploitation: a relation through pilfering between one population and another, and a relation of exploitation between the class of slaves and the class of masters.

In slavery, the growth of the labour force is independent of effective demographic forces. It rests not on the demographic growth which is due to natural increase, but on the means devoted to the capture (as in war) of foreign individuals. The possibility of accumulation comes about through the multiplication of slaves independently of growth in the productivity of labour

Box 3.3: Agricultural Slavery Slavery mode of production, which Marx referred to, was found in Italy during formation of the Roman empire. Around 200 AD this empire included western Asia, the whole of northern Africa from Egypt to Morocco and most of Europe, including

Notes

Britain. It had a territory of about one million seventy five thousand square miles and a population of about sixty million. Such a large empire was obviously a mixture of heterogeneous societies with various modes to production. Only in Roman Italy slavery on the land (agricultural slavery) assumed an importance beyond anything experienced before. Also, in some of the city-states. Such as Athens, slavery was a dominant mode production. The ruling classes in these regimes acquired their wealth from slave labour. In the western half of the Roman empire the production transformed from ancient to feudal mode.

This mode of exploitation permits a demographic manipulation of society. It permits the modification of the birth rate, the manipulation of the 'age' at birth, and the manipulation of the duration of life, especially active life. The test of the dominance of slave mode of production lies not in the numbers of the slaves but in their location, that is, in the extent to which the elite depend on them for their wealth.

3.6.3 Feudal Mode of Production

Marx and Engels were primarily interested in the definition of the capitalist mode of production. Their writing about feudalism tended to mirror that interest, as well as focusing on the transition between the feudal and the capitalist modes of production. They were concerned with the 'existence form' of labour and the manner in which the products of labour were appropriated by ruling classes. Just as capitalists exploited the workers or the 'proletariat', so did the feudal lords exploit their tenants or 'serfs'. Capitalists grabbed surplus value and feudal lords appropriated land rent from their serfs. Serfs, being legally unfree, were deprived of property rights, though they could use the lord's property. They were obliged to surrender their labour, or the product of their labour, over and above what was needed for family subsistence and the simple reproduction of the peasant household economy. Serfs or the producers were forced to fulfil the economic demands of an overlord. These demands could be in the form of services to be performed. These could also be in the form of dues to be paid in money or kind. The dues or taxes were levied on the family holdings of the peasants. Thus feudal rent whether in the form of services or taxes was an important

component of the feudal mode of production. The feudal lord was able to force serfs on the basis of military strength. This power was also backed by the force of law. In this mode of production, serfdom implied a direct relation between rulers and servants. In feudal serfdom, the instruments of production were simple and inexpensive. Feudal (see Unit 1 in Block 1 of ESO–13) society was seen by Marx and Engles as intermediate, i.e., between the slave society of the ancient world and capitalists and proletarians in the modern era. The evolution of the feudal system brought about the development of exchange of agricultural and manufactured products in regional markets. Special needs of the ruling class and high ranking Church officials gave an impetus to the growth of commodity production, including consumption goods such as silks, spices, fruits and wines. Around this activity developed international trade routes and mercantile centres. It laid the foundation for capitalist relations of production, which were to become the main contradiction of the system and cause its downfall. In the course of this transformation, many peasants were expropriated from their lands and forced to become wage-labourers.

Activity 2 Do you think that agrarian society in any part of India was ever dominated by feudal lords? If yes, describe in two pages how during this period peasants were deprived of property rights though they had rights of use. Were the peasants expected to give their labour or product of their labour to feudal lords? Write your answers to these questions on a sheet of paper and compare them with those of other students at your Study Centre.

3.6.4 Capitalist Mode of Production

Capitalism refers to a mode of production in which capital is the dominant means of production. Capital can be in various forms. It can take the form of money or credit for the purchase of labour power and materials of production. It can be money or credit for buying physical machinery. In capitalist mode of production, the private ownership of capital in its various forms is in the hands of a class of capitalists. The ownership by capitalists is to the exclusion of the mass of the population. You can take this to be a central feature of capitalism as a mode of

Notes

production. As a mode of production, capitalism has the following characteristics (see Bottomore 1983: 64).

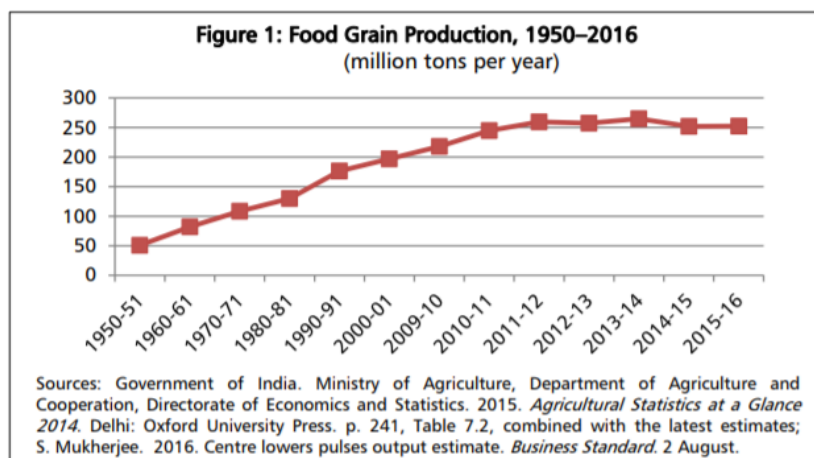
- Goods are produced for sale rather than own use.
- The capacity to do useful work or labour power is bought and sold in a market. For a period of time (time rate) or for a specified task (piece rate) labour power is exchanged for money wages. In ancient mode of production labourers were obliged or forced to surrender their labour. Contrarily, in capitalist mode of production labourers enter into a contract with employers.
- The use of money as a medium of exchange. This gives an important role to banks and financial intermediaries
- The production process is controlled by the capitalists or their managers.
- Financial decisions are controlled by the capitalist entrepreneur.

Individual capitalists compete for control over the labour and finance. As a mode of production, capitalism first emerged in Europe. You may like to go back to this discussion for recapitulating the growth of merchant capital, overseas trade colonisation. The industrial revolution starting in England and spreading across different countries saw a rapid growth of technology and corresponding rise of capitalist economies. Marx viewed capitalism as a historical phase, to be eventually replaced by socialism.

3.7 RESOURCE BASE

Indian agriculture needs to secure food supplies for a population of 1.2 billion. It accounts for 20.4% of the world's agriculture and, in terms of India's food production alone, it has grown more than five times since the 1950s when it was producing 50.8 million tons a year (Figure 1). India currently produces more than 250 million tons of food grains a year (the highest ever production was 264.8 million tons in financial year (FY) 2013–2014).¹ With the People's Republic of China, India is the first or second largest global producer of many agricultural commodities including rice, wheat, pulses, groundnuts, sugarcane, cotton, jute, milk, fruits, and vegetables.² The green revolution technology of the late

1960s, the spread of irrigation, and the expanded use of biochemical fertilizers have played a vital role in this achievement.



2. Drawing upon India's rural population of 689 million, agriculture employs 263 million workers either as cultivators or as agriculture labor³ tilling an average of 1.15 hectares (ha) per household (Figures 2 and 3). As of the 2011 census, women constitute a little more than one-third (34.9%) of the rural working population. However, there were fewer female cultivators (23.4% of the total) than female agriculture laborers (43.1%).⁴ Most of the cultivators grow two crops—one in the wet season (June to September) and one in the dry season (November to March), locally known as a kharif and rabi crops respectively.

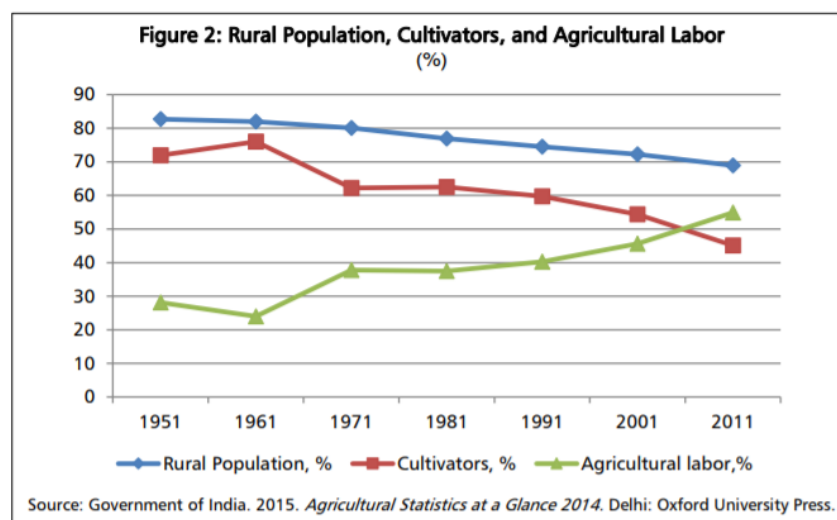
3. Notwithstanding the tremendous achievement of Indian agriculture, per capita per day food availability in the country hovers around 450–500 grams. Increases in income mean that the pattern of consumption is gradually shifting away from food grains to dairy products, meat, fruit, and vegetables. Within the food basket, the availability of pulses (a major source of protein for vegetarians) has declined from about 60 grams per capita in 1951 to 42 grams in 2013, making it difficult to meet the daily protein requirements of consumers.

4. While Indian agriculture has managed to meet the requirements of its growing population so far, the sector faces an array of challenges that reflect both the socioeconomic conditions of the country and South Asian

Notes

environmental and climatic conditions. 5. The paper is structured in four parts. Following the introductory section, selected aspects of the agriculture and natural resources sector in India are described, focusing on irrigation, rainfed cultivation, productivity, and efficiency.

5 A reform and policy agenda related to the sector is briefly recounted. The third section deals with ADB operations during the last decade, including loans, grants, and technical assistance projects. The fourth section provides a tentative assessment of ADB operations using the Independent Evaluation Department (IED) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and development impact before presenting some lessons and suggestions for consideration.



3.8 PATTERN OF RESOURCE USE IN AGRARIAN PRODUCTION

"The higher the index of the intensity of cropping, the higher the land use efficiency and the lower the index the lower the land use efficiency and less utilized or underutilized the area sown". - Singh (1976). The agricultural intensity refers to the number of crops grown on the same area in any one agricultural year, the index of cropping is 100 percent and it can be termed as single cropping, if two crops a year are produced as kharif and rabi crops, the intensity index will be 200 percent and it may be termed double cropping. Agricultural intensity, extent the

maturity and increase in the yield from the existing cultivated area are issues of great significance in Dhamtari district. These needs serious though by the planners and all those concerned with agricultural development. Because the problems of under use the net area sown, under productivity per unit area and the risk of crop failures are taxing the rural society every where. It would be a useful gain to overcome some of those problems in the near future. The various geographer various method used to determine the agricultural intensity. Such as R.R. Tripathi (1970), R.B.Singh, Y.G. Joshi and Tyagi all the expert have given valuable contribution. The most favourable method is famous agriculture geographer R.R. Tripathi (1970). We used this formula from the tabulate of agricultural intensity.

"Among the physical factors which are combatively static in nature, relief, altitude, climate, and soil very important role. It is more so in developing countries where mechanization of agriculture has not yet taken place to a measurable extent. These factors explain more than three fourths of the total variation in the dependent variable". - Sabbiah and Ahmel (1980). Agricultural efficiency means determination of crop production in per unit of land. There are various method used to determined the agricultural productivity. The methods are M.M. Khusera (1964), J.L. Buff (1967), Kendas (1939), S.D. Stamp (1958), Sprey and Deshpandey (1964), S.S. Bhatia (1967), Mohammad Shati (1972), Majid Hussain (1979) all the experts have given valuable contribution. The method of agricultural efficiency index suggested by S.S. Bhatia (1967) has been used because of the availability of data of both area and production rate for the measure of agricultural efficiency in study area.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What is Production?

Notes

-
.....
.....
2. Discuss about the Forces of Production
-
.....
.....
3. Discuss about the Relations of Production.
-
.....
.....
4. Discuss about the Mode of Production.
-
.....
.....
5. Discuss Four Modes of Production.
-
.....
.....

3.9 LET US SUM UP

The concepts of forces, relations and mode of production are central to Marxist social theory. The mode of production, which for Marx is the main determinant of social phenomena, is made up of the forces of production and relations of production. The forces of production refer to both the material worked on and the tools and techniques employed in production of economic goods. The relationships of production refer to the social relations arising in the process of production, especially between the owners and non-owners of the means of production. Relations of production include the control and the capacity to possess the products. Thus in capitalist societies, for example, the relations of production are those relations that obtain between capitalist and worker such that the former (relations of production) both controls the means of production and can dispose of the goods and services that are produced by the worker. The forces and relations of production are fundamental to

the constitution of any society. The different ways in which different societies are organised depend upon the relationship of the forces of production to the relations of production. The concept of the social relationships of production does not so much refer to the relationship between individuals as between social classes. Because the relationships of production are essentially antagonistic (for example, the capitalist appropriates the product of labour of the worker), so are the relations between the classes. A mode of production is the relationship between the relations of production and the forces of production. Modes of production can be distinguished from one another by the different relationships between the forces and relations of production. For example, in the feudal mode of production, the lord does not possess direct control over the peasant's forces of production, tools and land, but does have control over the disposition of the peasant's produce. In the capitalist mode of production, on the other hand, the capitalist controls both the forces of production and the disposition of the product. Mode of production is an abstract analytical concept. In any particular society at a particular point in time there may exist more than one mode of production. However, it is possible to identify a dominant or determinant mode of production which gains primacy over all the other production systems. Particularly during the period of social revolution more than one mode of production co-exist in the same society. However, Marx has left behind the theoretical conceptualisations relating to four modes of production; Asiatic, ancient, feudal and capitalist. This last mode of production was his major theoretical concern.

3.10 KEY WORDS

Ancient Mode of Production Refers to a production system where the master has the right of ownership over the slave and appropriates the products of his labour through servitude, without allowing the slave to reproduce

Asiatic Mode of Production Refers to community-based production system where ownership of land is communal and the existence of is expressed through the real or imaginary unity of these communities.

Notes

Bourgeoisie The class of capitalists who, in all developed countries, are now almost exclusively in possession of all the means of consumption and of all the raw materials and instruments (machines, factories necessary for their production (Engels in Principles of Communism, 1827)

Capitalist Mode of Production Refers to a production system where the owners of means of production, capitalists, extract surplus labour from the proletariats in the form of profits.

Capitalists The ruling class in capitalism who control the means of production.

Feudal Mode of Production Refers to a production system where the lords appropriate surplus labour from the serfs in the form of rent.

Forces of Production Refers to the material technical aspect of production as well as the corresponding labour power and its competencies required in the production process.

Lords The ruling class in feudalism, who exercise indirect control over serfs.

Masters The ruling class in slavery who exercise control over slaves.

Mode of Production A mode of production is the relationship between the relations of production and the forces of production. Modes of production can be distinguished from one another by different relationships between the forces and relations of production.

Relations of Production Refer to social relationships that arise directly out of the process of production. These social relationships include the relationships between the owners and non-owners of the means of

production. These relationships decide and even determine the control and the capacity to possess the product.

Slaves Class of producers in the ancient mode of production, who are directly controlled by the masters as their private ‘property’.

Serfs Class of producers in the feudal mode of production whose surplus labour is appropriated through rent.

Workers Class of producers in the capitalist mode of production who have nothing except their labour power as their only means of livelihood. Their surplus labour is appropriated by the capitalists through profit.

3.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Discuss about the Resource base.
2. Discuss about the Pattern of resource use in agrarian production.

3.12 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Dore, J. (1997) Sustainability Indicators for Agriculture: Introductory Guide to Regional/National and On-farm Indicators, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Australia.
- Falvey, Lindsay (2004) Sustainability – Elusive or Illusion: Wise Environmental Management. Institute for International Development, Adelaide.
- Gold, Mary (1999) Sustainable Agriculture: Definitions and Terms. Special Reference Briefs Series no. SRB 99-02 Updates SRB 94-5 September 1999. National Agricultural Library, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2019) Negative Emissions Technologies and Reliable Sequestration: A Research Agenda.

Notes

- Paull, J. (2014) Lord Northbourne, the man who invented organic farming, a biography. *Journal of Organic Systems*, 9(1), 31–53.
- Pender J., Place F., Ehui S. (2006) *Strategies for Sustainable Land Management in the East African Highlands*
- Pollan M. (2007) *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*
- Roberts W. (2008) *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Food*
- Royal Society (February 2008) [permanent dead link] Dedicated double issue of *Philosophical Transactions B on Sustainable Agriculture*. Some articles are freely available.
- Bottomore, Thomas B., 1975. *Marxist Sociology*. Macmillan: London
- Huberman, Leo 1969. *Man's Worldly Goods*. People's Publishing House: New Delhi

3.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 3.2
2. See Section 3.3
3. See Section 3.4
4. See Section 3.5
5. See Section 3.6

UNIT 4: NATURE AND MAGNITUDE OF TAXATION AND AGRARIAN RELATIONS

STRUCTURE

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Agrarian relations in Medieval India
- 4.3 Agrarian Relations During the Sultanate Period
- 4.4 The Revenue Collection System
- 4.5 Methods of Irrigation and Crop-pattern
- 4.6 The Existence of Feudalism/Serfdom
- 4.7 A Peculiar type of Land Tax Jizia
- 4.8 Agrarian Relations During the Mughal Rule
- 4.9 Let us sum up
- 4.10 Key Words
- 4.11 Questions for Review
- 4.12 Suggested readings and references
- 4.13 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know about:

- Agrarian relations in Medieval India
- Agrarian Relations During the Sultanate Period
- The Revenue Collection System
- Methods of Irrigation and Crop-pattern
- The Existence of Feudalism/Serfdom
- A Peculiar type of Land Tax Jizia
- Agrarian Relations During the Mughal Rule

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Notes

In a predominantly agrarian country like India where about 70 percent of its population lives in its villages and almost an equal percentage are directly or indirectly linked with agriculture as a means of livelihood, monopolies over land and rural, asset ownership continue along with the worst forms of caste discrimination and oppression. The monopoly over land, credit and markets are vested with a few individuals leading to a social formation characterised by a rigid class or status structure linked to land and land relations where the hierarchy of land ownership corresponds to the hierarchy of political power. The specific historical features of India's agrarian development and the reasons for the prevailing conditions in the rural areas under question have to be analysed keeping in mind the specific features of the development trajectories of most of the postcolonial nation-states of the third world. "In their societies the property relations have not yet simplified themselves into those between capitalists and free wageearners alone, or even between capitalists, landlords and free wage-earners. There are many segments of society with ties between people which are non-contractual in appearance and substance, and cannot be reduced to those simply between unattached buyers and sellers. It will thus be necessary to pay particular attention to pre-capitalist relations of production even when the dominant relations are capitalist in nature of imperialist colonisation and various other factors. The social background of the peasants and agricultural workers, the forces which gave rise to it and the forces that work behind it in the present day have to be closely studied to arrive at an objective analysis and derive correct conclusions. Hence this study seeks to explain not only what happened in history but also to probe the failure in the progressive unfolding of history using the method of dialectical materialism. A thorough study of the class stratification along with an analysis of the social and economic processes in the countryside is necessary for examining the agrarian problem while situating it in the context of the new conditions created by the neo-liberal economic policies and the present stage of economic development.

The basic quest that we have embarked upon leads us to explore the contours of the pre-colonial, colonial and the post-independence phase as

part of our preoccupation with the peasantry in the long transition to capitalism. Each of these complex historical epochs is moulded by the dominant mode of production which leaves an unmistakable impact by placing 'its imprint on the whole society' and exerting 'a major influence in moulding the trend of development.' Hence the nature of the dominant mode of production in any social formation has to be accurately identified to grasp the basic structure and dynamics of the society under observation. "In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production." What Marx calls 'social production' is a process of production in society comprising two aspects. The productive forces of the society which reflect man's interaction with nature constitutes one of the aspects of 'social production'. The fact is that social production is always a social process and is characterised not only by man's relation with nature, but also by the relations which take shape between the people themselves in the process of production, namely, the relations of production. These constitute the other aspect of social production. The production process involves the interaction of three elements with one another. The first element is the 'object of labour', that is, that which is the objective of human activity.⁴ It embraces two groups: a) materials directly obtained in natural conditions and converted into a product. It may be land as the universal object of labour, deposits of minerals and oil, ores, fish in natural water reservoirs etc, and b) previously processed materials. These are called raw materials (for instance, yarn in textile production, metals or plastics at an engineering plant, etc. ⁵The second element is the instruments of labour or the 'implements of labour', that is, that by means of which man exerts an influence, whether directly or indirectly, on the diverse objects of labour. This includes the simplest instruments like the hammer and the spade, and the most diverse machines, like tractors, excavators, machine-tools, automatic lines and the most complicated assemblies. Among the instruments of labour exerting an indirect influence on the process of production are also the buildings of factories and plants, transport routes, airports and seaports, and storage facilities. ⁶ The

Notes

objects of labour and the instruments of labour, taken together, comprise the means of production. The interaction of these two elements or the means of production with the third element that is, labour itself which involves 'people's conscientious and purposeful activity by which they alter natural objects, adapting them to satisfy their own requirements' taken together characterise the productive power of labour, the productive forces of the society. 7 The relations of production constitute an intricate and highly ramified system covering the relations which people establish with each other in the process of production and distribution of the goods of life.

4.2 AGRARIAN RELATIONS IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

The Sultanate period provides a historical background to understand the larger area where the present study has been conducted. The Sultanate rule was confined to Northern India with Delhi being its capital. The dynamics of agrarian relations and social structure bases itself on the relationship between power structure at macro level and traditional structure at micro level. The significance of agrarian relations at the village level and its dialectics could be seen in the relationship with outside forces. Rural aristocracy of villages perhaps represents the linkages of peasants with state. Sultanate rule when challenged by Rais and Ranas took help of Chaudhary, the traditional village headman by making him a revenue collecting official. Interaction of forces at the level of State with local during the Sultanate period finds expression in the first part of the chapter. Some questions relating to the issues of 'feudalism' and 'serfdom' during Sultanate period also form the part of discussion here.

In the second part of the chapter agrarian relations during the Mughal rule are discussed. The Mughal rule are discussed. The Mughal rule was more widespread in area and thus more strong than the Sultanate Rule. Peasantry witnessed a more stronger state before them. However, the challenges to Shivaji. could the Mughal Rule, particularly in Deccan by be seen as a challenge to the agrarian policies persuaded challenges also. decentralization by Mughals, which Shivaji's death of the challenging

reduction war-groups only included again forces primordial led to and their A division of agrarian structures into oppressive class of intermediaries and peasants, provides a background which helps in understanding the agrarian structure of period following it.

This unit consists of two parts. In the first part agrarian conditions during the rule of Sultanate at Delhi are examined, this includes a discussion on agrarian inequalities, class-relations and the overall nature of the political economy of that period. In the second part of the present chapter agrarian relations during the Mughal period of Indian history are examined. An attempt has also been made to Sketch a general picture of agrarian relations over the entire Medieval period - this includes a compare and contrast of the above discussed two particular periods in the Indian history

4.3 AGRARIAN RELATIONS DURING THE SULTANATE PERIOD

In order to make a precise understanding of the agrarian relations as they exist in India today it is essential to understand how and when they evolved as the Indian history unfolded itself. Not simply for the reason that several terms like Muquaddam and Zamindar etc. representing the basic important units of agrarian social structure during the Sultanate rule or later during the Mughal rule are found to be in use in certain parts of the country even today, but also to understand the historical role that they have played in a meaningful way. The traces of various units or elements of today's agrarian classstructure go or date back at least up to the Sultan's rule at Delhi and the Mughal rule later. Apart from it to a limited extent some traces of the elements of the Western style feudalism could also be located during these periods.

Political economy of the Sultanate period was closely associated with the power-structure. The power structure of those days was never a static one and this is to be seen as well as established with the help of historical facts. This power-structure was also closely associated effort is understand with the agrarian hierarchy of that also made at later stage of this the nature of the agrarian economy or period. An chapter to for that

Notes

matter a part this economy i.e. a single unit as it could be related with certain terminologies originated in the west like 'feudal', 'serf' etc. of course with certain modifications. The mode of revenue collection by the state has also gone through a considerable change from time to time. This was so because we come across some examples, where peasants literally ran away from one place to another in order to save their life and several local taxes imposed upon them either by Sultan or by the representative of Sultan. Extra-economic coercion has also been present throughout this period. A detailed discussion on all these is to follow later in this chapter. An effort is made now first to sketch the agrarian hierarchy and second to explain its relationship with the power-structure and also to see whether any suitable explanation could be offered or not as we move across from one system to another.

For the construction of agrarian hierarchy, secondary sources of data have been used and historical material is utilised with all the precautions necessary for that purpose. While utilizing the historical material which in itself based upon certain original documents, the attempt has been made to bring out the sociological meaning that they might convey instead of questioning their scientific validity. Of course, as said above every possible effort has been made to keep an eye over their historical reliability. Agrarian hierarchy of the Sultanate period broadly speaking consisted of two categories namely khots (or headmen) and batahars (or village menials). There were however some other categories also and their reference has to be made after due care because the historical material has been doubtful in certain cases. There is another point that needs be clarified here. As the historical material is available - it reflects both economic nature i.e. agrarian hierarchy as well as political nature i.e. power structure of the historical period under consideration. The major thesis that is advanced in this chapter is that while analysing the agrarian social structure of the Sultanate period it should be seen in relation to the political economy of this period. This means that instead of asking a question about sharp distinctions between economic and political hierarchy of the period, it would be more appropriate to see them as operating together, one affecting the other. Thus, an effort has

been made to analyse how polity actually affected economy of the period and also its vice-versa. This attempt obviously does not reach the boundaries of the argument that how polity affects economy and its vice-versa at a generalised level. It would thus be relevant to begin with the power structure with the Sultan at the top and later the structure that follows him downwards. The power-structure of the Sultanate period, apart from its being related to the agrarian structure, must be seen vis-a-vis traditional social structure also. From numerous examples, it appears that the power structure underwent a continuous change throughout the historical period. At a given point of time the power-structure in fact may not correspond to the traditional social structure. But it has been noticed that whenever there was some crisis at the level of power-structure, the policy inclined itself towards the traditional social structure. That is why there appears to be a need to see these two structures vis-a-vis one another. This point shall be made clear at the later stages of this unit.

The consisted of power-structure of the Sultanate period Sultan or the ruler at Delhi occupying the position at the top of i.t. Below sultan there was a governor, known as Sultan's governor. Below Sulta~s governor there existed a rural aristocracy consisting of two categories within it, locally known as Rais and Ranas. This rural aristocracy was followed by another strata consisting of two categories, locally known as khots and Mugguaddams. The position of Khots and Mugguaddams has witnessed a lot and perhaps most of the changes in their structural situation. Khots and Muquaddams when agriculture flourished rose nearly up to the structural situation of rural aristocracy and when either due to crop-failure or heavy taxation their position was reduced just nearly equal to peasants. Th~ changing position of Khots and Mugguaddams could be traced throughout the Sultanate period. This has remained such a marginal strata which had under gone and witnessed most of the changes. Khots and Mugguaddams and their structural situation which varied a lot could be equated to peasants also. In fact "Khots and Muquaddam as peasants" when and under what conditions? This could become an interesting problem for further research and investigate on. Below them there existed small peasants and those who worked on land for others.

Notes

The literature on Indian history does not reflect much on these categories. However, their conditions could be attempted for the purpose of understanding with the help of the discussion on whether or not or to what extent feudalism did exist in India. Methodologically this would reflect the approach suggested by Durkheim known as indirect experimentation. As it was argued above that there is a need to see this power-structure vis-a-vis traditional social structure, to provide a dynamic nature to the problem as a whole. It has been stated above also that both power structure as well as agrarian-structure are seen as related to dynamic forces or process and not to the static ones. The traditional social structure of the Sultanate period was like as follows. The traditional social-structure of the Sultanate period was not much different from the earlier one i.e. the power structure, however there were certain categories that existed in villages and played important role, especially when there was a crisis at the level of power structure. Besides other categories, it was Chaudhary who played an important role in the traditional social structure. If we delineate traditional social structure, it had at its top the Sultan followed by Sultan's governor, village headman who happened to be Chaudhary and then Khots and Muqqaddams and village menials. It needs to be emphasised here that the position of Chaudhary was so central-so pivotal that almost every social activity was surrounded around it. Chaudhary was a title and must not be confused with a surname. The status and role of the Chaudhary had enjoyed the maximum support derived from traditional authority in Max Weber's sense. The status of Chaudhary and the role associated with it was more social than its political counterpart. Chaudhary's major concern was about those activities that were basically non-economic in nature. It has to be pointed out that economic concerns were only added roles bestowed upon him by Sultan's governor.

The dynamics of agrarian relations could be seen between the interactions of power-structure and traditional social-structure. Within the power structure itself contradictions could be easily located. The Sultan's rule from Delhi was not accepted as such, but numerous examples are there to witness the revolt from Rais and Ranas who

constituted the rural aristocracy. At the instances of revolt from Rais and Ranas, the Sultan was forced several times in the history to send his governor to assess and take account of the situation arising out of these revolts. The revolts by Rais and Ranas were also not without any base. They had their own armies and many a times did not tolerate the rule from above i.e. the rule of the Sultanate at Delhi. But the strength of the Sultanate rule could be identified with the then existing fact that even 1,00,000 foot soliders and archers could not dare to stand before 6,000 or 7,000 cavalry of Delhi. At the time of revolt therefore the Sultanate started eliminating the influence and the personnel of Rais and Ranas. For the purpose of revenue collection, Sultan's governor sought the help of Chaudhary. He agreed to collect the revenue to avoid a further possible loss of people's lives and crops.

It is therefore argued here that the traditional social-structure acquired an important place in the dynamics of agrarian relations. It may lie or seem to lie dormant but has its important role. At the time of the crisis in the power-structure its existance and role becomes important. Out of these situations and facts there emerges a set of some important sociological insights and they could be put in the following way.

- (1) When the Sultan defeated Rais and Ranas and established Chaudhary in its place, it meant only that the one intermediary category was replaced by another intermediary category and as a result of it Sultan's rule at Delhi got strengthened.
- (2) There are chance of the sub-inundation to be reduced because the elemination of Rais and Ranas meant one step less in the agrarian hierarchy. In fact earlier peasantry had two rulers - the Sultan at Delhi and Rais and Ranas at the village level.
- (3) The structural importance of traditional socialstructure becomes evident at the time of crises in power structure.
- (4) The newly added revenue collection role to Chaudhary might have led him to become another aristocrat. The political economy of the Sultanate period was marked by revolts from Rais and Ranas. Apart from this there were certain other elements that need attention. The

Notes

important ones were (i) the revenue collection-system, (ii) methods of irrigation and crop-pattern, (iii) the existence of feudalism/serfdom and (iv) a particular type of land tax Jizia. These and some other related points are to be discussed now.

As discussed earlier, whosoever came to constitute the category of rural aristocrats-be they Rais or Ranas or Chaudhary himself, they had their links in two directions. Upward, the rural aristocrats were related to Sultan for whom they collected taxes and provided armed support, downward they were related to peasants and village menials. Agrarian hierarchy, sub-infeudation and a peculiar type of land tax Jizia were the characteristic features of this period.

4.4 THE REVENUE COLLECTION SYSTEM

The Sultan at Delhi had appointed a governor to look after the revenue collection. Sultan's governor depended on rural aristocracy i.e. previously on Rais and Ranas and later when they revolted, the Chaudhary was assigned this additional responsibility. What becomes obvious from all this is that direct collection from the villagers was avoided. Only in a few cases when Chaudhary also became defaulter, direct revenue collection from villagers was sought. Under this system of revenue collection the villages were organized into a group of 84 (Chaurasis). According to another classification the villages were organized into a group of 100 (Sadi). Yet another classification suggests that in some cases villages were organized into a group of 1000(Hazar). It appears that for the purpose of revenue collection villages were not organized on a unilateral pattern. But on the other hand historical evidences lack on the conception of either Chaurasi (84) or Sadi (100) or Hazar (100). It simply suggests that for the Sultan rural aristocracy itself had its own hierarchy and it could be found out with a little bit of exercise into historical records. Each city is said to have been divided into several Sadis and each Sadi had a Chaudhary who was the official to collect land revenue.

For the purpose of land revenue the organization of village into Chaurasi (84) or Sadi (100) or Hazar (1000) even though lack the historical support necessary for its academic approval, it does not look valid even on logical grounds. Before adopting any sort of a classification for the organization of villages for the purpose of revenue collection there is a need to look into the local social as well as geographical conditions. Geographical conditions at that time included a lot of forests too. The rain was uncertain and the irrigation was being developed. It is not logically possible to divide the whole territory into the same number of villages comprising one unit. Therefore the debate between Chaurasi (84) and Sadi (100) and Hazar (1000) simply suggests that even the organization of villages for the purpose of revenue collection had a sort of unequal distribution and the very nature of the rural aristocracy was hierarchical. For the purpose of deriving something reasonable out of it, it could be assumed that the figures reflected only the rough or almost vague idea of the number of villages organized together. Another reasonable unit known as pargana comes to light. According to this the entire territory was divided into various parganas which itself had several villages. But the important point was that the exact number of villages was not specified. But this does not mean that we can use the term *sadi* and the like with *pargana* as identical. To conceive of *sadi* as identical to *pargana* might be misleading and this usage is highly problematical. Irfan Habib prefers to define a village as composed of 200 to 300 people living there. But he does not give any evidence to support this. This conception of village ignores the possibility of much smaller and generally much bigger villages than the specified number of people living there. This notion of a village could be dropped merely as a historical conjecture.

4.5 METHODS OF IRRIGATION AND CROP-PATTERN

The cultivation was said to be based mainly upon individual peasant farming, although the possibility of other forms could not be ruled out. The size of land varied from *Khat* to *Balhar*. There was less use of iron in agricultural implements and unequal distribution of land had its own impact on the methods of irrigation and the croppattern. That is why we

Notes

hear of brickless or kutchha wells they were more in number and the numbers of brick well or pakka wells were less. Wells were used for artificial irrigation and advancing the loans to the peasants for it was the important matter. It was advanced for the purpose of digging wells and to extend cultivation. Dams are reported to have been built by local people as well as by the state.

The use of canal became known in the fourteenth century. The historians have attributed the notion of canal to have come from central-Asia itself. The names of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq (1220-25) and later that of Firoz Tughluq (1351-86) have been associated with the development of canal and its tributeries. During this period it is heard of tributeries of canal known as Rajah-Wah and Ulugh-Khani . The use of the term Rajah-wah is still found in the rural areas of the western Uttar Pradesh. During the same period the route of the river Yamuna was diverted towards Hissar a place now located in Haryana state. Some smaller canals were also built in the Multan area which now forms a part of Pakistan.\

During this period the extensive use of canals and its tributeries, in addition to the wells became evident. As a result of this in the areas mentioned above, there came a point when peasants could have shifted from one crop to crop pattern. In addition to Rabi (Rain) crop Kharif also came into being - wheat being the main part of crop. Landlords and local people built small canals and two crop that the big canals were built by the state. This was the biggest net work of canals till the nineteenth century. In the Sixteenth century the use of the Persian wheel became evident. The rise in irrigation led to the decline in Barley and Juar production, cotton and gram remained stable. Barley and Juar were virtually driven off the fertile land. Irfan Habib does not mention here the price of sugar-cane and uses the prices of wheat as a criteria to determine the prices of other crops, therefore a meaningful analysis is not possible here. In his presentation, the price of sugar-cane is not reported and the price of wheat have been made stagnant, although crops with artificial irrigation like wheat and sugarcane were valued much higher than other crops. On the other hand the Kharif crops which were based upon irrigation were valued lower. The Rabi crops valued higher because they

were based upon artificial irrigation and the means for this type of irrigation were limited.

4.6 THE EXISTENCE OF FEUDALISM/SERFDOM

The Western style feudalism which was seen in since fifteenth to late eighteenth century, based clearcut class-systems has not been witnessed in India. Even the historians like R.S. Sharma prefer to call it the lack of the Indian variant of feudalism and similarly Amit Bhaduri and others have preferred to use the word semifeudal for the Indian society. Karl Marx had also negated the existence of feudalism in India and said that instead of having a class-structure of its own, there was yet another variant of exploitation. Marx termed the British Indian society as represented by what he called oriental despotism which meant submission of all to the state or king. Clearly Marx's opinion negates the existence of feudalism in India. The main point to be observed was that the Indian society did not represent classes nor class conflict was thus visible, yet represented by a lot of repression and exploitation. Historians like Irfan Habib prefer peasants of that time to be equated with yet another term he had coined that is 'semi serfs'. In order to justify the term Irfan Habib says that peasants at that time could own only seeds, cattle and implements, they paid land revenue in cash after selling their produce. Another point highlighted by Irfan Habib is the processes that led to the differentiation of peasantry from within or the internal differentiation of the peasantry.

The medieval Indian history speaks of enormous extra-economic oppressions. Just to mention one case Ghazi Malik asked one Rais of Dipolpur to marry his daughter to his brother. He first denied it but later on had to surrender. Those were the days of Sultan when nobody could dare to speak against incidents like this one. The peasants who were restricted to cultivation and cattle were still in worse conditions. The point that is theoretically relevant here is that the medieval Indian society was represented by the exploitation of all by the Sultan and partly by rural aristocracy, it was not marked by the Western style of class-structure operating under feudalism. Andre Beteille had cautioned

Notes

against using any blanket term like feudalism for Indian society without a proper care. There is in fact a need to handle the historical material very carefully. At several place in the article Irfan Habib has mentioned that sufficient evidence lack in order to prove the thing that he has written.

Therefore for the analysis of agrarian relations during the Medieval period of India, we have to take care of a few requirements. Firstly the data has to be used carefully so that the possibility of historical conjectures could be avoided. Secondly, it is not necessary to attempt any equivalent of the western style feudalism in India. In other words every such attempt which any how stretches the Indian society into its western counter part is to be avoided. In such type of an attempt every danger of social reality being riefied is involved. Thirdly, Marx's conceptualization of Indian society as being represented by asiatic mode of production needs re-examination. In fact apart from the king several elements like Rais and Ranas who constituted rural aristocracy were also exploiting the peasantry. Fourthly any attempt to construct the existence of feudalism in India must not take several disconnected characteristics but feudalism must be analysed in its totality forming a system as a whole. Fifthly, it must be seen where this particular type of feudalism under the bigger category of social formation does come In other words the dominant mode of production must be located first than other modes constituting it. From this discussion it seems safe to characterise the medieval Indian society as semi feudal and peasants as semi-serfs.

4.7 A PECULIAR TYPE OF LAND TAX JIZIA

The existence of this type of land tax was based upon a peculiar notion. The Hindus of this country or nonMuslims of this country had to pay one additional tax to the Muslim rulers. India in her history since eleventh century had witnessed several invasions of the barbaric tribes belonging to the Muslim religion. The rise of Islam was restricted upto the tenth century by the efforts of Palas of Bengal, Pratihars of the north and west and Rashtrakutas of western Deccan. This peculiar type of land tax on the nonMuslims was one extra burden upon them. This sort of an -

exploitation was not the characteristic of the western world. The Jizia then continued upto the Mughal rule, barring a few exceptions (like during the rule of Akbar) it continued to exist in the Indian history.

In short it could be said that the agrarian relations during the sultanate period in India could be understood with the help of the general political economy of that period. Inequalities in agrarian India were and the historical analysis brings out certain are important for sociological insights. The widespread facts that invasion by central Asian barbaric Muslim tribes, the existence and the role of rural aristocracy within the agrarian social structure are also important. Another important change in agrarian conditions was the introduction and management of central system. Theoretically it seems worthwhile to call this period as represented by semi-feudalism within which peasants could be equated with the notion of semi-serfs. In the next part of this chapter agrarian relations during the Mughal rule are discussed.

4.8 AGRARIAN RELATIONS DURING THE MUGHAL RULE

In the second part of this chapter agrarian relations during the Mughal rule in India are discussed. The first difference between the Sultanate and the Mughal rule in India was that the former had its limited impact and was concentrated in the Northern part of India with Delhi as its capital and the latter witnessed the expansion of the Mughal rule which started spreading towards the Southern part of India. As far as the religious impact is concerned a sort of continuity could be seen. Jizia tax imposed on the non-Muslims was carried over with the exception of the days of Akbar who introduced a new religion known as Din-e-ilahi. During this period of the Indian history despite several counter-attacks, the Mughals continued to increase and consolidate their power. The empire of Akbar in 1605 A.D. included the areas like Kabul and Kandahar in the northwest, Lahore and Panipat in Delhi, Agra and Oudh in the north, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa in the north-east, Ajmer and Malwa region in the central part, Ahmedabad in west and in south it was spread upto Khandesh and Berar. At that time Gondwana region in central north,

Notes

Bidar, Golkunda, Bijapur, Goa, Calicut, Cochin and Nellore in the south were free of the Mughal rule, but at the time of Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D. except a few areas like Calicut, Cochin, Tranquebar, Negapatnam and the extreme south where Polygars ruled, all fell to it and could not resist the Mughal invasion. The Mughals ruled India from 1526 to 1857 with the only exception of the years between 1540-55 when Sur dynasty was in power.

The agrarian policy of the Mughals was based upon taking the share of the produce from peasants and for this several mechanisms were devised but Zamindari and Jagirdari were the principal ones. The state's share of the produce varied between one third to one half of the total produce. Irfan Habib terms it as extraction with all repressive In the new introduced characters of the system of revenue collection system Almost all the areas were revenue a new put collection. device was into various revenue yielding territories and the jagirs were given to the nobles who had no local ties with that area and then they were transferred too quite frequently. These rights were hereditary in character and nobles used all means to extract revenue from the peasantry. Jagirdars in fact had no interest left in the improvement of that area because these areas were under their control for a temporary period. Another institution ijarā came into being referring to the system of revenue farming in which money could be invested in this, the then highly profitable work. In this way jagirdars and ijaradars flourished during this period, they provided armed men also to the Mughal's forces. These jagirdars and ijaradars represented the oppressive class which used severe means of repression that were discovered recently by the historians.

The rights in land were unequally distributed and differential rates of revenue were introduced for highly priced crops and the other low income generating crops. Mansabdars who were above Zamindars collected land revenue. Zamindars passed this burden upon their raiyats or peasants. In fact every surplus was extracted from the raiyats.

Raiyats or peasants then started leaving their territories and entering those ones where Zamindars were very strong being known as Zortalab

Zamindars. These Zortalab Zamindars along with raiyat became a strong force against a weak mansabdar. As a consequence of this, mansabdars were compelled to leave some surplus for the Zortalab Zamindars and the raiyats or peasants. In order to protect the raiyat several measures were taken by the Mughal rulers. Aurangzeb is said Zamindars peasants' cultivated Aurangzeb to have issued orders to protect the raiyat from when the latter was forbidden to cultivate land in his own name but which was actually being by hired labourers. Irfan Habib notes that even was not able to protect the raiyat or peasants from nobles and other intermediaries. Irfan Habib speculates the possible development of the intermediaries at the expense of the peasantry. Historical conjectures go further on upto raising the argument of the possible development of the superior rights, and the intermediaries with the introduction of possibly double and multicrop pattern. The possible development of money lenders has also attributed to it. The development of cash crop is also said to be associated with it.

The agrarian hierarchy of the continued at the lower level consisting of Mughal period two categories namely Khols and Balhars. These two witnessed during the Sultanate rule also. categories were Apart from it Irfan Habib emphasises the need to make an inquiry into the nature and working of the rural elite and on the other hand accepts that the historical evidences lack so far on that. Irfan Habib prefers to concentrate on elite contradiction or the contradictions within the rural aristocracy to understand agrarian conditions of that period. Irfan Habib prefers to examine these elite contradictions just before and after the fall of the Mughal rule in India. As far as the nature of inequality among the elite is concerned, a reference has been made of Bengal where just six big Zamindars contributed about half of the total revenue of the state as a whole. Sometimes mansabdars impoverished and zortalab zamindars flourished. Peasantry remained exploited.

In the Deccan the major agrarian policies were framed out by Malik Amber, who was the prime minister of the Nizamshahi Kingdon (1604-26}. The significant changes introduced in the agrarian policy were the

Notes

abolition of all sorts of taxes on land and the framing out of certain other criteria to collect land revenue. This was a major shift in land revenue collection, besides abolishment of all taxes, the new policy was based upon nazar pahni meaning glance survey. This could be seen as an improvement over the land revenue collection system in the north India. This new system of land-revenue system was useful to such an extent that later even during Shivaji 's rule in the Deccan it was carried over. As evident by the use of the term itself, in this new policy first a glance survey was made of all the cultivable land. Broadly the land was then divided into two categories baghat meaning irrigated land and ziraat meaning dry land. Dry land was again divided into four types on the basis of the quality of land. The more important point in this policy was that the entire irrigated and dry land was clubbed together and was then divided into two categories namely Khalisa meaning fully assessed land and inam meaning land exempted from revenue. The village headman was made responsible this policy deshpandes collection given inam to collect revenue directly from some hereditary officers like were deprived of their right peasants. In Deshmukhs and of revenue as intermediaries. lands and also They were on the other inam villages. With hand the appointment of headman, as revenue collecting official and the removal of the intermediaries were the aim of giving a limited ownership of land to the peasants. The revenue of land on Khalisa i.e. fully assessed land varied between one fourth to two third but some historians have assessed it to be even more than that.

These salient features of the Malik Amber's policy impact on other Kingdoms also. It was in the Qutbshahi Kingdom but did not tried yield and the desired results, most of them amounting due to the inefficient bureaucracy. Some highly placed bureaucrats leased their land assigned to them, out to lessees, who in their turn did the same. In this way a chain of leasing out started and the process of sub-infeudation was built in this. But the over all conditions of agriculture in the south was prosperous, it has been claimed by Irfan Habib. This needs some vigorous treatment of the data but not much of it are available at the moment according to the historians. Probably the historians might have

advanced their argument on the basis of the fact that the intermediaries were removed, hereditary revenue collectors were given inam land and inam villages. And moreover the revenue was directly related to the quality of land.

The rise of the Maratha power in the Deccan mainly during Shivaji rule could be seen as a direct challenge to the erstwhile Mughal agrarian policy. After its establishment as a kingdom Shivaji followed the agrarian policy of Malik Amber. The revenue on land varied between one third to one half of the produce. There were certain other cesses too, in all peasants were estimated to have paid about half of their produce to the rulers. Shivaji's death led to the decentralization of the then hitherto existing centralised administration. After the murder of Sambhaji, the son of Shivaji, the rising militant power of the Marathas was reduced to guerrilla warfare against the Mughals. Sahu of Satara who declared himself the king, also recognized Maratha Chieftains as hereditary jagirdar. Bureaucracy within this territory flourished with hereditary rights in their jagirs or saranjams. The Mughal rule then started to weaken and several parts of the southern and central India and some independent kingdoms got themselves established. The main kingdoms were that of the Holkars in Indore, Scindia in Gwalior and the Peshwas in some parts of central and northern India. In the south India several large tanks were made for the purpose of irrigation. No interest loans known as taquavi were also issued to the peasants in the south.

The agrarian relations during the Mughal rule in India bring out the following facts to our knowledge. In comparison to the earlier days of the Sultanate rule in Delhi, Mughal rule had vast territories of its own kind spread over upto Bengal in the east and upto almost all but the remaining small part of extreme south. Besides all, Jizia continued almost at all places barring a few years of Akbar's rule, it was imposed on all non-Muslims and Parsis. Earlier days of the Mughal rule saw the creation of several jagirs and jagirdars who collected land revenue and also maintained their own army ready to support the Mughal rulers. Money investors in agriculture were known as ijaradars Jagirdars and the

Notes

institution to invest in as ijara. These and ijaradars represent that strong intermediary oppressive class that invented every new method of coercion to suppress the peasants. In some areas where there were zamindars, they passed on every burden to peasants. Even the strongest ruler of the Mughals like Aurangzeb could not do away despite several efforts. This intermediary oppressive class in rural India had already established its links with the bureaucracy and thus the peasants could not be protected. The jagirdars leased out their land to others and the same process was carried over at several steps further. A process of sub-infeudation was thus unavoidable. Some evidence of the introduction and improvement in the of irrigation and double or multi-crop pattern is found. The existence of moneylenders also came into system also being. On several scores like the exact amount or extent of revenue collection or the percentage of the produce taken away from peasants. At several stages the required number of army personnel were kept by the jagirdar or some intermediary and thus the total number of the armed men under the control of the Mughal rulers could have not been specified by the historians. They lack data on these counts and at several places tried to make some historical conjectures. That sort of a discussion is avoided and all possible care has been taken so that this chapter does not remain a sketchy one.

A change in the agrarian policy in south deserves the mention of a prime minister, Malik Amber of the rule of Nizamshahi kingdom (1604-26) who introduced a policy based upon the assessment of land in irrigated and dryland areas for the purpose of revenue collection. During this time peasants flourished to a limited extent and the same policy was followed by Shivaji 's son , there came several independent states like ones in Malwa, Gwalior, Peshwa ruled areas and the like came into existence. The Mughal rule continued to weaken became ultimately decentralised and several strong zamindars along with the peasants revolted. Mansabdars, Zamindars, Jagirdars continued to exist as the intermediary oppressive classes and the peasants suffered a heavy coercion. Historians like Irfan Habib reckon that the Mughal rule was basically based upon the coercion, which it used for its existence and continuation.

With the of the Mughal ruler at the top the Mughal period of the Indian consisted of the following two categories.

- 1) Intermediary - oppressive classes and,
- 2) Peasants.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What is meant by Agrarian relations in Medieval India?

.....
.....
.....

2. What is Agrarian Relations during the Sultanate Period?

.....
.....
.....

3. Discuss about the Revenue Collection System.

.....
.....
.....

4. Discuss about the Methods of Irrigation and Crop-pattern.

.....
.....
.....

4.9 LET US SUM UP

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

Notes

and judicial powers. Land rights controlled the life of 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.

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. The village is referred to as 'gaon or uru in the local language of the Deccan. It is also called *maae* (a corrupt form of Arabic *mauza*), and *deh* (Persian). A bigger village that included a market place (bazar) was called *Qasbah* (Arabic *qasbah*). The word *gaon* is derived from Sanskrit *grama*. The vast expanse of village fields was called *gaon shivan*. 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 2040 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 *pandhiri* (indigenous term, originally meaning white soil unfit for cultivation). The *pandhari* was surrounded and protected by a wall called *gaon Kunsu*. It will be 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 *halaadas*. The original family in possession of the land 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.

4.10 KEY WORDS

Feudalism: Feudalism was a combination of legal, economic and military customs that flourished in medieval Europe between the 9th and 15th centuries.

Agrarian: An agrarian society, or agricultural society, is any community whose economy is based on producing and maintaining crops and farmland. Another way to define an agrarian society is by seeing how much of a nation's total production is in agriculture.

4.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Discuss about the Existence of Feudalism/Serfdom.
2. Write Peculiar type of Land Tax *Jizia*?
3. Discuss about the Agrarian Relations During the Mughal Rule.

4.12 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Barth, F. 2001. Features of Person and Society under Agrarianism: Collected Essays. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Brown, D.E. 1988. Hierarchy, History, and Human Nature: The Social Origins of Historical Consciousness. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Cohen, M. N. 1989. Health and the Rise of Civilization. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Notes

- Johnson, A. W. 2000. *The Evolution of Human Societies: from Foraging Group to Agrarian State*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Langlois, S. 2001. "Traditions: Social." In Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, Editors, *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, Pergamon, Oxford, 15829-15833.
- Lenski, Gerhard. "Agrarian Societies [Parts I & II]." In *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*, 189-296. 1966. Reprinted, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Nolan, Patrick, and Gerhard Lenski. 2014. "The Agricultural Economy." In *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, 156-201. 12th ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pryor, F. L. 2006. "The Adoption of Agriculture: Some Theoretical and Empirical Evidence." *American Anthropologist* 88:879-97.
- Renfrew, C. (ed.) 1993. *The Explanation of Culture Change*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Thompson, Paul B. 2010. *The Agrarian Vision: Sustainability and Environmental Ethics*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.

4.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 4.2
2. See Section 4.3
3. See Section 4.4
4. See Section 4.5

UNIT 5: INDUSTRIES, PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES, TRADE, COMMERCE AND MONETARY SYSTEM

STRUCTURE

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Industries in Medieval India
- 5.3 Production technologies Medieval India
- 5.4 Trade Medieval India
- 5.5 Commerce and Monetary System in India
- 5.6 Let us sum up
- 5.7 Key Words
- 5.8 Questions for Review
- 5.9 Suggested readings and references
- 5.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

- To know about the Industries in Medieval India
- To discuss about the Production technologies Medieval India
- To know about the Trade Medieval India
- To discuss about the Commerce and Monetary System in India

5.1 INTRODUCTION

India held world monopoly in the manufacturing of cotton textiles for about more than 3000 years from B.C. 1500 to A.D. 1500. It has been observed that in the Middle Ages, Indian cotton textile products were in great demand in Eastern and European, both the markets. There has been vast development observed in cotton industry as the way of producing

Notes

products is now changed (Wolbers, 2009). Earlier, the Indian industry seems to be using traditional ways in manufacturing clothes and cotton. However, after agriculture, textile industry is the only sector in India that has generated huge employment for both skilled and unskilled labours in textile. From economic point of view, textile industry is considered as the second largest employment generating sector in India and this has been recorded that it offers direct employment to over 36 million in the country. The Indian industry continued to progress till the outbreak of First World War in 1914. This also increased the number of textile firms especially in India. India has been well known for the textile goods since ancient times and the traditional of India is virtually decayed during the colonial regime. However the modern textile industry took birth in India in the early 19th century when the first mill in the country was established near Calcutta. After independence, the cotton textile industry made rapid growth plans with number of spindles (Lal, 2006) . The great Mughal Emperor brought carpet weaving to India in 16th century and thus it is named as Mughal carpets. It is said when Babur came to India and when he felt disappointment from the luxury facets. At that time, he was actually missing the luxuries of Persia, which included the famous Persian carpet. Hence Akbar laid the foundation of carpet weaving tradition in India in 1520 AD when he actually brought some carpet weavers from Persia.

Cotton in India is considered as one of the principal crop, which aids in exploring employment opportunities and make significant contribution in generating export earnings. As per statements marked by FICCI, Cottage industry presently engages around six million farmers besides associating it with around 40-50 million people that perform activities relating to cotton cultivation, cotton trade ad cotton processing. Domestic textile industry is built with 1608 spinning and 200 composite wheels, with an installed capacity of 35.61 million spindles, 448000 open-end rotors and 69000 looms in organized sector. Though, India has brought qualitative transformation in producing cotton since independence, yet it is far behind many countries like USA and china (Fletcher, 2013). The main reason for such under growth is on account of that 65% area under cotton is rain fed. In contemporary market place, there are certain companies in

the same industry that produces products through weaving and spinning over hundreds of years ago. However on the other hand, innovations and developments are being generating up to a higher extent. The present research has been made with an attempt to ascertain development in Indian textile industry and time as well as concept of producing products has changed over years (The Tradition of Textiles in India, 2005). The industry would not be able to survive in strong competition from the modern mill industry of UK, which usually provides cheap and better goods as a result of Industrial Revolution in the subsequent country. Hence, during that time, British textile industry enjoyed huge political advantage. The real expansion of cotton textile industry tool placed in 1870's since at that time, the number of mills enhanced over 60% especially in Mumbai. The essay has further also discussed list of all modern developments that were held in the same industry along with the techniques that are currently in use (Barnes, 2004). Textile industry in India plays a vital role in Indian economy and it also contributes substantially to the export regions. The region nearly represents that modern form of production has taken industrial place and the discussion also states that wide variety of natural and synthetic fibers are used to produce fabrics. The phenomenal growth in textile industry has been a striking feature in the economic development of country since independence (Technology Development in the Indian textile Industry: Interaction between Government Policy, firms and cooperative Research Associations, 2012). The traditional way of producing fabrics is entirely different with that to the modern way of production, which uses large pool of diversified machines, which produces different types of designer and casual fabrics. On the other hand, weaving and spinning of clothes lies under the traditional way of fabric production however, in the present scenario as well. Most of the organizations have been using the same technique for producing finished fabrics. This is also a time consuming process however fabrics are quite different in quality, which further enhances the value of traditional ways in textile industry. The record of ancient medieval Indian textile exists mostly in literature and sculptures; hence there is an archaeological evidence of cotton textile at Mohenjo daro in the Indus valley around 3000 BC. Indian textiles were

Notes

more important to Dutch and the English than to the Portuguese (Sukaadas, 1992). Carpets, shawls and other textile materials are still made in India as they have been for hundreds of years. Most of the materials are made with knotted wool and with cotton pack. However patterns are strongly Persian but it also shows a preference for naturalistic plants and animals. India has a diverse and rich textile tradition and the origin can be traced to the Indus Valley Civilization. It has been observed that the people of that civilization used homespun cotton for weaving their garments and this is quite concerned with Indian tradition and history. Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo Daro have stipulated the use of certain modes for weaving designs in fabrics such as needles made up of wood and bones (An analysis of growth and development of textile industry in India, 2015). This make sure that people have been spinning cotton at home to make yarn and finished garments. Fragments of woven cotton have also been found in this category, which alternatively produces best fabrics as required. In RigVeda, information about textile industry and about the concept of weaving has been stated. As per the Hindu epics, Ramayan and Mahabharat, information about the variety of fabrics in vogue during those times is also included. From the history of Ramayan, the concept of rich garments worn by the aristocracy can be identified which is not often in modern textile industry. India has numerous trade connections with the outside clients and the cotton textiles in India are also populous in other countries of the ancient world. Ancient way of producing fabrics is quite dissimilar as compared with the contemporary style since that is probably integrated with various sculptures belonging to Mauryan and Gupta ages. This also showcases that ancient history testifies to the technical achievements of the antediluvian Indian weaver. For instance- Indian silk is quite popular in Rome especially in the early centuries of Christian era. Several fragment of the cotton fabrics have been coming directly from the topographic point of Fostat, which is one of the oldest places of Gujarat (Barnard, 2013). Cotton fabrics and all the related materials have also been exported to China at the time of heydays of silk route. The past tradition about the textile industry and handlooms is still discernible in the motifs, designs and patterns (specifically in weaving technique), which is

probably used in the current industry as well. Surat in Gujarat is one of the oldest centers of trade in cotton textiles and the city then exports this to further parts of the world. Huge development has been taking place in textile industry as now in the modern time period, many machines and devices have entered in the market place that further aids in producing the requisite fabric as required. In the 19th century, Kashmir shawl was one of the rarest and most beautiful gifts, which could be offered to woman. This romantic appeal was started in the Vale of Kashmir and brings nobility to India. Woolen blankets and shawls were woven and exported to Roman Empire and brought in Turkestanni weavers (Sinclair, 2012) . Indian shawls are also considered as the soft fabric draped beautifully with colorful shimmers and pine patters. There are several stories that has given origin to core designer shawls and it is as old as processes of 16th century. Mughlas not only used Persian technique for weaving shawls and carpets but also they were highly influenced by traditional designs and motifs from Persia. However, as compared to the oldest form of textile companies, weaving, printing and spinning has facilitated numerous other designs as well in fabrics, which are quite different from traditional textile. Chintz1 is also a popular tradition in India. The types of fabrics can be categorized into varied types, which further are imported to Europe and other parts of the country. Long cloth can also be painted in similar fashion by using wooden blocks and motifs, which reflects Indian history and properties (Comparing Technological Innovation of Textile Industries in India and China, 2006). The crowning glory of Indian textile was Kinkhab or Brocade, which currently is in demand. This is indeed useful for males and females both for designing purposes. This is such a fabric that is being woven out of silver threads and then plated with gold and thus, it makes the fabric expensive and quality concerned. Therefore, the expensive dresses that are made up of brocade can be used for special occasions like weddings and religious functions. For the Mughals, this fabric epitomized the refined taste and high level of indulgence. The literal meaning of Kinkhab is fewer dreams and the fabric is made up of abrasive texture that makes the material more enticed. The textile known as Patola forms to be a traditional garb of Gujarati bride and this is one of the most

common forms of fabrics in contemporary scenario. It is quite difficult to imprint the design, as certain sorts of machines and equipment are required to do so.

5.2 INDUSTRIES IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

Sultanate Period:

During Sultanate period, Bengal and the towns in Gujarat were famous for their fine quality fabrics. Cloth of fine quality was produced in other towns as well.

Cambay in Gujarat was famous for textiles and for gold and silver work. Sonargaon in Bengal was famous for raw silk and fine cotton cloth (called muslin later on).

There were many other handicrafts as well, such as leather work, metal work, carpet weaving, etc. Some of the new crafts introduced by the Turks included the manufacture of paper. The art of manufacturing paper had been discovered by the Chinese in the 2nd century. It was known in the Arab world in the 5th century and travelled to Europe only during the 14th century.

The production of textiles was also improved by the introduction of the spinning-wheel. Cotton could be cleaned faster and better by the use of the cotton carder's bow (dhunia). But there is little doubt that most important was the skill of the Indian craftsmen.

Indian textiles had already established their position in the trade to countries on the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. During this period, fine Indian textiles were introduced to China as well where it was valued more than silk. India imported high grade textiles (satin etc.) from West Asia, glassware and, of course, horses. From China it imported raw silk and porcelain.

Mughal Period:

The most impressive achievement of the Mughal Emperors was in the field of manufactured goods. They had a very rich and prosperous foreign trade although they had not developed their own navy. According to the Time of India of October 2, 1934, as quoted by Prof. S. R. Sharma:-a Captain of the Indian marine was appointed annually by the East India Company to the post of Admiral of the Mughal Emperor, with Head Quarters at Surat, in order to defend Mughal trading vessels.

The officer, fortunate enough to hold the post, received about Rs 85,000 for his year's service. This officer was an English man and was appointed by the East India Trading Company. We can, thus see that in spite of the fact that they had no navy of their own and no ship building activity, they had their relations with Persia, Iraq, Mombasa, Sumatra and even other African countries.

They had a very favourable trade balance because the common people did not use the costly produce of Europe and in order to have Indian goods, the foreign traders used to import bullion from their mother countries.

Usually, they exported textile, both silken and cotton and some woolen garments and cloth, shawls and carpets plus, of course, spices. According to the foreign travellers "The whole country from Orissa to East Bengal looked like a big cotton factory and the Dacca District was especially reputed for its delicate Muslim fabrics, the best and finest cloth made of cotton."

According to Pelsaert, the people of East Bengal lived "by the weaving industry and the produce has the highest reputation and quality" Another foreign traveller, Bernier, also speaks in identical terms. "There is, in Bengal, such a quantity of cotton and silk that the kingdom may be called the common store house for those two kinds of merchandize, not of Hindustan or the empire of the great Mughal only, but of all the neighbouring kingdoms and even of Europe."

According to one estimate, the total annual produce of silk was not less than 2/4 million pounds. They had some other minor industries like the one recorded by Terry. According to this writer, the people could produce many curious boxes, trunks, stand-dishes (pen cases), carpets, with other excellent manufactures.

Types of Textile Industries under The Mughals:

There were two types of karkhanas during the Mughal period. One was the artisan system in which the independent artisans were supplying their own capital, their own material and their own labour to manufacture the goods and the other was the karkhana system in which the artisans were working in karkhanas on the order of the state. The state karkhanas were established generally in towns and particularly in prominent cities i.e. in Delhi, Agra etc. which is well described by Abul Fazl and Bernier. In Mughal India karkhanas were under the direct control of the state. The modern system of contractors was absent there and the cottage industries were to capable of satisfying the state demand. The state was responsible for producing each and every item of its use. There were so many needs of the state i.e. the state was giving a robe (khilat) to the mansabdars twice in a year. The Hindus and other noble were receiving these robes from the emperor on the two birthdays (solar and lunar) of the emperor.⁵ The number of mansabdars was 7500, who were paid in cash and there were 7000 mansabdars who were paid in Jagirs.⁶ Therefore the Mughal government was producing almost each and every item of its need, because the modern system of private karkhanas was absent there. The Mughal rulers were encouraging the production of many items i.e. beds, tents, clothes, jewellery, gold and silver wares perfumes, medicines, shawls, turbans and other metals. The Emperor was giving almost thousands of robes of honour to his officers and others. There are many sources telling about the number of karkhanas. There were 12 treasuries and 36 karkhanas. The Marathi works like Sabhasad Bahar and the Chitnis Bakhar mention only 18 karkhanas. According to Zawabit-i-Alamgiri⁹ there were 69 karkhanas. The Ain-i-Akbari tells about 26 main karkhanas and it indirectly tells that there were 10 karkhanas also. Therefore there were 36 karkhanas in total. The state karkhanas were producing the good for khilat robe of honour which was consisted of several items distributed by the emperor on several occasions i.e. coronation ceremony, the two Ids, the solar and Lunar weighments. Robe of honour was not only given to the military department but also to everyone present at the court. There were several categories of khilat, those of three, five, six or seven pieces. A three piece (khilat) consisted

of a long coat with full skirts (jamah), a turban (dastar), and a scarf for the waist (Kamarband). Other was a five piece robe came from the Tosha-khana (store house for presents), the extra piece being a turban ornament called a sarpech and a band for tying across the turban (balaband). For the next grade was a tight fitting jacket with short sleeves, called a half sleeves (nimastin) was added. Tavernier also gives the details of the seven piece khilat, the cap, the cabaya or grand robe i.e. royal robe (long gown), (a coat with sleeves) or cassock, two pair of drawers, two shirts and two girdles with a scarf to be worn round the neck and upon the head for protection against the heat of the sun. The karkhanas also prepared dresses for the royal wardrobe. The harem clothes, garments, and hundred other items were manufactured in the royal karkhanas. Clothes, embroideries, carpets were prepared in the royal karkhanas and imported from abroad. Thus valuable articles prepared in these karkhanas were to meet the needs of the emperors and courtiers.

Silk Proto-Industry:

During the Mughal period Bengal was the main silk producing center. A large scale silk industry was existed in Bengal. The other important centers where sericulture was practiced in India were Kashmir, Assam and Western India. But Bengal was the main center of silk production. The silk produced in Bengal was exported not only out of India but also to Gujarat and other silk weaving canters of India. Use of silk was prohibited in Islam as its use was considered unlawful for Muslim males.¹⁸ But this Islamic religiosity could hardly control the use of silken fabrics by Muslim elites.¹⁹ The climatic condition of India also supported the use of silk for most of the parts of India. Silk was generally used for ceremonial purposes. Delhi, Agra, Lahore and Ahmedabad were the important centers for the manufacture of silk. But because of the timidity of Indian markets for silk goods could hardly to expand silk industry under Akbar and silk industry remained a minor industry during the first half of 17th century. Some other important centers of production of silk were Murshidabad, Hugli, Chinsura, Puri, Ghorahat, etc. The patolas were manufactured in Gujarat and on the Coromandal coast. In

Notes

Gujarat, Cambay and Ahmedabad were the main manufacturing centres for this cloth. The patolas were used as waist cloths. Silk was also produced at Benaras, Chaul, Thana and Hyderabad.(map.1) Even the Asian market for Bengali silk during this period remained stable. The main consumer of silk stuffs was the Mughal aristocracy. It was during Empress NurJahan, the silk fabrics became popular at the Mughal court. The most of the needs of Mughal nobility were satisfied by the import of silk goods to India from Far East, Central Asia, Persia and the eastern Mediterranean countries. The karkhanas of state merchants and nobles were particularly for satisfying the state and their personal needs. These karkhanas worked on the instruction given by the state to governors and Jagirdars.²² Even high skilled artisans were invited from foreign countries during the reign of Jahangir. There were two important branches of silk industry: sericulture and silk weaving. Both of these were managed by the system of advance capital or dadni merchants. The system of growing mulberry plants and working of filature was the responsibility of dadni merchant. The merchants were providing both the capital and raw materials to the weavers.

Cotton Industries :

Cotton and silk were the main textile crops during the medieval period. Like the cultivation of cotton, cotton weaving was also popular because of the plenty of raw material. This is the reason that textile industry was the dominant industry during the Mughal period. The cotton textile industry contributed a lot to the development of the economy of Mughal Empire. The raw cotton of the villages and the weavers of urban areas facilitated the production of cotton textiles. Towns were the main canters for the production of the textile industry. The urban weavers utilized the almost all the facilities of the town and because of their long working hours they could work efficiently. Growth of cotton textile industry during the Mughal period was because of the great foreign demand for Indian goods. The fine quality of muslin produced at Dacca was known as mulmul -i-khas. Because of its delicacy and fineness it was suitable for royal use. Because of its transparency it seems very gorgeous. The Dacca muslin was well known for their delicacy for centuries. The

fineness of the Dacca muslin is shown from its length and the number of threads in the warp in comparison to its weight. The weight of a 15 yards piece was only 900 grains. It is said that a wet muslin cloth laid on grass was almost invisible, it was just like evening dew known as shuabnam. Another was called ab-i-rawan or running water which became invisible in water. This fine thread can be spun in a moist atmosphere. Therefore the spinning of muslin is required the rainy season. Sind and Masulipatnam was the centre where muslin was produced. But the main production centres of muslin were Dacca. Jamdani were very fine textured muslins in which floral, animal or bird ornaments are woven on the loom. The warp is as a rule unbleached grey yarn, the motifs being woven in bleached white yarn. The most important centers of Jamdani weaving in the Gangetic plain were Dacca, Tanda (Fyzabad district, Uttar Pradesh) and Banaras. In Banaras, gold thread is used along with bleached and unbleached white to weave the design since Mughal period. In Dacca, coloured cotton thread is used along with gold and white, but the Tanda cloth, are of finest quality, only white yarn being used in the ornament.

The main cotton production centers in Northern India were Sialkot where embroidered muslin was produced. Chintz and red muslins were produced at Sirhind. Saharanpur, Panipat were also the main production centers of muslin. Muslin and Calico were also produced at Agra and Delhi. Mau and Banaras were the production center of muslin. In Eastern India calico was produced at Murshidabad and Kasimbazar. Dacca was the main production center of muslin. Muslin was also produced at Sonargaon, Soron and Harishpur. In Central India Chanderi was the main production center of muslin. The art of making jamdani designs on fine fabric reached its zenith during the Mughal rule. There were handlooms in almost all villages of the Dacca district, Dacca, Sohargaon, Dhamral, Titabari, Jangalbari and Bajitpur were famous for making superior quality of Jamdani muslin. The jamdani muslin was manufactured under the monopoly of government and the finest muslins were reserved for Bengal Nawabs of Murshidabad. These muslins were exclusively produced by the weavers of Dacca. The rest were manufactured at weaver's house. NurJahan also patronized Dacca muslin and made every

effort for its promotion and it was made the fashionable dress of the Mughal royalty. This high quality of muslins were mainly manufactured for the imperial and native courts of India. The other important production centers of muslin were Ajmer, Cambay, Baroda, Burhanpur, Aurangabad, Paithan. In southeast and south the other important centers of the production of cotton were Sagar, Hyderabad, Masllipatam, Nasarpur. At Nagapatan also the long cloth was produced.

5.3 PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES MEDIEVAL INDIA

Shawl Karkhanas:

Shawl karkhanas of Kashmir were very famous. The new loom was introduced which contributed a lot for the development of industry. During the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin twill tapestry technique was introduced. The woollen rug from Kashmir was exported to Persia. The production of Kashmir was in abundance, which monopolized the entire market. Different types of floral designs were woven on the new type of loam. Therefore Walter Lawrence view that shawl weaving technique was introduced in India and then it was entered in Kashmir is not true. During the Mughal empire, the major development was the needle work embroidery. There was a big craze of shawls during the Mughal empire. It was a considered the precious gift, which was gifted to the nobles and the foreign rulers, because it was considered a sign of prestige. During the time of Zain-ul-Abidin Kashmir was famous for manufacture of silk. Different types of wool came from different countries was woven in Kashmir. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin invited Turkish weavers and the foundation of shawl industry was laid in India Abul Fazl in his Ain-i-Akbari cites a number of textiles. Emperor Akbar took great interest in various stuffs. That's why we find Iranian, European and Mongolian articles of wear, in the country. Because of his interest in textiles e invited a number of artisans and craftsmen from different countries. The karkhanas established at Lahore, Agra, Fatehpur and Ahmedabad were famous for producing excellent products. Multan and Leh were the other important centers of silk production. Lahore was a center of shawl weaving and produced a stuff called mayan which was used for turbans

and waist-bands. This was undoubtedly luxurious shawl type and was used by aristocratic class. Srinagar the provincial capital of Kashmir was also a center of shawl weaving industry.

Shawls were never produced in India to a great extent. The origin of Kashmiri shawls can be traced back to pre-Mughal period. In India shawl was used as personal wear as it is used today round the shoulders or over the head. John Irwin noticed the writings of Pietro Della Valle where he cited that in Persia shawl was used as girdle whereas in India it was used across the shoulder. Even today, some priests of the Parsis, descendants of Iranians are draping woollen shawl round the waist, for ceremonial purposes.

Kashmir was the main center of production of shawls in India. The foundation of Kashmir shawl industry was laid by Zain-ul-Abidin, whom historians called “Akbar of Kashmir”. The best quality of shawls was produced in Kashmir were the “ring shawl”. These shawls were name as ‘ring shawl’ because when there are completely folded it can be passed through a men’s signet ring. Another famous Kashmiri shawl is soberly colored and delicately embroidered which represents the conventional Persian and Cashmere wilderness of flowers with birds. Emperor Akbar was very fond of wearing shawls He himself introduced a new fashion of wearing shawls, which was sown back to back in which under surface of the shawl was never seen, popularly known as doshala. But during the time of Mughal the shawls which were in vogue were embroidered with gold and silver. The majority of best quality of shawls was made of Pashmina. The two main types of Kashmiri shawls as the do-sala (twin-shawls) and the Chaddar-rumal or kasaba. As it name denotes that it is always sold in pairs. The kasaba shawls are squarish in shape. They are generally in twill weave or may have damark pattern in a plain colour woven into them. The colours of Kashmiri shawls are yellow (zard), white (sufed), black (mushki), blue (ferozi), green (zingari), purple (uda), crimon (gulnar), and scarlet (Kimiz). The motifs of the shawls are the imitation Nature – the leaf of the Chenar tree, apple blossoms, the almond, the tulip and sometime the fruits of the region were remained

Notes

the main motifs of the shawls of Kashmir.⁵³ The mode of shawl weaving is popularly known as the twill-tapestry technique which is similar to that of tapestry weaving in the west. The pattern of the shawls were produced on fabrics by means of smooth, light, wooden spools known as Tojlis, without the use of a shuttle.⁵⁴ The designs on the shawls are formed by the weft threads. The designs are woven back and forth round the threads of the warp wherever each colour is required. The loom used by the Kashmir weavers is horizontal, unlike those used for tapestry weaving in Europe.⁵⁵ The twill-tapestry technique is very time-taking. It requires a high degree of specialization of weaving technique. Before weaving the six other specialists take part in the preliminary process: the warp maker, the warp dresser, warp threader. The pattern drawer, the color caller, the pattern master. The Jamaivar shawls of Kashmir were also very famous, which is very famous and loom-designed brocaded woolen-fabric. The Jamaivar shawls are of fixed length and is woven completely with wool or sometimes mixed with cotton, but the floral designs, but the floral designs and brocaded parts are in silk or Pashmina wool. So many brocade designs are found in these shawls but the dominant are the large flower sprays (Kirkha Butis and the small flowers or Rega butis). The Shawl karkhana of Kashmir was very famous. The twill tapestry technique was introduced by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. The introduction of new loom contributed a lot to the development of shawl industry. In Kashmir the production was on such a large scale that it monopolized the market. A number of plants and flowers were woven during this period. Woolen rug Pattu was exported to Persia. Therefore the view of Walter Lawrence that the shawl weaving technique was introduced by Babur in India then it came to Kashmir is not true. During the Mughals there was a big craze for Kashmiri shawls, it was considered a sign of prestige. On different occasions it was gifted to the nobles of different ranks and to foreign rulers. *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl throws light on the manufacture of Kashmiri shawls during 16th century. Akbar was very fond of adopting the new style of wearing, this is the reason that a number of European, Iranian and Mongolian articles of wear were available in his wardrobe. He himself took interest in the development of textile industry. The imperial karkhanas of Agra, Lahore, Fatehpur and

Ahmadabad were famous for the excellence of their products. With the textile industry Akbar also patronized the shawl industry of Kashmir. In Ain 31 to the Sal, Akbar renamed as Param Naram, which means very soft. The production of shawls during the Mughal period was on a large and very large scale. In Lahore itself there were more than thousand workshops of Shawls. A kind of shawl, called mayan was chiefly woven there; and it consisted of silk and wool mixed, and was used for chiras (turbans), fotas (lion cloth) etc. Tus shawl was made from the hair of Tus goat. Patterned and corded or taran shawls were made of either white, black or mixed wool. During Akbar's time the white kind of shawl was dyed in the number of colors. Different varieties of shawls were famous during the Mughal period i.e. Kalabattu⁶⁶, this design was brocaded with gold wire, Zardozi, was embroidered with gold wire, Qasidah, the pattern in this was too embroidered not woven. Qalghai, was made either of silk or gold wire. Bandhnun shawl was tie-dyed pattern. Chint shawl was painted or decorated with floral patterns. According to Jarret Purzdar is a sort of stuff of which the outside is plush-like. Women were the main spinners, they were working in their homes. The raw material was given to them in a very bad condition, their first task was to separate it into fine fleece, inferior fleece and hair. The ratio of fine fleece was only about one third of the total fleece, and this is further divided into two grades, the one is very fine and other is known as phiri, which is of inferior quality. The yarns were spun lengthwise and their length was about 2500 yards and then doubled and twisted. For this work spinners were getting about one and a half annas a day. The dyers were coming under a separate group. During the Mughal period more than three hundred tints were in use. Most of these were vegetable dyes blues and purples from indigo, orange and yellow from carthamus and saffron, red mainly from logwood. Dyes from other sources were cochineal for crimson, iron filings for black. Imported English baizes were used for green. At least six specialists weavers were involved in this weaving process. They were warp-maker, warp-dresser, warptheader, pattern-drawer, color-caller and pattern-master. The warp-maker was twisting the yarn into the required thickness for the warp. The task of warp-dresser was to starch the warp and the task of warp-dresser was to pass the yarn through the heddles of

Notes

the loom. The weavers were mostly poor as they were. The pattern-dyers or naqqash were getting higher salaries. The weaver were all men and the owner of loom was known as ustad. There were two types of contracts between the owner of the loom and those who worked his looms. The first type of contracts was based on piecework in which the weavers receive a fixed for every hundred spools passed round as many warps. The second type was based on a partnership where the loom owner provides the loom and raw materials and took one fifth of the net sale. The spools or tojlis used in place of shuttles were made of light and smooth woods. In the beginning of the process of weaving the cloth was faced downward and the spool was inserted by the weaver from the reverse side. When every line of the weft was completed the comb was brought down with a repetition of stroke. The quality and standard of the weaving was determined by counting the number of combstroke or wefts to the girah (one sixteenth of a yard). The main profit makers were not loom owners but the shawl-brokers, who were the intermediaries between the producers and the English merchants. Therefore there emerged a class of loom owners known as karkhanadars and their head was known as ustad. The weavers exploited by the karkhanadars. The karkhanadars employed artisans and paid them in cash. The artisans paid them in cash and the art went down from father to son. The imperial court was the main consumer of these shawls and the transactions worth lakhs of rupees were done at the Imperial camp. In spite of the well established industry during the Mughals, the condition of weavers was not good because of the exploitation by the karkhanadars. The wage of women and children were very low. With the expansion of the Mughal empire new centers were opened for the shawl trade. ShahJahan sent a large number of Kashmir shawls to the rulers of Golconda and Bijapur. During this period shawls were sent to the Ottoman empire, Persia and Egypt. Lahore, Ahmadabad, Gujarat, Agra and southern India emerged as main marketing center of Kashmiri shawls within India.

The Extent of Mughal Karkhanas: Abul Fazl mentions the following karkhana in his Ain-i-Akbari; the treasuries, the mint, the Farrash khana, illumination and lights, the workshops for making the royal seals, the

abdarkhana (for water), the kitchen, mevakhana (the fruitery), khushbukhana (the perfumery), the wardrobe and the bedding and mattresses, the workshops for manufacture of shawls and textiles, kurkyaraqkhana and tosh khana (for dresses and different types of stuff used for weaving apparel etc.). It was during the time of Akbar when much attention was paid towards the development of Karkhanas. Though importation of the stuffs was high during the Mughals from Iran and Europe. But various efforts were also done to produce stuffs indigenously. During Akbar skilful masters and workmen were employed to teach people an improved system of manufacture. Imperial workshops were established at different places like Lahore, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Ahmedabad. The products produced in those workshops were very fine and their patterns, figures and variety attracted the foreign travellers. The royal patronage to the workmanship led to the development of these karkhanas. In these workshops all kinds of hair weaving and silk spinning was done. During Mughals royal karkhanas were scattered all over India. The main centres of karkhanas were Kashmir, Lahore, Agra, Ahmadabad, Fatehpur and Burhanpur. Kashmir workshop was very famous among all. Its palkis, inkstands, trunks, bed sheets, boxes and spoons were used all over India. But its shawls were very famous. In Agra, Patna and Lahore similar shawls were manufactured but these shawls could not reach the fineness of Kashmir shawls. A number of industries were flourished at Lahore. Silken, woollen, cotton and mixed goods both plain and flowered were produced there. Lahore was the main centre where art and craft was practiced. It was the main centre of producing shawls. There were more than thousand workshops of shawls in Lahore. A kind of shawl called mayan was chiefly woven there, which consisted of silk and wool mixed. But it was not a regular shawl, because it was used for chiras (turbans) and fotas (lion bands) etc. Silk industry was also flourished there, which produced brocades and velvets and were on sale in Agra.⁸¹Sialkot, Bajwara and Sultanpur were also famous for embroidery. Gujarat was famous not only for the fertility of soil but also for the manufacture of silk and brocades, as cited by Ali Muhammad Khan in his Mirat-iAhmadi city of Ahmadabad was very famous for the karkhanas

Notes

producing velvet embroidered with gold and silver. In *Ain-i-Akbari*, Abul Fazl described that there were a number of workshops established in Agra. The most famous was the weavers' shops where the all sorts of textiles were produced. Among the Mughals Akbar had keen interest in developing the karkhanas. He had a mechanical turn of mind. During the reign of Akbar a number of fine textiles were manufactured at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, good cotton cloth at Patan in Gujarat and at Bahrapur in Khandesh while Sonargaon was famous for its fine fabrics, the best and finest clothes made of cotton all over India.

Administration of the Mughal Karkhanas:

The Mughal Emperors were maintaining their karkhanas themselves, for the manufacture of different goods i.e. the articles of cotton and silk. The karkhanas were established within the boundaries of the wall of the fort. During the Mughal period the advancement took place in each and every department of the state. Babur did not have time to the industrial development yet he established public works department or *Shuhrat-i-Am*. Humayun too would not do any remarkable work for the development of karkhanas because of the political disturbance. Because of the political stability and extent of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar, major industrial developments took place which is clear through the words of Abul Fazl. He said that Akbar paid much attention to various stuffs, skilful masters and workmen have settled in this country to teach people an improved system of manufacture. His majesty himself acquired in a short time a theoretical and practical knowledge of the whole trade, and on account of the case bestowed upon them the intelligent workmen of this country soon improved. According to Abul Fazl about hundred workshops were there under Akbar, which were coming under *Diwan-i-Buyutat*⁸⁹. Father Monserrate, an eyewitness, writes that Akbar did not shrink from the craft of any ordinary artisan. Nor does he shrink from watching and himself practising for the sake of amusement the craft of any ordinary artisan. In the karkhanas for cotton weaving, dyeing and printing, silk and shawl manufacture, Akbar is said to have introduced new designs or varieties but even acquired 'theoretical and practical knowledge' in some of the trades. During the

reign of Jahangir also karkhanas flourished a lot. According to Bernier during 17th century in karkhanas skilled workers were employed by the state. During the reigns of Jahangir and ShahJahan the art and crafts industries were as developed as never before during the Muslim period. Sir Thomas Roe has appreciated the Indian artisans of Jahangir's reign for their perfection. Bernier, who visited India during the reign of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb was also impressed by the industrial advancement of India i.e. the shawls manufactured in Kashmir Agra, Patna and Lahore reached at its apex of fineness. During the reign of Aurangzeb, the disintegration of Mughal Empire took place. It was the time of setback in each and every aspect of life. It adversely affected the growth of industries. It is suggested that he hated the luxuries, but it is not completely true. The continuous wars were led to the exhaustion of the resources. During the later Mughals also the position could not improve. Under the Mughals the administration of karkhanas was very well organised. Khan-i-Saman was the head of the whole of the household department. In Ain-i-Akbari we don't find the term Mir-i-Saman. In Akbar Nama we find a reference of Mir-i-Saman, but his powers and duties are not mentioned there. The term Khan-iSaman was in use during 15th century whereas during 17th century the term Mir-iSaman was in use during the reign of Jahangir. During the 15th year of the reign of Jahangir, the term Khan-i-Saman was in use, when Mir Jumla was appointed to the post of Khidmat-i-Samani and during the 21st year of his reign the term Mir-i-Saman was again used.

According to Dastur-ul-Amals of Aurangzeb's period, the term Khan-i-Saman was predominant.⁹⁸ Khan-i-Saman was under working just below the post of Diwan. He was mainly the Diwan of expenditure. The duties of Khan-i-Saman are well described in the Dastur:

- He was responsible for attestation of the salary bills as well as for increments in the salary.
- The appointment, dismissal and posting of Daroghas, amins, mushrifs and tahvildar, of the various karkhanas.
- Setting up of the rules and regulations for the karkhanas and treasuries.

Notes

- Considering applications from the workshops and stores.
- Nazar, charity-funds and presents • Permits for the loan of articles from the karkhanas.
- Attestation of the attendance of the daroghas, amins, mushrifs and tahvildars of karkhanas.
- Long sheets of letters from the karkhanas
- Arrangements for the marriages of the princes.
- Escheat of property. If the order is restore, then send a copy of the order to the office (of the Diwan), so that his tanka may be paid according to it.
- Khan-i-Saman was responsible for manufacture, supply and for their stock also. He made the arrangement for the orders of the emperor.

Mir-i-Saman was also under the control of Diwan. He was responsible for the proper administration of the internal finances of the buyutat. Mir-i-Saman also made out the estimates of the expenditure twice a year and obtained the sanction from the wazir and the monarch.

All important papers were required to be countersigned by the Mir-i-Saman. He was solely responsible to deal with state cases connected with property under the control of the department. Both under Jahangir and ShahJahan's the Mir-i-Saman occupied a higher status and enjoyed a much higher rank than the Diwan of their department. The management of Buyutat was done with the various offices and their departments. There was a Darogah or a superintendent, assisted by clerks and accountants at the head of every karkhana.

Other important officers were Tahsildar (cashier and store keeper), Mustauf-i (Auditor) etc. But at the apex remained the king His duties did not end with the sanction of grants and the inspection of the financial statement every sixth month. The Mir-i-Saman and the Diwan presented themselves in the Darbar every day, like other heads of departments, and represented important cases connected with their duties.

Some of the manufactured goods were presented in the court before the king including the artisans if their work was remarkable.

Thus it was the complete management of the karkhanas under the Mughals.

Nature of Karkhanas under the Mughals: The main purpose of the state Karkhanas was to provide the encouragement for the workers to improve their skills. The major factor that was enforcing the workers to secure job in the state karkhanas was that the state was providing much security to their job.¹⁰⁸ The workers during the medieval period were not willing to work for any private organization because there were not any rules to regulate these private organizations, or no private organization was available during the medieval period which could provide the security to the workers. If any noblemen wanted the service of any artisan, he called him forcefully and after taking his service, he was not providing their reasonable wages to them. Therefore the artisans found themselves safe under the state karkhanas. Abul Fazl gives information that Akbar invited a number of master craftsmen from far and wide places and settle them in the cities of northern India.

Father Monserrate gives the reference of the encouragement of artisans under the patronage of emperor Akbar. Similarly during the reign of Jahangir and ShahJahan the patronage to the artisans continued. Only those artisans were appointed to the court Karkhanas, who were highly skilled and from different part of the countries they were sent to the capital where these skilled artisans were working under the guidance of experts. Pelsaert talks about prince Khurram, 'He was a patron of all craftsmen to whom he paid such high wages that he attracted all the splendor of his father's court. Pelsaert again says that the workmen of Agra followed hereditary occupations. Therefore a number of artisans were working in royal karkhanas. Others were working to private orders with the raw material given to them. The establishment of state Karkhanas led to the transfer of workers from villages to towns. Thus the technically able artisans were drawn from villages to town either voluntarily or forcibly. The highly specialized artisans acquired their own status. Bernier said that the son of an embroiderer brought up as an embroiderer, son of goldsmith brought up as goldsmith and the son of a physician was brought up as a physician. Bernier gives us the information that the exploitation of peasants in villages led to their migration to towns. Aurangzeb's revenue policy affected a number of

Notes

peasant and they migrated to towns. Similarly Moreland informs that the main increase in the amount of labour was the main economic fact of Akbar's age. The caste organizations of the artisans, were formed to fight against the feudal system where the nobles were exploiting the artisans. The noble class which was controlling the state machine, was exploiting the peasants in form of taxation system. The system of monopolies also encouraged the exploitation of artisans, for example on the purchase and production of certain goods like dyes, saltpetre there was the monopoly of state, which led to the oppression of artisans in many ways. Because of the monopoly, these nobles were the main consumers of the goods made by artisans, and special decrees fixed the prices of various goods and the labour of the artisans. Francois Bernier gives us an important information about the Indian workshops and Karkhanas during the Mughal period. He says that Indian workshops were consisted of the skilful artisans and he praised their workmanship. He states that there are so many instances of handsome pieces of workmanship made by the persons destitute of tools, and who can scarcely be said to have received instruction from a master. Sometimes they imitate so perfectly the articles of European manufacture that the difference between the original and the copy can hardly be discerned". Bernier also highlighted the pathetic conditions of the Indian artisans. He said that "if the artists and manufactures were encouraged, the useful and fine arts would flourish; but these unhappy men are condemned, treated with harshness and inadequately remunerated for their labour". Bernier also gave information about the karkhanas or workshops for the artisans. There were separated halls for different types of work. Different kinds of work were done in separate halls. Bernier was a French traveller and in France the slavery was practiced and social differences pronounced. He was confused about India's complex caste system which divided people by birth and traditional occupation. Bernier talked about the prevalence of caste system in India. He stated that the son of embroiderer brought up as an embroiderer, and the son of a goldsmith was brought up as a goldsmith. There were several types of karkhanas during the Mughal period like manufactory, storehouse and repair workshop. These karkhanas were under the control of emperors, members of royal family,

nobles and merchants. But we don't have much information about the karkhanas maintained by the nobles and merchants, we have appropriate information only about the royal karkhanas which is given in Bernier and Abu'l Fazl. The demands of the Mughal royalty were satisfied by these karkhanas, which were managed by the emperors and nobles at different places. These karkhanas were manufacturing a number of items like clothes, robes, utensils arms etc. The craftsmen of these karkhanas were working under the control of malik, who was under the control of State General Superintendent of Arts and Crafts.¹²⁶ These Mughal karkhanas were placed at Dacca, Sonargaon, Junglebare, Bazetpore for the manufacture of the malboos khass muslin for the royal wardrobe of Delhi. These karkhanas were under the direct control of Darogah, who controlled all craftsmen employed here. The main duty of Darogah was to control the manufacture of cloth production and to maintain the quality of cloths. Expert weavers were employed to maintain the quality of the cloth produced. The working hours of weavers were fixed. Mukeems or inspectors were employed to control the whole process of weaving. These imperial regulations were facilitated by the production of superfine muslins. These regulations contributed to the production of fine Muslin. Several guards were appointed to check the weavers act. Except state karkhanas, the royal families were also having their own karkhanas. Shahjahan, Aurangzeb, Dara Shikoh and Jahan Ara Begum etc. were maintaining their own Karkhana. According to the contemporary sources the scarcity of the skilled artisans was a setback to the output of the royal karkhanas, and state karkhanas coming to the reign of Aurangzeb the creativity of the artisans was lost. Very few information are available about the karkhanas maintained by the nobles. Almost every major Mughal city had its own karkhanas and were producing different type of products .Every noble's karkhana was under the control of a Darogah and other important officials of noble's karkhanas were tahvildar, mushrifs, the shahs and bhayyas. The nobles' karkhanas were divided into two general and specialized karkhanas. Regional variations are very well found in the nature of the organization of the Mughal's noble's karkhanas. In case of Amber thirty six different kinds of karkhanas were there. The local and regional specialized workforce was utilized there.

Notes

The worker's wages were decided on the basis of nature of their work, and the prices of the commodities. The growth imperial household is increased by the consumption of fine clothes of gold and brocades, silks and embroideries.¹³⁰ The royal karkhanas were under the control of feudatories. In royal karkhanas highly skilled artisans were preferred. The flexibility of supply was not there because of the constant demand of aristocratic class. The contemporary technological changes were not so much entertained by the artisans of the karkhanas that's why the qualitative change was not possible there.

During the reign of Aurangzeb these karkhanas began to decline. Because Aurangzeb was a puritan Mughal, the Mughal court karkhanas at Lahore, Ara and other cities declined considerably. During the reign of Aurangzeb the artisans began to return to their towns and villages and there the new generation of Indian weavers became ustads themselves. These ustads in their villages established new karkhanas. Because of the easier, cheaper and local availability of raw materials, labour and communication the production was increased to a great extent. The Mughal state established the karkhanas on a large scale which provided employment to a number of artisans and there were enormous future opportunities for the artisans and craftsmen. The emperors were instructing the provincial governors for appointment the best artisans and workers from the different parts of the country. Even foreign workers were invited by Jahangir from Turkey, Persia, China and European countries. The raw material for these karkhanas was not brought by the artisans through open purchase but it was provided through monopoly purchases by the state. The workers and artisans were not working freely like implementing their own designs but they were working on the instruction of the state officials according to the desire of the elites. The articles made in state karkhanas were not for sale in the market but was for the use of elite and aristocratic class. The term Buyutat was used by the Mughals for karkhanas. Not only in the Imperial Household but also the military and fiscal set-up of the empire, these karkhanas played an important role. The entire organisation was coming under the supervision of Diwan. The Mughal emperor's were keenly interested in the development of karkhanas not only in the capital but also in the

provincial headquarters too. Under the Mughals the Karkhanas were not only established to meet the general demands but to meet the demands of choice of the elite class. The functions of karkhanas were not limited they were dealing with the each and every aspect of life of elite class, like the food served on the monarch's table to the clothes they wore and the arms and ammunitions they used. So many factories and offices were coming under the imperial household. The standard and the amount of the articles used at the Mughal court was so high that no private agency could meet this. Abul Fazl said there were more than hundred karkhanas. They all were paid full attention by the emperor Akbar. These karkhanas were placed in large halls at palace. According to Bernier within the fortress there were so many large halls. In one of them embroiders were busy in their work, in other hall were the manufacturers of silk brocade and fine muslins of which are made turbans, girdles etc. The son of an embroiderer was brought up as embroiderer the son of a goldsmith became a goldsmith. The development of Indian art industries under state patronage is well described by Abul Fazl, 'His Majesty pays much more attention in various stuffs, hence Irani, European and Mongolian articles of wear are in abundance. Court historians like Abul Fazl and European travellers like Francois Bernier and Pelsaert have written a lot about medieval Indian urban crafts. Abul Fazl mentions the 'guilds of artifices' and gild masters, who were appointed by the town administrator. These guilds were working under karkhanas. There developed a hierarchy of karkhanas owned by courtiers. The main features of karkhanas under the Mughals were that culture of collective work in urban north India was started by these karkhanas. Artisans and their master's relationship was handled by a system of unwritten rules. When the karkhanas were not providing the goods to the market, it was likely to a complete end. The purchase inputs were under the control of court directly or indirectly. The goods produced in these karkhanas were rarely send to the market but made for the royal use particularly. The state was appointing the best worker in these industries. European travellers said that there was a hierarchy among the artisans. Bernier said that there were two types of urban artisans. At one place there were bazar artisans who were nominally independent, lowly skilled and employee of the rich. On the

Notes

other were the highly skilled artisans who were the employees of the karkhanas. These artisans were in service of kings and exclusively worked for them.

Thus under the state Karkhana system a number of large scale industries were established in which the raw materials, the tools and the workshops were provided by the state. The workers were concerned only with the wages they produced; they had nothing to do with the consumption of the goods produced by them. These karkhanas were producing the goods according to the taste of the emperor and the state was financially much strong to meet the fancy demands of the elites, this gave no space to the private commercial agencies. Whereas their existence was depended upon the state requirements. This is the reason that with the decline of the Mughal empire these karkhanas also declined.

Organization of labour under the Mughals:

During the medieval period, the occupations were going on hereditary basis. The craft skills were transferring from father to son, hereditarily. The castes were representing different crafts. Therefore the caste organization was itself a training ground for the artisans, because there was not any school of art for the training of artisans during the Mughal period. Therefore the industries were working on family basis and were transferred from father to son. Abul Fazl says that a number of skilled master craftsmen were settled in the country to train people an improved system of manufacture. Pelsaert gives us the information about the labour of Jahangir's reign, he said that the children of one artisans could not follow the craft of any other artisan. Bernier said that the son of an embroiderer was brought up as an embroiderer, a goldsmith's son became a goldsmith and a physician's son was brought up as a physician. According to Jadunath Sarkar the skilled artisans were given training in the imperial workshops, and then sent in service of the nobles. During the Mughal rule the private workshops were not existed. We have very little information regarding the economic position of the artisans during the Mughal period. Abul Fazl also mentions about the matters and the craftsmen and he also gives us the information about the skilled and unskilled artisans. Except this very few information are available

regarding the economic position of artisans during the Mughal period. In broader sense there were two types of artisans. One was the independent artisans, who were working with their tools and raw materials. Other was the artisans of the state karkhanas where the artisans found themselves more secure in comparison to the independent artisans as their wages and working hours were fixed, where they were strictly controlled by the state machinery. The most favorable factor for the artisans of state karkhanas was the encouragement by the state. During the reign of Akbar the nobles were directed to wear special kinds of fabrics which gave the textile industries the chance for improvement. Abul Fazl said that emperor Akbar paid much attention towards the establishment of a number of new manufacturers. The skill of artisans also increased under his patronage. Lahore had more than thousand manufacturers of shawls. The imperial workshops played an important role in the diffusion of talent, which raised the cultural level of the country. The artisans trained in the imperial workshops were not absorbed in the state itself, but they were employed by the nobles. Thus more or less during the Mughal period the condition of artisans was bad. According to Moreland the artisans of Mughal period worked mainly for the benefit of merchants, purchasers and middlemen, and the salary given to them was not high so that they could not save much for the period of crisis. Under the Mughals, the state did not have any machinery to improve the condition of workers. That's why, the Indian labors were exploited to a great extent. The working hours of labors were not fixed. There was not any fixed holiday neither weekly nor monthly. The working age of children was not fixed. Only those artists were in some better position, who were working exclusively under their patron. The recruitment was on the basis of caste. When there was a need of more labors, the artisans working in karkhanas brought with them their relatives to recruit in the karkhanas. The brokers worked as the middlemen they were earning their profit at the cost of laborers. During Mughal period there was the lack of industrial organization, there was no state control over the conditions of the employment of laborer. They were getting low wages, working hours were long, bad working conditions, no safeguard for the injuries which adversely affected the efficiency of laborers. The artisans during the

Notes

Mughal period were facing the oppression of state officers. They were facing the problem of low wages. Pelsaert writes that the artisans faced the oppression of the governors, the nobles, the diwan, the kotwal, the bakshi and other officers. Any of these officials could compel the laborers to work against their will or forcefully. Another adverse factor which led to the deteriorated condition of artisans was the interference of middlemen. Because there was no chance for the artisans to earn profit because any product passed through several hands before reaching to the consumer. Bernier said that the money was passing to the hands of the merchants not to the artisans this was the main reason of deplorable condition of artisans. During the Mughal period the wages of the artisans were very low in the state karkhanas. During this period there was not any labor organization, that's why we do not have any evidence of the discontentment of laborers against the low wages. The artisans were given monthly cash salaries or daily wages it depends on the nature of their work. The skilled artisans were given the salary on regular basis. The skilled laborers were getting 3 to 4 dams a day. The form of the wages of workers were differed from workshop to workshop. In some workshops artisans were paid in cash while on others they were getting their wages in form of finished products.

According to some modern economists the wages of labourers might be either in form of cash which is called as 'money wages' or in form of luxuries, necessaries which is called 'real wages'. According to Pigou we do not have sufficient information regarding the wage of artisan. Abul Fazl in his *Ain-i-Akbari* gives a long list of prices of various commodities and wage of artisans engaged in the manufacture of gold stuffs, cotton and woollen goods and silk pieces. The fact is that during the Mughal period, wages in this period were not uniform all over the Mughal India. In conclusion I would like to say that the textile industries flourished under the Mughals cannot compete the machine based industry of today, yet the products of the Mughal textile industry were competing with the products of the contemporary world. A large part of Indian textile industry was exported during that period, there was a great demand of Indian textile products, but the most preferred were the

muslin, chint, block-printed clothes. Though the method of production of clothes was traditional, in spite of that Indian cloth was competing the world. This all was possible because of the attention given by the Mughal Emperors towards the development of the Mughal Karkhanas.

5.4 TRADE MEDIEVAL INDIA

Trading Classes

- Among the merchant classes, some specialized in wholesale trade, and others in the retail trade. The wholesale traders were known as '**seth**' or '**bohra**' and the retail traders were known as '**beoparis**' or '**banik**.'
- In south India, the community 'chettis' formed the trading class. Besides, there was a special class, 'banjaras,' who specialized in the trading.
- The banjaras used to move from one place to another place, sometimes with thousands of oxen, laden with food grains, salt, ghee, and other daily use stuff.
- The '**sarrafs**' (**shroff**) are specialized in changing money, keeping money in deposit or lending it, or transmitting it from one part of the country to the other by means of '**hundi**.'
- The '**hundi**' was a letter of credit payable after a certain period. The use of hundis made it easier to move goods or to transmit money from one part of the country to another.
- When needed, the hundis were cashed at a discount rate, which sometimes included insurance so that the cost of goods lost or destroyed in transit could be recovered. Taking the advantage of these facilities, the Indian merchants could easily ship goods to countries of West Asia as well where there were Indian banking houses.
- English and Dutch traders who came to India during the seventeenth century found that the Indian financial system was highly developed, and the Indian merchants were very active and alert.
- The trading community of medieval time in India was considerably large in number and included some of the richest

Notes

merchants of the world. For example, Virji Vohra had a large fleet of ships and he dominated Surat trade for several decades; Malaya Chetti dominated the Coromandel Coast; Abdul Ghaffoor Bohra was much popular trader who left 85 lakhs of rupees in cash and goods at the time of his death in 1718.

- Merchants and traders lived in lofty houses with colored tiles, wore fine clothes, and had people carrying flags and banners before them when they moved out in public.
- The French traveler, **Bernier**, however, written: “the merchants tried to look poor because they were afraid that they might be squeezed of their wealth.”
- Bernier’s observation might be wrong because the emperors right from the time of Sher Shah passed many laws to protect the property of the merchants.
- The laws made (for the traders) by Sher Shah were very strict. Secondly, Mughal Emperor Jahangir made a provision that "if anyone, whether nonbeliever or Musalman should die, his property and other belongings should be left for his heirs, and no one should interfere with them.”
- In a case where the respective (rich) person had no heir, an inspector should be appointed and also there would be separate guardians to guard the property, so that its value might be expended in a lawful and social expenditure, such as the building of mosques and sarais, repair of broken bridges, and the digging of tanks and wells."

Organization of Trade & Commerce

- The Mughals paid attention to roads and sarais, which made communication easier. A uniform tax was levied on goods at the point of their entry into the empire. Rahdari (a transit duty, a toll) or Road ceases was declared illegal, though it continued to be collected by some of the local rajas (kings).
- The Mughals introduced silver rupees of high purity, which became a standard coin in India and abroad and that helped in the growth of India's trade as well.

- Mughals also made the policies that helped the commercialization of the economy and the growth of a money economy.
- During the Mughals period, salaries of the standing army as well as many of the administrative personnel (excluding the nobles) were paid in cash. Besides, under the zabti system, the land revenue was assessed and required to be paid in cash.
- The growth of the rural grain markets led to the rise of small townships (or qasbas). The demand for all types of luxury goods by the nobles led to the expansion of handicraft production as well as the growth of towns.
- Ralph Fitch, who came India during the Akbar's reign said that Agra and Fatehpur Sikri were each larger than London.
- Monserrate said that Lahore was second to none of the cities in Europe or Asia. Bernier says that Delhi was not much less than Paris and that Agra was larger than Delhi.
- Ahmadabad was also a large town, being as large as London and its suburbs. Dacca, Rajmahal, Multan, and Burhanpur were large towns, while Patna in Bihar had a population of 2 lakhs.

Right from ancient times till the establishment of the British Empire, India was famed for her fabulous wealth. Even during the medieval period, i.e. roughly from the 12th to the 16th centuries, the country was prosperous despite the frequent political upheavals. A notable feature of this period was the growth of towns in various parts of the country. This development was the result of the political and economic policies followed by the Muslim rulers. These towns grew into trade and industrial centres which in turn led to the general prosperity.

During the Sultanate period, which lasted from the early 13th to the early 16th centuries, the economy of the towns flourished. This was due to the establishment of a sound currency system based on the silver tanka and the copper dirham. Ibn Batuta the 14th century Moorish traveller had visited India during the Sultanate period. He had described the teeming markets of the big cities in the Gangetic plains, Malwa, Gujarat and Southern India. The important centres of trade and industry were Delhi,

Notes

Lahore, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Sonargaon and Jaunpur. Coastal towns also developed into booming industrial centres with large populations.

During the two hundred years of Mughal rule i.e. from the 16th to the 18th centuries the urbanisation of India received a further impetus. The Mughal era witnessed the establishment of a stable centre and a uniform provincial government. During this age of relative peace and security, trade and commerce flourished. The burgeoning foreign trade led to the development of market places not only in the towns but also in the villages. The production of handicrafts increased in order to keep up with the demand for them in foreign countries.

The prime urban centres during the Mughal era were Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Multan, Thatta and Srinagar in the north. The important cities in the west included Ahmedabad, Bombay (then known as Khambat), Surat, Ujjain and Patan (in Gujarat). The flourishing trade centres in the eastern part of the country were Dacca, Hoogli, Patna, Chitgaon and Murshidabad. Most of these cities boasted of sizeable populations.

Products and Manufactures

The accounts of foreign travellers contain descriptions of the wide variety of exquisite goods sold in the markets of those days. India was famous for its textiles, which formed one of the chief items of export. Duarte Barbosa a Portuguese official in Cochin in the early 16th century described Gujarat, in the western region as a leading cotton trade centre. Textiles from Gujarat were exported to the Arab countries and to South-east Asia. Patola, which is a kind of silk dyed in natural colours, was highly popular in South-east Asia. It was very much in demand among the wealthy classes in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Phillipines.

In the east Bengal was another important region for a wide variety of textiles. Ibn Batuta the 14th century Moorish traveller saw many cotton trade centres during his sojourn in Bengal. Silks were also manufactured there. The textile products included quilts of embroidered tussar, or

munga on a cotton or jute, silk and brocade edged handkerchiefs. Dhaka muslin was renowned for its fineness. Kasimbazaar in Bengal was an important trade centre for cotton and silk goods. Sirbund, a type of cloth used for tying turbans was manufactured in Bengal. It was highly popular in Europe.

Similarly, Malabar in Kerala was also famous for its coloured and printed cloth material. The other important textiles producing centres in the south were Golconda, Shaliat and Pulicat. The last two were major trading centres for a wide variety of cottons. Golconda was famous for its Kalamkaaris. These were finely painted cotton fabrics with motifs from Hindu mythology. They were exported through the port city of Masulipatnam. Palampores, which were another variety of painted fabrics, were popular in the Mughal and Deccan courts. These were bedspreads made of Calico cloth. The borders of these pieces were block printed while the centre depicted depicted the 'Tree of Life' motif made by hand. Indian textiles whether from Bengal, Gujarat or the South were highly appreciated abroad for their fine texture, elaborate design and brilliant colours.

Hardwood furniture, embellished with inlay work was a very popular item. The furniture was modelled on the European design but the expensive carvings and inlays were inspired by the ornate Mughal style. The production centres were in Sindh, Gujarat and the Deccan. Mother-of pearl inlay against a black lac background was a traditional design in Gujarat.

Carpets were used both in ancient and medieval India but it was in the 16th century during the Mughal era that the skill of carpet weaving touched new heights. It had become an important profession by then and all the major courts of the country encouraged it. The carpets produced during the Mughal era depicted either animals in combat or flowers. The flowers were woven so meticulously that they could be easily identified. The affinity of the Great Mughals with nature is evident from the designs of the carpets made during their times.

Notes

Many varieties of ornamental work in cut stones, ivory, pearl and tortoise shells were produced in South India. Pearl fishing was a major industry here. Diamonds were procured from the Deccan while sapphires and rubies were imported from Pegu and Ceylon. Major centres were established at Pulicat, Calicut and Vijaynagar for cutting and polishing these stones.

Indian arts and crafts were patronised by Indian rulers. They were unmatched for their beauty and skill and were popular in the European countries. During the Mughal era the European traders used to employ local artisans at the manufacturing centres set up by them at various places in India.

Domestic Trade

Foreign travellers gave extensive accounts about domestic trade in medieval India. Ibn Batuta had described Delhi as a major trade centre. The most superior quality rice and sugar from Kannauj, wheat from Punjab and betel leaves from Dhar in Madhya Pradesh found their way to the markets of Delhi.

Well-maintained roads linking various parts of the country facilitated domestic trade. The threat from bandits did not in any way affect the flow of goods as merchants travelled in well-armed groups to ensure their security. According to Barbosa's account, trade between Gujarat and Malwa was possible owing to the routes established in this area. The roads facilitated the exchange of goods between the different parts of the country. Limbodar in Gujarat and Dabhol in Maharashtra were major trade centres, which linked the northern and southern halves of the country. Accounts of foreign travellers give instances of the trade between Vijaynagar and Bhatkal in Goa with 5000-6000 bulls carrying goods between the two places. Vijaynagar traded in diamonds with other southern cities.

River routes also facilitated trade between different parts of the country. Boats carrying goods used to ply on the Indus and the Ganges. Some of the merchants had their own large boats.

Different communities dominated trade in various parts of the country. Multani and Punjabi merchants handled the business in the north, while in Gujarat and Rajasthan it was in the hands of the Bhats. Foreign traders from Central Asia, known as Khorasanis engaged in this profession all over India. Members of the nobility and the royalty took an interest in trading activities. They set up their own manufacturing centres wherein local artisans were employed.

Internal trade flourished due to the organised system set up by the government. The 14th century Sultan Alauddin Khilji for instance, used to strictly supervise the market places. Shopkeepers, who were caught violating the rules, were severely punished. However, the trading community used to face unfair treatment from the government officials. Sometimes they were forced by these officials to sell their products at reduced rates or on credit, thus incurring heavy losses in the process. The price list fixed by the government brought in low returns for the traders.

During the period of the later Mughals in the 18th century, the royalty and the nobility either purchased luxury goods at very low prices or did not pay at all. Such circumstances forced the trader to hoard his wealth and lead a frugal existence.

Foreign Trade

India's exports far exceeded her imports both in the number of items as well as in volume. The chief articles of import were horses, from Kabul and Arabia, dry fruits and precious stones. India also imported glassware from Europe, high grade textiles like satin from West Asia, while China supplied raw silk and porcelain. Foreign luxury goods were highly popular among the royalty and the nobility. These included wines, dry fruits, precious stones, corals, scented oils, perfumes and velvets.

During the Sultanate period articles of everyday use as well as luxury articles were exported to Syria, Arabia and Persia from Bengal and Cambay. These included silks, gold-embroidered cloth caps, exquisitely designed clay pots and pans, guns, knives and scissors. The other prime

Notes

articles of export were sugar, indigo, oils, ivory sandalwood, spices, diamonds and other precious gems and coconuts.

Arab traders shipped Indian goods to European countries through the Red Sea and the Mediterranean ports. Indian products were also sent to East Africa, Malaya, China and the Far East. In China, Indian textiles were valued more than silk. Trade was also conducted through overland routes with Afghanistan, Central Asia and Persia. The route lay through Kashmir, Quetta and the Khyber Pass. Iraq and Bukhara were the other countries with which India conducted trade via the land route.

Foreign trade was in the hands of both local and foreign merchants. Many European travellers had settled in the coastal regions. Limbodar in Gujarat was a major exporting centre. Horses imported from Arabia were sent from the port of Bhatkal in Goa to the southern kingdoms. Imports like bronze, iron, wax, gold and wool were brought in through Goa, Calicut, Cochin and Quilon. The traders of Malabar, Gujarat and foreign settlers controlled business in the port cities of Calicut, Khambat, and Mangalore. Chinese ships docked at Quilon and Calicut while in Khambat the volume of trade was such that 3000 ships visited this port annually. This fact gives an idea of the magnitude of India's foreign trade during the medieval period.

Trade with China and Southeast Asia was mainly carried on through the port of Sonargaon now known as Dacca. Vijaynagar, which was the richest and most extensive state in the 15th and 16th centuries, enjoyed the most voluminous maritime trade with diverse countries such as Persia, Arabia, Africa, the Malayan Archipelago, Burma, China and the numerous islands in the Indian Ocean. The magnitude of trade can be surmised from the fact that there were 300 ports to facilitate the movement of goods. The shipbuilding industry flourished in the coastal towns.

The city of Vijaynagar was a teeming marketplace for both exports and imports. The fabulous wealth of the Empire left the foreigners

dumbfounded. The people, irrespective of which strata of society they belonged to, possessed vast quantities of gold, diamonds and material wealth. Domingo Paes described the citizens as being heavily bejewelled. Abdur Razzak, the Khurasani ambassador to the court of Vijaynagar, refers to the treasury which had chambers filled with molten gold.

The merchant community in the other parts of the country was a prosperous lot. The Gujarati and Marwari businessmen who controlled the trade between the coastal towns and North India were extremely wealthy and spent large sums for the construction of temples. The Multanis who were Hindus and the Khurasanis who were Muslim foreigners controlled the trade with Central and West Asia. Many of these Multanis and Khurasanis settled in Delhi where they lived luxurious lives. Cambay was also home to an affluent mercantile community.

Thus India had always enjoyed a favourable balance in her trade relations with other countries. Her earnings from the export of textiles, sugar, spices and indigo alone went up to crores of rupees. The state coffers were amply stocked with gold and silver.

The Decline in Prosperity

However the political conditions in India in the 18th century brought about a sea change in the situation. This period was marked by decline of the Mughal government and the rise of the Maratha power. After Aurangzeb, who was the last of the great Mughal Emperors, the state crumbled and it could not protect the mercantile community as before. Though the regional powers did extend patronage to the artisans and manufacturers, they did not have the economic and military means to sustain it. Consequently trade dwindled. The Maratha invasions in northern India also adversely affected trade and commerce.

The rise of the British East India Company in the mid 18th century dealt a fatal blow to the prosperity of the country. The victory of the English over the Nawab of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 marked a

Notes

turning point in the fortunes of the country. In order to disrupt the trade relations between the Indian mercantile community and the foreigners, the Company imposed heavy duties on both imports and exports. After the Company had established its supremacy in Bengal, it prevented merchants from Asian countries from coming to the eastern provinces for trading purposes. The export of Indian textiles to England was totally banned.

The Company increasingly monopolised the foreign trade in India thereby reducing the mercantile community to bankruptcy. Not only did it cripple the indigenous manufactures, but also it started importing various items such as cloth, utensils, horses, etc. from England. This so adversely affected the Indian traders that they turned to other professions for their livelihood. The great trading community, which had flourished during the Mughal rule, had dwindled to non-existence by the end of the eighteenth century. Thus the once glorious arts and crafts of India died a natural death.

5.5 COMMERCE AND MONETARY SYSTEM IN INDIA

Sultanat Period

State Policies:

The first few Muslim Sultans could not devote their attention to trade and commerce as they were preoccupied with the problem of securing their position.

Balban is the first Sultan who got dense forests cut; roads built and secured from the danger of bandits.

This helped the traders and their commercial caravans to move from one market place to another. The economic reforms of Alauddin Khilji brought the prices to very low ebb though it was an artificial measure and had nothing to do with the true prosperity and economic growth.

However, it encouraged import of foreign goods from Persia, since the Sultan made advances to the foreign traders to import their goods and he always subsidised in such cases.

The failure of Mohammad Tughlaq that the country regained its economic prosperity and the revenue of Delhi alone reached the high figure of six crores while that of Doab was 80 lakhs. His encouragement to gardening and provisions of means of irrigation like the wells and canals increased the prosperity of the country.

During the days of this very ruler, we hear of Karkhanas in which he utilised his slaves. Besides these public commercial undertakings, there were private enterprises as well. We hear how many types of industries prospered during the reign of Feroze.

Dr. Ashirwadi Lai provides a very exhaustive list of these industries like the textile “including the manufacture of cotton, woolen and silk cloth. Dyeing industry, printing industry, calico printing industry sugar industry, metal work, paper industry, stone work, enameling, etc.”

Despite this industrial development the main occupation of the people was agriculture. Ala-ud-din realised 50% of the total produce in Doab and even then the farmers could find it economic to till the land.

It was the prosperity of these farmers which induced Mohammad Tughlaq to think of enhancing the land revenue. The foreign traveller, Ibn- Battuta speaks of black rice which he partook in royal feast during the reign of Mohammad Tughlaq and which was thought to be of the days of Ala-ud-din Khilji.

Internal and External Trade:

India's foreign trade both overland and overseas was truly an international enterprise. Although the Arabs were the dominant partners in the India Ocean trade, they had been by no means ousted the Indian traders, viz. the Tamils and Gujaratis, both Hindu and Muslim.

The coastal trade and trade between the coastal ports and north India was in the hands of Marwaris and Gujaratis, many of whom were Jains. The

Notes

Muslim Bohra merchants also participated in the trade. The overland trade with Central and West Asia was in the hands of Multanis, who were mostly Hindus and Khurasanis, who were Afghans, Iranians, etc. Many of these merchants had settled down in Delhi.

The Gujarati and Marwari merchants were extremely wealthy and some of them particularly the Jains, spent large sums for the construction of temples. Cambay was a great city in which many wealthy merchants live. They had lofty houses built in fine stone and mortar, with tiled roofs.

Their houses were surrounded by orchards and fruit-gardens which had many tanks. These wealthy merchants and the skilled craftsmen lived a luxurious life and were accustomed to good food and clothing. The merchants, Hindu and Muslim, were attended by pages bearing swords with silver and gold work. In Delhi, the Hindu merchants rode horses with costly trappings, lived in fine houses, and celebrated their festivals with great pomp and show.

Barani tells us that the Multani merchants were so rich that gold and silver were to be found in abundance in their houses, the nobles were so spendthrift that every time they wanted to hold a feast or a celebration, they had to run to the houses of the Multanis in order to borrow money.

Transport and Communication:

In those days, travel was always risky due to robbers and dacoits and various marauding tribes. However, the royal roads were kept in good shape and there were many sarais on the way for the comfort and safety of the travellers.

In addition to the royal road from Peshawar to Sonargaon, Muhammad Tughlaq built a road to Daulatabad. There were arrangements for the post being carried quickly from one part of the country to another.

This was done by relays of horses or even more efficiently and quickly by runners who were posted every few kilometres in towers which were built for the purpose. The runner continually clanged a bell as he ran so that the man on the next relay may be able to see him from the tower and get ready to take his burden.

We are told that by means of these relays, fresh fruits were obtained for the sultan from Khurasan. When Muhammad Tughlaq was at Daulatabad, which was 40 days' journey from Delhi, he regularly used to receive the Ganga water for drinking purposes by means of these relays.

Mughal Period:**State Policies:**

During Mughal period salaries to the standing army as well as to many of the administrative personnel (but not to the nobles) were paid in cash. Under the Zabti system, the land revenue was assessed and required to be paid in cash.

Even when the peasant was given the option of choosing other methods of assessment, such as crop-sharing, the share of the state was, generally, sold in the villages with the help of grain dealers. It has been estimated that about 20 per cent of the rural produce was marketed, which was a high proportion.

The growth of the rural grain markets led to the rise of small townships or qasbas. The demand for all types of luxury goods by the nobles led to the expansion of handicraft production and to the growth of towns. French traveller, Bernier, says that merchants tried to look poor because they were afraid that they would be used like "filled sponges", i.e. squeezed of their wealth. This does not appear to be fully correct.

Emperors from the time of Sher Shah passed many laws for protecting the property of the merchants. The laws of Shah are well known. Jahangir's ordinance included a provision that "if anyone, whether

Notes

unbeliever or Musalman should die, his property and effects should be left for his heirs and no one should interfere with them.

If he should have no heirs, they should appoint inspectors and separate guardians to guard the property, so that its value might be expended in a lawful expenditure, such as the building of mosques and sarais, repair of broken bridge and the digging of tanks and wells.” However, local officials could always abuse their power to harass traders.

Internal and External Trade:

The Indian trading classes were well organized and highly professional. Some specialised in long distance, inter-regional trade and some local, retail trade. The former were called seth, bohra or modi, while the latter were called beoparis or banik.

In addition to retailing goods, the baniks had their own agents, in the villages and townships, with whose help they purchased food-grains and cash crops. There was a special class of traders, the banjaras, who specialized in carrying bulk goods.

The banjaras used to move long distances, sometimes with thousands of oxen carrying foodgrains, pulses, ghee, salt, etc. The more expensive goods, such as textiles, silks, etc., were laden on camels and mules or in carts. But it was cheaper to move bulk goods through the rivers on boats.

Boat traffic on waterways and coastal trade along the seashore was more highly developed than now. The trade in food stuffs and a wide range of textile products were the most important components of inter-regional trade during the period Bengal exported sugar and rice as well as delicate muslin and silk.

The coast of Coromandel had become a centre of textile production and had a brisk trade with Gujarat, was the entry point of foreign goods. It exported fine textiles and silk (patola) to north India, with Burhanpur and Agra as the two nodal points of trade. It received foodgrains and silk from Bengal and also imported pepper from Malabar.

North India imported luxury items and also exported indigo and foodgrains. Lahore was another centre of handicraft production. It was also the distribution centre for the luxury products of Kashmir — shawls, carpets, etc. The products of the Punjab and Sindh moved down the river Indus. It had close trade links with Kabul and Qandhar, on the one hand and with Delhi and Agra on the other.

European Trade:

Between the middle of the 16th century and the middle of the 18th century India's overseas trade steadily expanded. This was due to the trading activities of the various European companies which came to India during this period. India had commercial relations with the western countries from time immemorial. But from the seventh century A.D. her sea-borne trade passed into the hands of the Arabs, who dominated the Indian Ocean and the Red sea. It was from them that the enterprising merchants of Venice and Genoa purchased Indian goods.

This monopoly of Indian trade by the Arabs, and the Venetians was sought to be broken by direct trade with India by the Portuguese. The geographical discoveries of the last quarter of the 15th century deeply affected the commercial relations of the different countries of the world and produced far-reaching consequences. The discovery of a new all-sea route from Europe to India via Cape of Good Hope by Vasco da Gama had far-reaching repercussions on the civilised world.

The arrival of the Portuguese in India was followed by the advent of other European communities and soon India's coastal and maritime trade was monopolised by the Europeans. The European merchants who came to India during this period differed from the earlier foreign merchants and had the political and military support of their respective governments.

They were not individual merchants but represented their respective countries and tried to establish and safeguard their maritime trade on the strength of their superior naval power. In course of time, their commercial motives turned into territorial ambitions.

Transport and Communication:

Notes

Means of transport were cheap and adequate for their needs. Despite complaints by some European travellers, safety on the roads was satisfactory and could be covered by insurance. The means of travel with sarais at the distance of 5 kos on the principal highways was as good as in Europe at the time.

The Mughals paid attention to roads and sarais which made communication easier. A uniform tax was levied on goods at the point of their entry into the empire. Road cesses or rahdari was declared illegal, though it continued to be collected by some of the local rajas.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What do you know about the Industries in Medieval India?

.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss about the Production technologies Medieval India.

.....
.....
.....

3. What do you know about the Trade Medieval India?

.....
.....
.....

4. Discuss about the Commerce and Monetary System in India.

.....
.....
.....

5.6 LET US SUM UP

Medieval period represents the sharp contrast between the rural and the urban economies; the former was largely subsisted on 'barter exchange' while the brisk market and monetary exchanges prevailed at urban centres. In the exchange network coinage occupied the foremost place. Mughal coinage was basically an 'open coinage' so was the market. It largely operated on free trade principle. Baniyas, Bohras, and Chettiars were the prominent social groups involved in trade and commercial activities during this period. The beginning of our period saw the introduction of 'standardized multi-metallic currency system' resulting in the expansion of trade and exchange network. However, there was a downtrend during 14-15th centuries leading once again to a shift from precious to base metal. This coincided with the 'worldwide shortage of silver'. Sher Shah and later the Mughals revived the Sultanate tri-metallic currency. This combined with the flow of European silver influx to Indian markets during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. In south India gold currency was supplemented with copper so it was largely a bi-metallic coinage. Partnership was a known and common business practice during this period. Sarrafs enjoyed an important position as money lenders. Even the Europeans banked heavily for credit on them. Bills of exchange (hundi) used largely as 'money transfer' than as 'credit'. To cover the risk in trade from 17th century onwards we get definite evidence of 'bima' (insurance). In all these transactions sarrafs, played the pivotal role.

5.7 KEY WORDS

Sultanate: Sultan is a position with several historical meanings. Originally, it was an Arabic abstract noun meaning "strength", "authority", "rulership", derived from the verbal noun **سُلْطَان** *sulṭāh*, meaning "authority" or "power".

5.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- 1) Critically analyse the growth of coinage during the Mughal period.
- 2) In what ways Mughal coinage was different from contemporary south Indian currency system?

Notes

- 3) Critically analyse the interdependence of market and monetary exchange. What role did the state play in controlling the market forces during the medieval period?
- 4) Discuss the social background of various groups involved in trade and exchange activities. What role did they play in organising and facilitating the trade during the medieval period?
- 5) Analyse the growth of business practices in medieval period.
- 6) Discuss the working of the joint-venture enterprises during the 16-17th centuries.
- 7) Examine the position of sarrafs during the medieval period.
- 8) Analyse the growth of banking in medieval India.
- 9) Critically examine the working of the hundis (bills of exchange) during the medieval period.
- 10) To what extent commenda, insurance, and respondentia facilitated the trading activities during the medieval period?

5.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Andrews, Francis B. *The Medieval Builder and His Methods*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973. Medieval construction technique, with a brief chapter on tools.
- Blair, John, and Nigel Ramsay, editors. *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* London: Hambledon Press. 1991. ISBN 1-85285-326-3
- Burns, Robert I. (1996), "Paper comes to the West, 800–1400", in Lindgren, Uta (ed.), *Europäische Technik im Mittelalter. 800 bis 1400. Tradition und Innovation* (4th ed.), Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, pp. 413–422, ISBN 3-7861-1748-9
- Crosby, Alfred. *The Measure of Reality : Quantification in Western Europe, 1250-1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997
- Jared Diamond, *Guns, germs and steel. A short history of everybody for the last 13'000 years*, 1997.

- Di Ieva, Antonio; et al. (2007), "The Neuroanatomical Plates of Guido da Vigevano", *Neurosurgical Focus*, 23 (1): 1–4, doi:10.3171/FOC-07/07/E15
- Gies, Frances and Joseph. *Cathedral, Forge, and Waterwheel: Technology and Invention in the Middle Ages*. New York: Harper Collins, 1994. ISBN 0-06-092581-7
- Gimpel, Jean. *The Medieval Machine: The Industrial Revolution of the Middle Ages*. London: Pimlico, (2nd ed. 1992) ISBN 0-14-004514-7
- Hägermann, Dieter; Schneider, Helmuth (1997), *Propyläen Technikgeschichte. Landbau und Handwerk, 750 v. Chr. bis 1000 n. Chr* (2nd ed.), Berlin, ISBN 3-549-05632-X
- Hall, Bert S. (1979), *The Technological Illustrations of the So-Called "Anonymous of the Hussite Wars"*. *Codex Latinus Monacensis 197*, Part 1, Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, ISBN 3-920153-93-6
- Holt, Richard (1988), *The Mills of Medieval England*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, ISBN 978-0-631-15692-5
- Long, Pamela O., editor. *Science and Technology in Medieval Society*. in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol 441 New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1985 ISBN 0-89766-277-6 A series of papers on highly specific topics.

5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 5.2
2. See Section 5.3
3. See Section 5.4
4. See Section 5.5

UNIT 6: INLAND AND MARITIME GRADE, ROLE OF ARAB AND EUROPEAN TRADERS

STRUCTURE

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Intra-Regional Trade
- 6.3 Seaborne and Coastal Trade
- 6.4 India and the Asian Trade
- 6.5 The West Coast
- 6.6 The East Coast
- 6.7 Historiography of Asian Trade
- 6.8 Let us sum up
- 6.9 Key Words
- 6.10 Questions for Review
- 6.11 Suggested readings and references
- 6.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit an attempt is made to trace the background of the trade network of Arabs from the hoary antiquity to the palmy centuries of the Abbasids. Literary sources, reports of analysis of numismatics and archaeological findings and reports of mineralogical analysis of artifacts form the materials for the study. Trade, the main social activity of man started when he began to produce beyond his immediate needs. The surplus thus produced, he exchanged with other people's taking from them, their surplus in return. In macroeconomics the only way to create net wealth in a commune or locality is through external trade and reverses investments. Buying and selling within the same commune or locality is economically a zero-sum effort. Hence, foreign trade is a prerequisite for economic growth. Moreover, during the early historic

period foreign trade had an important role in territorial expansion of empires. It was long distance trade, which motivated people to cross the seas and deserts which enabled intercontinental exchange of ideas, cultures, arts and technology, in addition to commodities and services. Assemblages of exotic materials in indigenous contexts are significant proofs of long distance contact and trade.

After this unit, we can able to know:

- Intra-Regional Trade
- Seaborne and Coastal Trade
- India and the Asian Trade
- The West Coast
- The East Coast
- Historiography of Asian Trade

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The proposition that the medieval Indian economy was predominantly agrarian in character hardly needs any emphasis. Though the absence of census and similar data for the period makes it impossible to assign precise values to the sectoral origin of output and the occupational distribution of the work force, there can be very little doubt that the agricultural sector accounted for an overwhelming proportion of both the total output and the total employment in the economy. By the same token, the bulk of the state revenue was also provided by this very sector in the form of land revenue. Each of the other two sectors viz. the non-agricultural sector producing mainly handicraft goods and the services sector, including the trade sector, was comparatively much smaller in size though obviously no precise estimates of the respective sizes are possible. When one looks at the structure of the economy in these broad terms, the trade sector in medieval India was undoubtedly a comparatively small sector. It generated a comparatively small proportion of total income and provided a comparatively small proportion of total employment. But it is important to realize that these proportions may be a grossly inadequate measure of the role that trade and exchange are likely to have played in the working of an economy

Notes

such as that of medieval India. According to circumstances, the role of trade and exchange can vary a great deal as between economies and the size of the trade sector is not necessarily a reliable indicator of its importance in the overall working of the economy. Trade in medieval India at the local, inter-regional as well as the international level performed certain very crucial functions which had far reaching implications for all sections of the community including peasants and artisans. It is quite true that the bulk of the population in medieval India lived in villages whose needs for goods and services were satisfied largely through production for use. But at the same time, it must be recognized that there was an impressive and large scale exchange of goods at various levels. To take into account one important factor, on an average between 40 to 50% of the gross agricultural produce in Mughal India was collected as land revenue paid in or eventually converted into cash. This extremely high proportion of marketed to total agricultural output naturally involved a great deal of exchange and trading activity notwithstanding the fact that the agricultural sector's own demand for the products of the non-agricultural sector was minimal. The towns were dependent on the villages for the supply of not only primary products but also a large part of the manufactured goods they consumed. Even for industries based in the urban areas, a large part of the raw materials originated in the country-side.

The second half of the first millennium AD witnessed a remarkable increase in the world trade. Trade was transformed in nature from a low volume high value trade to bulk trade in a variety of commodities of daily consumption. This trade, which spread over the five different economic regions of Europe, West Asia, India, South East Asia and China was necessitated by two major factors. Firstly some communities or regions had a technological advantage which others lacked; for example silk and porcelain technology of China. Secondly geographical determinants of production such as spice production of Indonesian islands, pepper production of Malabar and Java and incense production of Arabia. The nomadic pastoralist Arabs who walked behind the camels in the desert emerged as great sailors and navigators and undisputed

masters of the world trade within a period of a few centuries. The factors which helped this transformation are analysed here. La longue duree (the long term) concept of Braudel³ explains that the basic social attitudes of a people towards food, clothing, agriculture and trade are determined by the long term rhythms of their natural and human environment. Hence an analysis of the long term environment of the Arabs will help us to understand the totality of their commercial activities.

Natural environment of Arabs

The geomorphology of Arabia has played a vital role in the growth of both maritime and land trade. The Arab regions as a whole have long been important points on the world's great trade routes. Arabian Peninsula which is situated at the meeting point of three continents, i.e. Asia, Africa and Europe acted as an entrance to every nook and corner of the world. The very long coast line which bounds the peninsula on the three sides favoured the development of sailing from Arabian shores. The most fertile and inhabited parts of Arabia, al Yemen, Hadramaut and Oman are situated near the coasts. Arabia which stands at the cross roads of three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa, has the distinction of being the centre of the old world. Its shores are washed by the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Oman, and the Persian Gulf. Where the seas end, the historic rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris form the boundary between Iraq and Arabia⁴. Beyond Arabia, to the south-west it was easy to cross to East Africa, "to the east, the monsoon winds were very helpful for voyages to India and China. The Red Sea and Persian Gulf supplemented by the Nile, the Euphrates and Tigris functioned as natural thoroughfare between the Mediterranean and East Asian countries. Hence, the Arabs were astride two of the world's trade routes". Moreover, the famous overland Silk Road to China was accessible through Persia and Central Asia. "From Persia it was possible to go to China via Balk or Samarqand by high passes over the Pamirs crossing the desert of East Turkestan; this was the ancient 'Silk Road' between West Asia and China". Nations, tribes, armies and pilgrims – people on the move have traversed the middle east, finding the land bridge convenient and along the way discovering the wealth of the area

and the civilization of its people. Since the Arabs stood in the past, as they stand today, in a most strategic geographical position; no people were in a more favourable position for exploring the ancient world than the Arabs. The outcome of this geographical advantage is affirmed concisely by Bertold Spuler as “only the Muslim geographers possessed a reasonably good knowledge of all civilizations of the world as the muslims were neighbours of all of them: Western and Eastern Europe, Black Africa, India and Indonesia, China and Central Asia.

6.2 INTRA-REGIONAL TRADE

A large volume of internal trade in items such as foodgrains, other agricultural produce such as cotton, other raw materials and finished manufactured goods across the length and breadth of the country contributed a good deal to the growth of productivity in both the agrarian and the non-agrarian sectors. The achievement of an extra-ordinarily high degree of market dependence is suggested by bits of evidence like the poor peasants of the rice-growing riverine systems of southeastern India consuming not the expensive paddy crops which they produced, but millets and dry grains from the interior. Foodgrains, raw materials and finished products travelled long distances for eventual consumption in production centres and markets providing the highest return. Bengal was known to be the „granary“ of the subcontinent and provided large quantities of items such as rice, sugar and oil to many parts of the country besides neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka and the Maldiv Islands. The cotton textile industry of the Coromandel coast depended for a large part of its raw material on Maharashtra and Berar. In Bengal, while the finest Dhaka muslins were woven from high-grade cotton grown in the vicinity of Dhaka itself, the bulk of the cotton used in the extensive cotton textile industry in the province was imported from areas such as Gujarat. The important silk textile industry in Gujarat, in return, obtained the bulk of its supply of high-grade raw silk from Bengal. The large volume of trade between the east and the west coasts was done via the heartland of the Mughal empire. Luxury silks and muslins were a staple item in the cargo sent from Bengal to Agra for use by the Mughal aristocracy. Some of these goods were reexported from

Delhi and Agra to the west coast along with indigo from Bayana and clothes produced in Hindustan. They were exchanged, among other goods, for Gujarati silk textiles and luxury items from the Middle East. The trading communities in north India included Punjabi Khatri and the Rajasthanis, but perhaps the most dominant group was that of the Gujarati merchants who controlled the great crosscountry trade route from Surat to Murshidabad. Indeed, on the basis of their excellent market information and large capital resources, many of these Gujarati merchants had settled down in various parts of the country including Bengal, several branches of whose trade, both by land and water, they eventually came to dominate. There were also significant overland trading links with Persia and Central Asia via the northwest. The route to Persia stretched from Agra to Lahore to Qandahar on to Isfahan – the central market of Persia (see Map on page 8). The volume and value of the trade on this route seems to have been reasonably large with 20,000-21,000 camel loads travelling each year from Lahore to Isfahan in the early part of the seventeenth century with all kinds of relatively high-value goods manufactured or grown in the north Indian plains. Ordinarily, overland transportation, particularly when it also involves a certain amount of protection cost payable to the tribes through whose jurisdictions the caravans would have to pass, is more expensive than transportation by sea. But in the case of the Indo- Persian trade, the Dutch East India Company factors at Agra maintained that the land route between Agra and Isfahan via Lahore and Qandahar cost less per unit of goods transported than the land-cum-sea route which would involve the transportation of the goods from Agra to Surat by land, on to Bandar Abbas by sea and finally from Bandar Abbas to Isfahan by land. The route connecting the Mughal heartland with central Asia also started at Agra and continued on to Lahore and Peshawar reaching Kabul via the Khyber Pass. It then continued on to a chain of Indian trading settlements which stretched far up into central Asia to Astrakhan and Lake Balkh. This was a significant trade which took Indian spices, textiles and other goods up to Bokhara and beyond in search of gold and silver, horses, silks and Chinese porcelain. The scale of this traffic may be judged by the effect of a single accidental fire in Peshawar fort in 1586. The

disaster destroyed 1,000 camelloads of goods belonging to the merchants who had sheltered there when the route was temporarily obstructed. As long as the chiefs of the Afghan and other tribes were given their usual cut, the caravan trade on this route ordinarily moved quite smoothly.

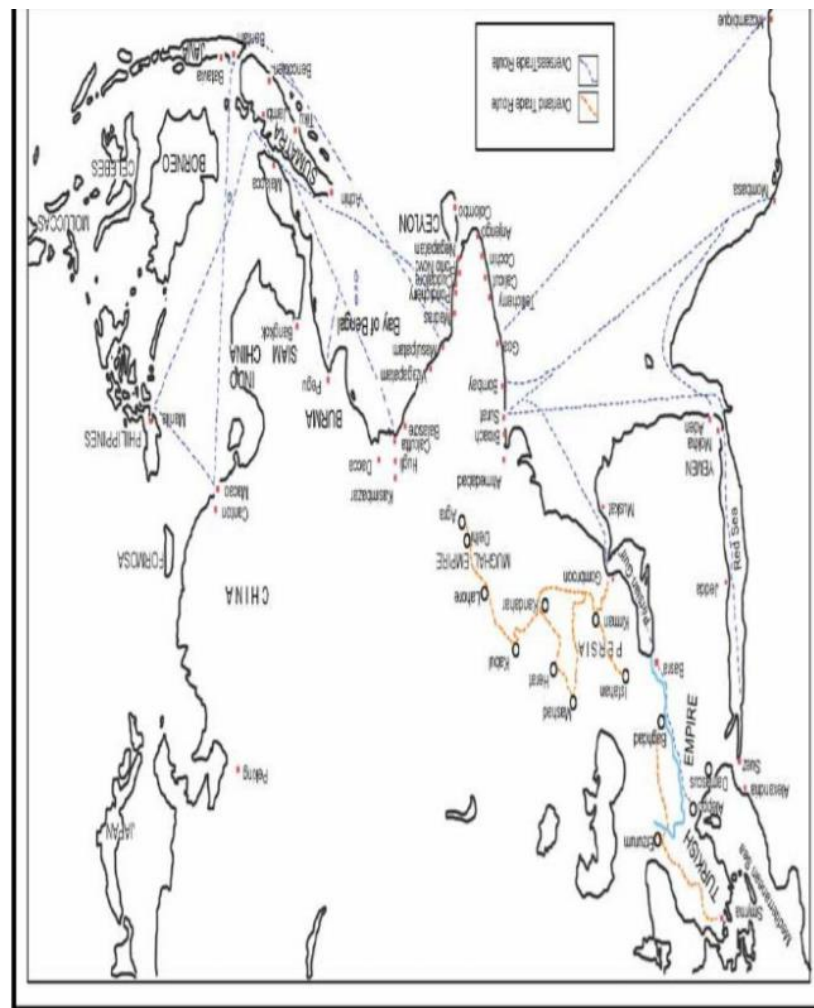
6.3 SEABORNE AND COASTAL TRADE

In addition to a fairly impressive amount of internal trade and a certain amount of external trade by land, the medieval Indian economy was characterized by a large scale coastal and high seas trade carried on from its extensive coast line. On the eve of the arrival of the Europeans into the Asian Seas at the beginning of the sixteenth century, maritime trade from India was an important constituent of the Indian Ocean trade, alternatively referred to as Asian trade. Traditionally, the great arc of Asian trade included the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea in the northwest and Japan in the northeast. The principal natural divisions of this huge area were the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea. Within each of these zones, there were important blocks of ports across which a large amount of trade had traditionally been carried on. The western or the Arabian Sea zone included ports in the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, those on the East African coast and on the west coast of India. The Bay of Bengal network included ports in Sri Lanka, the Coromandel coast, Bengal, Burma, Thailand, Malaya and Acheh in Sumatra. Ports such as Canton and Zaiton in the South China Sea had extensive contacts both with the Indonesian ports as well as with ports in the straits of Malacca (see Map on page 8). India played a central role in this structure of Asian trade. In part, this indeed was a function of the midway location of the subcontinent between west Asia on the one hand and southeast and east Asia on the other. But perhaps even more important was the subcontinent's capacity to put on the market a wide range of tradable goods at highly competitive prices. These included agricultural goods, both food items such as rice, sugar and oil as well as raw materials such as cotton and indigo. While the bulk of the trade in these goods was coastal, the high-seas trade component was by no means insignificant. The real strength of the subcontinent, however, lay in the provision of large quantities of manufactured goods, the most important amongst

which was textiles of various kinds. While these included high value varieties such as the legendary Dhaka muslins and the Gujarat silk embroideries, the really important component for the Asian market was the coarse cotton varieties manufactured primarily on the Coromandel coast and in Gujarat. There was a large scale demand for these varieties both in the eastern markets of Indonesia, Malaya, Thailand and Burma as well as in the markets of the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and East Africa. While it is impossible to determine precisely what proportion of total domestic demand for mass consumption textiles in these societies was met by imports from India, the available evidence would seem to point in the direction of this not being altogether insignificant. India's capacity to manufacture these textiles in large quantities and to put them on the market at highly competitive terms made it in some sense the „industrial“ hub of the region surrounded by west Asia on one side and southeast Asia on the other. This circumstance also determined to a large extent the nature of India's demand for imports from the rest of Asia. This demand consisted essentially either of consumption goods which were not produced domestically for soil, climatic or other reasons, or of minerals and metals of various kinds whose domestic supply was either nil or substantially below the total demand. In the first category were items such as fine spices like cloves, nutmeg and mace from Indonesia, and horses and rosewater from west Asia. The second category included rubies and other precious stones from Burma, as well as metals – both precious and non-precious. By far the most important non-precious metal imported was tin from Malaya. Precious metals, mainly silver, were imported overwhelmingly from west Asia. It was for this reason that, from the sixteenth century onward, the port of Mocha was repeatedly referred to as the „treasure-chest“ of the Mughal empire. It is really immaterial for our purposes whether the imported precious metals are treated as a commodity import or as a means of settling the adverse balance of trade that the concerned trading partner of the subcontinent had with it. The important point to emphasize is that by virtue of her relatively more advanced structure of manufacturing production and her capacity to provide large quantities of basic manufactured consumption goods such as inexpensive cotton textiles at highly competitive terms,

Notes

India significantly enhanced the basis of trade in the Asian continent. She not only provided the textiles and, on a more modest scale, the foodgrains and the provisions in great demand in the neighbouring societies but also provided an important outlet for their specialized agricultural, mineral and other products. Trade satisfied different kinds of consumption needs for India as compared with her numerous trading partners in the Indian Ocean region. This by itself provided an excellent basis for a significant and growing level of trade. It is really in this sense that the critically important role of India in the structure of early modern Asian trade needs to be assessed.



Indian Ocean in the 17th and 18th Centuries (After K.N. Chaudhuri,

6.4 INDIA AND THE ASIAN TRADE

The key position of India in the structure of Asian trade was also reflected in the important role of the Gujarati and other Indian trading groups in the actual conduct of this trade. This role, if anything, was strengthened in the course of the fifteenth century which witnessed the fragmentation of Asian trade into well-defined segments. Increasingly, the participation of the Arab merchants became confined to the trade between west Asia and the west coast of India. This left the trade between the west and the east coasts of India on the one hand, and the eastern Indian Ocean region on the other, almost exclusively in the hands of Indians – the Gujaratis more than anyone else, but also the Chettis, the Chulias and other groups from the Coromandel coast, besides the Oriyas and the Bengalis. The participation of the Chinese merchants was now restricted by and large to controlling the trade between China and Malacca, while the Indonesian and the Malay merchants hardly seem to have ventured beyond the inter-island and the port-to-port trade in the Malay-Indonesian region. In sum, Indian merchants from different regions of the country constituted an important trading group operating in the Ocean. From the vantage point of India, the two principal segments of maritime Asian trade were the western Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. In the west, the link through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf extended overland to the southern coast of the Mediterranean. The Bay of Bengal littoral extended through the straits of Malacca to the South China Sea going all the way to Japan. In the west, the area of operation of the Indian merchants stopped at the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf ports, while in the east it extended as far as Malacca. While there were clear-cut and by and large autonomous areas of operation and linkage in each of these two broad segments and there is a certain amount of merit in analysing each of these separately, it must be recognized that there was a considerable amount of interdependence and interaction across the two segments and that neither of the two should be regarded as a fully autonomous and self-contained system. One only needs to refer to the large volume of direct trade between Gujarat and Indonesia to realize the significance of this caution. This was equally true at the level of coastal trade as well, and one only has to remind oneself of the regular trade links in the fifteenth century between the ports of

Notes

Bengal on the one hand and those of the west coast – in both Malabar and Gujarat – on the other. In both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, a considerable amount of trade was carried on both on the high-seas as well as on the coastal trade circuits. The coastal circuits were often dominated by trade in agricultural products such as foodgrains and other bulk goods, and were usually characterized by the use of relatively small craft which would ordinarily not be usable on the high-seas runs. Also, in comparison to the high-seas connections, the role of the monsoon winds was comparatively limited in determining the rhythm of trade on the coastal circuits.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. Discuss about the Intra-Regional Trade.

.....
.....
.....

2. Write about Seaborne and Coastal Trade.

.....
.....
.....

3. Discuss about India and the Asian Trade

.....
.....
.....

6.5 THE WEST COAST

The west coast of India could conveniently be conceived of as consisting of four distinct segments divided roughly at the ports of Chaul, Karwar and Cannanore. To the north of Chaul lay the Gujarat coast; from Chaul to Karwar was the Konkan coast; south of Karwar to Mount Eli immediately to the north of the port of Cannanore was the Kanara coast; and to its south the Malabar coast. During the fifteenth century, the ports

of Cambay in Gujarat and Calicut in Malabar were the two major international ports on the west coast of India, and between them they handled a considerable amount of re-export trade. Gujarat was a major trading area in the subcontinent and the Gujaratis – mostly Muslims but also including Hindu traders – had traditionally been a dominant group amongst the Indian mercantile communities. The most important of the new ports to emerge during the fifteenth century was Malacca, to which the Gujarati merchants shifted their trade from the Javanese and the Sumatran ports on which they had concentrated until then in their eastern trade. The growth of Malacca continued in the second half of the fifteenth century, and so did the Gujarati share in the trade of the port. The goods that the Malacca-bound ships leaving Cambay carried were, in part, coloured woollen clothes and glassware from the Mediterranean, and items such as rosewater, opium, indigo and silver from west Asia. But a large part of the cargo would seem to have consisted of textiles manufactured in Gujarat – mainly of coarse cotton, though more expensive varieties including those manufactured from fine-quality cotton and silk also seem to have figured in the list. The cargo obtained in exchange at Malacca included Chinese goods such as silk and porcelain, Indonesian spices such as pepper, cloves, nutmeg and mace, besides woods and aromatics, and precious and non-precious metals such as Malayan tin. In addition to Malacca, the Gujarati ships from Cambay called at ports such as Aceh, Kedah, Tenasserim/Mergui and Pegu. The goods carried to these ports were broadly similar to those carried to Malacca: the goods brought back were largely of local origin, rather than cosmopolitan as in the case of Malacca.

There was also a large amount of coastal trade carried on between Cambay and other smaller ports of Gujarat on the one hand, and ports on the Konkan, Kanara and the Malabar coasts to the south, and those in Bengal, on the other. The principal commodity procured in the Konkan ports of Chaul and Dabhol was textiles, while the main item procured in Kanara and Malabar was pepper. A certain amount of rice was also procured in Kanara. At Calicut, limited quantities of Chinese and Indonesian goods were also picked up. Bengal provided foodgrains and

provisions such as sugar, butter and oil in addition, of course, to textiles of different varieties. A part of the large conglomerate of goods brought to Cambay was obviously destined for consumption in Gujarat, as well as the large north Indian hinterland supplied by it. But a good proportion would seem to have been re-exported mainly to west Asia, the most important ports in the region at this time being Aden and Jeddah. The other important constituent of the cargo to west Asia was textiles manufactured in Gujarat. These were predominantly those manufactured from coarse cotton and intended for mass consumption, though superior varieties manufactured from fine cotton and silk also figured in the list. The route from Cambay to Aden would seem to have been dominated by the Arab, Persian and other west Asian merchants, though the Gujarati merchants also operated on this route in an important way.

6.6 THE EAST COAST

The two principal trading regions on the east coast of India were the Coromandel Coast and Bengal. The Coromandel Coast is conventionally defined as including the stretch between Point Godavari and the island of Manar, south of which lays the Fishery coast. To the north of Point Godavari is the Gingelly coast which is sometimes also included in the Coromandel Coast. For our purposes, Bengal would be defined as including the Orissa ports of Pipli and Balasore. There was a fair amount of coastal trade between the ports of the two regions, dominated; it would seem, by the merchants of Bengal. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the principal Coromandel port was Pulicat linked via Tirupati and Penukonda to the imperial city of Vijayanagar to the northwest. In Bengal, by far the most important port was Chittagong which was linked to the capital city of Gaur. Satgaon was next in importance until about 1580 when, due to the silting up of the waterway on which it was situated, it was succeeded by Hugli. Pipli and Balasore in Orissa were the other important ports in the region. The high-seas trade from Pulicat was basically in two directions: to Mergui and the ports of the Irrawaddy delta in southern Burma on the one hand, and to Malacca and ports further east in the archipelago on the other. While the trade with Mergui was marginal, that with Pegu and lower Burma, in

particular the ports of Martaban and Cosmin, was more substantial. The principal exports from Pulicat consisted of textiles produced all over the Coromandel Coast and red yarn from the Krishna delta. The imports into Coromandel included items such as gold, rubies, timber, tin, ivory and copper. The link to Malacca was perhaps even more important. Until its capture by the Portuguese in 1511, the annual traffic to the port from Coromandel usually consisted of one large ship and as many as five smaller ships. The principal items imported into Pulicat included Indonesian spices, various kinds of wood, Chinese silk and other goods, gold and nonprecious metals such as tin, copper, quicksilver and vermilion. A major trading group at Pulicat was that of Muslims, a few of Arab origin, but mainly members of the Muslim communities of coastal southeastern India, known as Chulias in parts of Southeast Asia and as Marakkayars in Coromandel. The trading community also included Telugu speaking Chettis of the Baliya and Komatti communities as well as Armenians. At the Malacca end, the mercantile community consisted largely of the so-called keeling merchants of Tamil and Telugu origin led by people like Nina Chatu and Nina Suryadev. The Sultan of Malacca himself is also known to have participated in this branch of commerce. There was regular trade between Bengal and Coromandel based on the import into ports such as Masulipatnam of rice, gram, wheat, long pepper, opium, clarified butter and Bihar saltpetre by an annual coastal fleet from Bengal. While the ships from Bengal usually returned from north Coromandel itself, those from the Gingelly coast went further south to supply central Coromandel as far as Pulicat and São Tomé. The Coromandel cargo carried back to Bengal was raw cotton, tobacco, iron and crucible steel, and some textiles, but the profit seems to have been made largely on the outward journey. As far as Bengal was concerned, in addition to the coastal trade with southeastern India, the major commercial links extended to the eastern littoral of the Bay of Bengal and Malacca, to Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Malabar, and finally to the Gujarat, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf complex. The eastward trade was dominated by the trade to Malacca. The exports from Bengal included textiles, rice, sugar and conserves, while the imports were a varied lot. These included Borneo camphor, Moluccan spices, pepper,

Notes

sandalwood, Chinese porcelain and silk, precious metals – perhaps mainly silver – as well as base metals such as copper, tin, lead and mercury. The connection with Burma was mainly through the ports at Martaban, Dagon and Cosmin. The exports to Sri Lanka, the Maldives and the Malabar Coast were again mainly textiles and foodstuffs, including large quantities of rice. Indeed, besides Kanara, Bengal was the principal rice surplus area in the entire region and areas such as the Maldives depended mainly on Bengal for their rice requirements. The principal items brought back by the Bengal vessels were cinnamon and areca from Sri Lanka, cauris (used extensively in Bengal both for ornamental purposes as well as in the form of low denomination currency) from the Maldives, and pepper, of which again Bengal was an important consumer, from Malabar. The trade to Gujarat was carried on primarily through Cambay, while the trips to Mocha in the Red Sea were often made after a stopover at the Maldives. The principal goods carried were textiles, sugar and long pepper, while the principal item brought back from Mocha was silver.

The accounts of Portuguese travellers Tome Pires (1512-1515) and Duarte Barbosa (c. 1518) also enable one to decipher the principal components of the mercantile community operating from Bengal. The indigenous merchants of Bengal are described as „merchants with great fortunes“ and were an important constituent of the trading community. But a large part of the trade would seem to have been controlled either by merchants based at the partner ports or by foreign merchant groups settled in the Bengal ports. Thus the trade with Malacca was dominated by the keling merchants settled there. The pepper trade with Pasai and Pidie was carried on by Persian merchants settled at the port of Chittagong. This last-mentioned group would seem also to have dominated the trade to the middle and the western Indian Ocean ports, though the traders on these routes also included Turks, Arabs, Rumis, Abyssinians and merchants from Chaul, Dabhol and Goa. The essentials of the Indian maritime trading network as outlined above remained by and large unchanged over the course of the sixteenth, the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The arrival of the Portuguese into the Asian

Seas at the beginning of the sixteenth century did indeed introduce some elements of change in the functioning of this network but it is important not to over-emphasize the nature or the magnitude of such changes. It is, for example, simply not true to claim that on the strength of the superior fighting power of their vessels operating in the Asian Seas, the Portuguese were able to dominate the Indian Ocean trade at the cost of Indian and other Asian trading groups. Devices such as the cartaz system which obliged Indian ships operating on specific routes to seek prior permission of the Portuguese and paying customs duties at the ports controlled by the latter were at best minor irritants involving a small additional cost from the point of view of the Indian maritime merchants and nothing more. More direct intervention by the Estado da India (lit. State of India; functioned on behalf of the Portuguese Crown) through devices such as the concession system on a reserved route basis again did indeed cause a certain amount of dislocation and inconvenience to say the merchants operating from a Coromandel port such as Pulicat. But the response of the Indian merchants was to create an alternative network of ports in the Bay of Bengal and avoid the Portuguese controlled ports. It would seem to be almost certainly the case that the overall implications of the Portuguese practices and policies for the fortunes of the Indian maritime merchants were practically nil. With the arrival of the English and the Dutch on the scene at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the overall situation did not undergo any fundamental change. Though both these Companies formally took over the cartaz system, it was never enforced with any vigour by either. Of the two, only the Dutch East India Company engaged in intra-Asian trade and was concerned about competition from Indian merchants operating on the same routes, but there was very little the Company could do about it. The Europeans had no option but to participate in the maritime trade from India as simply another group of merchants doing business in the region.

This situation was eventually altered to a certain extent in the second half of the eighteenth century when the English East India Company wrested diwani rights (right to collect revenues on behalf of the Mughal emperor) in the Bengal subah (province) in 1765 from the Mughal emperor. The

employees of the Company engaged in trade on their private account took full advantage of the political power now available to the Company. This power was often used to create unauthorised monopolies of various kinds, particularly in highly profitable items of trade such as opium. The trade of the rival Indian merchants was also sought to be hindered in a variety of other ways. It is, however, a great tribute to the basic strength and the resilience of the Indian maritime merchant that he steadfastly refused to be overwhelmed by the fair and unfair competition provided by the English private traders. If the trade with China where opium figured in a big way now became unviable for the Indian merchant, he sought new markets in South-East Asia and by and large made up for the loss of the China market. The point is that while it was indeed the case that the newly found power of the English created problems for the Indian maritime merchant, he displayed sufficient flexibility to be able to stay in business.

6.7 HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ASIAN TRADE

In order to put our discussion in perspective, it might be useful to refer briefly to some key concepts that have emerged in the historiography on Asian trade over the last three quarters of a century or so. The pioneer in the field was a Dutch sociologist-historian Jacob van Leur who argued that the Asian merchant was no more than a pedlar and that the trade was overwhelmingly in luxuries. The role of the merchant was confined to hawking his wares from market to market and the only change in the trade was the waxing and waning in its volume. Van Leur was clearly wrong in maintaining that trade in luxury goods was a principal characteristic feature of Asian trade. We now know on the basis of detailed research that it was indeed the trade in ordinary goods – the most important component of which was Indian textiles of everyday wear – that dominated the Asian trade. But Van Leur's pedlar hypothesis found a strong supporter in Niels Steensgaard, a Danish historian who further refined the hypothesis and developed it almost into a theory. Steensgaard argued that the pedlar of the Indian Ocean operated in a world of non-transparent markets and did not enjoy the protection of

buffers such as intermediaries and stocks against possibly large price fluctuations. An Indian historian, the late Ashin Das Gupta argued that the concept of pedlar was not necessarily in conflict with the fact that in addition to the predominance of small merchants who travelled the maritime routes in the Indian Ocean with their bundle or two of coarse cloths, wealthy ship-owning merchants such as Mulla Abdul Ghafur also participated in the Indian Ocean trade in an important way. He agreed with Steensgaard that the markets in the Indian Ocean were small, easily glutted and exceptionally erratic. Das Gupta wrote, "Price was fixed by matching demand and supply, only no one could tell the state of demand and supply much beforehand. This meant that even the large operators were the victims of the eccentricities of the market. If insecurity be accepted as the real hall-mark of peddling trade, then the Indian Ocean market in the early 18th century was a pedlar's market". Another concept that Niels Steensgaard developed in the context of the growing European participation in the Indian Ocean trade in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries was that of Asiatic Trade Revolution. Steensgaard argued that the Portuguese European- Asian trading network, using the newly discovered all-water route via the Cape of Good Hope on an exclusive basis, was essentially a redistributive enterprise which basically meant that the Portuguese state used its monopoly power over the route to force the Portuguese merchants to share their profits with it and by and large acted as a parasite. This situation, according to Steensgaard, changed radically from the beginning of the seventeenth century onward with the establishment of the Dutch and the English East India Companies. He drew a sharp contrast between the seigneurial and redistributive nature of the Portuguese enterprise on the one hand and the rational and productivity – maximizing policies of the Companies on the other. Thus, "the Portuguese pepper monopoly was not a business but a custom-house." On the other hand, the success of the Companies was not based upon government monopolies or the use of violence but on their ability to compete in the market. For by adopting specific policies in relation to stocks, pricing and the mode of disposal of their goods, the Companies made impressive gains in the transparency and the predictability of the markets in which they operated. In his writings, Om

Notes

Prakash has argued that recent work in the field would seem to suggest that while certain key elements in Steensgaard's formulation continue to be valid, the overall characterisation of a redistributive enterprise for the entire Portuguese trading operations both between Europe and Asia as well as those within Asia is in need of revision. This is partly because the Companies were not quite as devoid of the use of monopoly and violence as Steensgaard's model in a pure form would seem to imply. More importantly, we now know that the Portuguese enterprise was indeed very much more than a simple Euro-Asian trade in pepper, the commodity mainly responsible for the characterisation of the trade as redistributive in nature. From about the last quarter of the sixteenth century onward, pepper increasingly lost ground to other goods in Portuguese Euro-Asian trade. Also, in addition to the EuroAsian trade, there was a considerable amount of trade the Portuguese private traders carried on within Asia in respect of which too the redistributive characterisation will really not apply. The manner in which the trade was carried on was in its essentials not very different from the way the northern European corporate groups and private traders carried on their trade. Om Prakash has also suggested in his work that in the context of the European trading operations in the Indian Ocean, there indeed was an Asian Trade Revolution taking place from the seventeenth century onward but of a kind very different from that suggested by Steensgaard. This Asian Trade Revolution consisted partly in the phenomenal expansion in the volume and value of Euro-Asian trade and partly in a major diversification in the composition and the origin of the Asian cargo entering this trade. Initially, both the Dutch and the English concentrated on the procurement of pepper and other spices which, as in the sixteenth century, continued to account for an overwhelming proportion of the total Asian imports into Europe. But unlike, and indeed mainly because of, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English procured their pepper in Indonesia rather than on the southwest coast of India. The result was a marked shift in the Asian loci of the Euro-Asian seaborne trade from India to the Indonesian archipelago. This was the Asian counterpart of the shift of the European loci of this trade from Lisbon to Amsterdam and London. It was nearly three quarters of a century before

the Asian loci shifted back to India in response to the change in European fashions assigning an increasingly important role to textiles and raw silk in the Asian imports into Europe. It was only in the second half of the eighteenth century that the growing role of Chinese tea again deflected somewhat from the central importance of India in Euro-Asian trade.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. What is the West Coast?

.....
.....
.....

2. The East Coast

.....
.....
.....

3. Discuss Historiography of Asian Trade.

.....
.....
.....

6.8 LET US SUM UP

To conclude, India possessed an extensive network of inland and maritime trade during the medieval period of her history. This network was strong enough and efficient enough to successfully face the competition provided by the European corporate groups as well as private traders and retain its identity in all its essentials. Even the assumption of political power by the English East India Company in the latter half of the eighteenth century was unable to damage this network in more than a marginal way.

6.9 KEY WORDS

Notes

Asian: **Asia** is Earth's largest and most populous continent, located primarily in the Eastern and Northern Hemispheres. It shares the continental landmass of Eurasia

Trade: Trade involves the transfer of goods or services from one person or entity to another, often in exchange for money.

6.10 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- 1) Discuss the importance of Agra as an important entrepôt in the 17th century.
- 2) Critically examine India's trade during the 16-17th centuries vis-à-vis Asian trade.
- 3) Analyse the nature of coastal trade in the 16-17th centuries.
- 4) Analyse the trading activities of the Gujarati and Bengali merchants during the 16-17th centuries.
- 5) Give a historiographical assessment of the Oceanic trade. Evaluate Van Leur's hypothesis of 'peddling trade'.

6.11 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Gupta, A.Das and Pearson, M.N. (ed.), India and the Indian Ocean 1500-1800, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1987.
- Gupta, Uma Das (compiler), The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant 1500-1800, Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2001.
- Prakash, Om, European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Prakash, Om and Lombard, Denys (ed.), Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal 1500-1800, Manohar, 1999.
- Steensgaard, Neils, The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century, Chicago, 1974.

6.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 6.2
2. See Section 6.3
3. See Section 6.4

Check Your Progress 2

1. See Section 6.5
2. See Section 6.6
3. See Section 6.7

UNIT 7: INDIAN MERCHANTS AND THEIR COMMERCIAL PRACTICES, MEDIUM OF EXCHANGE, CURRENCY, COINAGE AND BANKING

STRUCTURE

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Indian merchants and their commercial practices

7.3 Medium of exchange

7.4 Currency, coinage and banking

7.5 Let us sum up

7.6 Key Words

7.7 Questions for Review

7.8 Suggested readings and references

7.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit, we can able to know:

- To discuss about the Indian merchants and their commercial practices
- To discuss about the Medium of exchange
- To know about the Currency, coinage and banking

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The collection, distribution and exchange of goods are called trade. It is a process which depends on a number of factors such as the nature and quantity of production, facilities of transport, safety and security of traders, the pattern of exchange, etc. It also involves different sections of society including traders, merchants, peasants and artisans. In a

somewhat indirect manner, even political authorities have a stake in it as taxes on the articles of commerce imposed by them constitute an important source of revenue of the state. The historical features of trade during the early medieval times can be best understood if we divide this period into two broad phases: 1) c.700-900 A.D. and ii) c 900-1300 A.D. Briefly, the two phases are marked by: a) relative decline of trade, metallic currency, urban centres and a somewhat closed economy in the first phase, and b) reversal of most of the aforesaid tendencies in the second phase. So, one notices trade picking up momentum not only within the country but in relation to other countries as well. Metal coins were no longer as scarce as they were in the first phase. Of course, it was not a phase of deeply penetrated monetary economy as was the case in the five centuries following the end of the Mauryas (c.200 B.C.-A.D.300). Nor did the pattern of urban growth remain unaffected by the revival of trade and expansion of agriculture.

7.2 INDIAN MERCHANTS AND THEIR COMMERCIAL PRACTICES

In the light of the above quotation as stated by father of economics one can observe many major and minor communities participated in trading all over the world in this period. The economic activities of both Indian and Europeans kept the Indian and in specific the Deccan economy vibrant. The late medieval trade and commerce was influenced more by Europeans and it helped many indigenous traders and merchants both Hindu and Muslims in community wise. To many historians the arrival of Europeans facilitated the trade and commerce during medieval times.¹ The Hindu castes dominated commercial world in Coromandel Coast and its hinterland. ² But they didn't influence much on trade which they enjoyed during the helm of Vijayanagar rulers. They lost ground to foreign traders and merchants mostly on the overseas and in coastal areas and had to share their profits with new trading groups. Among Hindu Merchants Telugu speaking people dominated north of the Palar River as far as Nagapatnam. Kommaties, Chettiars, Naidus and some other communities were the main merchant classes in the south.³ Over all in south India and Deccan a mixed character of merchants became a special

Notes

feature as territory became base for commercial activity and not because certain group or castes. Banias, Shettis, Perikas, Balijas and Chettis were another important Merchant Community who were wealthy and large scale shippers and brokers and wholesalers. The Telugu agricultural nobility, with Reddy and Naidu as suffixes to their names, also participated in the Trade in Deccan since bygone days. Small Scale boatmen who came from fishing and related Maritime communities dominated much of the coastal trade. Along the coast, north of Madras up to Srikakulam major Telugu Weaving Communities were namely Devangas and Saales (Padmashali).⁴ At this juncture in later medieval period large scale of peddlers, transporters and traders entered Deccan and started to have their share and influence on this region and they were none other than Banjaras with different local names. Thus, other than Hindu castes, the Muslims concentrated their business on both Eastern and western coast of India, but they dominated western mostly. During Qutb Shahi era, many Muslim nobles lost no opportunity in making profits out of trade and commerce.

Pre-Colonial Trade and Commerce The establishment of new independent kingdoms of Deccan and south India after the collapse of Mughals gave moral and economical boost to this Vancharas or Banjaras who too were looking eagerly searching to seek livelihood after decline of Mughal Empire who were their main patrons both during wars and peace when they entered Deccan and thereby to coastal areas, they found other traders and merchants of different communities and castes. Some of the merchants to the North of Penner River were Golconda Muslims, predominantly, Persian, regarding whom the discussion is made in the later of this chapter. The Golconda Muslims were mainly overseas, shippers, who settled in Masulipatnam and in some smaller ports such as Nizampatnam, Vizagapatnam and Bhimilipatnam. The Muslim merchants located in south of Madras were a blend of Arabs, and Indo-Arabs who were the products of mixed marriages. The coastal Muslims also called Chullas by foreign observers, interacted socially on the basis of equality with outsiders. We have plethora of evidence on the status and role of Merchants provided by local historians, foreign armature historians and European travellers, the Merchants and had their own

means of Influence and access to Center of political powers. There were many powerful merchants who enjoyed a considerable power during this period. In the Islamic Kingdom of Golconda and Bijapur, the Coromandel Hindu merchants had to share profits with new officials. Further Golconda Muslim Merchants extended their influence and penetrated south wards from Masulipatnam. A number of political merchants like Mohammad Said, popularly called Mir Jumla, Governor of Golconda, who was a ship owner and exporter to many regions of Indian Ocean and used his Political influence to enforce a monopoly on the Dutch Company's imports in Masulipatnam. We have other political Merchants, Khan-i-Khanan, the Bijapur general, who was involved extensively in overseas trade, owing ships, and Krishnappa, the commanders of the armed forces of the Nayak of Jinji, secured administrative control over the ports on east coast. They were mostly supplied with goods by their age old suppliers who accompanied from north India are none other than Banjaras. All the Merchants Politically strengthened their position to expand their Commercial activities. They took control over the produce of weaving villages in areas under their Jurisdiction. Rich and influential merchants wielded their power and sometime led to the volatile and uncertain political situation with the growth of European port-settlements, we find a fundamental shift in the relations between merchants and political power and between merchants of the Coast and their hinterland. Earlier the Merchants operated freely in both segments. This was hampered due to several political, administrative and economic factors. The Merchants were intermediaries for the companies with local power. Both in Indian ports and in the European enclaves south of Masulipatnam, Indian Merchants had dealings with the companies and continued their coastal and inland activities. Coromandel Merchants, Traded on their own as well as with Companies. There were significantly a number of merchants who continued to operate independently of the companies in many Indian ports of the coast of which were the Golconda Muslims. According to the Dutch and the English Company records, the joint-stock association of the merchants became popular in several parts of the coastal region merchants took up the joint-stock. In all The English Settlements and

Notes

factories, the joint-stocks not only stood for the purchase of textiles like woolens, lead, copper, Zinc quicksilver, brimstone and coral but also shares were allotted in accordance with the capacity of the merchant. In organizing such type of joint stock associations, Indians were lagging behind in late medieval or in pre-colonial period like their European merchants and traders. This was the time world is coming across many changes especially in the field of trade and commerce. New innovative methods and new people from different parts of the world are coming onto the scene. There was increasing drift of merchants towards Europeans Companies as a result of Mughal's penetration into the Deccan region, especially Golconda, when the Mughal administration was established in Jingsi and far off south.¹⁴ If it were possible to have statistics of the volume of internal and external commerce around the year 1600 for different regions of the globe, it is fairly certain that with an estimated population of 125 to 150 million, would at least have claimed a share proportionate to its population, though it may be an assumption. The land tax accounted for the larger portion of the surplus in India, and in most areas taxes were collected in kind and money. This alone generated extensive trade in agricultural produce. The ruling classes were largely town-based, and an urban economy flourished, with craft production for both local and distant markets. India was undoubtedly the greatest cotton-textile producer of the world, and the finer qualities of cotton cloth sustained brisk long-distance commerce. The country exported calicoes, indigo, pepper, silk and numerous other commodities over sea and over land, in return for which it absorbed large quantities of gold, silver and jewellery. The coins of the Mughal Empire issued from numerous mints all over India, was of wonderful quality and uniformity. These facts should be sufficient to persuade us of the importance of studying how commerce in India was conducted just at the time that the merchant empire of Western Europe had begun their progress toward a worldwide hegemony. The present effort focuses on the merchants and selects two major mercantile communities, the Banjaras (long-distance transporters) and Banyas (village and town based merchants), for presumption. The sketches of the two communities are followed by a discussion of the forms of mercantile organization,

commercial and financial techniques of the Banyas. Financially, there will be a provisional attempt to evaluate some of the theories that have been advanced concerning pre-colonial Indian commerce. There is no doubt that a full description of commercial institutions and practices in pre-colonial India must come with array of multiplicities within the limited space and with large worldwide network. The pre-colonial commercial world of India was one of open and competitive market, where different groups tried to establish an advantage in one sphere or another by means of inherited skills and ways of life. Such a situation led to brisk commodity exchanges and the development of sophisticated and distinguished commercial and financial techniques. Historians of an earlier generation like W. H. Moreland, the vulnerability of Indian commerce lay not in its structural backwardness but in the political environment, that is constant construction by the taxation and expropriations of the arbitrary, absolute despotism of the Mughal government. This view has been strongly contested, however, based on evidence concerning Mughal Commercial taxation and law enforcement and on the rarity of specific instances of confiscations of mercantile wealth. A variant of Moreland's theory has now been offered by K. N. Chaudhuri, who sees a constant threat to mercantile prosperity (Hindu) from religious persecution of Muslim. Irfan Habib commented on the above statement that it was not unusual for Hindus to conduct business with Muslims merchants. As a matter of fact, the brokers of Muslim merchants were mostly and invariably were Hindus. Chaudhuri adds that the Surat disturbance of 1669 was far from being an isolated incident, when the entire history of Surat tells us that in its religious genesis the disturbance was unusual. Some intellectuals' hold that the act of discrimination in the commercial sphere was when Aurangzeb (1659-1707) increased duties on goods of non-Muslim merchants to 5 percent, keeping them at 2.5 percent for Muslims that was highlighted by Chaudhuri is the only example of discrimination in commercial history of late medieval period of India. But even here, the higher rate was often avoided by the Hindu merchants by passing off their goods as those of Muslims. For quite some time now, yet another theory of the weakness of Indian (and Asian) commercial structure has been popular. This

Notes

argument accepts the fact that competition, and not monopoly, was the normal background for commerce in India (and Asia). This meant that a large number of individuals with small amounts of capital peddlers accounted for most of the trade. Since the "peddlers" worked perforce on faulty intelligence and could not plan controlled responses, there were surplus and scarcities in different markets, great price fluctuations, and therefore an enormous wastage of economic effort. These defects were rectified in the trade controlled by the European companies, which were blessed with large capital, efficient organization, and informed planning. The argument has been set out elaborately by Niels Steensgaard, who derived the concept of the peddling trade from van Leur. Steensgaard's arguments have been contested by Tapan Raychaudhuri, who denies that peddlers dominated pre-colonial Indian commerce. One begins to wonder how Indian or Asian trade could have been different from commerce within western or central Europe. The fact that the Red Sea, not the Cape of Good Hope, remained the main conduit for India's external trade in the 17th Century shows that the commerce was by no means less efficient than the trade of the Dutch and English companies. Though Europeans triumphed over India but the Indian commerce in which the Banyas, Shroffs and Banjaras greatly specialized that they brought into use their own commercial fabric of institutions like brokerage, deposit banking, bill-money, and insurance, these institutions did not indicate a static or stagnant state of commerce. Let us see about them in brief manner.

Trade in Later Medieval Deccan and Coromandel Coast

India had good commercial relations with West and East since early times.¹⁵ The trade was carried out by group of merchants belonging to different sections of the society as said in early paras. In south India the mixed character of merchants became a special feature as territory was the basis of organization and not a particular caste or group in ancient India. Hindu dominated the entire commercial world of Coromandel Coasts for several centuries in spite of other merchants' such as Muslims and other Europeans participation. During the 16th and 17th centuries the activities of the Europeans helped Indian merchants in expanding the

trading relations of India with west and other parts of the world. The 17th and the 18th Centuries marked a transitional period in their history of India. During these centuries, India, because of the cumulative influence and total effect of a number of political, social and economic factors commenced on its course of moving from the feudal age towards the colonial age. From the limited perspective of trade and commerce these two centuries may also be called as “the age of European East India Companies”. The Indian merchants were mainly middlemen in the European trade later. The Indian traders who later assisted the foreigners’ foreign trade were of two types as briefed earlier. One is peddlers group who engaged in small scale and other is larger merchants.

Commodities of Trade

Both the foreign and indigenous records present a cozy picture about affluent and richness of India during early and later medieval era. India’s prosperity was fueled to some extent by its vibrant inland and overseas trade. Indian markets served both rich and poor with equally. It provided all those articles that are scarcely found through imports and exported that is in surplus. Deccan region flanked with vast coastal line on both sides with numerous ports that served accordingly to requirement. Thus the prosperity of Medieval India was fueled by both exports and imports. The advent of the Europeans and existing political conditions served as great impetus to the expansion of trade and commerce especially in Deccan. The local rulers to increase revenue gave trading permissions in form of Farmanas and by giving exemptions to the traders who came from various countries. The home industries too fed on raw material from foreign lands like raw silk, semi-precious stones, precious metals that were imported from Persian and Arab land routes. In a nut shell India imported more luxury goods, precious metals and exported textiles, food grains and spices.

Exports

The record of this period shows that India in general and Deccan in particular has exported certain goods. They are like Textiles, Allegies, Bettilles. Chiavonys. Cassaputeh and Cassa Merah, Sastracundis or

Notes

Saceragunties, Sucatoons, sugar, white millets, Romals, Chintz, Gingham, Kalamkari, Yarn, Animal Skins, Salt Petre, Iron and Steel, Diamonds, Leather, Indigo, Tobacco, Redwood, Lac, Drugs and Cassamba, Floor Stones and Baked Bricks, Slaves. The largest mine in the Qutb Shahi Dominions was at Kallur. It was the first mine to be used in Golconda. Diamonds and rubies from the famous Golconda mine were exported to south East Asian countries from Masulipatnam. The state maintained its export trade extensively. In 1621 A.D. Diamond mine was found near Bannaganapalli about 50 miles south of Masulipatnam. There was several diamond cutting centres near Golconda mines.

Imports

Likewise the imports till dawn of modern period were Spices and Pepper, Precious Metals, Pearls, Tin, Copper, Amber, Aromatic Wood, Natural Gum, Sulphur, Camphor, Damar, Lac, Perfumes, Coconuts, Arecanuts, Carpets, Brocade, Dried Fruits, Mirrors, Blades, Wines and Dye-roots, Elephants, Porcelain, Horses. The sea ports that flourished during this period played a major role for the development of the markets for the imports. Machilipatnam, Nizampatnam, Narsapuram and other ports were the major ports. Machilipatnam because of its hinterland became an important port during the Qutb Shahi period. Precious metals occupied an important position among imports from Holland.

Markets in Medieval Deccan

The term Mandi is used to denote markets during medieval times. Villages acted as collecting centers of grain (Mandis) leading up to a bigger Mandi for a region. There were various systems of weights and measures, currency and taxation in the country. These bigger mandis were closely linked to the larger towns and to the big grain-dealers (The Banjaras pedlers). During this period small towns came in to existence. These towns also known as Qasbas were the regional centers for the collecting grain. According to K.N. Chowdary every large sea port had three types of markets. They were purely local market, whole sale market and other allied off-shoot markets or forward market. 24 The Golconda markets were the complex of specialized industries and raw agricultural

and mineral commodities. They could be bought at the dealers counter or even directly at the agricultural or industrial production. The sea ports that flourished during this period played a major role for the development of the markets for the imports. Machilipatnam, Nizampatnam, Narasapuram and other ports were the major ports during the Qutb Shahi and in post Qutb Shahi era. There was great demand for luxurious goods from the royal and noble families of local Telugu Rulers, Nayakas, Palegars, Zamindars and Warlords in and around Northern and southern circars along with Telangana and Rayalseema regions. The centres like Machilipatnam and Bhiminipatnam were geographically well situated. They were linked by roads that were connected with various trading centres got flourished. Metals especially used in day today life were the largest important items of import. During the period of Qutb Shahi dynasty large quantities of metals came from Sumatra and West Javanese ports to the ports of Masulipatanam, Nagapatnam and Devanampatnam. Commodities of imports included horses from Arabia and Persia by Portuguese, led from England, board cloth from France. Masulipatnam was the main centre of import of Persian and Arabian goods. Saltpetre was one of the chief imports of the Qutb Shahi state. It was in great demand because of its importance for gunpowder. During this period they had to wage wars against Mughals that is why the demand for salt petre was increased. Elephants were another important item of import in to Golconda. There was a great demand for these animals and they were imported in a large numbers. People from higher class like Hindu Nayakas, Reddi Rajas, and Zamindaras bought them for status symbols and at times they donated them as gifts to the temples. Tennasserim, Pegu, Thailand and Ceylon were the major centers for exporting elephants. Masulipatnam was the chief port for importing the elephants. From 1640's onwards the Dutch participation increased sharply. They established factory in the capital (Hyderabad) of Qutb Shahi kingdom. They were exempted from transit dues. As result of this they could increase their sales. Actually the Dutch participation in India started with the opening a factory at Nizampatanam in 1606 A.D. The sultan gave a Farman asking them to pay the amount for which the Dutch refused. Sultan imposed some trade restrictions on

Notes

the Dutch that they were not allowed to deal with the local merchants directly. The Dutch decided to close their factory. The English came forward and opened their factory at Nizampatanam. Like other regions of India, Deccan region flanked with costal region on both of its sides also experienced an extensive trade and commercial activity responsible for the commercial life. This can clearly be noticed in the history of Telugu speaking region popularly known as Andhra Desa. The money lenders played their own role in its boosting. The rural population provided various products and the carrier groups took these goods from place to place. But it was the community of the merchants which played a very significant role in monitoring the nature of commodities and other essential goods in the markets. In Deccan, as elsewhere in India, the aspect of trade and commerce in 17th and the 18th Centuries has acquired a special significance. This significance lies in the fact that a foreign and extraneous element in the form of European East India Companies like the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English and the French entered the economic scene through various channels of trade and commerce. For trade and commerce, transport and communication facilities gave backbone support. The accounts of the foreign travelers like Tavernier, Bernier and Thevenot throw a flood of light on this subject. Their accounts may be supported or contradicted by the journals and letters of the Europeans factory officials. It is evident from the contemporary accounts that there was a fairly good network of roads connecting the different industrial Centuries. The markets and the ports were linked to the royal capital Hyderabad by an excellent network of roads that further ran towards Surat, the chief Mughal port. Bijapur, the Adil Shahi capital, Goa and Masulipatnam from both sides enriched all the commercial centers and important towns of hinterland Deccan.

7.3 MEDIUM OF EXCHANGE

The period from A.D. 750-1000 witnessed wide-spread practice of granting land not only to priests and temples but also to wamor chiefs and state officials. As already seen it lead to the emergence of a hierarchy of landlords. Even graded state officials such as mahammadaklvara, mandaka, manta, mahammanta, thakkura, etc. developed

interests in land. However, they were different from the actual tillers of the soil and lived on the surplus extracted from the peasants who were hardly left with anything to trade. It resulted in the growth of rural economy where local needs were being satisfied locally through the imposition of numerous restrictions on the mobility of actual producers. The relative dearth of medium of exchange, viz. mutual coins only strengthened this trend.

Media of Exchange

India was ruled by many important dynasties between .A.D. 750 and 1000. These include the Gujara Pratiharas in Western India, the Palas in Eastern India and the Rashtrakutas in the Decan. All had the distinction of having been served by some of the most powerful kings of the day, many of whom had very long lasting reigns. It is astonishing that their available coins are very few and in no way compare either in quantity or quality with the coins of earlier centuries. Since money plays an important role in the sale and purchase of goods, the paucity of actual coins and the absence of coin-moulds in archaeological finds lead us to believe in the shrinkage of trade during the period under survey. Pugh first suggested by D.D. Kostimbi, it was the publication of Professor R.S. Sharma's *Indian Numismatics* in 1965 that brought to focus the paucity of coinage in the post-Gupta times, its link with trade and commerce and consequent emergence of feudal social formation. The subject has been keenly debated in the last twenty five years. There have been four major types of responses:

ii), A cast study of Orissa substantiates complete absence of coins between c.A.D. 600 and 1200 but argues for-trade with Southeast Asia and emphasizes the role of barter in foreign trade. iii) Kashmir, on the other hand, shows emergence of copper coinage from about the eighth century A.D. Extremely poor quality of this coinage has been explained in terms of the decline of trade based economy and rise of agricultural pursuits in the valley. iv) Finally, a point of view questions not only the idea of paucity of coins but also the decline in trade. This is based on the evidence from what is described as the mid-Eastern India comprising

Notes

Bihar, West Bengal and the present Bangladesh during A.D. 750-1200. While it is conceded that there was no coined money and that the Palas and Senas themselves did not strike coins, it is also argued that there was no dearth of media of exchange. To illustrate, it is emphasized that there was not only a long series of Harikela silver coinage but also cowries and more importantly churni (money in the form of gold/silver dust) also functioned as media of exchange. Well, there may have been some regional exceptions but the all-India perspective fits in the general hypothesis of Professor Sharma. Even with regard to the regional exceptions, the following questions require some attention:

- a) What was the nature and extent of such commercial activities?
- b) Were such activities capable of giving rise to stable commercialized class?
- c) Who took away the profits of this trade?
- d) Did this so called flourishing trade give any incentive to the toiling, subject and immobile peasantry? It is significant to note in this context that: The relevant sources cited in the context of the mid-Eastern India, are silent about the participation of indigenous people in the maritime trade of the area. Even the limited trading activities were confined to the ruling elite. The miserable conditions of the common man are reflected in the meaning of the word vangali (literally, a resident of Bengal) which denoted somebody "very poor and miserable". Similarly, those who talk about India's trade with Southeast Asia may also do well to keep in view the position of metal money in that region. Detailed study of Cambodia, for example, shows that during the two centuries of post-Gupta times (A.D. 600-800) Southeast Asia failed to evolve any system of coinage and barter (largely based on paddy and only marginally on cloth) provided essentials of the Khmer economy.

Even when such early medieval coin types as the Indo-Sassanian. Shri Vighraha, Shri Adivaraha, Bull and Horseman, Gadhaiya, etc. emerged in Western and North western India and to some extent in the Ganga valley; they could not make much dent in the overall economy. Apart from the doubts about the period of emergence of these coins, their extremely

poor quality and purchasing power also indicate the shrinkage of their actual role; Further, in relation to the rising population and expanding area of settlement, the overall volume of money circulation was negligible. Hence, we can say that the case for the relative decline of metallic money during the first phase is based on convincing empirical evidence. This was bound to have an impact on India's trading activities.

Relative Decline of Trade Internally, the fragmentation of political authority and the dispersal of power to local chiefs, religious grantees, etc. seem to have had an adverse effect, at least in the initial centuries of the land grant economy. Many of the intermediary landlords, particularly of less productive areas, resorted to loot and plunder or excessive taxes on goods passing through their territories. This must have dampened the enthusiasm of traders and merchants. No less discouraging were the frequent war amongst potential ruling chiefs. Though two Jain texts of the eighth century, *Smnicchaluha* of Haribhadra Suri and the *Kuvalayarmrh* of Uddyotana Suri, 'refer to brisk trade and busy towns, it is rightly argued that these texts heavily draw their material from the sources of earlier centuries and. therefore, do not necessarily reflect the true economic condition of the eight century.



8. Coins of Tenth Century A.D.




Notes

As regards the decline of foreign trade with the West, it is pointed out that it had greatly diminished after the fall of the great Roman Empire in the fourth century. It was also affected adversely in the middle of the sixth century when the people of Byzantine (Eastern Roman Empire) learnt the art of making silk. India thus, lost an important market which had fetched her considerable amount of gold in the early centuries of the Christian era. The decline of foreign trade was also caused by the expansion of Arabs on the North-west frontiers of India in the seventh and eighth centuries. Their presence in the region made overland routes unsafe for Indian merchants. A story in the Kathacmrtsagara tells us that a group of merchants going from Ujjain to Peshawar were captured by an Arab and sold. Later, when they somehow got free, they decided to leave the North-western region forever and returned to South for trade. The fights amongst the Tibetans and Chinese during these centuries also affected the flow of goods along the routes in central Asia. Even the Western coast of India suffered dislocation and disruption of sea trade as the Arabs raided Broach and Thana in the seventh century and destroyed Valabh~, an important port on the Saurashtra coast, in the eighth century. Though as we have pointed out, later, the Arabs played an important part in the growth of Indian maritime trade after the tenth century; initially their sea raids had an adverse effect on the Indian commercial activity. There are some references in the contemporary literature to India's contact with Southeast Asia.

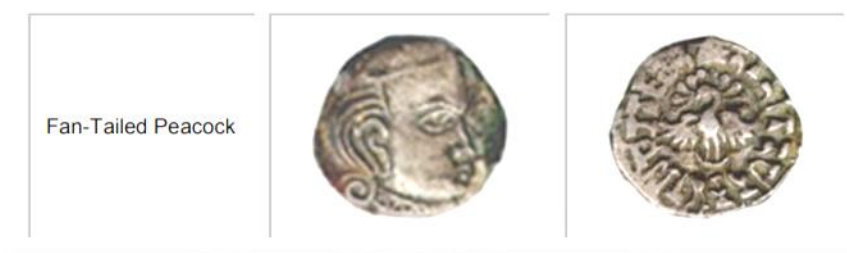
A. Cunningham's *Coins in Mediaeval India* (1894, reprint 1967) was the first classical work of numismatic research of the early medieval Indian coins from 600-1200 CE. His work deciphers the early medieval coins and associates the series of coin types with dynasties which issued them. He also records the weight, quality and quantity of the coins which helped in the study of their metrology, fabric and metal content. His analysis proved that Indian coins of the early medieval period in northern India were of varied kinds chiefly of silver, copper plated or those which were only washed with silver. Only one gold coin was found (Cunningham, 1984, 47).

- Paucity of Coinage

D.D. Kosambi who wrote the book titled Indian Numismatics (1981), was known to be the first Indian historian to show that the paucity of indigenous coins in the post-Gupta period, that brought about a major change in the economy of those times (Kosambi, 1981, ix). He put forward the theory that there was a significant rise of self-contained village, taxes were collected in kind and trade declined. Kosambi argument was further buttressed by R.S. Sharma to lay the hypothesis of ‘Indian feudalism’ in which this scarcity of coinage was witnessed from in the post-Gupta period till the 12th century CE., although he accepted that in the 11th century CE the situation changed a bit. Initially Sharma postulated this theory in his book Indian Feudalism (1965) which was further developed into the theory of Urban decay or de-urbanization in another book Urban Decay in India (c.300 – c. 1000.) (1987) showed low level of economic transactions, and thus a quiescence of trade and commerce. Later he countered some of his critics in another book Early Medieval Indian Society: A Study in Feudalisation (2001).

Description	Obverse	Reverse
King as Horseman		
King as Lion Slayer		
King & Queen Type		

Notes



Coins of the Guptas

Source: <http://www.rbi.org.in/currency/museum/c-ancient.html>

‘Gupta coinage (4th-6th centuries AD) followed the tradition of the Kushans, depicting the king on the obverse and a deity on the reverse; the deities were Indian and the legends were in Brahmi. The earliest Gupta coins are attributed to Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta and their coins often commemorate dynastic succession as well as significant socio-political events, like marriage alliances, the horse sacrifice, etc (King and queen type of coin of Chandragupta 1, Asvamedha type, etc.), or for that matter artistic and personal accomplishments of royal members (Lyrist, Archer, Lion-slayer etc.)’ <http://www.rbi.org.in/currency/museum/c-ancient.html> Sharma has tried to put forward his theory of paucity of coins from 500-1000 CE. According to him, the period between 300 CE to 500 CE had witnessed large number of coins, especially the gold ones issued in the Gupta period (Photos of coins of Gupta period are given above). Hereafter, the gold coins registered a sharp decline in number and purity (Sharma, 2001, 123). The rise of the independent and self-sufficient local units witnessed the paucity of the coins of common use from the Gupta period onwards. Two reasons are assigned to this phenomena, first, decline of internal trade that led to necessity of producing local commodities to meet local needs; and second, there was the weakening of the power of the centre (Sharma, 1965, 52-53). The decline of trade and urbanization, led to number of social changes such as mode of agricultural production, emergence of forced labour or Vishti, rise of the Brahmans as landholders and beneficiaries and servile peasantry. The Gupta tradition of coinage continued to decline in northern, central and eastern India and as well as in eastern and western Deccan till 650 CE. During this period the dynastic coins also suffered a drastic reduction as was evident in the kingdom of the Palas, the Rashtrakutas and the Gurjara-Pratiharas.

Peninsular India also noticed the decline in the issuance of coins after the fall of the Satavahanas during the first half of 3rd century CE and after the 6th century approximately for next 400 years the south Indian dynasties [especially Pallavas, Pandays, Badami Chalukyas and Cholas] seemed to have discarded the practice of issuing coins (Sharma, 2001, 126). During the phase between 500-1000 CE the archeological evidences of actual mints, moulds and dies are absent. As a result, cowries continued to serve as the medium of exchange from the early medieval period. Cowries till the coming of British. Use of cowries reflected the backward economy, where the decline of local and long-distance trade was evident. During the phase of decline in the number of coins in the early medieval period, the population and area under settlement seemed to have increased in northern India.

Whatever coins available, were very rough and of less density as compared to the proceeding phase. The shortage of money restricted the collection of revenue in cash from peasants. Moreover due to absence of cash, payment of military, administrative and religious services were made by land grants. Other impact of contraction of money was the decline of crafts and industries which were concentrated in urban centres. There were enough evidences of imposition of *visti* or *sarvapida* (forced labour) on the rural folk to give their services to temples. This became the basis of Sharma's model of Indian Feudalism. Although some regions like Kabul, the Punjab and Kashmir maintained the continuity of coinage from the early medieval phase. In regard to the shortage of gold coins between 650-1000 CE, Sharma evaluated the causes and assigned two factors, first, during the earlier two centuries northern India formed the wider exchange zone with central Asia. In this phase the Indian traders continued to operate as intermediaries or direct traders with the Byzantium. But around 650 CE, the Byzantine people learnt to grow the art of silk which lessened their dependence on Indian traders. Decline in the silk trade hampered the inflow of gold from central Asia to India. Second, was the decline of considerable flow of Roman gold and silver after third century CE. Romans were unaware of the drain of its coins which were exported to India as a part of general trade in metals.

Notes

Moreover, there are references of drastic reduction of flow of Roman precious metal coins to India after the 3th century CE. Early medieval period also noticed a decay of classical cities in the Eastern Roman Empire and decline of urban life in Byzantine, these led to little scope for trade between the Indian subcontinent and the Byzantine (Sharma, 2001, 144-145).



Post-Gupta Coinage

Source: <http://www.rbi.org.in/currency/museum/c-ancient.html>

'Post-Gupta coinage (6th-12th centuries AD), is represented by a monotonous and aesthetically less interesting series of dynastic issues including those of Harsha (7th century AD, Kalachuri of Tripuri (11th century AD) and early medieval Rajputs (9th-12th centuries AD). Gold coins struck between this period are rare. These were revived by Gangeyadeva the Kalachuri ruler who issued the 'Seated Lakshmi Coins' which were copied by later rulers both in gold as well as in debase form. The Bull & Horseman type of coins were the most common motif appearing on coins struck by the Rajput clans. In western India, imported coins like the Byzantine solidi were often used reflecting trade with the Eastern Roman Empire.' (<http://www.rbi.org.in/currency/museum/c->

ancient.html) Sharma however has pointed out two exceptions in regard to the theory of paucity of coins in early medieval India. Firstly, he agreed that there are evidences of regular issuance of coins by the Shahi rulers of the Punjab and Afghanistan between 650-1000 CE. Secondly, the rulers of Kashmir too issued a series of coins from the 6th to the end of 10th century CE. Thus except the Indo-Sassanian, Pratihara and Eastern Chalukya coins, other types of dynastic coins were limited in quality and quantity between the seventh and tenth centuries in India (Sharma, 2001, 140-141). However these coins had less intrinsic value in comparison to earlier ones. Whatever coins were found were of extremely poor quality and their purchasing power reflected the decline of their actual role. Moreover, in comparison to the rising population and expanding area of settlement, the total volume of money in circulation was quite less. During post tenth century, besides the kings of Kashmir and Sahi rulers of Kabul, many Rajput dynasties also issued coins. The Cholas and the Pandyas in south India and Eastern and Western Chalukyas in the Deccan issued currency after 10th century CE (Sharma, 2001, 141-42). Many debased coins of various metals were issued during this phase. In totality it refers to probably the revival of trade and urbanism in the 11th century CE. Thus large number of dynastic coins have been found during 1000-1300 CE in both north and south India. There are many evidences that prove the existence of India's trade with China and Egypt 11th century CE onwards. Sharma's view has been challenged by, B. D. Chattopadhyaya, who, in his *The Making of Early Medieval India* (1994), argues that though the early medieval period saw the decline of some urban centres, some others simultaneously continued to flourish and some new ones also emerged. Although the intensity of commercial exchange was unequally distributed, a complex pattern of trade involving a wide range of goods, use of metallic currency and other means of exchange in many exchange centres have been identified (Chattopadhyaya, 1994, 134-149).

Counter arguments against dearth of Media of Exchange

A pioneering work by John S. Deyell, *Living without Silver* (1990), based on numismatic research, criticized Sharma's argument of paucity

Notes

of coinage and impoverishment of medieval states in the early medieval period. Based on the survey of analysis of coins hoards, he does not perceive an absence of precious metals during the period and on the contrary his approach considers it to be a clear excess of demand over supply. He argued that 'Living without Silver' (or indeed gold), in sufficient quantities is the dilemma of early medieval Indian economies. The so called paucity of precious metal [especially silver] in north India and shortage of foreign precious metal supplies especially in the late 10th century CE from the Arab world [termed as silver famine] was countered by debasing coins and depending on other variety of currencies of mixed metal coins [gold, silver, copper coins; and cowries]. The dearth of precious metals caused a general deflation of prices, to the extent where modest quantities of gold and silver had considerable purchasing power (Deyell, 1990, 190). According to Deyell, debasement is 'not priori evidence of decline; an expanding volume of exchange transaction during a period of restricted supplies of precious metals would be well-served by the alloying of the circulating medium' (Deyell, 1990, 5). He explained that the money of North India between 800-1200 CE had a number of distinct coinages which constituted well-defined currency systems based on political and unconstrained political boundaries. He stated the usage of cowries shell, copper, silver and gold coins, although there are evidences of debasement of coins where the low mass of individual units of the two precious metals made them inconvenient to handle in pure form; thus the use of a copper carrier or matrix to bring the coins up to a reasonable weight and size (Deyell, 1990, 237). He argued that under-monetization does not refer to physical shortage of coins but rather it refers to an intentional circumscription of the use of money. This occurred by supplying of money as an exchange medium by other non-monetized wages. The debasement of coinage does not any reflect financial crisis but it was an alternative means to fulfill the increasing demand for coins in a condition of shortage of supply of precious metals. This shortage was covered by alloying [debasing] silver content of the coins. He stated that this theory not only proves that there was no diminution in the use of money in exchange transaction before the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate but also show that the high

volume of exchange transaction depended on money during this period (Deyell, 1990, 244). Through two comparative tables, Deyell tries to show the noticeable trend towards a serious debasement of the coinage or lowering of the precious metals in the coins of the Pratiharas in the period 750-1000 CE and Yaminids, Kalachuris, Chandellas, Gahadavalas and Yadus in the period between 1000-1200 CE. By citing second table he proves that the dearth of precious metal content of coins was neither time specific nor place-specific but based on situation specific, as no major debasement of coins was evident in the coins of Shahis and Chalukyas between 750-1000 CE and not of Chakukyas/Chavadas; and Tomars/Chauhans in the period 1060-1240 CE (Deyell, 1990, 238). The coinage of northern India between 800-1200 CE had broad regional distribution, where it contained a number of distinct currency zones or spheres. Within each zone, a single coinage variety circulated and some overlapping occurred in the major currencies. The tendency of anonymity of the issuer was evident in early medieval period [750-1000 CE] while under Rajput era [1000-1200 CE] the trend of anonymity in coins [Lakshmi-type gold coins and bull-and-horse billion coins and exception Gadhैया billion coins maintained anonymity] ended. Deyell also questions the ideas of the monetary anaemia, of a slump in trade and of self-sufficient closed village societies. K.M. Shrimali however criticizes Deyell's research based on numismatic data which according to him has many statistical pitfalls and quantity shortcomings (Shrimali, 2008, 729-37) and that he paid greater emphasis on the period after 1000 CE.



Cowries Shells

Notes

Source:<http://teachersites.schoolworld.com/webpages/GHurst/files/cowry%20shells.pdf>

Sharma' sees a huge decline of trade due to paucity of minted metallic currency in the early medieval times when the vibrant money economy of proceeding centuries was replaced by cowry shells as a main means of exchange. However the use of cowries in great quantity which is also suggested by archaeological and literary data, implied the continuation of maritime trade since these were mainly imported from the Maldives islands. Chakravarti cites early medieval Arab chronicles to argue that cowry shells were in fact by itself an item of long-distance maritime trade, and which were shipped from Maldives to Bengal. Bengal had great quantity of cowry shells available which may not suggest the decline of trade as Bengal exported rice to Maldives in exchange of cowry shells. These cowry shells played a significant role in small exchanges in the Indian Ocean maritime trade (Chakrabarti, 2010, 334-335). There are references of circulation of number of silver coins known as Harikela coins in Bengal during the 7th to 13th centuries CE and these had corresponding local eastern series, which were issued in the name of various local localities (Singh, 2009, 54). Sharma defends his argument by analyzing large number of early medieval coins available in different museums. These are arranged and tabulated in eleven tables showing that the number of coins between 500 CE and 1000 CE does not exceed 20,000. The same table shows the total number of coins between 200 BCE to 300 CE to be approximately 97,000. Thus the coins of 500-1000 CE seem to be not more than a fourth of the coins

found between 200 BCE-300 CE (Sharma, 2001, 141). Another historian, Andre Wink, in his work' *Al-Hind: The making of Indo-Islamic World* shows that the domains of the Rashtrakutas, the Palas and the prosperous commercial regions of Gujarat and the western coast offer no evidence of an indigenous coinage tradition. He states that the driving force of early medieval economy and trade was the 'world embracing exchange circuit with a unified monetary constituent and a fusion of

formerly rival dominions in a new universalistic polity which bridged the divide between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.’ (Wink, 1990, 359) Another pioneering historian, Rekha Jain, in her book *Ancient Indian Coinage* published in 1995, supports Sharma’s argument that the paucity of the metallic coinage [due to decline of trade and commerce both internal and external] in between 5th to 8th centuries CE but witnessed a partial revival of the money economy since 9th century CE. She said the gold coins were rare, silver and copper were not many in number during the post-Gupta period (500-800 CE) and mostly whatever coins issued were the imitation of the Gupta coins (Jain, 1995, 7). Her argument gets distant from Sharma’s theory which locates the revival of trade in 11th century CE, as she thinks it to be reasonable to place the occurrence from the 9th century CE onwards although, she acknowledges the lack of evidences of revival of trade in eastern India including Bengal and Bihar. Her argument stressed that monetary system of this period witnessed a gradual change from gold to silver, gilt, silver, bronze and finally to copper (Jain, 1995, 181). She shows the prominence of variety of coins in and around the 9th century CE issued by different kingdoms such as Gadahiya or Indo-Sassanian coins, coins of Shahi kings, early Rajput dynasties coins [Kalachuris of Tripuri and Ratnapura, Chandella dynasty of Jejaka Bhukti and other Rajputa Dynasties]; of Kashmir and lastly coins of ruling south Indian dynasties such as eastern Chalukyas, Hoysalas, Cholas, Pandyas and Yadavas (Jain, 1995, 181-209). Sharma defends his argument by saying the prevalence of gadhaiya coins during in 6-12th centuries CE does not indicate a real revival as they were mostly bullion pieces were made as alloys of base silver, therefore those could not be used effectively in long-distance trade and large local transactions (Sharma, 2001, 148-49). Further he says the money economy actually revived with the resumption of the issuing of gold coins in a considerable scale in the northern and southern India by the beginning of 11th century CE. Assessing of the impact of money on the commercial organization and the nature of urbanism in south India during early medieval period poses a major problem. In spite of the availability of numismatic data, specially the existence of several Chola coins, it is difficult to get an insight of the degree and effect of

Notes

monetization. Before the rise of the Cholas, the available evidence of money as medium of exchange was marginal. Moreover even during the Chola period, the currency was not based on any uniform group of coins with fixed ratios between different denominations and metals. D. C. Sircar in his book *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India* (1969), criticizes the argument of paucity of metallic coinages in the early medieval times. He says that a large number of kings and other agencies of the post-Gupta issued coins as is evident from the numismatic, literary and epigraphical records which highlight that not just gold, silver and copper coins but also plenty of cowrie-shells were extensively used as coined money. But at the same time he concedes that many of the ruling families flourishing in the early and the medieval period did not appear to have issued coins (Sircar, 1969, 34). He also points out that fresh coins were not needed by the traders as there were plenty of older issues and cowrie-shells in the market. He elaborates his view that coins of any country, once circulated in the Indian market, never went out of use and that cowries were there to make up for the scarcity if coins were not occasionally available in particular for some reason or the other (Ibid., 34-35). Cowries did not necessarily mean the shells were actually in use as a medium of exchange and that for the sake of convenience in calculation the coins of higher denominations were converted into cowries (Gopal, 1965, 213). Foreign travelers' accounts gave references of cowries being used as medium of exchange in economic transactions. In contrast, some literary references term cowries as being used in daily transactions and that they had very little value. The continuation of cowries along with coins as a media of exchange is also evident in indigenous accounts. In a similar vein, M.R. Tarafdar makes a comparative analysis of different geographical or cultural regions of early medieval Bengal in terms of economic viability, and states that this was a region which had all the characters of developed money economy, supported with a large currency system, growing urban centres and developed commercial relations. The basis of monetary system was trade with Arabia, import of gold and silver from southern China, Burma, Pegu and South-East Asia and commercial contacts with China. (Tarafdar, *Indian Historical Review*, Vol IV, no 2, pp 274-84)

In regard to the theme of issuing of coins in the early medieval period, Gopal suggested that it depended upon the kings' convenience as there were already in circulation a sufficient number of coins and if the economic needs of the kingdom did not require fresh coins, the king refrained from issuing them. Exception to this trend was the Gangeyadeval king of Kalachuri who ordered the minting of coins due to shortage of existing currency. There are some references of coins being issued to proclaim the conquest of a king, for example, the Chandella coins were initiated by Kirtivarman to signalize his victory over his rival. Issuing of coins was considered as an important right, privilege and concern of the king who minted coins according to the requirements. There are also a few references of times when either he did not perform this function or gave free hand to private concerns [merchant or bankers] especially in the matter of minting gold coins (Gopal, 1965, 220-23). Based on the study of the coins, it is found that those issued by private individuals had irregular metal content and were inferior in quality as their main objective was to make profit out of coinage (Mukherjee, 1982, 91). The greed of private moneyers contaminated the currency, which must have been started with the coins minted from royal mints. There are also evidences of coins of old types and sometimes with the names of former kings which continued to be minted officially and even by many shroffs. The combined use of devalued coins is indicated by several sources which forced the people like traders and bankers to accept coins for transactions only after examining their intrinsic value and fixing their ratio of exchange (Ibid., 99). Besides cowries, the use of gold and silver (in form of dust or metallic piece) in the regions not accustomed to regular use of coins of different weights and intrinsic value were common (Ibid., 101). B.N. Mukherjee opposes Sharma's argument that the diminished use of coins indicated the decline of trade. On the contrary, he suggests that there was flourishing trade in India from 700 to 1200 CE (Mukherjee, 1986, 92). He focuses his research on mideastern India comprising Bihar, West Bengal and Bangladesh, showing that most of the coined money in this early medieval period were issued by the Palas and the Senas. There was no dearth of media of exchange in regard

Notes

to coinage, gold/silver dust and cowries. The units of gold and silver probably also served as a medium of exchange, as they served better in comparison to coins of doubtful value (Mukherjee, 1982, 75). In relation to early medieval Bengal, Mukherjee argues that high quality silver currency was minted and circulated between 7th to 13th centuries CE. These numismatic evidences countered the argument of absence of currency of precious metal in Bengal and also somewhat in north India. This historian also points out the changes in the metrology, shape and execution of the Harikela coinage starting from 9th century CE that follows the example of reformed Arabic currency. The supporters of Sharma's hypothesis said 'simplicity of the predominantly rural life... and heavy expenditure of the Palas and Senas rulers on the maintenance of their armies accounted for restricted use of money. Another reason put forward was the lack of security. Like the Konkan coast, the region of the Bay of Bengal, too, was susceptible to the activities of pirates, thus denting such essential components of markets as order, security and jurisdiction' (Shrimali, 2008, 747).

Another argument related to scarcity of minting of dynastic coins in India from the 7th to the late 10th century CE was the constant conflicts between the political powers leading to a period of instability. However a fresh assessment of numismatic references gives evidences of numerous terms of coins in inscriptions even in areas without dynastic coinage. There are references of huge volume of trade which was performed through one or more mediums of exchange such as cowries [during the rule of the Palas and the Senas] and other coins. The paucity or absence of monetary unit of relatively high value restrained the growth of industry and commerce as it was cumbersome to carry cowries with low intrinsic value. Thus they carried 'dust money or a unit of silver in dust weighting 32 ratis' which was equivalent to 1280 cowries (Mukherjee, 1982, 70). The merchants must have carried the dust in small bags. These regions also have references of using gold and silver as medium of exchange in the eleventh century. The concerned regions had both units of metal (gold and silver) currencies and cowries to facilitate buying and selling of commodities. Mukherjee gives the approximate formula of

intrinsic value of currency such as gold, silver and cowries and says 1280 cowries = 1 silver unit weight about 32 ratis, 16 such silver units = One gold unit weighting about 80 ratis. [1 gold unit = 1280 cowries x 16 = 20480 cowries]. It has been argued that the use of dust currency, was placed between the cowry shell and a coin of precious metal. This complex three-tier currency system in eastern India might have been extended to larger parts of north India. In the conclusion, Mukherjee states that the western and central sectors of eastern India between 750 to 1200 CE had a very complex system of currency (Ibid., 69-73) and although agriculture was the main basis of socio-economic life, agricultural surplus products were used in varied trading activities in national and international trade. There were also competent organizers to trade in varied other articles of commerce. Different sources give references of different categories of men engaged in commerce such as merchants, itinerant traders, rich merchants, financiers, industrialists, agriculturists and traders (stationary or mobile) (Ibid., 73-74). The maritime trade flourished throughout or most part of this period, the most important port of this region was Chittagong (Samandar).

Urban Settlements :

Decay The first phase was also marked by the decay and desertion of many towns. It is an important symptom of commercial decline because the towns are primarily the settlements of people engaged in crafts and commerce. As trade declined and the demand for craft-goods slumped, the traders and craftsmen living in towns had to disperse to rural areas for alternative means of livelihood. Thus towns decayed and townsfolk became a part of village economy. Beside the accounts of Hiuen Tsang, the Pauranic records too, while referring to Kali age indicate depopulation of important cities. This seems to have been the continuation of the trend already indicated by Varahamihira (5th century). Reference was made in Unit 2 to the excavated data from 140 sites. The decay of important towns such as Vaishali, Pataliputra, Varanasi, etc. is evident from the archaeological excavations which reveal poverty of structure and antiquities. The pan-Indian scene is marked by desertion of urban centres or their state of decay in the period

Notes

between the third and eighth centuries. Even those settlements which continued upto the eighth century, were deserted thereafter. One can mention Ropar (in Punjab), Atranjikhera and Bhita (in Uttar Pradesh), Eran (in Madhya Pradesh), Prabhas Patan (in Gujarat), Maheswar and Paunar (in Maharashtra), and Kudavelli (in Andhra Pradesh) in this category of urban settlements. Even the medieval greatness of Kanauj (in the Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh) for which several wars were fought amongst the Palas, Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, has still to be testified by the excavator's spade. The commercial activity during the first phase of early medieval period had declined but did not disappear completely. In fact, trade in costly and luxury goods meant for the use of kings, feudal chiefs and heads of temples and monasteries continued to exist. The articles such as precious and semi-precious stones, ivory, horses, etc. formed an important part of the long distance trade, but the evidence for transactions in the goods of daily use is quite meagre in the sources belonging to this period. The only important article mentioned in the inscriptions are salt and oil which could not be produced by every village, and thus had to be brought from outside. If the economy had not been self-sufficient, the references to trade in grains, sugar, textile, handicrafts, etc. would have been more numerous. In short the nature of commercial activity during A.D. 750-1000 was such which catered more to the landed intermediaries and feudal lords rather than the masses. Though there were some pockets of trade and commerce such as Pehoa (near Karnal in Haryana) and Ahar (near Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh) where merchants from far and wide met to transact business, they could not make any significant dent in the closed economy of the country as a whole.

7.4 CURRENCY, COINAGE AND BANKING

The revival of trade received considerable help from the reemergence of metal money during the centuries under discussion. There is, however, substantial discussion about the degree and level of monetization. Very often the contenders of the penetration of money in the market invoke literary and inscriptional references to numerous terms purporting to

describe various types of coins of early medieval India. Thus texts such as Prabandhachintnmanl, Lilavatf, Drivyapariksha, bkbapddlmtf, etc. mention bhagaka, rupaka, virnshatika, karshapana, dinar, dramnm, niahla, gadhaiya-rnudrn, pdyanaka, tanka, and many other coins with their multiples. No less prolific are inscriptional references. For example the Siyadoni inscription alone refers to varieties of drarnnm in the mid-tenth century. The Paramara Chalukya, Chahmana, Pratihara, Pala, Candella and Cola inscriptions corroborate most of the terms found in contemporary literature. There has also been considerable speculation about the value of these coins, their metal content and their relationship with one another. Nothing could be more simplistic than to guggat the penetration of money in the market simply on the basis of listing of numismatic gleanings from a mixed bag of inscriptions and literature. We need to scrutinize the contexts of such references. Aspects requiring detailed exploration are:

- i) whether references to coins are in the context of exchanges in the rural area or in the urban setting?
- ii) the types of exchange centres and the nature of 'market" where such transactions take place;
- iii) the personnel involved in these transactions; and
- iv) how far are the inscriptional references to coins only notional? etc.

As far as the actual specimens of coins are concerned, one can say that the practice of minting gold coins was revived by Gangeyadera (A.D. 1019;1040); the Kalacuri King of Tripuri (iri Madhya Pradesh) after a gap of more than four centuries. Govindachandra, the Gahadavala King near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, the Chandella rulers ~ift6varman and Madanavarman in Central India, King Harsha of Kashmir and some Cola Kings in Tamil Nadu also issued gold coins. Reference has already been made above to certain early medieval coin types in Western and Northwestern India. According to one estimate, about nine mints were founded in different parts of Karnataka during the twelfth and thirteenth

Notes

century. An important mint functioned at Shrimol (near Jodhpur) in Rajasthan.

Despite the plethora of references to coins, the evidence of overall volume of money in circulation is almost negligible. Nor can one overlook the poor purchasing power of early medieval coins, irrespective of the metal used. All coins of the period were highly debased and reduced in weight. Also, in terms of the rising population and expanding area of settlement, the use of money seems to have been highly restricted. The case study of early medieval Rajasthan shows that the revival of trade, multiplication of exchange centres and markets and prosperity of merchant families took place only with the help of "partial monetization". Similarly, the cash nexus on the Western coast (Konkan area) under the Shilaharas (c. 6.D. 850-1250) was also marked by limited use of money. The types and denominations of coins remained not only extremely localised but could not penetrate deep into the economic ethos. Masses were far away from handling of coins. The currency system of South India during A.D. 950-1300 also shows that transactions at all levels of the society were not equally affected by coined money. For example, the fabulous expenses reported to have been incurred by the Pandyas as regular buyers of imported horses cannot be thought in terms of what we know as very poor Pandyan currency. Barter was still an important means of exchange in local inter-regional and perhaps even in inter-national commerce. There are references which indicate that carvanas of merchants exchanged their commodities with those of other regions. According to one account, horses imported from abroad were paid for not in cash but in Indian goods which may have been silk, spices or ivory. These Indian goods enjoyed constant demand in the markets all over the world.

Though the revival of even "partial monetization" was contributing to economic growth, yet no less significant was the parallel development of credit instrument by which debits and credits could be transferred without the handling of cash money. In the texts of the period we find references to a device called hundika or the bill of exchange which might have been used by merchants for commercial transactions. Through this device credit could be extended by one merchant to another and, thus the

obstacle to commerce due to shortage of coined money could be overcome. The Lakhapaddhati, a text which throws light on the life of Gujarat in the twelfth thirteenth centuries, refers to various means of raising loan for consumption as well as commercial ventures through the mortgage of land, house and cattle.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. Discuss about the Indian merchants and their commercial practices.

.....
.....
.....

2. Discuss about the Medium of exchange.

.....
.....
.....

3. What do you know about the Currency, coinage and banking?

.....
.....
.....

7.5 LET US SUM UP

The present study of trade and commerce during c.A.D. 700-1300 has focussed on : the two phases of inland and foreign trade, the nature and extent of the use of metal coins and. the role of other media of i exchange in the trade network, contribution of expansion of agriculture and increased agricultural production in i furthering interests of trade, and impact of trade and commerce on the condition of towns through the centuries. The overall picture of trade and commerce during the six centuries under discussion is that of feudalisation. The way in which money transactions took place, the manipulations of landed interests including those of state officials and ruling chiefs, functioning of the ruling elite in the interests of big traders and merchants and putting

Notes

restrictions on artisans and craftsmen (see also Unit 4) are indicators of the process of feudalisation.

Numismatic evidences are a major source of monetary history, which assists to analyze the production and circulations of coinage, monetary value associated to coins, its frequency and volume of issues. Archeologists and historians evaluate the level of coins found to indicate the economic prosperity of any period. Thus in regard to early medieval India, historians like R.S. Sharma tried to prove that the paucity and debasement of coins seemed to reflect economic decline along with decline in trade while others especially John Deyell, criticize this view, stating that in such condition of reduction in the supply of precious metals, alloying and debasement became a successful alternative to fulfill the increasing demand of coins for economic exchange. In reference to northern India, Deyell showed that the between 800-1200 CE had a number of distinct coinages which constituted well-defined currency systems based on political and unconstrained political boundaries, further highlighting the usage of cowries shell, copper, silver and gold coins. According to Deyell, debasement is 'not priori evidence of decline; an expanding volume of exchange transaction during a period of restricted supplies of precious metals would be well-served by the alloying of the circulating medium'. Other historians support either Sharma or Deyell. In totality, one cannot ascribe a particular judgment to early medieval monetization history, as due to their variations in the level of region, time, coins excavated, circulation and respective economic position of each dynasty during this phase. This assessment also applies on south India coins, but regional studies and excavations have showed that there was no dearth of coins although a stimulus to new series of coins was absent. Thus in order to assess a pan-Indian picture of monetization, one needs to take into consideration the different contradictory arguments put forward by the historians. At the same time, further researches are awaited on this important aspect.

7.6 KEY WORDS

Monetization: Monetization or monetisation is, broadly speaking, the process of converting something into money. The term has a broad range of uses. In banking, the term refers to the process of converting or establishing something into legal tender.

7.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1) What is numismatics? What is the importance of coins as a source of the early medieval Indian history?

2) Discuss the debate around arguments and counter-arguments regarding paucity of coins in early medieval India

7.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Chakravarti, R. 2002. Trade and Traders in early Indian Society, Delhi: Manohar Publisher and Distributors.
- Chakravarti, R. 2001. Trade in Early India, Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Champakalakshmi, R. 1996. Trade, Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300 CE to 1300 AD. Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Chattopadhyaya, B.D. 1997. Coins and Currency Systems in South India Ad 225-1300, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 7.2
2. See Section 7.3
3. See Section 7.4