



Urbanization in the First Half of Eighteenth Century: with Special reference of Mughal Nobles

Dr.MD. SHAKIL AKHTAR

Contact Address: Official, Head, School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Apex Professional University, Pasighat, East Siang, Arunachal Pardesh,791102.

Permanent Address: c/o Mazhar Imam, Mohalla Shahsupan, Lalbagh,
Darbhanga Bihar, 846004, Mob. 09402627730, 7004197058,
mail:shakilalig@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper discussed about the development of urban centre during first half of eighteenth century. Eighteenth century in India considered as decline in all field. Even imperialist historians considered it as a 'dark age' in Indian history. But this paper tries to uncover that during this period Mughal nobles established various urban centers with keeping in mind trade, business, art and crafts etc. They were well aware that without agricultural product urban centre cannot exist, so that they also tried to develop agricultural production side by side. The rise to power and eminence of the big merchant i.e. Jagat Seth, Omichadn, Khawaja Wazid etc. was mainly due to the favor of Kings and nobles.

Key word: Urbanization, Eighteenth century, Bazar, Ganj, Mohalla, Jaisinghpura, sImambara, Khilat, Sarai, Darbar, Nawab

During the 18th century the trade and industry of the period by and large depended on patronage of the ruling elites i.e. kings and their nobles, for they were the greatest consumers of the fine goods and products, which the middle class people could not afford to use. The Nobles had also brought general state of unemployment to control by employing various classes of people, for all types of professional classes who earned their livelihood by attached themselves to the court of the kings and the nobles.¹

The significant change of this period was the decay of Old Township and the rise of some new ones in different provinces of Indian Sub-Continent. This was partly resulting of shifts in the political centers of powers. The imperial capital cities of Agra, Delhi and Lahore understandably started to decline,

¹ Imtiyaz Ahmad, 'The Mughal Governor of Bihar and their public works', *PIHC*, 1998, p. 383; Sushil Chaudhry, *From prosperity to Decline Eighteen Century Bengal*, p. 5.

therefore merchants, artisans and other professional classes migrated to the provincial capitals, often newly founded provincial capitals, where they could get patronage, and the ready market for their production and services.

Many towns were founded by the provincial governors, who established their autonomous rule. Faizabad in Oudh was one of the earliest founded by Sa'dat Khan Burhanul Mulk (1722-39) and later improved by Safdar Jang (1739-54), who named it Faizabad. Shuja-ud-Daula also took interest in the development by inviting people to this town offering the special patronage. As such people saw wealth, ranks and lavish diffusion of money in every street and market; artisans and scholars flocked there from Deccan, Bengal, Gujarat, Malwa, Multan, Hyderabad, Shahjanabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Kabul etc. According to a contemporary writer "If the *Nawab Wazir* had lived for ten or twelve years more, it would have grown up like another *Shahjahanbad*."²

Under *diwan* Atma Ram a *bazaar* (*Market*) was laid out with rows of shops outside the enclosure on the west side bearing the gate known as *Delhi Darwaza* (*Delhi Gate*) where residential buildings were also erected. Outside the enclosure Ismail Khan, the *risaldar* also built another open *bazaar* (*Market*) and market place, which he named after himself. In the same way with the increase of population, houses sprang up irregularly and the trade was flourished.³

Farrukhabad, another town flourished during the first of half of the 18th century. It was founded in 1714 by Mohammad Khan Bangash, after the name of the reigning Mughal emperor Farrukhsiyar (1713-19). The place was favored due to its proximity to the Ganga River, as there was abundance of water and wells could be easily dug.⁴ He invited artisans of different arts and craft and skilled men from Delhi and other places by providing them every kind of facility. Consequently within a short time of span, the city becomes a well populated and every ward was thickly inhabited. According to Thomas Twining in 1794 "it was a large city".⁵

Mohammad Khan Bangash also founded some of the other important towns named after himself, his sons and his *chelas* (slaves). In course of time these towns become centers of considerable trade and commerce and supplied the needed commodity to the city of Farrukhabad. He founded a town a little South-West of *Mau* and named it *Qaim Ganj*, after the name of his eldest son Qaim Khan.⁶ Where, the commercial activities were encouraged by the Pathan

² Mohammad Bakhsh Ashob, *Tarikh-i-Farah Baksh* ff.224b-25a; Qazi Murtaza Bilgrami, *Hadiqatul Aqlim* pp.155-6.

³ Mohammad Farah Baksh Kakorwi, *Tarikh-i-Farah Bksh*, f. 221b.

⁴ Munawwar Ali Khan, *Loh-i-Tarikh*, ff.11ab; W. Irwin, The Bangash Nawab of Farrukhabad, *JASB*, Vol.XLV VIII part.I, 1878, pp.276-7.

⁵ Thomas Twining, '*Travels in India*', p. 174

⁶ Manuwwar Ali Khan *Loh-i-Tarikh*, f. 12b, W. Irwin, op. cit., pp. 275-6

chieftains. Foreign traveler *Valentia*, who visited Farrukhabad in 1802, remarks that “the trade already considerable and the vicinity of the cantonments will ever render it flourishing.”⁷

Jesuit Father Tieffenthaler visited the city probably during the rule of Qaim Khan (1743-49) and gives the following account of the city, “it is the emporium for all commodities for northern part of India i.e. for Delhi, Kashmir, Bengal and Surat.”⁸

The city was divided into 143 *Mohallas* or wards each assigned to one profession or community. The quarters were accordingly named after the trade such as *Khatrana*, *Jatwana*, *Mochiyana* (shoe maker), *Holiyana*, *Koliyana*, *Sadhawra*, *Mamunpuri*, *Rustogi*, *Agarwal*, *Halwai* (grocer), *Kaghazi* (paper work), *Mahajan* (Money dealer) etc.⁹ The main bazaar was 52 yards in width, shops were built on a planned manner. People of one and the same art and craft were allotted shops in a single place and the *bazaar* was named after each profession such as *Kasarhatta* (Work in Brass or braziers), *Pasarhatta* (druggists), *Sarraf* (money lender), *Lohari* (mongers), *Nunbai* (Salt dealers) and *Khandai* (Sugar sellers).¹⁰

Najib-ud-Daula founded a town known as Najibabad 24 miles north east of Bijnore in 1753-54. The Chaupar Bazaar in the middle of the town was a small one but beautiful according to the standard of time. It consisted of a brick paved square in which market were held thrice a week.¹¹ Four or five Ganjs (grain markets) were founded after the names of his sons and brothers, *Zabita Ganj*, *Munir Ganj* and *Nawab Ganj*.¹²

The town was divided into *mohallas* named after of the respectable men living in that *mohallas* or a renowned noble such as Zabita Khan which comprised eastern part of the town. There was another *mohalla* called *Nawab Tola*. It is said that while selecting the place Najib wanted to make it a center of trade and commerce which proved true in subsequent years.¹³

Since the Sikhs, the Afghans and the Maratha had created insecurity on the trade route passing through the Punjab for Kabul and Qandahar, a new route was found via Kashmir. Thus this town facilitated commercial activities between Najafgarh and Kashmir and beyond. It took a course through the Punjab hills and led into the Rohilkhand through the *Lal Dong pass*.¹⁴ Thus it become a mart for

⁷ Valentia, *Voyages and Travels to India*, vol. I, pp. 194

⁸ Tieffenthaler, *Farrukhabad: A Gazetteer*, Vol. IX, Mp. 198-99.

⁹ Munawwar Ali Khan, op. cit. f. 14b ; W. Irvin, op. cit. p. 280.

¹⁰ Ibid, f. 14a; Irvin, op. cit. p. 280.

¹¹ Munawwar Ali Khan, op. cit., pp. 317-18

¹² Manawwar Aali Khan, *Tarikh-i-Baldha-i- Najibabad*, p.6.

¹³ George Foster, ‘A journey from Bengal to England’, vol. I. p.141, 218.

¹⁴ Ibid, I pp. 221-222.

trade with the hills and also station on the pilgrim route to Hardwar.¹⁵ George Foster noticed that “on one occasion about one hundred mules laden with raw-silk and cotton clothes and ordinary calicoes left Najibabad for the Jammu market.”¹⁶

Rampur state which was established by Nawab Faizullah Khan was marked by the same character and carried profession as the Rohillas living in other parts of Rohilkhand. George Forster observe that the whole of this chief country evinces the beneficial effects arising from the encouragement of husbandry and aid of active government populous villages skirted by extensive fields of corn, are seen on all sides and haughty independent spirit which invariably pervades every classes of people, mark their abhorrence of despotism.¹⁷

The Pathans of Rohilkhand served as soldiers but some of them also took to trade and become prosperous.¹⁸

George Foster remarks that the, Afghan conquerors of *Rohilkhand* were rapacious, after they had established a government in India, they adopted the profession of husbandry and their improvements of the various branches of agriculture, were amply recomposed by the abundance and superior quality of the production of *Rohilkhand*.¹⁹

Raja Swai Jai Singh Kachhwaha (1699-1743), who was one of the front ranking nobles of the Mughal Empire, was an extremely wise and shrewd statesman. The Raja was determined to make the best of it politically, economically and culturally. He is recorded to have founded a number of his own small, fortified townships or localities called Jaisinghpura in the provinces where he was posted mainly at *Kabul, Peshawar, Multan, Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Patna, Burhanpur, Aurangabad and Ellichpur*.²⁰

In Eastern India, too town development took place. Murshidabad was founded by Murshid Quli Khan (1704-25) governor of Orissa and Bengal since the town became the seat of the governor of Bengal. He also established a mint, and after the death of Aurangzeb, he erected buildings of permanent nature.²¹ After the death of Murshid Quli Khan, Sarfraz Khan succeeded him as governor of Bengal, he razed the buildings constructed by his father-in-law, and erected a number of new building such as *Darultmarat-i-Ali, Naubat Khana, Tripoliya, Dewan Khana* etc. Siraj-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Bengal who also constructed

¹⁵ Ibid, I, 281, 283, II, pp, 380, 390, 405; Munawwar Ali Khan, op. cit. p. 317.

¹⁶ George Foster, *A journey from Bengal to England*, I, p. 220

¹⁷ Ibid, I, pp. 112-13

¹⁸ Twining: *Travels in India: A Hundred years ago*, London , 1893 p, 150

¹⁹ Ibid, I, pp. 136-7

²⁰ R. Nath, *Studies in Medieval Indian Architecture*, p. 150.

²¹ Yusuf Ali Khan, *Tarikh-i-Bangla-i-Mahabat Jang*, ed. Abdus Subhan, pp.113-14

the *Imambara*, the *Medina*, (famous Imambara) the residential quarters, *mosques*, clock tower etc.²² Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai tells us that Alivardi Khan invited several families of Delhi to settle at Murshidabad.²³

As a result of decline of Delhi, besides scholars and men of letters, people of other professional classes migrated to Murshidabad. Insha Allah Khan '*Insha*' informs us that during the reign of Siraj-ud-Daula some Mughal *mansabdars* some mimics called *bhands*, famous musician and dancing girls, *marsiya* reciters, vegetable sellers and grain roaster came to Murshidabad in the hope of monetary gains. Inhabitants of the entire *mohalla* of Delhi called Mughalpura, are said to have migrated to Murshidabad.²⁴

Mir Qasim (1761-64) invited people of letters and man of literary activities and extended patronage to them, he also extended great favors to pious men such as Maulavi Nasir Ali Khan, Daud Ali Khan, Zair Hussain Khan etc.²⁵

Agricultural product was backbone for town and newly founded provincial capitals. There for nobles took keen interest for the development of agriculture and irrigation formed an important part in the field work and the preservation of water. For which the high land were molded by great banks to collect the water that falls from the mountains. These reservoirs were kept by the government for the public benefit, every man paying for that his portion of drain.²⁶

Elphinston reports that on the rivers of Khandesh expansive embankments had been erected for irrigation purposes.²⁷ In Rohilkhand, the Rohilla chiefs had constructed aqueducts traversing corn-fields in all direction in the hilly areas artificial dams were too built and filled from mountain stream.²⁸

With regard to the province of Gujarat, Forbes is of the opinion that the whole province looked like a luxuriant garden. Provision was very cheap and no one could complain of poverty. A family of simple habits could comfortably live on an annual expenditure of 40 to 50 rupees and even perhaps for less.²⁹

India at that time was complete self sufficient in food grains and other elements of dietary. During the period however the ravages of soldiery increased

²² Ghulam Husain Khan, *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, II pp. 625-52

²³ Ibid, II, p. 610

²⁴ Insha Allah Khan '*Insha*' *Darya-i-Latafat*, ed. Abdul Haq, p. 116.

²⁵ Ghulam Hussain, *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, vol. II, pp. 611-14.

²⁶ Parker, *The War in India*, pp. 5-6

²⁷ M. Report on the territories conquered from peshwa, p.4.

²⁸ W. Franclin, *History of the Reign of Shah Alam II*, p. 239

²⁹ James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, Vol. I.p. 8.

but decline in cultivation does not appear to have affected the country's resources to feed its urban population.³⁰

George Foster says that the native princes and chiefs of a various description the retainers of numerous dependents, afforded a constant employment to a vast number indigenous manufacturers who supplied their masters with gold and silver stuffs, curiously flowered, plain muslins, a diversity of beautiful, silk and other articles of Asiatic Luxury.³¹

Indian courts spent enormous sum on distribution of rich robes of honor (*khilat*) to officers and persons of rank and religious heads and this practice made them big consumers of the indigenous textile manufactures of the fine quality.³² Out of the total manufacture and silk of Dhaka, those worth Rs. 10,0000 and Rs 30,0000 were exclusively meant for the Emperor at Delhi and Nawab at Murshidabad respectively.³³

In manufacturing of cotton fabrics Gujarat confessedly excels the entire world though the fabric and sale of its finest white clothes have suffered on irrecoverable blow by annihilation of the Mughal Empire, in the elegance and refinement of which sprang their chief consumption. In 1788, several families of Gujarat silk manufacturer of the formers of this state (Maratha) who ruled over that the province, fled to Banares, and settled there where they practice their former occupation.³⁴

In a country, where traveling is not secure and comfortable, movement of stores from one place to another is not swift and smooth, urban centre cannot make full use of its industrial resources.

India during the period of study, provided facilities to the travelers, its towns and countryside were provided with rest houses, choultries and *serais*, erected by government or philanthropists, which, were served at nominal rate, all were admitted to the privilege of staying. At many places, the rest house was in larger number for the convenience of visitors and travelers.³⁵ In every city and town there were innumerable handsome and elegant rest places of masonry.³⁶ Hyderabad State Mosque superintended by *fakirs* was generally used as rest-house by travelers and these were much cleaner than other choultries.

Scrafton a traveler inform us that the robberies were unusual on the highways and he doubted there having been any instance of one in the memory of man. The

³⁰ V.P.S Raghuvanshi, *Indian Society in the 18th c.*, p. 317.

³¹ George Foster, *Journey from Bengal to England*, I, pp. 3-4.

³² Fourth Report, committee of secrecy, 1773, p.113

³³ Tylor; *A Description and historical account of the cotton manufacture of Dacca*, pp. 130-31.

³⁴ Proceeding of Indian Historical Records Commission, XI, p. 185.

³⁵ W. Hodges: *Travels in India during 1780-83*, pp. 7- 32

³⁶ Sher Ali Jafri 'Afsos' *Araish-i-Mahfil*, (urdu), p. 9, trs. Major R. Court.

diamond merchant, who generally passes Bengal have seldom have a weapon of defense owing to that admirable regulation, which obliges the lord of the spot, where the robbery is committed to recover the effects or make good the value.³⁷ He wrote about the safety on road in the mid of 18th c. when the Mughal administration was on the path of decline. Another traveler George Foster speaks about the security on the roadsides from Varanasi to Moradabad in 1780 “traveling is by no means attended with danger on this part of India, as may be proved by any example, for in no part of the roads from Banaras to Moradabad chiefly alone did, ill usage, and I shall hold myself guilty of an injustice, if I did not unreservedly declare, that the inhabitants treated me with civility and usually with kindness.”³⁸

The rise to power and eminence of the merchant i.e. Jagat Seth, Omichadn, Khawaja Wazid etc. was mainly due to the favor of Nawab. The *darbar* backing was crucial for their survival and when it was under crucial circumstances unwillingly withdrawn in the second half of the 18th century, all of them crashed headlong, sooner or later.³⁹

Conclusion: During first half of eighteenth century Mughal nobles established a number of urban centers that existed even today. Najibabad, Farrukhabad, Murshidabad, Faizabad, Qaim Ganj etc. are founded during this period and they invited people from different quarter of different profession to these centers. They not only founded and invited but also provided different facilities, protection, security and bazaar quarters etc. They also tried to improve agriculture the backbone of urban centres.

³⁷ Luke Scrafton, *Reflections on the Govt. of Indostan.*, p. 13

³⁸ George Foster; *Journey form Bengal to England*, Vol. I p. 189

³⁹ Sushil Chaudhary, *From Prosperity to Decline 18th C. Bengal*, p. 9.