

ABSTRACT

Name : Md Riyajuddin
Supervisors' Name : Prof. Farhat Nasreen
Department : History and Culture

Title of Ph.D. Thesis: The Dynamics of Trade and Regional Economy in Mughal India:
A Case Study of Bihar (1580-1765)

Findings: The present study explores the Mughal Bihar from an economical perspective. The region of Bihar has occupied an important place in the economic history of India since very early times. As far as Mughal Bihar is concerned, it has given its best contribution to India's economy and served the world economy. The present work has explored and analysed the various aspects of the economic life of Mughal Bihar. It is an attempt towards systematic research on the regional economy. The prime focus is to study the economy of Bihar as a whole, combining agriculture, trade, and commercial practices. The revival of the regional economy in relation to contemporary trade, and the kinds of changes that occurred in the economic life of Bihar during the period under review have been analyzed.

The study shows that economically, Bihar was an important region of Mughal India. In the geographical context, the role of fertile tracts in north Bihar and the forest belt in the south, along with the role of rivers and rich mineral resources in the plateau region, have been of great significance in shaping the regional economy. Bihar occupied an important place in the history of Indian trade and commercial activities. Its geographical position at the eastern edge of the northern Indian plains constituted an important link between the northern plains and the alluvial plains of Bengal. With a strategic position, Bihar provided an important route to access Bengal and Orissa. Communication with both Bengal and Orissa was only possible through the tracts of Bihar. Hence, geographically, the province of Bihar had a very significant position during the period under review, particularly from the point of view of military operations as well as for the trade and commercial activities.

The economic analysis and discussion present a clear picture of the economic conditions of Mughal Bihar. The present study reveals and finds that Bihar was an important region in Mughal India from a political and economic point of view. Mughal Bihar reflects the high level of growth in trade, commerce and industrial practices as well as the gradual development in agriculture and other wealth-producing economic activities. The Mughal period witnessed the high growth of European trade with the Bihar and Bengal regions. The

centralized Mughal rule provided a better atmosphere for the development of the regional economy. The ongoing trade and commercial interests also gave a major booster to transform the dynamics of the agricultural economy in the region, which was more apparent in the growth of the cultivation of several cash crops. The commercial interests and the list of exportable goods reflect some significant changes in the sphere of agricultural production in Mughal Bihar. The agricultural products for which the commercial demands increased during the Mughal period, simultaneously even the cultivation of that crops increased respectively.

It is evident from the present study that Bihar was one of the important regions of Mughal India from the point of view of trade, commerce and industrial practices. Mughal Bihar through its widespread trade and commercial activities gave its best contribution not only to the Indian economy but also served to the world economy. It played a very significant role in the commercial economy of India, Asia, Europe and other parts of the world during the period under review. As a result of foreign access and demand, mostly by the penetration of European trading companies and individual merchants, the worldwide commercial importance of Bihar reached on its culmination point, particularly during the 17th century. It became a warehouse for the world, supplying different commodities abundantly like sugar, cotton, silk cloth, opium, saltpetre etc., to the Asiatic, African and European traders.

From our study, it is also very clear that the province of Bihar was in a very strong position in the cycle of both national and international trade. In Mughal Bihar, especially Patna was the main commercial hub or principal centre of national and international trade. Thus, our understanding of the economic life of Mughal Bihar, focusing primarily on agriculture, trade and commerce, has enhanced as a result of the investigation and analysis of different records in the present account. It may be reasonable to state that there are regular references about the economic condition of Bihar and its significant role in the economy of India and the world during the period under review, which provide us an important pitch to study the Bihar region further and add some new facts in the sphere of its economic history.