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An Analysis on Decline and Achievement of the Mughal in India

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Abstract – This paper identifies the absence of both sub-continentally oriented histories which knit together the land and sea trades, and convincing explanations of the persistence of the Indo-Central Asian trade (for example) despite the growing Indo-European trade from the seventeenth-century. The customs-union model usefully approximates this trading-situation (i.e. the Europeans were given a privileged trading position by the Mughals vis-à-vis the Central Asians). It is used to structure the investigation and provide suitable explanatory hypotheses, as it suggests the separation of the likely creative and divertive effects of such privileged relations. Two tradable (and related industries) are examined. The textile-industry demonstrates the possibility for trade-creation (i.e. due to substitution between otherwise regionally-specialized production-centres as in Gujarat, and the utilization of spare capacity as in Bengal); it is not, however, possible to comment on the extent to which trade-creation took place. The horse-trade persisted because of limited trade-diversion. This was in turn the consequence of the absence of a European supply of horses, on the one hand, and the continued/unchanging geographical comparative advantage and demand conditions in the Mughal Empire, on the other. The necessary extensions to the model and analysis – for a complete understanding of sub-continental trading patterns – are noted (e.g. extending geographical and chronological scope, investigating private trading, and introducing balance of payments issues).

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INTRODUCTION

The unity and stability of the Mughal Empire was shaken during the long and strong reign of Emperor Aurangzeb. However, in spite of setbacks and adverse circumstances the Mughal administration was still quite efficient and the Mughal army strong at the time of his death in 1707. This year is generally considered to separate the era of the great Mughals from that of the lesser Mughals. After the death of Aurangzeb the Mughal authority weakened, it was not in a position to militarily enforce its regulations in all parts of the empire. As a result many provincial governors started to assert their authority. In due course of time they gained independent status. At the same time many kingdoms which were subjugated by the Mughals also claimed their indepence. Some new regional groups also consolidated and emerged as political power with all these developments, the period between 1707 and 1761 (third battle of Panipat, where Ahmed Shah Abdali defeated the Maratha chiefs) witnessed resurgence of regional identity that buttressed both political and economic decentralization. At the same time, intraregional as well as interregional trade in local raw materials, artifacts, and grains created strong ties of economic interdependence, irrespective of political and military relations.

Passing of the Mughal Empire - In 1707, when Aurangzeb died, serious threats from the peripheries had begun to accentuate the problems at the core of the empire. The new emperor, Bahadur Shah I (or Shah Alam; ruled 1707–12), followed a policy of compromise, pardoning all nobles who had supported his rivals. He granted them appropriate territories and postings. He never abolished jizya, but the effort to collect the tax were not effective. In the beginning he tried to gain greater control over the Rajput states of the rajas of Amber (later Jaipur) and Jodhpur. When his attempt met with firm resistance he realized the necessity of a settlement with them. However, the settlement did not restore them to fully committed warriors for the Mughal cause. The emperor's policy toward the Marathas was also that of half-hearted conciliation. They continued to fight among themselves as well as against the Mughals in the Deccan. Bahadur Shah was, however, successful in conciliating Chatrasal, the Bundela chief, and Churaman, the Jat chief; the latter also joined him in the campaign against the Sikhs.

ROLE OF THE SIKHS

Sikhs played a significant role in the fall of Mughul Empire. What motivated inspired and impelled them to play such an impertinently bold and significant role? This is worth pondering over, for the nation which was being subdued for nearly two centuries. True, they got encouragement from their spiritual leaders and raised their heads a number of times, exhibiting unmatched feats of gallantry and valour at

many occasions, yet it did not gain enough power with which they could win complete freedom.

At last they got such occasions that they could scatter the power of Mughuls and group themselves into powerful sects of warriors. Then Ranjit Singh was born with exceptional brain and capacity to become a powerful ruler and soldier. He won complete freedom for the Sikhs, established a Sikh state and founded powerful and unmatched Sikh empire. Unfortunately it was short lived and survived only upto the demise of the valiant and mighty ruler Ranjit Singh.

Then came the Sepoy Mutiny 1857. The weak Moghul ruler Bahadur Shah II joined the mutineers. For Sikhs this was the occasion to take revenge from the descendents of the Moghuls who had tried their level best to aninhilate the Sikhs. Henry Hodson took advantage of this, though again for the mutual benefit.

The British officers had observed the Sikh officers and soldiers fight against them during the battles of Mudhki, Feroze Shah and Sabraon. They were impressed by their martial acumen, loyalty to their masters and steadfastness to the aim and purpose. So they decided to reemploy them to raise dauntless regiments, acting as impregnable walls to repel the mutineers and keep them at bay. An excellent choice and wise decision. No wonder they could rule for nearly a Century without a problem. They selected the best from amongst the Khalsa Army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Amongst them was Mann Singh who proved to be the costliest jem.

HISTORY

The 8th century began with a long, bloody clash between Hindus and Muslims in this fragmented land. For almost 300 years, the Muslims were able to advance only as far as the Indus River valley. Starting around the year 1000, however, well-trained Turkish armies swept into India. Led by Sultan Mahmud (muh•MOOD) of Ghazni, they devastated Indian cities and temples in 17 brutal campaigns. These attacks left the region weakened and vulnerable to other conquerors. Delhi eventually became the capital of a loose empire of Turkish warlords called the Delhi Sultanate. These sultans treated the Hindus as conquered people.

Delhi Sultanate - Between the 13th and 16th centuries, 33 different sultans ruled this divided territory from their seat in Delhi. In 1398, Timur the Lame destroyed Delhi. The city was so completely devastated that according to one witness, “for months, not a bird moved in the city.” Delhi eventually was rebuilt. But it was not until the 16th century that a leader arose who would unify the empire.

Babur Founds an Empire **-** In 1494, an 11-year-old boy named Babur inherited a kingdom in the area that is now Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. It was only a tiny kingdom, and his elders soon took it away and drove him south. But Babur built up an army. In the years that followed, he swept down into India and laid the foundation for the vast Mughal Empire.

MUGHAL ARISTOCRACY

A sinister development in the later Mughal polities was the rise of powerful nobles who played the role of ‘king-makers’. Wars of succession were fought even in the days of the Mughal Empire but then the royal princes were the principal contestants supported by powerful mansabdars. In the later Mughal period the ambitiopus nobles became the real contenders for political power and the royal princes receded in the background. The powerful nobles and leaders of different factions used the royal princes as pawns in their game and set up and removed royal princess from the throne to suit their interests. Thus Jahandar Shah became the emperor not by his own strength but because of the able generalship of Zulfikar Khan, a leader of the Irani party. Similarly, it were the Sayyis brothers who raised Farrukhsiyar to the throne in 1713 and pulled him down in 1719 when he ceased to serve their interests. The three puppet emperors, Rafi-ud-DArajat, Rafi-ud-Daula and mohammad Shah were raised to the throne by the Sayyids. The fall of the Sayyid brothers in 1720 came not because they had lost the confidence of the emperor but was brought about more by the Turani faction under the leadership of Nazim-ul-Mulh and Muhammad Amin khan. And worst of all, these powerful parties were not political parties in the modern sense having different programmes for the welfare of the nation but were factions looking for self-advancement, more often at the cost of the nation and against the interests of the Mughal Empire.

THE THEORY OF MUGHAL COLLAPSE

The dissolution of Mughal hegemony could have affected manufacturing through several channels. The first is a reduction in overall agricultural productivity through an increased rent burden, shifting of settlement owing to insecurity, and warfare. Reduced agricultural productivity would be reflected in an increase of the price of grain, the key non-tradable, and therefore in the relative price of non-tradeables to tradables (such as textiles). To the extent that grain was the dominant consumption good for workers and that the grain wage was close to subsistence, this negative productivity shock should have put upward pressure on the nominal wage in cotton spinning and weaving. Indeed, East India Company officials in Surat were already complaining in the 1720s that rising foodgrain and raw cotton prices were putting upward pressure on the prime cost of textiles they were sending to England (Chaudhuri 1978, pp. 299-300). Cotton textile wages started from a low nominal but high real base in the mid-18th century (Parthasarathi 1998;

Allen 2005; Prakash 2004: 268, 383). Competitiveness in textile manufacturing is negatively related to the own

real wage, the nominal wage divided by the price of textiles. Declining textile prices and rising nominal wages put downward pressure on “profits” from both below and above.

An increase in the own wage in textiles would have hurt the edge India had relative to its 18th century competitors in third-country export markets, such as the booming Atlantic economy. A decline in 18th century agricultural productivity in India would suggest that even before factorydriven technologies appeared between 1780 and 1820, Britain was already beginning to wrest away from India its dominant grip on the world export market for textiles.

DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE (1707-1857)

Aurangzeb's death in 1707 plunged the empire into a gruelling war of succession among his sons. The short reign of the victor, Bahadur Shah I (1707-12), was followed by yet another bitter conflict in which, upon Farrukh Siyar's (1713-19) success, notable supporters of a defeated claimant were for the first time executed en masse. Muhammad Shah's long reign (1719-48) saw a steady decline of Mughal power as the Marathas extended their power over central India and Gujarat. Provincial governors, like those of Bengal and the Dec-can, tended to become autonomous. Finally, in 1739-40 Nadir Shah's invasion and sack of Delhi proved a devastating blow from which the empire never recovered. The KabuL suba and southern Sind were seized by Nadir Shah; and henceforth the Mughal emperor was virtually powerless to impose his authority on any part of the empire nominally owing allegiance to him.[36] The Mughal dynasty formally continued in existence (after 1803, under
British tutelage) until 1857, when the British deposed the last emperor Bahadur Shah II-an exceptionally fine Urdu poet - and sent him as a prisoner to Rangoon.

As the Mughal Empire rose and fell, Western traders slowly built their own power in the region. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach India. In fact, they arrived just before Babur did. Next came the Dutch, who in turn gave way to the French and the English. However, the great Mughal emperors did not feel threatened by the European traders. Shah Jahan let the English build a fortified trading post at Madras. In 1661, Aurangzeb casually handed them the port of Bombay. Aurangzeb had no idea that he had given India’s next conquerors their first foothold in a future empire.

There have been numerous attempts to explain the fall of the Mughal empire. For his- torians like Irvine and Sarkar, the decline could be explained in terms of a personal deterioration in the quality of the kings and their nobles, who are thought to have become more luxury-loving than their seventeenth century predecessors. Sarkar, in his monumental History of Aurangzeb, also dwells on Hindu-Muslim differences: Aurangzeb's religious policy is thought to have provoked a Hindu reaction that undid the unity that had been so laboriously built up by his predecessors.

More recently, there has been an attempt at a more fundamental examination. Chandra seeks to find the critical factor in the Mughals' failure to maintain the mansab and jagir system, whose efficient working was essential for the survival of the empire as a centralized polity. Habib, on the other hand, has explained the fall of the Mughal Empire as a consequence of the working of this very system: the jagir transfers led to intensified exploitation, and such exploitation led to rebellions by zatmndars and the peasantry. All these factors are sometimes supposed to be compounded by yet another - the rise of'nationalities' (such as Afghans and Marathas), which subverted and shattered the unified empire. This thesis, developed by Soviet scholars like Reisner and maintained by a school of popular Indian Marxist writers, has received corroboration from scholars who have found new regional power groups emerging in the states that arose during the eighteenth century.

DEBATE

The debate on the nature of eighteenth century has engaged historians of Mughal India as well those interested in colonial studies. Early Mughal studies view the overall changes in the shadow of Mughal political collapse and project the period as “Dark Ages”, thus Mughal political crisis is seen to be accompanied by economic and social breakdown as well. However, later studies scrutinize eighteenth century economy and society in regional perspectives preceding the beginning of the colonial rule that characterized the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus the two positions argue around “continuity versus change” paradigm. Generally, Indian historians perceive the colonial conquest which began from the mid eighteenth century as a point of departure for Indian history. So the basic issues pertaining to eighteenth century are two-whether the fall of Mughal Empire initiated the fall of socio- economic structure as well and secondly, whether the arrival of colonialism was a fundamental break or not?

The issue of whether European commercial activities wrested the Indian Ocean trade away from Asian merchants remains ambiguous in the maritime history tradition, but an established tradition exists which argues that as far as European maritime trading and Indo-Central Asian overland trade were concerned, the effects were unequivocally deleterious. The central contribution to this tradition was made by Steensgaard in 1974. The thesis can be summarised as follows. First, it was not until the arrival of the Dutch and English Companies in the Indian Ocean (a

century after Portuguese) that the trade of the Indian sub-continent experienced a 'revolution' (i.e. a change in its established trade patterns), because the Companies were successfully able to internalize protection costs and enjoy improved technology and communication networks. This view has recently been supported by the work of the institutionalism Douglas North.46 Second, these Companies – unlike the Portuguese or the Indo-Central Asian caravan merchants – consequently benefited from economic buffers (rather than from lower transportation costs, which did not affect international trade until the nineteenth-century), thereby causing the decline of the latter.

CONCLUSION

The Mughals or Timurids were the Cathay Turks descended from Tammerlane, who established their empire in northern India during the sixteenth century under the direction of Akbar the Great (ruled 1556-1605). He completely reorganized the central and provincial governments and rationalized the tax system. Under his leadership, the Mughal empire became a truly Indian empire. Akbar was a religious eclectic who showed tolerance to all faiths. His successors could not match his foresight, but established a golden age of Mughal culture, especially in architecture and painting. The seventeenth century saw a general political decline, however, due to the burdens of new building projects (Taj Mahal), military campaigns, and the erosion of Akbar's administrative and tax reforms. Religious fanaticism and subsequent intolerance also contributed to the decline. The dominance of the British East India Company had utterly eclipsed Mughal power by 1819, although the Timurid line came to an official end only in 1858.

Akbar's religious eclecticism mirrored the atmosphere of sixteenth century India. On the Hindu side, there was an upsurge of bhakti devotionals; Muslim eclectic tendencies came primarily from the Sufis. But the many opportunities for Hindu-Muslim rapprochement vanished under the reactionary policies of Aurangzeb.

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