

Patna : Business And Urbanisation (1526-1707)



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Patna an urbanised city in medieval times gain much prominence. It was held as a centre of administrative and power control to the eastern empires for a long period. The origin of this city can be traced during the first cycle of urbanisation and aftermath, the city passes through many semesters of ups and down, by which I mean rise and fall. Patna city had a unique geographical location, having surrounded by the three different rivers (Son, Ganges and Ghandak) in three corners of the city. As well as in the south, it has rich alluvial deposit which makes this city's juncture of agricultural surplus and artisanal advancement. On beauty front, "The city is more beautiful than the face of the beloved; the inhabitants of the city are more charming than the city....."¹. Almost the city has all the essentialities to support a holistic urbanisation. The satellite city distributed in the region also produced the surplus for the development of this city, and which make the resonance for making this riverine port as the trading junction of inland and international trade in the region. The business and trade had enriched this city from time to time. We have reference in various sources about this riverine port and their commercial activities which had major impact and flavours among the Europeans. Thus, it might be concluded with the underlined fact, that this city was the manufacturing and commercial hub of east and it cannot be ignored while talking about the economics of eastern empires during the Mughals.

First thing first, about the origin of the name of 'Patna' come from folk lore of the temple of Patan Devi and story of the Prince Putra². Some other folk lore also confirms to the commercial importance of Patna as a riverine port. There is a song titled '*panikejahaj se patlaniabaniayehapiya, leleayeha ho piyasenurabangal se*'. This song signifies the links of trade between the Bengal and Patna, as the song means that a lady is demanding something from his husband to bring the gold from Bengal.

The aims and objectives of my seminar paper is to search business of adjoining area for the rise of trade and commerce and further urbanisation in Patna city. Next to it, I want to deal with markets, merchants and *sarais* which seems important ingredients in trade and commerce. I am also going to see the 'articles of trade' in and around the city during the Mughal regime. Other than that, my focus area is on the urbanisation and meaning of urbanity; as well as the administration of the city and how the administrative machinery facilitate traders and merchant communities in their activities. And further, how it is helping for the growth of trade and

¹Mirja Muhammad Sadiq, The Comprehensive History of Bihar, Patna, 1987, vol ii, pp-533

² Folk Tales of Bihar, Origin of Bihar, Delhi Archives

commerce. Finally, in conclusion I support the robust reason; that why Patna was called the manufacturing and commercial hub of east during Mughal time.

The historiography on city Patna has very few scholarly studies available, which deals the socio-economic life of the people and urbanization process in medieval period under one single title. Amongst them is Yogesh Sharma and Pius Malekandathil (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, and K. N. Chaudhuri, "Some Reflection on the Town and Country in Mughal India". Yogesh Sharma and Pius Malekandathil (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, book has broken the convention albe life that urbanization was shaped only by economic factors. This book deals with social and cultural processes that along with economic changes that transform a little-known trading town into full-fledged centres of learning and culture. It also highlighted important factors responsible for the social changes and economic developments which helped in the urbanization process in Mughal India. He mentions that, the expansion and consolidation of Mughal empire was an important factor in the urbanization. Moreover, Pius and Yogesh draw several information from different sources to establish links between economic change and changes in language, literature, teaching etc. And both analyses the complex socio-cultural phenomena and uses his analysis to reveal the less-known aspects of the Sultanate political economy, the process of urbanization, economy and trade and their impact on society. While the K. N. Chaudhuri, "Some Reflection on the Town and Country in Mughal India' talks about the emergence of Mughal towns and cities and how much the central imperial authority was responsible for their rise.

Other than that, we had another book by Dwijendra Tripathi's 'Business communities of India', who talks about the different business communities in India as well as also highlighted the role of Jain merchants and Marwaris for the development of Patna city. I have also investigated the different proceedings of meeting of Patna, IHRC records and tries to trace out the historicity in context of the topic. The book of Vipul Singh's 'The Artisans in 18th century Eastern India; a history of Survival' focuses on the artisanal activities in and around the Patna city.

On primary source, I am going to quote travellers account of Niccolao Manucci, Tavernier, Bernier and Thomas Bowrey, who visited the Patna city and mention detailed description about this city and their trading forum. But the critic of the European travellers account is that they always seem to be biased towards European module and had Eurocentric in taste. Moreover, I am also going to visit the state official document of that time, i. e. *Ain-I- Akbari*, who mentions about the city's development and the political history of the time along with the commercial one.

The chapterisation of the seminar paper is as follows

- 1) Patna: A Historical Background- origin; city through the years; Mughal control
- 2) Trade, Markets and Merchants-Sarais; Brokers
- 3) Urbanisation and Meaning of Urbanity; Patna specific;

Patna: A Historical Background

According to legend, Emerald Buddha was created in Patna (then Pataliputra) under the supervision of Nagasena in 43 BC³. The history of Patna covers a minimum of three millennia. The city had got several

³Upindersingh, 'A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th century', Pearson Longman Publications, New Delhi, 2009, pp-144

references in ancient Indian texts like the Vedas, the Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The earliest references to the historical region of Patna are found almost 2, 500 years ago mentioned in Jain and Buddhist scriptures. Patna started gaining prominence starting from the year 490 BC at a time when Ajatashatru, the king of Magadha⁴, thought of shifting his capital from the hilly Rajagriha to a more precisely located place to fight the Licchavis of Vaishali. He opted for the location on the banks of River Ganga and started fortifying the region. Lord Buddha visited this place during the final year of his life before on his way to his homeland Kapilavastu. His prophecy was for a bright future for this place, but at the same time, his prediction was for its devastation was because of flood, fire, and Wars⁵.

With the emergence of the Mauryan Empire, the region became the centre of power for the entire sub-continent. The legendary emperor Chandragupta Maurya (a contemporary of Alexander the Great) reigned over a vast empire, starting from the Bay of Bengal to Afghanistan. The ancient Mauryan city chiefly contained of wooden structures. Emperor Ashoka, the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, changed the wooden capital into a stone construction during 273 BC.

Megasthenese⁶, the famous Greek historian and an ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya too had recorded some rare facts about the city. He detailed that the city was located on the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Arennovoas (Sonabhadra - Hiranyawah) and had a length of 9 miles (14 km) and 1. 75 miles (2. 82 km) wide. Michael Wood, in *The Story of India* (2007), mentions Patna as the greatest city on earth during its tremendous influential times. The Sungas eventually retained control of Pataliputra and reigned over the city for nearly a century. The Sungas were then succeeded by the Kanvas and finally by the Guptas. There has been educational contradiction corresponding to the fact that whether or not the Indo-Greeks ruled the area around 185 BC.

Several of the Chinese travellers visited India seeking knowledge and recorded their explorations about Pataliputra in their travelogues, apart from those of a Chinese Buddhist Fa Hien, who toured India between 399 and 414 CE. He stayed at this city for several months translating vital Buddhist texts.

During the later years, several dynasties ruled the Indian subcontinent from the city, apart from those of the Gupta Empire and the Pala kings. With the fall of the Gupta Empire, Patna experienced uncertain times. During the Gupta period the city has been called the 'city of world' and it has all the things which an urbanised city has. The ruling seat of the Gupta empire was also from this city.

Coming to medieval times, Bakhtiyar Khilji took over Bihar during the 12th century AD and demolished several ancient seats of education. Eventually, Patna had to forgo its prestige as the political and cultural centre of India. The medieval sultans had also keen interest in capturing this town and a large-scale tussle and war for the seat of throne of Patna was concluded between the local rulers and the pre- Mughal sultans.

⁴ Ibid pp-178

⁵ Buddhist account confirms this fact.

⁶ Megasthenese in his book '*Indica*' mentioned about the detailed description of municipal administration of the Patna city. He while a visitor of the city, confirms that there is no thief in Patna and the administration, control of power is very good, and people are happy. Along with that, the account of Kautilya's '*Arthashastra*' also talked about the municipal administration and about the city.

Guru Gobind Singh, who was the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, was born in this city as Gobind Rai to Tej Bahadur, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, and his wife Gujri. Hence, his birthplace, Patna Sahib, is considered to be one of the most holy pilgrimages for Sikhs

The Mughal period was a period of forgettable provincial administration from Delhi. The most eventful period during such times was under the rule of Sher Shah Suri, who restored the lost glory of Patna in the middle of the 16th century. He constructed a fort and established a town on the banks of River Ganga. Sher Shah's fort in Patna cannot be sustained, even though the Sher Shah Suri Masjid mosque, constructed in Afghan architectural style, remained⁷. Mughal emperor Akbar visited Patna in 1574 AD to take over the Afghan Chief Daud Khan. It was Akbar's *navratna* and state's official historian and author of "*Ain-i-Akbari*" Abul Fazl who refers to Patna as an enterprising centre for paper, stone and glass industries⁸. He also cites the premium quality of several strains of rice grown in Patna, popular as Patna rice in Europe. At the time of 1620 AD, the city of Patna was the chief access way of northern India besides being the largest town in Bengal and the most popular for trade. This was prior to the establishment of the city of Calcutta. Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb had given into the suggestion of his dearest grandson, Prince Muhammad Azim, to rename Patna as Azimabad, in 1704 while Azim was in Patna as the subedar. But, very shortly changed, the name got changed again. With the fall of the Mughal Empire, Patna went into the administration of the Nawabs of Bengal, who charged a hefty tax on the people but permitted it to develop as an economic centre.

By 17th century, Patna turned into a hub for global trade. The British began with a factory in Patna in 1620 AD for the trade of calico and silk. Later, it became a trading centre for saltpetre. Bernierin *Travels in the Mogul Empire* has written that a major quantity of saltpetre was imported from Patna⁹. It was carried down the Ganges with great flexibility, and the Dutch as well as the English sent major cargoes to several parts of the Indies and to Europe requesting other Europeans such as the French, Danes, Dutch and Portuguese to compete in the profitable business. Peter Mundy's writing in 1632 AD, mentioned Patna as "the greatest economic centre of the eastern India"¹⁰.

Bihar was annexed by the Mughals in 1575 during the reign of Akbar and it officially united to Bengal *Subas* in 1733. The central Mughal control over the Bihar is from the capital at Patna and the nawabs residency at Patna was known as Patna *darbar*. Azimabad was the name given by Prince Azimushan, the prince had carried many substantial repairment and addition to the interior and exterior of Patna fort on the model of the Red Fort in Shahjahanabad. The beautification and public mansionary work were on the rise during the time of Shahjahan, as the famous palace of 40 pillars called *Chihilsatun* which was mainly the resident of Nawabs was built¹¹. Seeing the administration from the top the Patna city was ruled by the *nawabs* or the *subeder*, called *Sahibisuba* in royal correspondence, who had full control over civil (*Mulki*) and financial (*mali*) affairs. Down to them, there was the post of Governor, who were known by different titles such as *Sipahsalare*, *Nazim* and

⁷ Sher shah's information is bulletined in Tarikh-e-shershahi by Abbas khan Sarwani, the conquest of Bihar Subha was detailed in it. Along with the references of works and measures adopted by Sher Shah.

⁸Abul Fazal, *Ain-i-Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, vol. I, Calcutta, 1872; trans., H. S. Jarret, vol. II, Calcutta, 1891, connoted and ed., J. N. Sarkar, reprint, Delhi 1989.pp-164

⁹Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*,(1656-68) trans.by V. A. Smith, London, 1916.pp-456-8

¹⁰PeterMundy, *Travels in Asia*, 1630-34, ed., R. C. Temple, Hakluyt society, vol ii, London, 1914.pp-168

¹¹Abul Fazal, *Ain-i-Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, vol. I, Calcutta, 1872; trans., H. S. Jarret, vol. II, Calcutta, 1891, connoted and ed., J. N. Sarkar, reprint, Delhi 1989.pp-165

*Subahdar*¹². The Mughal governor was mainly derived from the *mansabdari* system, which the base of Mughal administration in India. In this system, the officials had to be ranked on the *zat* and *sawar* duties. Focusing more on them, they had to maintained a royal force or military and also have to favour the civil duties on the issue of *Farman*. The office of the governor was never left vacant and clear rules were laid down regarding the arrangements to be taken in the absence due to accident or for any other reason. On the specs of primary source *Ain- e- Akbari* quotes that the governor was the vice regent of the emperor and was responsible for increase in agricultural and flourishing condition of land.¹³ The subordinate office to Governor was the provincial *diwan* has an independent charge of revenue of the province. *Faujdar* was next in the line of subordinacy, who was appointed by and was responsible to the emperor. The state machinery remains independent to each order, means that ranks are higher or lower but the central reporting authority of the kingdom was the Mughal king. Under, the Mughals you can say that the administrative machinery in Bihar was a miniature copy of that at centre. The governor was the representative of the emperor, and various departmental head (*diwans, bakshi, qai, sadr, and muhtasibs*) were subordinate to their corresponding imperial officers, with the emperor as the final arbiter¹⁴. Other than that, both the *Subhedar* and the *diwan* were accountable directly to the centre and they acted in theory but in practice they acted as a check and balances upon each other in the province. Patna being the centre of provincial political power attracts lots of commercial and business tycoons and almost all types of business conducted under the framework of these political system. The relationship between the polity and economy was much intermingled during the Mughal period. The government officials also used to trade through their set of agents and take keen interests in Business¹⁵. So, it can be concluded that, if there is political turmoil, it directly made its effect on production, trade and commerce. This fact is confirmed with widespread exaction and plundering especially in early eighteenth century as a result of war of succession.

Located at 25° 37' north and 85° 12' east, along the west bank of river Ganga, Patna was almost at the heart of the rich alluvial deposits. It was due to the stability in the course of the river at this point that enabled the city to endure through the ages. Patna was the capital of Mughal *subah* of Bihar and was bounded by the Subhas of Awadh and Allahabad in the west, while in north, there is *terai* region of Himalayas. The eastern boundary of Bihar subah stretches up to *Sarkar* Purnea and in the south, it is up to Chotanagpur plateau. This central position was accentuated by its strategic location between the eminent cities of the rich doab on the west and the bounteous Bengal, which apart from other trading advantages possessed a convenient sea outlet¹⁶.

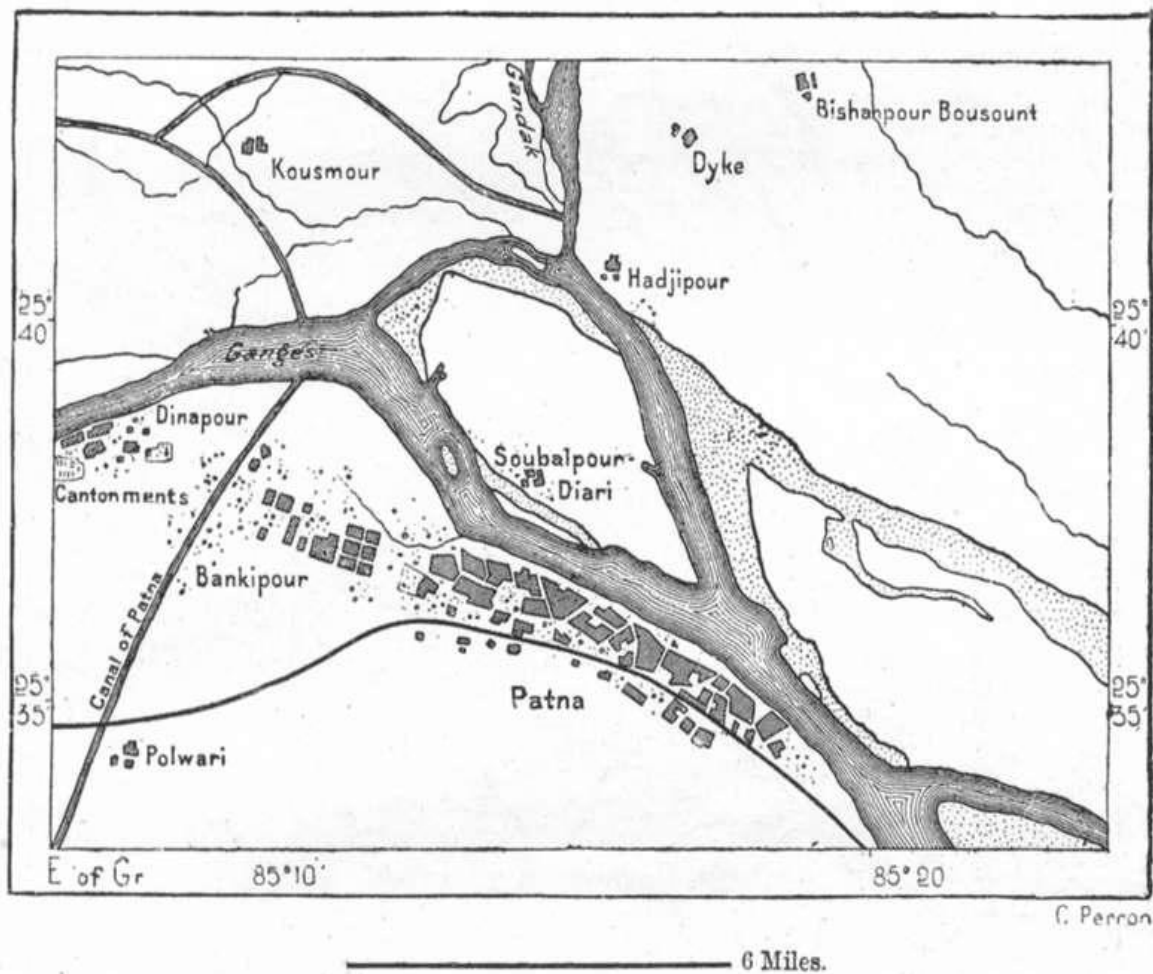
¹²Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, (1656-68) trans. by V. A. Smith, London, 1916. pp-456-8

¹³Opcit. Pp-146

¹⁴ Ibid pp-36-7

¹⁵Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp-194

¹⁶ Ibid pp-183



Trade, Markets and Merchants

The lifestyle enjoyed by the upper elites of Patna was extremely high standard and luxurious. Careri observed that the rich spend all they have in luxury keeping a vast number of servants and concubines¹⁷. Furthermore, the lifestyle of commoners is same like today, but the most peculiar things is that the numbers of domestic servants was very high and they were lodged within the compound of their master. The houses in medieval Patna was made of cane and it is covered with earthen tiles (*khaprails*), while the houses of commoners were mainly made of mud and earth.¹⁸

Patna being connected to convenient land routes and waterways through the Ganga river basin and all the routes connecting to north-west and central Asia acts as a nodal point in the advancement of trade and commerce of the eastern empires. Almost all European traveller visiting to Patna and its environs had talked about the magnificence and utility of both the land and the water routes¹⁹. The strings of trade route starting from Patna and connecting to most of its surrounding areas, like there were two routes which connects Varanasi(Kashi) to Patna, (i) this route ran along the Ganges through Danapur, Maner, Arrah, Bhojpur, Buxar, Chausa, Zamania and Mughalsarai, (ii) second one, ran through Phulwari, Nawbatpur, Arwal, Daudnagar, Sasaram to Mughalsarai. The eastern side the strings has linked to Hugli via Monghyr, Rajmahal, Kasimbazar,

¹⁷Surendra Nath Sen, ed. *Indian travels of Thevenot and Carrie* pp-247

¹⁸Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp-185

¹⁹Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp-185

and Balasore. The city of Patna was also connected to Neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bhutan. Nepal is connected through the channel of Hajipur, Mehsi, Motihari, and Hitoura.

Sarais were built on these trade routes for the convenience of traders and merchants. Manrique mentions these sarais were built by wealthy men with Philanthropic interests²⁰. If we check the historicity of Sarais, they were in medieval times named as khanqahs and it was built by collecting the taxes from the travellers similar like the modern toll tax. After sometime the Lodis, replaced these Khanqah term with Sarais and aftermath Shershah contributed much in this sector by building 1700 sarais for the benefits of travellers and merchants. Sarais was mainly equipped with markets(mandis) where the peasants came and sell their produce. Thus, it can be concluded by sense that these sarais acts as a nucleus around which many towns(qasbas) developed during medieval epoch.

The land routes were not safe for all the time, *Fauzdars* were instructed to keep a constant vigil on the roads so that the caravans and other travellers might not be attacked by robbers and thieves. There were transit duties paid for guarding the roads or renovation of road patrols. This road tax, *radhar*, amounting to about 10 percent of adv valorem of the value of the goods, was taken on every highway (*guzar*) and yielded large revenue²¹.



Bullock carts and pack of oxen were the major means of transport during medieval times. Despite of all the efforts from the government the transportation system during the rainy seasons was greatly hampered. Now talking about waterways, the cost of communication on land routes was much higher than the waterways, as the distance travelled by water was shorter. English Company men observed that the current of the Ganges from Patna towards the south-east was so strong that it could carry down freight in five or six days while the upcoming voyages take took thrice the time. The trade towards eastward to Patna was mostly carried by the

²⁰C.E Lourd, tr. And ed. *Travels of F. Sebastian Manrique*, vol II, London: Hakluyt Society, 1927. pp-146

²¹.Q. Ahmed and Hasan Askari, *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol II, pp-326

means of riverine transport, while the westward trade and transportation of goods was carried by land route. The land-cum- waterways were so important for the imperial officials that they use to levy taxes on the entry and the exit point of the routes and established customs house known as *chaukis or chabutras*. Robert Hughes mentioned chabutras as 'a shed used as a resting place for the travellers or for the transaction of public businesses.'²²

No city life of civilization has been recorded to be evolve without or independent of its hinterland. The satellites towns around the Patna city acts a developing ground for the city to become the manufacturing as well as commercial hub. The self-sufficiency in agricultural products helped the city to grow into a manufacturing centre of eminence since the artisans and peasants could concentrate more on production of manufactured goods²³. The products which make Patna essential field for commercial activities was rice. Abul Fazl noted that 'agriculture flourishes in a high degree, especially the cultivation of rice which for its quality and quantity is rarely to be equalled.'²⁴Other than rice, Patna grows cotton with its all existing varieties. Sugarcane and silk were also grown in abundance.²⁵ Patna's sugarcane was of two varieties, the thinner one is used for extraction of sugar while the thicker one was used for chewing. Raw silk was also of three varieties the brown, the ordinary and the fine one. Most of the silk is brought from Bengal (*sirbindi, Satgoan silk*). The European companies had to buy the silk from the indigenous merchants, who brought them to Patna, and had to pay a brokerage on these purchases. The demand of raw silk was in ups and down as it was accorded with the supplies of other silk received by Europeans in their home market. There were more cash crops which were associated with the region, these were oilseeds, indigo and tobacco. Peter Mundy talks about the production of indigo at Patna, which was the essential commodities used for dyeing.²⁶ Other than that spices like long pepper and turmeric were also produced by the adjoining areas of the Patna city.

Patna city was also known for its drug production, opium was highly valued drug. It was used by the Mughal Emperors, nobles and commoners. Other than Patna, Munger was also the manufacturing unit of opium in the region. Patna also produced tincall (*tinkal*). Streynsham Master reported that in one year 1, 667, 400 maunds of tincall were brought for export from Patna²⁷.

Patna and its surrounding environment were rich in forests produce. Lignum aloe (aguru) and Gumlac was important trading commodity. Moreover, the musk of local deer was also one of important demand of foreign buyers. The local produce such as jack fruit(*kathal*), *barhal*, mango, betal (*paan*) was prominence demand by the foreign travellers.

The bazaar painting clearly depict the traditional importance of Bihar in commercial sector. The bazaar paintings by the Patna school painters and independent artists portrayed various bazaars tradesmen, crafts and peddlers. In these paintings the depiction of commoners like the towns, village sites, and various means of transport were seen.

²²Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.),*Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi,2014. Pp-189

²³ Ibid pp-190

²⁴Abul Fazal, Ain-i-Akbari, ed. H. Blochmann, vol. I, Calcutta, 1872; trans., H. S. Jarret, vol. II, Calcutta, 1891, connoted and ed., J. N. Sarkar, reprint, Delhi 1989 pp-164

²⁵ Ibid pp-151

²⁶Peter Mundy, *Travels in Asia*, 1630-34, ed., R. C. Temple, Hakluyt society, vol ii, London, 1914.pp-156

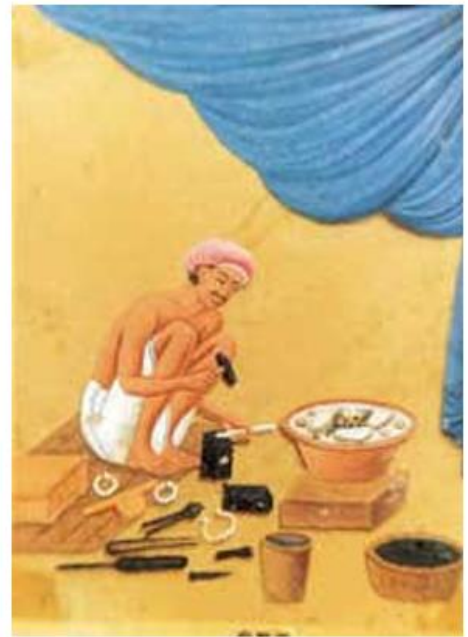
²⁷Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.),*Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi,2014. Pp-189



Pic- markets of Patna city



Pic- Artisans and sellers





Pic- shopkeeper during the medieval time.

On manufacturing front, Patna stands with his famous cotton textiles and silk textiles industry. The city had been famous for speciality of two varieties of cloth i. e *Ambertees and Alijab*. The localities around Patna, were important centres and markets of cotton products. Manucci observed that fine white cotton cloth was manufactured at Patna, and was plentiful in the province of Bihar²⁸. Gaya, Fatuha and Nawada were the weaving centre who provided the life to the city Patna. Other than weaving Patna also produced other varieties of calicoes such as *sahan, hammam, chautaha, ravat, ramsukha, carsa, and dupattas* with both finer and coarser variety. The next step inclined to the cotton textile industry was the dying and printing industry. The dyers were divided into four groups- *rangrej, nilgur, achfurosh and galalsaj*. The first group dyed cloth in various colours, the second dyed with indigo alone, the third dyed with the roots of marinda and the fourth dyed with lac alone. The block printing facility was also popular and widely used in printing textiles. Silk production as well as saltpetre were also emerging industries of Patna and its hinterland. Bernier also mentions about these trade supplements and exported materials in his travel account. Saltpetre came in huge quantity from the Tirhut division, where the soil contained large proportion of saline matter such as nitrate of potash lime, sulphate and soda. The European companies generally exported refined saltpetre instead of other unrefined one because refined saltpetre is good for making gunpowder as well as it also cuts their extra cost of transportation which they have to incur while trade. Thomas Bowery noted that it was the only substance which were routinely sent to England and Holland.²⁹ Patna was also the centre of production of bottles and fine earthenware. Minapur near Ghazipur was one of the prominent centres of finer pottery products. Abul Fazl in

²⁸Manucci, Storio de Mongor, tr. And ed. William Irvine, vol II, p-246

²⁹Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp-193

his *Ain-e Akbari* also noted that gilded glass was also manufactured in Patna. Peter Munday also testifies to the production of bows and arrows in the city Patna³⁰.

In Patna the commercial aspects were quite strong, like finance, weights and measures, coinage, merchant groups, production systems were all well developed. Peter Munday mentioned about the commercial importance of city as 'the greatest mart of all this country, from whence they *repaire* from Bengala that way to the Seaside, and from *Indostan* and other inland countries round about, plentiful in provisions, abounding with sundrie commodities'³¹. Generally, in Patna the system of production was very strong, the artisans owned their own tools of trade but still worked in whence and fences of domestic area which give them an independent hand to produce their own style and design of production. The system of contract as well as advance giving was also present during that period, it was given or taken to ensure the requisite of demand and supply by the merchants and the artisans. Aftermath, the practice of *dadnior* putting out system was growing in later days, which not only brought the artisans into the manifold of traders and merchants by giving them easier loans, but also provided them raw materials and also specified them about the size, pattern, quality, quantity of the goods. Patna was being the centre of manufacturing and production due to availability of cheap labourer, qualified and skilled workforce.

The financial aspects of trade in the region was highly developed and merchants could easily raise considerable investment loans in the foam of bills of exchange³². There was lots of company records as well as travellers accounts suggested that this bills of exchange and cheque system was widely used in regular basis during trading practice. The banking system was also seen in practice, Tavernier was of the opinion that, 'the village seems to be very small, if it doesn't have the money changer called shroff (*cheraf*), who acts as a banker to make remittance of money and issue a letter of exchanges.³³The money lender at Patna was known by the name of *nukdi-mahajanandugahiya*. The net of bankers and financers was distributed in every metropolis of that time, this finally shows the importance of business of money transaction. Some of the chief bankers in the region was Champa shah, whose son was posted in Agra for the same business. Other than that, some other bankers were Bharon Das, Chibilla Shah, Shyam Shah, Prag Das, and Chandrasahai Shah³⁴. The bankers in Mughal time was not only specialised in issuing *hundis* but also in discounting in bill of exchanges. In 1655, the English factors at Agra reported that *sarafs* weren't lending money at interest they made more profit, they usually use to issue exchanges to discount their funds through *hundis*.

Brokers are those people who facilitate interaction of traders and outsiders with the insiders and in lieu of that they charge their commission from them. Patna was also inhabited by these brokers and middleman and they acted as chain in the connection to Europeans and the local manufacturers and producers. Buchannan's observation about the city seems to be true that, 'there are a good number of *dalals* or brokers was there, who have no capital engaged and live by making bargains for others.³⁵ In fact, nobody likes the brokers but without the help of these brokers the European companies would have not been able to establish any sort of profitable commerce.

³⁰Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp-193

³¹Ibid

³² Ibid

³³Tavernier, Jean- Baptiste, *Travels in India*, (1640-67), trans., V. Ball, London, 1889.pp-24

³⁴Opcit pp-194

³⁵Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp-194

Both the Indian as well as foreign merchants came to Patna to advance their trade and merchandise activities. Various merchants and their families migrated and settled in Patna in seventeenth century. Most important among them was Hiranand Sahu, the founder of the house of Jagat Seth. Many travellers accounts also throw light about the different merchants houses in Patna, like Ralph Finch mentioned that, 'the chief merchants of Patna city are Moors and Gentiles'. Types of merchants in Patna were *goldars* (usually merchants dealing in wholesale grain and belongs to Jaina³⁶ religion); *aratiyes* (merchants who received goods from other merchants and disposed of them by commission); *sarrafs* (they dealt in precious metals and coins also in cotton cloth); *kothiwallahs* (bankers of the highest order who dealt in European woollens and shawls); *saudagars* (special merchants who kept European shops); *beruni* (who came in boats and purchased grains); *baqqals* (Persian term for traders of low birth)³⁷. There were different foams of hierarchy among the traders, if we difference it on the grounds of social stratification, which was discussed above in the types. The financial part was dominated by Hindu and Jain merchants while the trading and commercial part was done mainly by Muslim and Armenian merchants. Muslims was less prone to credit and trading commerce because of the *quranic* and *hadis* laws, this allowed the non-Muslims sedentary merchants, urban notables and others to make effective use of these arrangements by investing their surplus capital with travelling merchants, and thereby enjoy the profit of long-distance trade by providing the capital necessary to finance it³⁸. The merchants of Patna were seen as shrewd and intelligent by the Europeans. The merchants were also well versed in various mercantile practices. These merchants have different codes of manual signs known to all broker and merchants for every transaction. These signs were simple, distinctive and mistakes were extremely rare.

The merchants living in Patna or coming from outside Patna believed in long distance trade, they did not sell all their products in Patna, but tried to carried them Agra and Lahore presumably to gain higher profits. The merchants of Patna were purely inclined towards profit and adopted every way to enhance their commerce. They never restricted themselves from conducting business with other groups even when acting as an agent of a particular group. The business and mercantile trade in Patna made this city as a centre for business groups and traders to play their business as well as it also supports the strong reason, to be called the manufacturing hub of East due to that much presence of merchant class.

Patna city have specialised markets with the provisions of speciality with *bazaars and haats*. The smooth functioning of these markets is totally dependent on the well-knit system coinage, weights and measures system. Mughalia system of measurement and weight is advanced that time as much that, it is practiced now a days in many homes. The main unit of measurement was *gaj*, divided into twenty-four parts, each of which was equal to eight barley corns placed together by breadth. Another was the scale of weights, which was there as one maunds is equal to forty *sers*. *Sers* is more than weigh of a modern kilogram. Nevertheless, the leading characteristic of weights, measurements and coinage used that time have diversity. Although there were official rates intended to maintain uniformity, but there were some rates variation seen if we compared province to province and region to region. The economic importance of city Patna can be confirmed because of presence of imperial mint in the city. The official recognition of all cash transactions in Patna were *rupiya*

³⁶D. Tripathi, *Business Communities of India; a Historical Prespective*, New Delhi, 1984 pp-45-72

³⁷W.Foster, ed, *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, 1985, New Delhi, Oriental Books, pp-18

³⁸Opcit

(rupee) and dam. The gold *mahur* was also there but, it has very less in circulation. Apart from minted siccas, kauris and *badam* (almonds) were also used by common men at the time of transactions³⁹.

The traders in Patna seems to be happy as they have all suitable measure whether political, social and economic to support their trade and commerce. Markets and the commercial equipment are well in established foam, and there was an atmosphere for the artisans and merchants to participate in all spheres of business.

Urbanisation and Meaning of Urbanity

Coming to the Indian medieval historiography, depending upon the functional hierarchy for categorisation of cities⁴⁰, Imperial capitals or primary urban centres occupies a major portion of study leaving behind the non-Imperial capitals, that is, regional and local urban centres unexplored to a greater extent particularly through the prism of urbanisation relating to different economic, social and political perceptions.

The definition of a City never remained constant depending highly upon the social, economic and political dynamics, present both intrinsically and extrinsically. While discussing on the different perceptions on the medieval towns, the foremost argument had been given by Max Weber who states that the western medieval towns were majorly centres of production rather than cities largely being centres of consumption in ancient Greek or Rome. He also states that these medieval towns became the launching pad for development of capitalism in the west and when they combined the process of production and exchange, gives an edge to producers and traders over the consumers. The urban dwellers, mentioned above, broke their dependence on the feudal authorities around them and usurped power from them to resort to non-legitimate domination by imposing themselves illegitimately on artisans and peasants, who in turn were required to depend upon them⁴¹. This atmosphere of autonomy of the city allowed rational economic action, free conduct of trade, as well as pursuit of gain, thereby, protecting the interest of producers and traders both in the domains of economy and in power exercise which was instrumental in the development of 'work ethic' in western medieval cities. One could see this as the medieval cities of west Europe advancing towards mercantilism based of theory of 'Laissez-faire'.

The role of medieval cities in the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism has been a debatable issue. Henri Pirenne argues that the long-distance trade facilitated the social change and with the commercial revival in Europe from eleventh century, the country started orienting itself towards towns. One could see the similar urbanisation goes in Indian subcontinent, beginning in the thirteenth century as an intrinsic progress in different economies of world. The argument of Maurice Dobb that the rise of medieval towns was a process, internal to the feudal system and it highlighted the incapability of feudal social relations to contain the process of petty production and exchange that feudalism itself generated⁴². It shows the limited availability of economic resources and strife among the different feudal groups for control of small-scale production and profits made from trade. As a result of mentioned factors producing an exploitative structure had initiated large scale rural migration into urban centres, facilitating potential labour force.

³⁹Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp-198

⁴⁰Chaudhari, K.N., "Some Reflections on the Town and Country in Mughal India", *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.12, no.1, pp-21

⁴¹Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp-02

⁴² Ibid pp-03

Henri Pirenne have identified two different categories of medieval towns depending upon its nature - (a) Liege type of towns and (b) Flemish towns. The Liege towns were primarily a political centre or ecclesiastical centre with very limited economic scope whereas the Flemish towns were generally economic centre, controlled mainly by wealthy oligarchy with a large-scale potentiality of economic activities. Fernand Braudel also gives three categories to medieval cities depending upon their course of evolution. Firstly, open towns which were not differentiated from their hinterland from their hinterland having fair amount of power remaining in the agrarian structures of countryside. Secondly, Closed towns which were self-sufficient in units in terms of power sharing and was close diverseness, facilitating a different of way living compared to that of territories. In the case of these towns the moment a peasant fleeing from the seigniorial servitude and entered the walled space of the town, he was relieved of his servitude, became free and the seigniorial lord could not touch him. And thirdly, that of subject towns where under the absolute authority of state and used as capitals generally. Another distinction between the towns and the countryside could be made on the basis of nature of division of labour where one could find egalitarian outlook in the case of former⁴³.

There has a new trend to look medieval towns from perspectives of cultural formation where one shall study the participation of different communities in economic activities, their interaction with the alien culture, the formation of plural societies, different form of loyalties and affiliations. Modern scholars believe that the spatial process plays an important role in the urbanization. They considered the space being intentionally charged with the different meanings of power and domination. Henri Lefebvre mentions about three aspects of production of space working simultaneously, (a) perceived- physically present and materialistic which could be seen as what kind of terrain the urban centres poses with which human interacts and determines the power system there, (b) conceived- mental process and abstract plans which is related to the mental processes going among the urban communities, foreigners and countryside people interacting at the urban centre, and (c) 'Spaces of Representation' which meant the actual experience gained by the people dwelling in that centre⁴⁴. Together these three aspects form a complex system of urbanization involving the physical structures, ideology and aspect of practicality. Hence it shows that spaces are conflict zones which individuals and groups seek to control over whole power structure.

One section of historians and sociologists believes that demography, geography, technology and social structure determine the whole course of urbanization. Any technological innovation brings changes in the social structure such as emergence of new class and organisations and specialization based on the former. The social dynamics drive the changes in population structure such as different settlement patterns depending upon the level of stratification of the society which at last changes the landscape of that region. It is on the above notion that Irfan Habib criticizes his father Mohammad Habib on the concept of 'Urban Revolution' with regard to the labour process and the nature of emergence of urban centres⁴⁵. Irfan Habib based his arguments on technological innovations being the primary reason for the expansion of urban economy and population increase. But Irfan Habib is too optimistic of economic outlook that he pays very less attention to his father's view of social mobility if we see this in the context of existing social structure in general and caste system in particular. Certain scholars also consider long distance trade as a factor for emergence of new urban centres particularly in the north and north-west India. While going towards south, we find a certain

⁴³Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp- 12

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵Irfan Habib, *Medieval India: The Story of Civilizations*, New Delhi, pp-42-56

dissimilarity in case of emergence of urban centres. The city of Madurai and Tanjavur are classic examples of temple urbanisation where different occupational structures and settlement patterns in and around temples. In the Chola period, we find that the different mercantile guilds played important role in letting settle towns in port areas while promoting the maritime trade.

Hence, if we can see, majorly, two types of urbanism in the medieval period in India, firstly commercial based urbanism and secondly polity-based urbanism. Delhi, Agra, Golconda, Bijapur and others could be considered examples of the polity-based urbanism whereas Burhanpur, Patna, Ahmadabad, Multan and others for commercial based urbanism. But the third and somehow an undermined aspect is religion-based urbanism may exist in different forms. The classic examples are Benaras, Madurai, Tanjavur and others.

The great civilizations of the past originated and evolved for the greater part alongside rivers can be explained by the fact that water courses provide more practicable access for communication and exchanges than the land routes. River Ganges and its tributaries made Patliputra a *Jaladurga* or water fort and an important administrative capital, financial and commercial hub and also the cultural centre of the region⁴⁶. The river of Patna and its hinterland provided wide avenues of settlements populated with peasants, artisans, merchants, rulers. Along with that the city experiences three seasons in year. The summer months are intensely hot while the winter is temperate. The rains continue during six months and through the year the country is green and fertile.⁴⁷ This temperature also suit the urbanisation in Patna in greater say, because climate and topography plays a vital role in the establishment of urban centres.

In concluding para, I want to rewind the essentialities required for making Patna as urbanised town and commercial hub. The socio-economic platform, the support of satellite or hinterland area, cheap work force and the rising demand from the world summed this centre an urbanised and commercised one, from the second cycle of Urbanisation to the medieval time.

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⁴⁶Yogesh Sharma and Malekandathil, (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014. Pp-182

⁴⁷Abul Fazal, *Ain-i-Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, vol. I, Calcutta, 1872; trans., H. S. Jarret, vol. II, Calcutta, 1891, connoted and ed., J. N. Sarkar, reprint, Delhi 1989 pp-163

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