



1. What are the problems in using the Ain as a source for reconstructing agrarian history? How do historians deal with this situation?

Ans:

- (a) The Ain-i Akbari written by Abu'l Fazl in 1598 contains invaluable information for reconstructing the agrarian history of the Mughals. But it has its own limitations.
- (b) Numerous errors in totalling have been detected. These are, however, minors and do not detract from the overall quantitative accuracy of the manuals.
- (c) Another limitation is the skewed nature of the data. Data was not collected uniformly from all provinces. For example, Abu'l Fazl has not given any description regarding the caste composition of the zamindars of Bengal and Orissa (Odisha).
- (d) The fiscal data collected from various sources is in detail yet some important parameters such as, wages and prices have not been incorporated properly.
- (e) The detailed list of prices and wages found in the Ain-i Akbari have been acquired from data pertaining to the capital Agra and its surrounding regions. It is, therefore, of limited value for the rest of the empire.
- (f) Historians have dealt with the situation by supplementing the account of the Ain by information got from the provinces. These include detailed seventeenth- eighteenth centuries revenue records from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. These have been also supplemented by records of the East India Company.

2. To what extent is it possible to characterise agricultural production in the sixteenth- seventeenth centuries as subsistence agriculture? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans:

- (a) During Mughal, India was basically an agricultural country. In the Mughal state of India a different varieties of crops were produced. In Bengal two varieties of rices were produced. But the focus on the cultivation of basic crops does not mean that only subsistence agriculture existed in medieval India.
- (b) The Mughal state encouraged peasants to cultivate varieties of crops which brought in revenue especially cotton and sugarcane.
- (c) Cotton was mainly grown in vast area which was spread over central India and the deccan plateau, whereas in Bengal sugarcane was mainly produced.
- (d) Many varieties of cash crops such as oilseeds including mustard and lentils.
- (e) An average peasant of that time grew both commercial and subsistence crops.

3. Describe the role played by women in agricultural production.

- Ans: (a) Women played an important role in agricultural production. They worked shoulder to shoulder with men in the fields. The men tilled and ploughed the lands while the women sowed, weeded and threshed the harvest. Agricultural production at the time was carried out with the labour and resources of the entire.
- (b) The women performed important tasks such as spinning yarn, kneading clay for pottery and embroidery. Thus, the peasant women who were skilled artisans worked not only in the fields but

even went to their employer's houses and even to the markets, if necessary.

(c) Among the landed gentry class women had the right to inherit property. Women, including widows participated in the rural land market. Selling property which they had inherited especially in Punjab.

(d) Both Hindu and Muslim women inherited zamindaris. They were free to sell or mortgage their zamindari rights. In eighteenth century, Bengal had many women- zamindars. In fact, the Rajshah zamindari which was one of the most famous of the time was headed by a woman.

4. Discuss, with examples, the significance of monetary transactions during the period under consideration.

Ans:

(i) The political stability provided by the Mughal helped in establishing hoarsening trade relation with Ming (china), Safavid (Iran) and Ottoman (Turkey) empires. It led to increase in outland trade from China to the Mediterranean Sea.

(ii) The Discovery of new lands and sea routes also gave an impetus to Asia's trade with Europe. As a result enormous amount of silver entered India as payment for goods bought from India.

(iii) Jovanni Karari, an Italian traveller, who passed through India in 1690 has written how the silver reached India from all parts of the world. From his description, we also came to know how there was an exchange of cash and goods in India in the 17th century.

(iv) This benefitted India as she did not have enough resources of silver. Therefore, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries there was sufficient reserves of silver in India and the silver rupya was available readily.

(v) The mutual exchange in villages took place. As villagers established their links in the urban markets, there was a considerable increase in monetary transactions. In this way, villages became an important part of the monetary market.

(vi) It was due to the monetary transactions, became easier to pay daily wages to the labourers in cash and not in kind. This resulted in an unprecedented expansion in the minting of coins and circulation of money allowing the Mughal state to extract taxes and revenues in cash.

5. Examine the evidence that suggests that land revenue was important for the Mughal fiscal system.

Ans:

(i) Agriculture was the mainstay of the economy. Land Revenue collected was used to pay salaries and to meet different kinds of administrative expenses. So it was considered important to establish an administrative apparatus to ensure control over agricultural production.

(ii) Thus, before fixing land revenue, Mughal state first acquired specific information about the extent of agricultural lands and their produce.

(iii) Land revenue collection arrangements was consisted of two stages of assessment. These were Jama and hasil. Cultivators were given the choice to pay land revenue either in cash or kind. The state preferred to collect land revenue as cash. Attempts were made to maximize profits from the land revenue collection.

(iv) Both cultivated and cultivable lands were measured in each province to fix land revenue. According to a decree of Akbar, it was the responsibility of malguzar to make cultivator pay land revenue in kind and it was also kept open. Thus, it is clear from the evidence that the monetary transactions were very important. To continue this policy efforts by subsequent emperors like Aurangzeb continued to measure land for collection of land revenue.

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