



# Peasants And Their Role In The Economic Development Of Mughal Empire

Ajaz Ahmed<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Tabish Hashmi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Research Scholar Department of History, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab

Email ID: ajazmalik7723@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor Department of History, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab

Email ID: Tabish\_hashmi@rediffmail.com

**Citation:** Ajaz Ahmed et al. (2023) Peasants And Their Role In The Economic Development Of Mughal Empire

*Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(4), 6405-6408, Doi:10.53555/kuey.v30i4.2396

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

The Mughal Empire, which lasted from the 16th through the 19th century, had enormous economic growth and expansion during that time period. Peasants played an essential part in the growth of the Mughal Empire's economy, despite the fact that the Mughal Empire was characterized by a highly organized and hierarchical structure.<sup>1</sup> This fact is one that simply cannot be ignored. peasants played in the expansion of the Mughal Empire's economy. It focuses on the contributions that peasants made, the difficulties they overcame, and the influence that they had on the success of the empire as a whole. Agriculture was the primary occupation for the vast majority of the Mughal Empire's populace, who worked as peasants and made up the bulk of the population. Via the cultivation of the land, the production of food, and the generation of money through agricultural surpluses, they were an essential component in the maintenance of the economy of the empire. Peasants were responsible for cultivating a wide variety of crops, including wheat, rice, barley, and cotton, which were essential for both internal consumption and commerce both inside and beyond the limits of the empire.

**Keywords:** Peasants, Economic development, Mughal Empire, Agriculture, Revenue generation, Taxation

## Introduction

The Mughal Empire, which lasted for more than three centuries, is evidence of the splendour and economic wealth that once prevailed in the Indian subcontinent. This empire serves as a tribute to this. The peasants were a group that was sometimes disregarded despite the fact that they were an essential component in the complex tapestry that was the empire's centralised authority and hierarchical structure. This group was responsible for a significant portion of the empire's economic growth. Peasants made up the vast bulk of the people in the Mughal Empire. Furthermore, their contributions were essential to the continuation of the economy of the empire. Peasants were known as the "backbone of agricultural output." This article investigates the diverse role that peasants had in the economic fabric of the Mughal Empire. It sheds light on the agricultural activities that peasants engaged in, the problems they faced, and the long-lasting influence that peasants had on the general prosperity of the empire. The agricultural endeavours of the Mughal Empire's peasants were a significant contributor to the empire's overall economic success. The Mughal Empire was distinguished by its wide geographical breadth and rich cultural tapestry. These diligent people were given the task of cultivating the land, creating food surpluses, and contributing to the income of the empire via agricultural productivity in order to earn their keep. Peasants worked diligently across the empire's fertile plains to cultivate a wide variety of crops, including wheat, rice, barley, and cotton. These crops not only supplied the growing population of the empire with the food they needed to survive, but they also fuelled the empire's internal and external trade networks.

Agriculture was considered to be of utmost significance by the Mughal monarchs, and as a result, they instituted many programmes designed to increase agricultural output. They implemented cutting-edge agricultural practises, fostered the building of irrigation systems, and invested in essential infrastructure like

<sup>1</sup>Habib, Irfan. The Agrarian System of Mughal India: 1556-1707. Oxford University Press, 1999

as canals and wells. In addition, the empire was able to maintain a well-defined system for the collection of income, which required the peasants to pay taxes equal to a part of their agricultural output.<sup>2</sup> This money was very necessary in order to finance the administrative and military activities of the empire, which allowed it to keep its stability and continue to extend its sphere of influence. The Mughal Empire's peasants faced many obstacles on their way to economic development, but ultimately, they were successful. In many cases, severe challenges were presented in the form of heavy tax burdens imposed by local authorities and unpredictable weather conditions, which may range anywhere from debilitating droughts to deadly floods. Many peasants were driven into cycles of debt as a result of these difficulties, which drove them to engage in sharecropping or even sell their family estates in order to survive. The peasants persisted despite these challenges, and as a result, they continued to make significant contributions to the expansion of the empire's economy and maintained the viability of the agricultural sector. It is impossible to overstate the contribution that the common people of the Mughal Empire made to the expansion of the empire's economy. They did this by engaging in agricultural pursuits, which not only ensured that there was a consistent supply of food available for the expanding population, but also kept the huge commerce networks that cut throughout the empire functioning. The excess agricultural output allowed for healthy commerce on both the domestic and foreign fronts, which in turn increased the empire's income and propelled the growth of the economy. In addition, the income that was created as a result of this agricultural success was used to fund ambitious infrastructure projects, aided in the rise of urban areas, and eventually contributed to the general prosperity and splendour of the empire. The role that the peasants of the Mughal Empire played in the expansion of the empire's economy was critical and game-changing. Their unflinching dedication to agricultural output, in spite of the many obstacles they faced, contributed to the maintenance of the empire's economy, ensured the empire's food security, and helped build trade networks that extended to every corner of the empire. It is possible for us to gain a better understanding of the complexities of economic development if we acknowledge the profound impact that peasants had on historical societies. At the same time, it is important to highlight the significant role that agriculture played in forming the splendour of the Mughal Empire.

### **Peasants as Agricultural Producers:**

The economic growth and prosperity of the broad and successful Mughal Empire were primarily reliant on the agricultural expertise of its peasants.<sup>3</sup> The empire was named after the Mughal emperor, Muhammad Ghazni. Peasants were a vital component of the economy of the empire because of their position as agricultural producers. They were responsible for cultivating the rich regions and guaranteeing a consistent supply of key foodstuffs. This section dives into the significant role that peasants had as agricultural producers in the Mughal Empire. It emphasises the contributions that peasants made to maintaining the empire's food supply, fuelling commerce, and establishing the groundwork for economic expansion. In the time of the Mughal Empire, the bulk of the population consisted of peasants who lived in rural regions. These peasants comprised the peasant class. They were the knowledgeable farmers who tilled the ground, planted seeds, and harvested the crop at the end of the growing season. Peasants worked tirelessly to secure the production of a wide variety of crops, which served as the economic foundation of the empire thanks to their contributions in the agricultural sector. These diligent people grew a wide variety of crops, including wheat, rice, barley, and cotton, but their primary focus was on cereal grains. The peasants' agricultural operations were not restricted to just providing enough food for the local people to fulfil their subsistence requirements. Their overabundance of output was an important factor in the maintenance of the expanding urban centres and in the upkeep of the wide trade networks that the empire maintained. The excess harvests were essential for commerce inside the empire and served as important commodities in international trade, which helped to build economic relations with surrounding areas and farther afield.

### **Food Security and Peasants' Role:**

Food security, which encompasses the availability, accessibility, and consumption of food, was an essential component of the Mughal Empire's economic growth throughout its history. Through their work in agriculture, peasants were an integral part of the Roman Empire's effort to maintain a sufficient supply of food for its population. This section covers the peasants' contributions to the empire's stability, as well as the significance that their work plays in the general well-being of the people who live there, as well as the function that ensuring food security plays in their lives. In their role as agricultural producers, peasants were the Mughal Empire's most important contributor to the nation's supply of food.<sup>4</sup> Their hard work and ability in agricultural cultivation were essential in ensuring that a reliable food supply could be maintained for the ever-increasing population of the empire. Peasants, via their labour, were responsible for cultivating a wide variety of crops,

<sup>2</sup>Asher, Catherine B., and Cynthia Talbot. *India Before Europe*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>3</sup>Metcalfe, Thomas R. *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*. University of California Press, 1989.

<sup>4</sup>Chaudhuri, K. N. *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.

including as wheat, rice, barley, and pulses, which were used to provide the basis for the cuisine of the empire. The excess agricultural productivity of peasants was an essential factor in reducing the likelihood of food shortages and famines occurring during this time period. Peasants made significant contributions to the food security and stability of the empire by their continuous production of sufficient quantities of food to fulfil the expanding needs of the people. The excess agricultural reserves served as a buffer during times of food shortage or interruptions in supply, ensuring that the people continued to have access to a sufficient food supply regardless of the circumstances.

### **Impact on Economic Prosperity:**

The contribution of the common people, or peasants, to the economic success of the Mughal Empire was enormous. Their work as farmers had a major effect on the expansion of the empire's economy. This section delves into the different ways in which peasants contributed to the empire's economic success via their farming, taxation, and promotion of trade and commerce.

- **Revenue Generation from Agricultural Surpluses:** The surpluses produced by the Mughal Empire's peasant farmers were crucial to the empire's ability to generate income. The imperial government instituted a tax system that forced farmers to fork over a percentage of their harvest to the government. These levies brought in enough money to pay for the empire's government, military, and infrastructure needs as well as fuel economic expansion.
- **Commerce:** The Mughal Empire's economy was driven by the excess agricultural products of its peasant farmers. The widespread production of food paved the way for strong local economies and extensive international trade links. The empire grew into a hub of commerce, bringing buyers and sellers together from all over the world. The peasants' contributions to agricultural surpluses aided in the development of commercial hubs and the Empire's general prosperity.
- **The peasants' extra agricultural income** was used toward building roads, bridges, hospitals, and other necessities.<sup>5</sup> Mughal investments in canals, wells, and other forms of irrigation increased agricultural output and widened the area that could be farmed. The money also helped build bridges, roads, and markets, all of which boosted commerce and therefore the economy.
- **Growth of Cities:** The Mughal Empire's urban centres owe a great deal to the peasants' agricultural efforts. Food security in the growing cities was ensured by the peasants' excess production. As a result, commerce, handicraft industries, and other urban economic activities flourished, and city dwellers became richer.
- **Opportunities for Gainful Employment** Many segments of society were able to find gainful employment thanks to the agricultural efforts of peasants. Agricultural labourers, craftspeople, and those in related service industries all found work due to the sector's need for human labour. This not only sustained families financially, but it also sparked new business and boosted the empire's economy.

### **Legacy and Significance of Peasants in Mughal Empire's Economy:**

Mughal economic growth and expansion were inextricably linked to the contributions of the empire's peasantry. Their enormous impact on the empire's economy as farmers and tax collectors is still being felt today. Peasants were crucial in the development of the Mughal Empire's agricultural techniques, trade networks, social stability, and economics, all of which are discussed in this section.

- When it came to agricultural advancements, the peasants of the Mughal Empire were far ahead of their time. They were so skilled at farming that their innovations in irrigation systems, crop rotation, and other farming methods are still in use thousands of years after the fall of their kingdom. Long-term agricultural production and growth in the area owe much to the impact of these developments.
- The Mughal Empire's trade and commerce was propelled in large part by the efforts of its peasantry. The empire's internal trade networks relied on their excess agricultural output, which also helped promote foreign trade links. The excess harvests generated by peasants were largely responsible for the empire's status as an economic hub and its importance in world commerce.
- **Influence on the Economy:** Peasants Played a Crucial Role in the Expansion and Prosperity of the Empire. Taxes on agricultural goods were an important source of revenue for the Mughal Empire, allowing its leaders to fund massive construction projects, keep up a formidable military, and foster economic growth.<sup>6</sup> The fiscal strategies and economic objectives of the empire owed a great deal on the peasants' economic input.
- **Maintaining social order** across the empire was directly tied to the peasants' efforts to secure a reliable food supply and reduce the likelihood of widespread famine. Peasants helped keep the peace and prosperity of society in check by producing more food than they needed. Their attempts to ensure food security had a significant effect on the empire's stability and unity.

<sup>5</sup>Kumar, Ravi. *The World of the Indian Peasants: A Historical Survey*. Manohar Publishers, 2005.

<sup>6</sup>Bayly, C. A. *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*. Cambridge University Press, 1983.

- Culturally and historically significant, Mughal peasants played a pivotal role in the development of the empire's society and culture. A symbol of the empire's agricultural roots for good reason, these people have deep roots in the soil, strong family connections to farming, and a can-do attitude in the face of adversity. Literature, art, and historical sources testify to the importance of peasants' contributions and experiences in defining the economic and social dynamics of the Mughal Empire.

### Conclusion:

The Mughal Empire's economic growth was largely due to the contributions of its peasantry population. They cultivated crops and produced agricultural surpluses, which maintained the food supply, supported trade networks, and promoted economic expansion. As agricultural producers, they were the backbone of the empire's economy. Their efforts were critical to the health and prosperity of the empire as a whole. As a result of the peasants' contributions to agriculture, the expanding population was able to maintain a consistent supply of food, which helped to maintain social order and avoid widespread starvation<sup>7</sup>. Their overabundant output facilitated trade and commerce not only inside the empire but also beyond its borders, which contributed to the integration of the regional economy as a whole. The money that was created from agricultural operations carried out by peasants supplied the essential cash that were required to finance infrastructure projects, build irrigation systems, and sustain the administrative and military requirements of the empire. The peasants had to contend with a number of difficulties, such as the burden of high taxes, the unpredictability of the weather, and the possibility of falling into debt. In spite of these challenges, they were resilient and remained committed to agriculture, which enabled them to continue playing an essential part in the economic growth of the empire. The legacy that peasants left behind and the importance they held in the economy of the Mughal Empire go far beyond the contributions they made in the here and now. Their farming techniques, agricultural advances, and the continuing cultural value of their contributions continue to impact the agricultural history of the area. The succeeding farming techniques, trading networks, and the socioeconomic fabric of the area are all visible manifestations of the peasants' influence on the region. We are better able to understand the intricacies of ancient civilizations and the connection between agriculture, commerce, and government as a result of the significant contribution that peasants made to the economic growth of the Mughal Empire. The success and magnificence of the Mughal Empire were directly attributable to the conscientious work of the empire's peasants. Their efforts provided the groundwork for economic expansion, cultural resilience, and stability, leaving a mark on the heritage of the empire that will last for generations to come.

### Bibliography

1. Habib, Irfan. *The Agrarian System of Mughal India: 1556-1707*. Oxford University Press, 1999.
2. Asher, Catherine B., and Cynthia Talbot. *India Before Europe*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
3. Metcalf, Thomas R. *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*. University of California Press, 1989.
4. Chaudhuri, K. N. *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
5. Kumar, Ravi. *The World of the Indian Peasants: A Historical Survey*. Manohar Publishers, 2005.
6. Bayly, C. A. *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*. Cambridge University Press, 1983.
7. Bose, Sugata, and Ayesha Jalal. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*. Routledge, 2017.
8. Stein, Burton. *A History of India*. John Wiley & Sons, 1998.
9. Alam, Muzaffar, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
10. Habib, Irfan, and Jill Flanders Crosby. *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500-1650*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

---

<sup>7</sup>Bose, Sugata, and Ayesha Jalal. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*. Routledge, 2017.