UNIT 17 CITIES IN THE 18TH CENTURY-1*

Structure

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17.1 INTRODUCTION

A reassessment of the 18th century, earlier posed as the 'Dark Age', has been one of the most significant developments in South Asian history. In the light of this re-evaluation, the decline of imperial Mughal authority is no longer a conceptually adequate marker to explain developments in different parts of the subcontinent. Indeed, many of the Indian towns emerged around the seats of Mughal government and the Mughal patronage led to the expansion of many Indian towns. However, as scholars like C.A. Bayly, P.J. Marshall and Kumkum Chatterjee have highlighted, eighteenth century was a period of fluidity, one that witnessed marked developments, continuities and re-adjustments in regional centers.

This Unit focuses on the nature of this transformation in four Indian towns – Dacca, Patna, Ahmadabad and Bangalore – that stood as prominent manufacturing centers during the 18th century. The Unit traces the traditional importance of these towns as manufacturers of specialised goods, their growth with Mughal patronage and the elasticity and adjustments of their order during the pre-colonial (upto 1750s) and the beginning of colonial era (1750s) over the course of the 18th century.

17.2 DACCA

Dacca, now officially known as Dhaka and currently the capital city and a district and division of Bangladesh, was a prominent manufacturing town of India in the 18th century. The town has a long history of evolution. In 1905, Bengal was partitioned into two zones by the British and upon this partition, from 1905-1911, Dacca became the capital of the province of East Bengal. Prior to the formation of Bangladesh as an independent country in 1971, from 1947-1971, Bangladesh formed the East zone of Pakistan and before the partition of India in 1947, Dacca was a part of the province of Bengal in India.

17.2.1 Early Developments

Dacca is located on the north banks of the river Buri Ganga, a tributary of the river Dhalswari. The city is said to have derived its name from the Dhak tree (*Butea Frandosa)* which grew densely in the region in former times. However, according to a popular legend, Dacca received its name after an idol of Goddess Durga was found concealed in its jungles.

According to the excavations at Wari-Bateswar of Dacca region, the history of Dacca can be traced back to the Mauryan era when the site seems to have functioned as a prominent commercial centre of textiles. Roman historian Pliny (d. 113 CE) also noted the presence of Dacca's textiles in the Mediterranean trade as early as 73 CE. (Milburn,

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1813: 229). Similarly, records from the seventh century CE reveal that the region served as a flourishing market centre under the dominion of the Buddhist Kingdom of Kamarupa. (Chakrabarti, 2013: 163) The commercial viability of the region continued under the successive rule of the Pala and the Sena Kings, the Delhi Sultanate, the independent sultans of Bengal and the rulers of various local dynasties.

Dacca was particularly famous for its silk and fine cotton known as muslin. The word 'muslin' is said to have been derived and received popularity from the 13th century travelogue, *The Travels of Marco Polo* of the Venetian traveller Marco Polo who used the term to describe the famous cotton trade in the region of Mosul, Iraq. The Bengali term for Muslin is 'Mul Mul'. Muslin produced in Dacca was unrivalled in its beauty and its fine texture rendered it as a popular product for trade and a favourite with the wealthy and the elite class.

Woven out of Air! Process of Muslin Production

The production process for Dacca Muslin was very unique. The cotton plant for producing muslin, known as *phuti karpas* (*Gossypium arboreum var. neglecta*) was unique to the area and only grew in a tract of land that was twelve miles southeast of Dacca, along the banks of the Meghna River. Its fibres were the silkiest of all. To obtain the fibre, the seeds of the plant were carefully selected, dried in the sun and then sealed in earthen pots filled with clarified butter (*ghee*). These pots were hung from the ceiling over the kitchen fire to keep them moderately warm after which a special small-sized bamboo bow (*dhunkar*) was used in a particular fashion mostly by women- for want of a lighter touch- to strum the pots and upon the touch of the bow, the lightest fleece from the cotton separated from the heavier fibres and rose into the air. These delicate and lightest fibres were spun in intensely humid conditions, usually by young women, most likely because the work required soft and supple fingers, to make the finest muslin. The total number of implements used in forming the finest of Dhaka muslin amounted to 126. Younger women with soft and supple fingers were considered to be the best spinners of the fine material. Owing to their fine texture and distinct method of production, Dacca muslin were popularly said to have been woven out of air!

Source: Taylor, 1851: 165-169,173-175

17.2.2 The Seventeenth Century Developments

While Dacca's importance as a producer of textiles, specifically the muslin, was established since the early times, the evolution of the town as a major urban and trade centre primarily began under the dominion of the Mughal dynasty. The Mughals conquered Bengal in 1574 under the military leadership of Munim Khan and upon this victory, Dacca was converted into a *thâna* or military outpost, on the far eastern frontier of the Mughal territory. The status as a Mughal *thana* set the initial stage for the growth of the city as it brought with it an influx of Mughal officials into it. However, in the initial phase, Mughal imperial authority remained precarious in the region and as a result, in 1584, Dacca's *thanadar* (military administrator) was captured and imprisoned by a local Bengali Muslim chieftain named Isa Khan. In the face of such ongoing contests in the region, Mughal *mansabdar* Raja Man Singh directed his attention to Dacca, making it as the centre of his military operations in the east, and between 1599 and 1603, Man Singh was successful in reducing a large part of the contesting forces in the region. Despite that, the attacks by the Afghan chieftains did not cease throughout the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar (r.1556-1605) and it was only in the reign of his successor, Jahangir (r.1605-27) that the Mughals were successful in establishing a regular and firm administration in Dacca, as in the rest of Bengal.

The credit for establishing a firm Mughal control in the seventeenth century in Dacca is primarily owed to the efforts of Jahangir's able military commander and foster brother, Ala al-Din Islam Khan, who, over the course of 1608-1609, subdued the rebellious chieftains on both sides of the Ganges-Padma river system and in 1612 made Dacca as the capital of the *suba* (province) Bengal of the Mughal Empire (Gommans, 2002: 179). The decision to choose Dacca was based on its historical importance because since the mid-fifteenth century, Dacca had served as a military outpost of Muslim settlers (Eaton, 1993: 149). Once announced as the capital, the town was embellished with new palaces, new forts, new roads and canals and Dacca was officially renamed after the reigning Mughal Emperor

as 'Jahangirnagar', although the royal name did not gain much prominence over its popular traditional name.

Dacca witnessed significant growth not only under the command of Islam Khan who governed the city only briefly, dying in office in 1613 but the town witnessed steady economic growth even under the supervision of Islam's succeeding eight *subahdars.* There was however a short period of halt in the position of Dacca as when in 1641**,** Mughal Emperor Shahjahan (1616-61) appointed Prince Shuja (1639-59) as the *subahdar* (governor) of Bengal the latter preferred to shift the capital from Dacca to Rajmahal. This shift lasted for about two decades because after the war of succession among the sons of Shahjahan, Shuja fled to Arakan (Burma), and the next *subahdar* of Bengal, Mir Jumla (tenure 1660-1663) again made Dacca the headquarters in 1660.

Despite the period of interlude in its status as a capital, from the seventeenth to the early eighteenth century, the Mughal authority in Dacca led the transformation of the vast stretches of eastern delta into arable land while simultaneously resulting in the integration of diverse masses into its social and bureaucratic fabric. This development is most apparent from the account of Fray Sebastiao Manrique who visited Dacca in 1640 and described it as a "Gangetic emporium," with a population of over two hundred thousand (Manrique, Vol. 1: 45). Manrique was particularly impressed with the wealth of the city about which he wrote:

> Many strange nations, resort to this city on account of its vast trade and commerce in a great variety of commodities, which are produced in profusion in the rich and fertile lands of this region. These have raised the city to an eminence of wealth which is actually stupefying, especially when one sees and considers the large quantities of money which lie principally in the houses of the Cataris [Khatri], in such quantities indeed that, being difficult to count, it is usual commonly to be weighed (Manrique, Vol. 1: 44).

Moreover, a comparison of Manrique's account with that of Mirza Nathan's early seventeenth century *Baharistan* reveals that over the course of thirty years (from 1610-1640) Dacca had expanded to almost double its initial geographical area. (Ray, 2015: 481). This growth was however concentrated in the middle portion of the city and was furthered only during the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) when the town was extended towards the north. To fix its northern boundary at that time, the then *subahdar* Mir Jumla constructed a gateway which was later called the Ramna Darwaja and is now popular by the name of the Dhaka Gate.

Ramna Darwaja, Photo by Prabir Das

Source: http://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/heritage/the-forgotten-history-dhaka-gate 1362220

Alongside the expansion in its area, Mughal authority also provided impetus to the traditional textile industry of Dacca. The boost to the industry was facilitated by two important factors: one, the growth in the population of the city which included increase in both, a consumer class – primarily including the elites and the Mughal administrative clique – and the workforce – comprising the artisans, manufacturers and other professional groups – who followed the work opportunities created by the influx of a consumer class in Dacca. The second significant factor was the imperial patronage to textiles. In the seventeenth century, the Mughals established several *karkhanas* (workshops) in Dacca to particularly facilitate the production of muslins of varying quality. Such *karkhanas* were supervised by designated royal officers and a special officer titled *Daroga-i-Malbus Khas* was dedicated to meet the needs of the royalty for *malbus khas* which was the finest assortment among the muslin brands. The production of muslins also acquired special sponsorship from Mughal Empress Nur Jahan and the popularity of the fabric rose to such extent, that in the seventeenth century, no gift from 'Jahangirnagar' to the emperor and his nobles were deemed worthy without the muslin from Dacca. (Islam, 2008:3)

In addition to meeting the demands of the Imperial court at Delhi and the nobility at Dacca, the demands of other aristocracies of North Indian provinces for muslins were almost entirely catered by Dacca weavers during the seventeenth century and muslin came to be recognised by all contemporary royalties and nobilities with the place name 'Dacca' which was always tagged with it. The 'Dacca' tag actually enveloped the textiles produced from all the other centres in eastern Bengal as well (such as Sonargaon and Vikrampur) because the products from all such production centres found their way out to the outside world through Dacca – the entrepot of eastern Bengal. In fact, a seemingly significant reason for the Mughal interest in Dacca was its well connectedness with the Padma-Ganges river system and the older seats of Muslim power in the Gaur-Tanda region which made Dacca an ideal port for riverine trade between East and West Bengal, between Bengal and Upper India, and between Bengal and the wider world beyond the bay.

With the opening of the sea lanes in the seventeenth century, Mughal initiatives in Dacca came to coincide with the growth of overseas commercial interests of European powers in the region. An important role in this regard was played by Mughal *subahdar* Shaista Khan (tenure, 1663-1668) who signed several trade treaties with the Europeans and the South East Asians during his *subahdari*, thus providing impetus to foreign trade in the region.. As a result, in the seventeenth century, several foreign merchants including those from Arabia, Persia, Armenia, China, Malaya, Java and Sumatra found their way to Dacca and in 1663, the Dutch set up their *kuthi* or trading post at Dacca, in 1669 the English and the French in 1682. By the end of the seventeenth century, Dacca was thus integrated into two cosmopolitan and political economies, the Mughal and the European.

17.2.3 The Eighteenth Century Dacca

The eighteenth century opened with a shift in the political status and stability in Dacca. At that time, one of the sons of Bahadur Shah I (1643-1712) and grandsons of Aurangzeb, Prince Azim us-Shan Bahadur was administrating Dacca as its *subahdar*. While in 1701, Aurangzeb (1618-1707) appointed Muhammad Hadi as the *diwan* (revenue officer) of Bengal. As a *diwan*, Muhammad Hadi was the supreme head of the revenue administration in the province and in 1707 he also received the position of a deputy *subahdar* of Bengal. With his assigned powers, Muhammad Hadi reported certain disruptions in the treasury of Dacca to the Emperor, upon which, he entered into a conflict with Azim us-Shan and owing to the friction between the two, both officers were shifted from their offices from Dacca – the chief *subahdar* to Patna (see next section for details) and the *diwan* to Maksudabad, which was later renamed as Murshidabad (see **Unit 18** for details). Dacca however continued to be the seat of the deputies of the *subahdars* till 1715-16, when Muhammad Hadi, by then conferred with the titular name of Murshid Quli Jafar Khan, was appointed as its chief *subahdar*, the status more popularly called *nazim* during the eighteenth century.

Murshid Quli's ascendancy to the position of *nazim* coincided with the waning of the Mughal imperial authority and around 1717, he assumed power as the first de facto autonomous ruler of Bengal. The autonomous control of independent rulers in Bengal remained

so till it came under the British control in 1757. However, from the beginning of his rule, Murshid Quli Khan, governed the province of Bengal from Murshidabad and Dacca came to serve as the seat of *naib-nazim* (deputy *nazim* or deputy *subahdar*). Dacca retained this status till 1843 when the office of *naib-nazim* was ultimately abolished by the British authorities.

The shift in its status as the provincial capital in 18th century put an end to further geographical growth in Dacca. This, however, did not affect the commercial importance of the city, primarily because all European trading companies and private traders kept their investments intact in Dacca. Secondly, even while many master weavers left Dacca for Murshidabad, from where they could be closer to the power base, many weavers chose to stay back since the high quality cotton production was linked to cotton grown in Sonargaon and Vikrampur which lay in proximity to Dacca. Moreover, an important characteristic of the cotton industry in Bengal was that most of the weavers worked as peasants at the same time. So when the transition of 18th century led to the transfer of certain sections of weavers from the city, many of its peasants took to weaving and thereby compensated for the worforce required to meet the expanding foreign demand for textiles from Dacca. Robert Orme, an eighteenth century East India company official and writer, clearly observed this phenomenon as he noted "in the province of Bengal, when at some distance from the high road or a principal town, it is difficult to find a village in which everyman, woman and child is not employed in making a piece of cloth" (Orme, 1978: 151). Clearly so, despite the migration of a section of weavers, there was still no paucity of textile producers in eighteenth century Dacca.

Third, the money circulation remained in place because even while the house of Jagat Seth, the greatest banking group of India, and other capitalist cotton merchants and exporters moved their headquarters to Murshidabad, the group did not wind up their business in Dacca. Their agents, such as the banking houses of Govinda Das and Ramprasad Sarkar actively continued the banking activities in the erstwhile capital of Bengal.

On the demand side, the precipitate decline of the Great Mughal Empire was more than compensated by, first, the rising foreign demand and second, the orders from successor states and others like Bengal *nawabs*, *nawab wazir* of Oudh etc. who vied with each other to make their courts miniature replicas of the Mughal court. As a result, the demand for fine Bengal textiles did not diminish to any appreciable extent in the eighteenth century. Some idea about the quantum of supply from Dacca can be ascertained from the following report on Dacca's cloth export in 1747 by James Taylor, East India Company's Commercial Resident in Dacca (in 1800):

Table 1: James Taylor's Estimate of the amount of cloth exported from Dacca in 1747

Consumer	Price of the cloth exported (in Arcot rupees)[1]
Imperial household at Delhi Arcot	1,00,000
House of Jagatseth at Murshidabad	1,50,000
Nawab's household at Murshidabad	3,00,000
Turani merchants	1,00,000
Export by Pathan or Afghan merchants	1,50,000
Export by Armenian merchants	5,00,000
Export by Mughal merchants	4,00,000
Export by Hindu merchants	2,00,000
Export by English Company for Europe	3,50,000
English individuals for foreign markets	2,00,000
French Company for Europe	2,50,000
French individuals for foreign markets	50,000
Dutch Company for Europe	1,00,000
Estimated Total Cost	28,50,000

Source: A. Karim, 'An Account of the District of Dacca, Dated 1800', ***Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan,*** **Vol. VII, No. 2, December 1962 (Taylor's report was based on various contemporary official and private papers).**

[1] Arcot rupees were coined at Arcot near Fort St. George and at Madras. Approximately 100 Arcot rupees=108 current rupees of Bengal in the 18th century.

As evident from the above table (**Table 1**), eighteenth century witnessed the participation of European and Asian merchants in Dacca in great degrees. Their participation in this period actually superseded than ever before. Both, the foreign and Indian merchants at Dacca put up orders for fine muslins and other assortments of textiles, such as *jamdani*, *malmal*, *terrindam*, *tanjib*, *serhadkhana*, *seerbati*, *kasida*, *bafta*, *cossa*, *hummam*, *gurries* and *doria*. The manufacturers of these assortments were both contractual labourers as well as free sellers in the market. *Dalals* (agent) of foreign merchants bought the textile products from various *haats* (local market) and *bazaars* (market) of Dacca district, especially from the Babur Haat in Narshingdi.

Besides textiles, products such as *atar* (perfume), ornamented shields, sticks patterned with gold thread, ornamented *punkas* (fans) made of palm leaves, gold and silver washing bowls were also exported to Delhi in great quantities from Dacca during this century.

Owing to this continuous demand-supply chain, in the eighteenth century, a huge trading and manufacturing society developed in Dacca. Its elements were members of old and new bureaucracies, various segments of the textile society (weavers, spinners, bleachers, washermen, cleaners), foreign mercantile companies, local and foreign merchants, factory owners, landowners, money changers, bankers, masons, carpenters, boatmen, shopkeepers and so on. In 1800, the chief of the English factory, John Taylor estimated the population of Dacca to be nearly two lakh which was the same figure that was provided by Manrique in 1640 (Ray, 2015: 489). Although, it is estimated that during the rule of Shaista Khan (also known as the Golden period of Dacca) the population of Dacca would have increased to around five lakh which would have declined after the transfer of the capital from Dacca to Murshidabad. Despite that, Dacca clearly had a substantial and diverse population in the eighteenth century which was significant in retaining its vibrancy.

A decline in the rank and file of Dacca began from 1765, when the control of Dacca city alongwith eastern Bengal passed on to the East India Company. However, one sector of the economy, viz. the textile, survived and in fact flourished further. To substantiate, we have the report from Mathew Day, the then British Collector of Dacca, who made a survey of the quantum of trade and commerce of Dacca district in 1787 and concluded that in money terms, Dacca had business transactions of about one crore rupees, of which textile sector alone accounted for about sixty to seventy lakhs of rupees (Islam, 1981: 422). Similarly, in the trading season of 1795-96, Bengal exported cotton piecegoods numbering 22,87,479 pieces, the total value of which stood at Sicca Rupees. 20,41,513 of which Dacca cotton textiles of all assortments made the greatest chunk region-wise **(**Islam, 2008: 8). However, as the textile industry almost entirely depended on the external trade and commerce, the industry began to decline from the opening years of the nineteenth century and eventually succumbed and finally disappeared in the face of British industrial revolution and British colonial rule by 1830s.

17.3 PATNA

The history of Patna, traditionally known as Pataliputra, can be traced back from the 5th century BCE when the strategic location of this region-on the southern banks of river Ganga – made it earn the status of the capital of the Magadh Kingdom, then ruled by the Haryanka dynasty. Thereafter, the region continued to retain the status of the capital under the Nanda, Mauryan, Sunga, Gupta and Pala empires. With a rather continuous history as a node of habitation and power, the region witnessed a significant growth in the mid sixteenth century when the Emperor of Sur Empire, Sher Shah (1540-1545) decided to shift Bihar's capital from Biharsharif to the ancient site of Pataliputra in 1545 and strengthened the process of urbanisation there. Following then, in the eighteenth century, the city acquired the name of Azimabad from Aurangzeb's grandson Azim-us-Shan, who, as pointed in the previous section, held the *subahdari* (governorship) of Bihar from 1703 to 1707. In 1733, Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-1748) granted the governorship of Bihar to Nawab Shujauddin Mohammed Khan of Bengal and upon this appointment, this Mughal province was merged with the *subah* (province) of Bengal. Bihar became subject to the same political developments as Bengal leading to Patna's

centrality in future political and commercial processes. By this time, Azimabad had gained popularity as Patna and Patna as the chief city of Bihar had already emerged as a great entrepôt situated in the middle of a rich and productive hinterland. Actually, the word Patna is derived from the Sanskrit word *Pattan* which stands for port and it came into vogue as an indication to the economic significance of the region as a port city.

Patna's location on the great Gangetic artery connecting Northern India to Bengal made it ideal as an 'entrepôt city'. Convenient land routes connected Patna both with the cities of the north and with important centres in Bengal. Kumkum Chatterjee suggests that Patna emerged as an important 'entrepôt city' only after the consolidation of Mughal control over Bengal during the early seventeenth century. This led to an increase in the pace of commercial exchange between Bengal and North India (Chatterjee, 1996: 15). The city served as an outlet for several commodities produced in its hinterland, which were exported to cities and towns in Northern India, Bengal and to several foreign lands. Important export commodities included sugar, opium, cotton cloth and saltpetre. The facilitation of communication with the East also encouraged the European companies, first the Portuguese followed by the Dutch, and then the English to establish themselves at Patna. The European companies' trade in fact played a major role in expanding Patna's commercial importance. Complementing the boom in trade, there also developed a community of bankers offering a range of financial services to facilitate long-distance trade and over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Patna acquired importance as a major centre of banking along with trade, culture and learning. The city's functions as a center of business and that of government contributed to its expansion and to its prosperity in the seventeenth century.

As a result, by the early eighteenth century, Patna was a bustling city dotted with palaces, havelis, large public buildings and the commercial establishments of merchants. Such prosperity also owed to the efforts of the Nawabs of Bengal who had been ruling the city after its merger with the *suba* Bengal and the onset of the Mughal decline. One distinct aspect of the city's expansion during eighteenth century was however its slow expansion outside its closed walls. While the entry of the British into trading networks led to the development of a wholesale grain market called 'Maruf *Gunge*' outside the eastern gate in the 1760s. However, major expansion of the city towards the west began after 1772, wherein, after a long drawn clash between the Nawabs and the English, the English Company acquired territorial power in the region and established their seat of government in the western part of the city. This westward expansion led to the development of Bankipore, which was mostly inhabited by the new governing class. Similarly the construction of new public buildings, like the jail and the court, by early decades of eighteenth century in this area, bear testimony to the consolidation of British administration in Bihar.

In the eighteenth century, Patna's cultural life was also further stimulated as the gradual decline of Mughal imperial power at Delhi resulted in a steady outflow of aristocratic families, merchants, poets, soldiers and *sufi* saints to the relatively quieter cities of the East. Patna received a considerable number of such people. Among those that migrated to Patna, were distinguished literary figures like Meer Baqar Hazin, the famous *sufi* poet and saint Ruknuddin Ishq, Mohammad Ali Fidwi and Mohammad Jafar Khan Raghib, amongst others. These North Indian immigrants – the poets, writers and noblemen – reinforced a Persianised, darbar-oriented culture in the city thereby invigorating the Urdu-Persian literary tradition in Patna (Chatterjee, 1996: 18-19). Moreover, the artists who had fled from Delhi also created a local school of painting known as the Patna Kalam. These developments were possible because there were opportunities for help, patronage and relocation in Patna for the émigrés from Delhi and other areas in the North and such a process led to the formation of a significant regional culture and literary tradition in Patna during the eighteenth century.

Simultaneously, Patna's function as a center of business and culture led to the concentration of a large population of artisans, craftsmen, brokers, moneylenders, merchants, bankers, aristocrats and landed chiefs as well as a sizeable group of boatmen, carters and providers of other ancillary services for trade in the city. Large consignments of foodstuff, grain, cloth, salt and other articles moved into the city to sustain the urban

population, while the city's role as an entrepôt bolstered the staples of Patna's inter-regional trade, that is, cotton textiles, opium and saltpetre. In his study on *The Artisans in 18th century Eastern India,* Vipul Singh has noted that during much of the eighteenth century, the organisation of production remained craft based and the artisans constituted a substantial section of the population of Patna. The artisans of the city manufactured varied items like textile, leather, sugar and stone-work. Aside from these, carpet weaving was another highly rated industry in Patna district. The carpet weavers produced three kinds of carpets here. One was Shatranji that was made entirely of cotton. The second kind was a mixture of wool and cotton while the base of the third was made of cotton and the woollen part was neatly piled over the cotton warp and wool. Similarly, cloth manufacturing was a flourishing activity of eighteenth century Patna and while a majority of cotton weavers were involved in the production of coarse cloth which was used by the masses in general, there were many who manufactured finer cloths that were largely sent in exports. Cloth, along with other indigenously manufactured products, made a lucrative export business from Patna to Europe over the course of the eighteenth, and even in its immediate preceding, century. The commodities that stocked the city's retail market and also constituted the foundations of its export trade were drawn from production zones surrounding the city and also from regions beyond it. The city thus served as a nodal point for an extensive hinterland in the eighteenth century.

Such developments in eighteenth century Patna attracted many a foreign travellers, who have left significant accounts of this city during the period. Fore example, Lsouis Laurent de Federabe, Count of Modave, arrived at Patna in October 1774 and noted that the city of Patna had acquired importance due to its excellent commerce and many people came here regularly to purchase goods brought via Ganges. Modave observed that saltpetre and opium formed significant part of the commercial transactions of Patna. According to him, the saltpetre produced in this region was the best in the world while the opium extracted from poppy produced in this region was consumed all over eastern Asia. On the other hand, in his reports on his travels in Bihar from 1809-1813, Francis Buchanan observed that the production of raw cotton in Patna was not significant as most of the requirements of weavers were fulfilled by the import of cotton thread from the north side of the Ganges. He, however, noted that Patna stood as an important centre of cloth manufacture as huge amount of cotton cloth was exported from here (Buchanan Vol. II: 676-77).

Complimenting the aforementioned developments, the narratives of Buchanan, as of other foreign travellers, also go on to suggest that despite the political shift with the departure of the Mughals and the arrival of the English as rulers, Patna did not loose its economic and political viability in the eighteenth century. Actually it began to develop furthermore as a satellite of Calcutta, the first British Indian, which owed primarily to the strategic position of Patna – lying being way between the north and the east. This pattern of development was, however, certainly different from that of Hugli or Murshidabad (see **Unit 16** and **18** respectively) which declined rapidly after the transfer of power and after Calcutta had assumed the dominant position.

17.4 AHMADABAD

At the time of its annexation to the Mughal Empire, the Sultanate of Gujarat comprised twenty-five *sarkars* or administrative units. In 1573, the boundary of what came to constitute the *suba* of Ahmadabad (Gujarat) was redrawn so that it came to be composed of sixteen *sarkars*. Of the sixteen *sarkars* that constituted Gujarat, nine were brought under the direct administrative control of the Mughal Empire, where the Mughal fiscal system was applied for the collection of revenues. Ahmadabad was one among these. Rest remained in the administrative and fiscal jurisdiction of local chiefs. During seventeenth century European companies like English East India Company and the Dutch East India Company set up their factories in Ahmadabad, which played a crucial role in the procurement of indigo and textiles.

With the collapse of the Mughal central authority in the early eighteenth century, Gujarat also lost its political stability. It also adversely affected commerce along the western coast. The provincial governors began to exercise power independently. Struggle through military force ensued during 1720s for the post of Governorship of Ahmadabad. The unstable political condition

in Gujarat encouraged the Marathas to participate in political contests. As a reward for their support, the Marathas got a share in the land revenue. The governors tried to compensate themselves for the loss of revenue surrendered to the Marathas by extracting money from affluent merchants of Ahmadabad. As a consequence, mercantile property in Ahmadabad became highly insecure in the second quarter of the century. In 1753, the Gaikwads took control of Ahmadabad and thus put an end to the hundred and eighty years of Mughal rule in Gujarat. Ahmadabad lost much of its wealth and prosperity because of this. Second quarter of eighteenth century, therefore, saw migration of weavers from Ahmadabad to Surat and other places because of ensuing political crisis.

Once the Marathas established their control over Gujarat after their occupation of Ahmadabad and its *mahals* in the early 1750s, a phase of economic recovery followed. Initiative of the Maratha Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao was crucial in bringing peace in the region. The industrious craftsmen and producers who had formerly deserted the capital city were induced to return. The restoration of productive processes was also facilitated by the emigrants' desperation to return to Ahmadabad since nowhere else they could find a climate as suitable for the production of certain types of cloth as in that city. Much to the wonder of contemporaries, this tendency of Gujarati merchants and artisans to return to their respective cities and places contributed to the revival of the economy and trade in the region. The Peshwa's deputy at Ahmadabad, Shankarji Pandit, persuaded the Dutch authorities to re-establish their factory in the city. Anticipating good prospects of trade and industry, starting in 1754 Dutch factors at Ahmadabad were actively selling their imports and procuring return goods for Batvia and Europe. The textile industry flourished again as demand for its products was consistently strong and emigrant-manufacturers from Ahmadabad and other places appear to have added to its production potential (Nadri, 2009). There was a great surge in the demand of indigo in the 1780s and 1790s.

Gujarat had obtained prominence in Indian Ocean commerce by putting on the market a variety of commodities that were in great demand in Europe and Asia. Indigo, a variety of coarse and fine textiles, raw cotton and cotton-yarn attracted a voluminous oceanic trade. The supply of these commodities depended on processing indigo leaves and raw cotton. The tract of land between Ahmadabad and Surat had black and sandy soil suitable for cotton and indigo cultivation.

Textile manufacturing in Gujarat was geared towards export market. The industry contributed greatly to the region's commerce by catering to the Euro-Asian demand for textiles. A large number of merchants and artisans were associated with this industry. Unlike Bengal and Coromandal, where weaving industry was spread over in the countryside, in Gujarat weaving was urban based. Weavers were concentrated in some major urban centres like Surat, Broach, Ahmadabad, Baroda, and Bhuj in Kachh.

Ahmadabad was an important centre of textile manufacture that employed a large number of weavers, spinners, dyers and others. The varieties of valvets, thick carpets, silk muslins, satin taffetas and printed cloth were manufactured. The production of textiles went through several stages each having its own distinct social dynamism. Dying yarn and cloth was usually done by professional dyers who rendered such services to merchants for money wages. Raw material required for colours were locally-produced indigo and sappan wood imported from South-east Asia. In addition to the dyers, there were people involved in bleaching and painting or printing cloth in different shades and designs.

Since weaving required some training and skill, which was passed down from one generation to the next within families, some caste groups could maintain a dominant position. Weavers were mostly from Khatri caste. Due to large Euro-Asian demand for cotton and textiles, textile manufacturers were in good bargaining position, which contributed to their privileged position. Other than craftsmen, urban centres like Ahmadabad employed large scale wage-labourers. Two important categories of urban labourers were carpenters and bricklayers. Some specialised in ship-building, some had expertise in making furniture, while others were expert in making and mending looms. The pull of the city as a place that offered great employment opportunities attracted large number of people from the surrounding rural areas. Carpenters were mainly Hindus and Parsis whereas those involved in house building and sailing were predominantly Muslims (Nadri, 2009). European companies employed on a long-term basis a master carpenter, a chief bricklayer, and several other men to facilitate construction work.

17.5 BANGALORE

The city of "Bangalore" (present Bengaluru) as we know today is the result of the amalgamation of two different settlements a process which Janaki Nair terms as 'a tale of two cities'. The western part or *pete* is an older settlement, whose history goes back to at least five centuries. The development of eastern part was the result of a cantonment which came up after British annexation and came to be known as Bangalore. Therefore, the history of eastern settlement is no more than two centuries. It was only in 1949 that these two distinct spaces were brought together under single municipal administration (Nair, 2005: 26). The city began to acquire shape as a fortified settlement in the sixteenth century and is generally attributed to Telugu warrior chief named Kempegowda. Elements of medieval city life as gathered from the British sources that were collected after the Company takeover of Mysore in 1799 point towards three distinct aspects: the grant to Brahmin *agraharas*, establishment of large temple complexes, and the construction of tanks. The construction of water tanks was very important during early period of its settlement. Gradually temples developed around water tanks and temples in the old city emerged as important features of urban landscape (Nair, 2005: 29, 33). In 1807, a few years after the British takeover, as many as 44 temples were identified in the four *petes* or quarters of Bengaluru, each patronised by a different manufacturing caste or trade group (Nair, 2005: 34). Similarly, the influence of itinerant *sufis* led to the construction of *dargahs* and Muslim shrines during tje seventeenth century. Even Christianity preceded the British rule. The first missionaries of the Society of Jesus reached Mysore in 1648, and a church was built in 1724-5. Such diverse influences, in the words of Janaki Nair, led to a 'cosmopolitan religious landscape' in Bangalore (Nair, 2005: 35).

By seventeenth century, the city had become an important commercial centre. Traders, merchants and artisans flocked into this city in search for better prospects. The increasing commercial importance of the city and the region led the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707) to sent troops to capture the area in 1687. Wodeyars of Mysore supported the Mughals in this campaign. This display of loyalty fetched them the control of this city and its environs for a sum of Rs. 3 lakhs. A Sanskrit chronicle written in 1670 pointed out that there were many commercial streets in this town with an array of shops displaying costly goods (Nair, 2005: 38). Till eighteenth century, it was a flourishing centre of textile production and a major emporium of goods from several parts of the subcontinent. Its fortune suffered severe decline in the nineteenth century. Twentieth century saw a revival and even today it is known for its silk production.

Evidence collected after the British conquest regarding pre-colonial urban landscape suggests that the walled town with its four principal gates, was intersected by two main streets to form numerous *petes* which were identified with the various trades and profession of the inhabitants. British records bore testimony to the centrality of Bangaluru as the commercial and manufacturing capital of Mysore state under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. The city's textiles made their way to Srirangapatnam, Gubbi, Nagar, Chennapatna, and Chitradurga. Although trade with the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Company's territories was forbidden during his time, Tipu did much to attract foreign traders to Mysore. Silk manufactures of Bangalore were in much demand. Development of Bangaluru accelerated the process of urbanisation in the region. Several small towns of Mysore region were dependent on Bengaluru for supplies of raw materials as well as finished goods (Nair, 2005: 40).

Three types of textiles manufacturing systems prevalent in the region can be identified from the writings of travellers like Buchanan, who visited the region in early nineteenth century. The first was the production of superior cotton and silk cloths almost entirely for the royal consumption or export market. Weavers *were advanced* raw materials by merchants to whom they handed over the finished product. In the second system, weavers of muslin depended on the moneylenders for their advances, and sold most of their goods either to the merchants or at the local market. The third class of weavers belonged to 'low' caste groups who possessed little capital for printing and dyeing, and for better part of the year hired themselves as agricultural labour. Thus, production of cloth was catered to specific caste groups and specific uses (Nair, 2005: 40). Buchanan described the weavers of Bangalore as a 'ingenious class of men' who were capable of making 'very rich, fine, elegant cloths of any kind that may be in demand' (Buchanan,

Vol. I: 221). Benjamin Heyne, a visiting medical surgeon identified at least 18 different types of silk, cotton and woollen manufacture in the area. Beside cloth production, textile printing and dyeing, gunny manufacture, and oil pressing were also undertaken. Armament manufacture also flourished in Bangalore under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.

The advent of British rule in the last decade of the eighteenth century had devastating effect on the weaving industry. A process of 'de-industrialisation' unfolded in the city. The number of looms fell from 5,000 in 1805 to about 2,700 in 1850. 'The demand for Bengaluru's sophisticated silk and cotton textiles diminished with the dismantling of the court, and coarser fabrics were often replaced by mill-made cloth' (Nair, 2005: 41).

17.6 SUMMARY

In a century that witnessed the decline of Mughal imperial political order, the traditional manufactures of the towns highlighted in this Unit stood as a significant factor that contributed to their survival, and revival. While the Mughals had set the tone for development in most of the aforementioned towns, such process, despite the regression in certain domains, was continued in the eighteenth century by the collaboration between the locals (rulers, merchants and traders) with the Europeans. In due course, however, the European technologies overran the traditional manufactures taking up not just their market space in the world market but also setting the manufacturing towns on the route to decomposition.

17.7 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the factors that contributed to the continued commercial importance of Dacca in the eighteenth century.
2) In what ways did the Europeans facilitate the economic survival of Dacca in the eighteenth century?
3) Discuss the synthesis of trade and culture in eighteenth century Patna.
4) What made Patna an ideal 'entrepot city' during seventeenth and eighteenth century?
5) In what ways did the Marathas facilitate the revival of Ahmadabad in the latter half of eighteenth century?
6) Discuss the three systems of textile manufacturing prevalent in Bengaluru during seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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