

Assessment of Agrarian Expansion, Settlements and Demography: Banaras Zamindari, C.1600-1900

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Abstract: The present paper is an attempt to study that how agrarian economy develops and attracts different religious, caste and commercial fraternities to settle down in agriculturally fertile zones thereby causing continuous growth of population in the region. The study further investigates the comparative growth of cultivation and population in the neighbouring regions to understand the pace of expansion of agrarian fields along with its population. The differences in the rate of growth of agriculture and demographic pressure in adjacent political units have given rise to the issues of state attitude and policies towards agriculture during the precolonial and colonial times. Thus to understand such issues, paper has tried to assess the extent of cultivation, various religious and caste settlements and population growth in Banaras zamindari from Mughal to colonial times with the help of revenue statistics provided by *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Chahar Gulshan*, Duncan papers, Agrarian Statistics of British India, 1895-96, Anthropological works, Settlement reports, District Gazetteers and relevant secondary data.

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INTRODUCTION

The administrative entity known as Banaras zamindari gained its political status during the eighteenth century and was comprised of present five districts of the eastern Uttar Pradesh namely Banaras, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Ballia and Mirzapur (Chunar). It seems under the Mughal administration, these districts shared a common identity as the eastern part of the empire. According to the P.C. Wheeler's settlement report of Jaunpur (1877), "The fiscal unity of the Banaras Province remained intact till 1818 and up to that date (at all events) the history of any portion of this territory is the history of the whole" (P.C. Wheeler, 1886, pp. 137-138). One of the earliest written historical evidence about the region is given by Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari* compiled in 1596 during the reign of Akbar. Abul Fazl described Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Banaras and Chunar (Part of Mirzapur) were four *sarkars* of the *suba* of Allahabad. The district of Ballia constituted a part of the *sarkar* Ghazipur and a part of the district Mirzapur was included in the *sarkar* of Allahabad of Allahabad *suba* (H.S. Jarret, trans. *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, 1891, pp. 159-161). Before the Mughals, the *suba* of Allahabad was administered by the rulers of Delhi (H.S. Jarret, trans. *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, 1891, p. 168). In 1394, Malik Sarwar,

a eunuch of Firuzshah Tughlaq, was placed in charge of all the country from Kanauj to Bihar which included Banaras, Jaunpur, Ghazipur and Mirzapur (H.S. Jarret, trans. *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, 1891, pp. 168-170 and H.R. Nevill, 1909, p. 191). The headquarter was built at Jaunpur which became the capital of Sharqi dynasty or Jaunpur kingdom. There was a major change in the extent of the area of *sarkar* Jaunpur in Jahangir's time. In the year 1609, out of 41 *parganas* of Jaunpur, emperor Jahangir gave a grant of 22 *parganas* with a title of Raja of Azamgarh to Abhiman Singh, a Gautam Rajput, who embraced the faith of Islam. These *parganas* probably represented the territory which was found into the Azamgarh Raj at the commencement of the seventeenth century by Jahangir and which was resumed in 1771 by Nawab Shuja-ud-dowla.

In the pre-colonial times, with the changing political rule in the region, expansion of agriculture was always a celebrated feature for rulers and inhabitants. In the Mughal times, it was encouraged by the state in order to increase its revenue and perhaps it was the most convenient way to populate the barren land by giving revenue free grants in such areas. It has been a topic of interest for the economic historians to assess the extent of cultivated area, revenue and production in pre-colonial and colonial times. For the twelve *subas* of Mughal empire, we have measured area (*arazi*) statistics compiled by Abul Fazl around 1595. It is helpful to estimate the extent of cultivation for the 16th century with the help of Abul Fazl's estimate and then one can compare it with subsequent measured area statistics accounts of Mughal period till eighteenth century and finally with that of Agricultural Statistics of British India of 1895 to measure a systematic provisional estimate of the expansion of agriculture in any *suba* of Mughal empire. It would also be interesting to see how the expansion of agriculture in any particular area was correlated to different factors like increase in population or different settlements, rulers attitude and policies etc. Therefore, the present paper tries to study the following three issues:

1. Assessment of the extent of cultivation in the regions of Banaras *zamindari* from C. 1600 to 1900.
2. To explore the nature of settlement in the Banaras region since C. 1600.
3. To estimate the rate of growth of population in the region

ASSESSMENT OF THE EXTENT OF CULTIVATION IN THE BANARAS REGION (C. 1600 TO 1900)

Few scholars like W.H. Moreland, Irfan Habib, Shireen Moosvi and S.Z.H. Jafri with the help of statistical records of *Ain-i Akbari* (like *arazi* and *jama* figures) have tried to compute the extent of cultivated land around c. 1600. They have used the measured area (*arazi*) in *bigha* given by Abul Fazl for each *suba* and *pargana* to estimate the cultivated land. The *arazi* was divided by the mapped area (available in Irfan Habib's, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, 1982, that is total area of each *sarkar* as measured of his maps) to find out the percentage of cultivated land in a *suba* and *sarkar*. Although some historians like K.K. Trivedi have raised questions over the accuracy of *arazi* figures and also that the mapped areas remained increasing and in some cases decreasing with time. But nevertheless these *arazi* figures on the average help us to create a gross estimate of the extent of cultivation in the region during the Mughal period. Moreover, during the Mughal period, administrative divisions in Mughal *subas* more or less remained the same except in few cases like Jaunpur during the reign of Jahangir mentioned earlier.

To compare the extent of cultivation in c. 1600 with that of c. 1900, *Ain-i-Akbari* and the British Agricultural statistics of 1895-1900 has been used for the Banaras *zamindari* of eighteenth Century.

For the intervening period that is 1700, Rai Chaturman's *Chahar Gulshan* (1720) gives *arazi* figures only for the Mughal *sarkars* of Banaras and Ghazipur. The Duncan settlement report of Banaras *zamindari* gives us general idea of the extent of cultivation in the region as it was not based on proper survey, perhaps mostly *qanungos* and village *putwaree*'s report had been taken into consideration. Such computations do come across one challenge that the *arazi* figures of *Ain-i-Akbari* did not exclude cultivable wasteland and un-assessed land like habitational areas of villages and *nallahs* etc. whereas 1895 British statistics do not take into account the current fallows, culturable wasteland and land not available for cultivation. So, some error can be assumed while comparing *Ain*'s statistics with that of 1895.

To understand the expansion of agriculture in the Banaras region, firstly one has to take into account *Ain*'s figures. The total area of each *sarkar* has been taken from Irfan Habib's *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, 1982 which is converted into *bigha-i-Ilahi* from square miles and then compared with the *arazi* figures of the respective *sarkars* in the *Ain*.

The Extent of Cultivation in C. 1595

S. N.	<i>Sarkar</i>	(A) Measured Area (<i>Bigha-i-Ilahi</i>)	(B) Mapped Area (<i>Bigha-i-Ilahi</i>)	Percentage A/B
1.	Ghazipur	288,770	1,567,040	18.4
2.	Banaras	156,863	623,629	25.0
3.	Jaunpur	870,265	6,548,634	13.3
4.	Chunar	106,270	1,658,406	6.4
	Total	1,422,168	10,397,709	13.6

Source: Jarret H.S. (trans.), *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1891 and Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, Oxford University Press, 1982

The comparatively low *arazi* of *sarkar* Chunar was certainly due to the presence of dense forest in the region as shown by James Rennell in 1781. On the whole the entire region of Banaras *zamindari* shows low *arazi* of just 13.6 percent that means roughly fourteen percent of the entire area was then cultivated.

In the early eighteenth century, for the *sarkar* of Ghazipur, *Chahar Gulshan*'s *arazi* figures exceed the figure taken for the extent of its mapped area. However, for the *sarkar* of Banaras, if we take the ratio of *arazi* figure with the mapped area, it shows 72 percent of the area under cultivation which is a huge expansion from 25 percent represented in the *Ain*. In *Chahar Gulshan*, measured area in *bigha* for *sarkar* of Banaras is estimated to be 4,53,354 (Muhammad Riyazuddin Khan, ed. *Chahar Gulshan*, 1990, p.95).

Jonathan Duncan's permanent settlement report of 1790 shows roughly 80 percent of the area under cultivation (P.C. Wheeler, 1886, p. 154). Even, if it can be assumed as a gross assessment as it was done without any proper survey but Walter Hamilton's *Gazetteer* of 1828 overtly stated that when the Banaras *zamindari* was ceded in 1775 by the Nawab of Awadh, Asaf ud Daula, it was subdivided into sixty-two *parganas* containing 12,000 square miles of which 10,000 composed a rich cultivated flat on both sides of the Ganges (Walter Hamilton, 1828, p.167). This statement means that by the end of eighteenth century or early nineteenth century, roughly 80 percent of the region of Banaras raj was under cultivation.

Jonathan Duncan represents the following statistics in *bigha* for Banaras *zamindari* in A.D. 1790 (P.C. Wheeler, 1886, p. 154. Here Jaunpur is half in area of what was in Akbar's time):

Cultivated Area in Bigha – 2, 713, 461

Uncultivated Area in Bigha – 6,64,693

Total – 3, 378, 154

The total area divided by cultivated area gives 80.3 percent of area under cultivation. Now to compare the above data it is important to see the area under cultivation in British Agricultural Statistics of 1895.

Extent of Cultivation in 1895 in the Regions of Banaras *Zamindari*

S. No.	District	(A) Cultivated Area (Bigha-i-Ilahi)	(B) Map Area (Bigha-i-Ilahi)	Percentage A/B
1.	Ghazipur	976,387.1	1,480,549.0	65.9
2.	Ballia	861,963.3	1,309,411.3	65.8
3.	Banaras	667,486.0	945,494	70.6
4.	Jaunpur	1,047,974.6	1,646,499.2	63.6
5.	Mirzapur	928,208.9	2,681,007.9	34.6
	Total	4,482,019.9	8,062,961.9	55.6

Source: Agricultural Statistics of British India, 1895-96

After taking *Ain's* and 1895 British statistics as standard for the cultivated area in the Banaras *zamindari*, it can be assumed that there was substantial increase in cultivation in the regions of Banaras during seventeenth and eighteenth century. This increase amounted to roughly 50 percent that is from around 14 percent to 55.6 percent. If we compare the expansion of cultivation in the neighbouring Mughal *sarkars* of *suba* of Awadh with the same method, we find that there was also a considerable increase in the extent of cultivation in Awadh as a whole over the 300 years, from 1595 to 1895. This increase can be roughly calculated around 21 percent, from roughly 36 percent in the *Ain* to 57 percent in British Agricultural Statistics of 1895 (H.S. Jarret, Vol.II, 1891 and S.Z.H. Jafri, 2022). It can also be seen that such calculations for a particular *sarkar* may give different estimate as well.

In Awadh, it is probable that the extent of cultivation should have been 5 to 10 percent less in 1856 (the year of Annexation of Awadh by the East India Company) than it was in 1885-86. Part of this can be assumed under forest. Donald Butter (1839) in southern Awadh and W.H. Sleeman in 1849-50 from southern to northern Awadh have shown large tracts of forests. Sleeman estimated these forests around 886 ½ square miles (W. H. Sleeman, 1858, pp.279-87). Since Agricultural statistics of 1895 do not show any area under forest in this region, so roughly 10 percent growth in cultivation can be suggested after 1856 in the territory of Awadh (S.Z.H. Jafri, 1985, pp.24-26).

Now, if we go by the statistics of measured and unmeasured villages during Aurangzeb's reign, we find little more explanation for the agrarian statistics of eighteenth century pertaining to both the regions of Mughal *suba* of Awadh and Allahabad (of which a good portion was covered by the Banaras *zamindari* in eighteenth century).

Measured and Unmeasured Villages During Aurangzeb's Reign

S. No.	Suba	Total	Measured	Unmeasured	Measured Villages as percentage of the Total
1.	Awadh	52,691	33,842	18,849	64.23
2.	Allahabad	47,607	45,345	2,262	95.25

Source: Shireen Moosvi, *Economy of the Mughal Empire, C. 1595*, Delhi, 1987, p.48

The above statistics suggests that in the intervening period of eighteenth century, the extent of cultivation in Banaras *zamindari* seems to be much higher than in Mughal suba of Awadh as more than 95 percent of villages of suba Allahabad reported to be measured. So, Duncan's statistics though grossly over estimated, indicated towards 70 percent to 80 percent cultivation in Banaras *zamindari* by the late eighteenth century.

We can go into little more explanation to understand the advanced trend of cultivation in the eighteenth century in Banaras *zamindari*. A nineteenth century Gazetteer wrote for Banaras region that "*The cultivation has everywhere extended, an observation that may be applied to the whole zamindari (zamindari is referred to whole Banaras zamindari) as except in pergunnah Chownsah, and among the hills to the south-east of Chunar; there is hardly a sufficient quantity of uncultivated land for the grazing of cattle*" (Walter Hamilton, 1828, p.171). Thus, it would not be difficult to say for the region of Banaras that it was perhaps getting devoid of dense jungles by the end of eighteenth century. It has been suggested that under the exploitative *Ijaradari* system, Rajas of Banaras promoted extensive farming to meet their revenue bidding. In the early eighteenth century, larger portion of *sarkar* Chunar was under dense jungles. In *pargana* Agori Barhar, the villages were a fourth or an eighth or a tenth part cultivated and all the rest were jungles and woods and haunts for deer tiger and pasture for beasts (A. Shakespear, Vol. I, 1873, Appendix H, p.LXXIV). Raja Balwant Singh after expelling the *pargana's* Chandel Rajas kept this *Mahal Katchaa* and *Amani* and did not let it to farmers. He made a general order that those who were desirous to cut up the jungle and cultivate the country should give in their proposals to the *Naib* in charge of collections, specifying what share or proportion of the natural produce they could pay to government and take out *pattas* for a shorter or longer term accordingly (A. Shakespear, Vol. I, 1873, Appendix H, p.LXXIV).

Raja Mahip Narayan Singh, Raja of Banaras during the late eighteenth century, sent a letter dated 23rd January 1790 to the Resident of Banaras sharing his knowledge on the former Raja of Banaras, Balwant Singh's management and the conduct of the former *Amils*. Raja stated following things which throws light on the attitude of Rajas of Banaras towards cultivation in the region:

"The situation or manner of the settlement of this country in the time of Maharaja Balwant Singh (now in Paradise) that the plan of settlement of the country was not in one way or mode. Whenever he knew it proper, to receive the Malguzary or revenue from the hands of the zamindars, he did so, and wherever he knew the zamindars to be wicked desolaters and such men as a revenue would not be affected by, he there made the villages cutcha and took the revenue. In this way both the country remained cultivated and no losses accrued in the payment of the revenue. On this plan he carried on the Amaldari or management for sixty years. The cultivation daily increased, the Ryots remained also easy and contended. Neither did ever any loss happened, in the completion of the governments revenue.....Besides this, in several places the zamindars withdrew the best cultivated spots for the cutcha Ryots, and have reduced the cowl, or stipulated rates of their own cultivation" (G.N. Saletore, edited, Banaras Affairs, Vol.I, 1955, p.190).

Further, it seems forest and wasteland without second thought were ordered to bring under cultivation by Duncan's measures for permanent settlement implemented in 1795 in Banaras raj. Under permanent settlement tenures we find one Mehendi Ali Khan was given sanad in pargana Shadiabad (Ghazipur) for eight chucks and 194 mauzas containing twelve thousand nine hundred and ninety five bighas of lands which had lain fallow and waste for last six hundred years past, turned into jungle and have not been inhabited (A. Shakespear, Vol. I, 1873, Appendix B, p.VI).

In Pargana Ballia in the Deara land which was annually flooded by the Ganges and where there was also a jungle of Dhora (kind of reed), Duncan dispatched labourers to root up the dhora and then the Ryots of every village situated along the Ganges permitted to bring to the whole into cultivation (A. Shakespear, Vol. I, 1873, Appendix B, p.XX)

We also find during the permanent settlement operations of *Jamabandi*, majority of *zamindars* became richer due to more land or uncultivated land brought under cultivation as their *Sir*. It was this *Sir* that was most profitable, for it was carried of a much reduced rate on the *Jamabandi* (revenue role) of the *tappa*. *Sir* land in most *parganas* was assessed at least eight *annas* an acre less than *pargana* rates (Bernard S. Cohn, 1987, p. 389). In situation where land was brought under cultivation after the permanent settlement, it was permanently assessed at the rate for wasteland. Hence, a *zamindar* paid a few *annas* of revenue on such land, the profits from which could be Rs.10 or 20 or more an acre depending on the crop (Bernard S. Cohn, 1987, p. 389).

THE NATURE OF SETTLEMENT IN THE BANARAS REGION SINCE C. 1600

Much before fifteenth century, the region of Banaras locally seems to be controlled by some aboriginal tribes and subsequently by the land-owning fraternities of Rajputs and Bhumihars. Wilton Oldham recorded, "*The Hindoo land-owning tribes all agree in stating that at the time of the first immigration of their forefathers, the entire country, except a few tracts held by Brahmans, so far as the forests had been cleared, was occupied by aborigines not of the Aryan race,were called Seorees, Bhurs and Cheroos*" (Wilton Oldham, Vol.I, 1870, p. 46). Oldham further observed that this tradition of the old ownership of the aboriginal race is prevalent not only among the Hindus but also among the Muslim land-owning classes (Wilton Oldham, Vol. II, p. 91). Since the sixteenth century, the local power structure of the region can be described by using the details of each *sarkar* of Allahabad *suba* represented in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. As the Mughal economy was predominantly based on agriculture and the region of Banaras being agriculturally very rich, the power hierarchy appears to have existed in the various land-owning castes. Abul Fazl had made entries of the castes of the people under the head 'zamindar' or land-owner. A caste of *zamindar* who had the adequate armed forces and cavalry was in control of a *pargana* or a part of the *pargana*. According to Irfan Habib, "*the pargana may be defined as a tract of land in the possession of one undivided clan*" (Irfan Habib, 1958, pp. 1-3).

Ain-i-Akbari records the following castes of land-owners during the sixteenth century in the Banaras region:

I. Hindu Land-Owning Castes

1. Rajputs
2. Brahmans
3. Kayasths
4. Kurmis

II. Muslim Land-Owning Castes

1. Sayyid
2. Rahmat – Ullahi
3. Siddiqi
4. Ansari
5. Shaikhzadah
6. Faruqi

The caste distribution of land owning castes in the region had the following major features:

1. The principal land-owning castes appears to be Rajputs and Brahmans where numerically or *pargana*-wise the region seems to be outrightly dominated by the caste of Rajputs. Out of 29 *parganas* (for which the caste is known) listed in the *Ain -i Akbari*, 18 were dominated by the Rajputs.
2. The Rajput and Brahman dominated *parganas* were geographically contiguous.
3. Abul Fazl had not mentioned the word ‘Bhumihar’ in the column of the castes of *zamindars* while in the eighteenth century, Bhumihars were the principal land-owning castes of the Banaras region. Bernard S. Cohn quotes Elliot who says “*the compiler of the Ain-i-Akbari, did not appear to know the difference between Brahmans and Bhumihars*” (Bernard S. Cohn, 1987, p. 348). According to H.R. Nevill, “*the origin of Bhumihars is unknown but they have long been settled in the eastern districts*” (H.R. Nevill, 1909, p. 99). But Wilton Oldham is of the opinion that “*‘Bhoinhars’ both by themselves and by the ethnologists, are believed to be the descendants of Brahmans, who on becoming cultivators and land-holders gave up their priestly functions*” (Wilton Oldham, Vol.I, p. 43). In contrast to Wilton Oldham, W. Crooke opines “*Bhumihars are a Caste found in western Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh who claim Brahman status, but who are essentially landed classes, do not carry out priestly functions and are distinct in tradition and culture from Brahman and Rajputs*” (W. Crooke, Vol.II, 1896, pp. 64-70). However in the eighteenth century, we find Bhumihars dominant in the same *parganas* which according to Abul Fazl were controlled by the Brahmans in the sixteenth century. Therefore, it would be logical to denote Brahman land holders of the eighteenth as Bhumihar-Brahmans.
4. The region inspite of being agriculturally rich and under the control of Muslim rulers for long time, had few Muslim land-owners with respect to land-owning castes of Rajputs and Brahmans. Either the tract was politically and geographically so unimportant that it did not attract Delhi Sultans to assign *jagirs* to their muslim nobles or may be the local ruling castes provided little resistance in appropriating the desired revenue which subdued the necessity to populate the region with Muslim nobility.

The *Ain*’s statistical data is useful as far as one needs to investigate the administrative structure and details of the local power-holders of the Mughal empire. But the chronicle provides limited knowledge about the composition of other inhabitants or people of different professions of the region who probably were also paying revenue on different terms and conditions. However, the emphasis on the caste of the *zamindars* is useful which connects them with the ancestors of the present land-holding castes (Irfan Habib, 1958, pp. 1-3).

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, though due to the paucity of sources it is difficult to find much changes in the *zamindari* possession of Banaras from what is represented in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, but at the same time there are no reasons to assume any major change in the distribution of the land-owning castes. The prominent land-owning castes still belonged to the clans of Rajputs and Bhumihaar-Brahmans (As information gathered from the works of Wilton Oldham, 1870, M.A. Sherring, 1872, A. Shakespear, Vol. I, 1873, Census of India, 1891, W. Crooke, 1896, Settlement reports and Gazetteers). Most of the structural changes occurred due to the expulsion policies of Rajas of Banaras and eventually after the Duncan's permanent settlement of 1795. The dispossessed land-owners still live in their old homes, and cultivate some of the fields they once owned. They were always considered and called the *zamindars* or land-owners, while the auction-purchaser received the less dignified title of *Neilamdar*. The dispossessed land-owners, considered that they have an inalienable right to the land of their forefathers (Wilton Oldham, 1870, Vol.I, P. 42).

Besides the large *zamindari* possession of the clans of Rajputs and Bhumihaars, Muslim land owning fraternities also appears to have existed in considerable numbers. About their origin in the region, Wilton Oldham informs that "*some of them the descendants of converted Hindoos. Some of the foreign conquerors of Hindoostan; and some whose origin and ancestry are doubtful*" (Wilton Oldham, 1870, Vol.I, P. 44-45). The most prominent position as land-owners seems to have been acquired by Sheikhs who were also styled as Siddiqis, Qureshis and Ansaris etc. (Wilton Oldham, 1870, Vol.I, P. 44-45 and H.R. Nevill, 1909, p. 114). The principal migration of Sheikhs appears to have taken place during the sixteenth century between the reigns of the Lodi kings and that of Akbar (Wilton Oldham, 1870, Vol.I, P. 44-45). The other land-owning fraternities of the Muslims belonged to the castes of Saiyids, Pathans, Mughals and Iraqis etc.

Among the other agricultural castes, four had occupied significant position as chief cultivators and tenants of the region viz, Ahirs, Koeries, Kurmis and Chamars. Except Chamars, we find other three castes though of late, also figured among the land owning fraternities of the region. Traditionally, Ahirs worked as cultivators (H.R. Nevill, 1909, p.96). The Kurmis and Koeries were also ranked high as agriculturist (where Koeries were generally market gardeners or cultivators of valuable crops such as sugarcane, poppy, vegetables etc.) than general farmers (H.R. Nevill, 1909, p.96,100). The people of Chamar caste were generally employed as field labourers by the other land owning castes (H.R. Nevill, 1909, p.96).

Besides, agricultural castes, another group of Hindus resided as commercial class composed of people of the different castes like Vaishyas, Khattris and Gosains etc. Their leading members along with the hereditary *zamindars* were the co-sharers of power in the region. They were engaged in wide range of commercial activities like banking, money lending, sugar manufacturing and shop keeping etc. These occupations according to Bernard S. Cohn were not mutually exclusive, "*the commercial families tended to engage in a wide range of activities, including government service, law, management of landed estates as well as commercial pursuits*" (Bernard S. Cohn, 1987, p. 374).

Among the non-agricultural Muslim community, Julahas took the foremost place. They followed their ancestral occupation of weaving country cloth (H.R. Nevill, 1909, p.103). Closely akin to Julaha was the caste of Behna or Dhunas who were cotton carder by occupation.

DEMOGRAPHY

The review of the pattern of settlement in the Banaras *zamindari*, encourages a further investigation about the rate of growth of population in the region as consumption of resources bears direct linkage

with demographic pressure. W.H. Moreland tried to estimate the population of northern India on the basis of *arazi* figures in the *Ain* which he assumed to represent the entire gross cropped area (Shireen Moosvi, 1987, p.395). Irfan Habib on the basis of same method suggests that having the smaller area under the cultivation in Mughal empire, the land:man ratio should have been higher earlier. Thus he assessed that if the extent of cultivation in 1600 was 60 percent of what it was in 1900, so the population in 1600 would have been only about half of what it was in 1901 (Irfan Habib, 1982, p.165). S.Z.H. Jafri has suggested a method of computing the rate of growth of population for the province of Awadh. According to him, on the basis of the 1869 census figures the total population of Awadh can be determined for the year 1856, by scaling it down in the same proportion in which the population had increased in the ceded and conquered districts of Uttar Pradesh encircling or touching upon the limits of the eighteenth century kingdom of Awadh (eg. Gorakhpur, Basti, Kanpur, Shahjahanpur, Pilibhit, Bijnore etc.) whose population in the year 1853 was 1,00,27,145 and 1,10,16,947 by the census of the 1872. The compound rate of growth was thus about 0.38 percent per annum. Applying this rate to the growth of population of Awadh in the same period we can work out the population of Awadh for 1856. The census of 1872 discloses the population of areas within the limits of Mughal Awadh as 1,68,34,564, scaling it down to allow for a rate of growth of 0.38 percent get a population of 1,56,19,115 for the same territory in 1856. Thus we see that within a period of about 256 years, the population of Mughal Awadh increased from about 9 millions in C. 1600 to 15.6 millions in 1856 (S.Z.H. Jafri, 1985, pp.34-35).

In the case of Banaras zamindari, applying the same method gives a gross assessment of population growth. In the census of 1881, the population of district of Banaras, Ghazipur-Ballia, Jaunpur and Mirzapur (which largely constituted Banaras *zamindari*) together was 5.17 million (District Gazetteers, 1907, vol. XXX, pp.63-64, 1908, Vol. XXVIII, pp.71-72, 1909, vol. XXIX, pp.75-76, 1909, vol. XXVI, pp.83-84, 1911, XXVII, PP.85-86). According to acreage, it must be around 1 million in C.1600 (as 13.6 percent cultivation is estimated in c.1600). In eighteenth century Duncan assessed the population of Banaras zamindari to be 2911566 that is 2.9 million (P.C. Wheeler, 1886, p.154). Walter Hamilton also stated that “in 1801 the total population was estimated at three millions of inhabitants (probably under-rated)” (Walter Hamilton, 1828, p.168).

In the census of 1853 we find that the districts of Banaras zamindari were jointly estimated to have population of 49,28,906 that is 4.9 million (District Gazetteers, 1907, vol. XXX, pp.63-64, 1908, Vol. XXVIII, pp.71-72, 1909, vol. XXIX, pp.75-76, 1909, vol. XXVI, pp.83-84, 1911, XXVII, PP.85-86). But if we take census of 1872 as standard to scale it down to a growth rate of population at 0.38 percent per annum to assess the population in 1856 as in the case of Awadh we find that 1872 census shows population little lesser than 1853. Census of 1872 records population for the district of Banaras zamindari as 43,87,571 that is 4.3 million (District Gazetteers, 1907, vol. XXX, pp.63-64, 1908, Vol. XXVIII, pp.71-72, 1909, vol. XXIX, pp.75-76, 1909, vol. XXVI, pp.83-84, 1911, XXVII, PP.85-86). However after scaling it down to a growth rate of 0.38 percent per annum, the population in 1856 comes down to 4.12 million.

Since due to the frequent adjustment of administrative divisions under the British dominion that affected population of the area, these population figures can be taken as gross estimates.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we can suggest that since the Mughal period there has been constant growth in the cultivation in the regions of Banaras *zamindari*. However, when we compare the data of the regions

of Banaras with the Mughal *suba* of Awadh, we find that Awadh was much more cultivated than the Banaras *zamindari* during the reign of Akbar, as *Ain*'s figures suggests 36 percent of the land cultivated in Awadh and roughly 14 percent of land cultivated in the Banaras *zamindari*. But in the eighteenth century, where *Chahar Gulshan* suggests 45 per cent of land cultivated in Awadh, we can grossly estimate with the help of Duncan settlement report and to some extent from the *Chahar Gulshan* that 70 to 80 per cent of the land was cultivated in Banaras *zamindari* in this period. It can also be assumed that in the Banaras *zamindari* there remained further no scope for expansion of cultivation after the Duncan settlement was extended over its areas that already seems to be used up under the practice of *Ijaradari* system in the later Mughal period. If we go by the demographic pressure on land, although the census data may not stand the test of accuracy but roughly it can be suggested that there was continuous increase in population over the three centuries. Still, the pace of increase in the population cannot be ascertained with these generalizations. However, it is quite perceptible that wherever the East India Company intervened in local administration specifically for the revenue purposes that area started losing forests quickly to give space to agricultural fields. In the case of Awadh, much of its private forests were rooted up after 1857 and such areas were brought under cultivation. As Banaras *zamindari* came under the direct British control in 1775, during the Duncan settlement (1795), most of the remaining forests were allowed to cut and cultivate. The Agricultural statistics of 1895 shows a small tract of forests in Mirzapur district that too as a Government Reserve. Thus, the rate of expansion in agrarian fields does seem to have somehow coherent relationship with the rate of growth of population but the sudden destruction of forested areas and the rapid expansion of cultivation for the sake of revenue during the colonial period had caused both ecological and economic stress on the agrarian classes.

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