



## **Epidemics and Its Impact on Mughal Polity in India**

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### **Introduction**

Indian government declared the nationwide lockdown being announced last two months to take a precaution from a dangerous pandemic. At the present situation the life of human being is disruption due to the spread of the novel corona virus disease (COVID 19) over the past few months has adversely affected various aspects of the India and the world. At the present situation not even in India but also all over the world we the entire human being faced lots difficult situation due to Covid 19 pandemics. It is a very critical time to for all the human being, Covid 19 has set foot in India as across the globe and is likely to impact the country economy across industries and business format. “An epidemic is the rapid spread of disease to large number of people in a given population within a short period of time” Plague of Athens is considered one of the earliest accounts of disease epidemic in world history.<sup>1</sup> Epidemic is a term that is often broadly used to describe any problem that has grown out of control. An epidemic is defined as an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographical area and affects an exceptionally high proportion of the population.<sup>2</sup>

The age of the great Mughal a glorious era in Medieval Indian History. In the galaxy of the rulers of India the Mughal Emperors stands out eminent for their active and sincere interest in the welfare of their subjects. Their autocratic power was not only geared in the extension of the frontiers of their empire but also in foreign interest in their subjects. Natural Calamities from time immemorial have been occurring in different parts of the world in their various forms such as famines, inundation, and excessive rains, earthquakes fires and epidemics. These calamities not only brings in their train immense miseries and suffering to the masses but also badly disrupt

their socio-economic life and put great strain on the administrative machinery of the state as well.

The story of calamities is as old and thrilling as the story of man. It began just as the society came into being. Calamities in general may broadly be classified under two heads natural calamities and man-made calamities. My article deals with natural calamities especially focus on epidemics in Mughal period. At presently we fight against Covid 19 epidemics see not even India but also all over world man become helpless before Nature fury and there is no way to escape the irreparable devastation and losses caused by the nature.

Natural calamities can be divided into several types famines, inundation, and excessive rains, earthquakes fires and epidemics. Kautilya in his Arthashastra mentioned that “Fire, disease, famine, rats, wild animal, serpents and evil-spirits these are the eight great calamities of divine origin”<sup>3</sup>In the era of Ancient and Medieval period of India people believe in divine power which is control the whole natural circle and people in his country usually regard the natural calamities as a divine punishment. They believe that they occur, when God becomes angry with the people at their sinful acts vices, crimes and ill treatment to one another. He expressed his anger through famines, excessive rains and inundations, fires, earthquake and pestilences. Kautilya also suggested the worship of the river in case it is flooded. Likewise he lays down that people should worship Indra of in the case of famine, Agni in the case of fire and Varuna in the case of flood.<sup>4</sup>people of medieval India believed that the natural calamities were also due to the influences of the ominous stars. Whenever a comet appeared the astrologers predicted a famine. They considered natural calamities to be supernatural rather than a natural phenomenon and so in order to get rid of them they performed rituals and worship to nullify the influences of the ominous stars or appease the angry gods and goddesses.

### **Hypothesis:**

1. In Medieval India there are big Natural calamities.
2. Natural Calamities influences the course of history of the different countries of the world at all time.



3. Natural calamities directly or indirectly tell upon the socio, economic condition of particular area or country.

**Objectives:**

1. To focus on natural calamities during the medieval India especially on Mughal period
2. To study the measures adopted to fight the natural calamities by Mughal emperor.
3. To study the effects of the natural calamities on the society, Economic and Administration system of Mughal ruler.

Before we start the study of epidemics in Mughal period it is necessary to lightly focus on condition of the society of medieval India. because society are divided so many groups .During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries about 85 percent of India populations lived in rural areas main features of rural society in the country excluding tribal areas was its highly stratified nature. People were divided and grouped on the basis of their resident status, caste and position as office holders. While there were considerable difference in their material status, material situation was not a primary factor in fixing their position in rural society. In the beginning of the medieval India we found some epidemic background in sultanate period, In India also such natural calamities did occur from time o time. Tradition and history have recorded on several occasions practically the whole country except a few provinces, felt the impact of such a scourge. Million people were badly affected and a considerable number of them perished these natural calamities were generally caused by failure of the monsoon, excessive rainfall, floods fires or pestilences etc. In India people suffered much due to the occurrence of numerous epidemics like Plague, Cholera, and small-pox, malaria and hill fever. In medieval India many people affected and fell victims to these fatal diseases there are reference cholera, malaria, plague, small pox in the Vedas, Upanishadas, Jatakas of ancient India.

During the Turko-Afghan period, the people suffered much due to the outbreak of so many epidemics. The region of the slave and Khalji dynasty was not only totally immune from the devastating effects of epidemics through during their days these were not so serve. The founder of the Mughal emperor Babur who defeated the Ibrahim Lodhi in Panipat in 1526 then he become

the ruler of India. We found lots of reference regarding the Geographical condition of India. Babur write in his *Baburnama* “The year 1526 was very hot, violent and cholera winds struck people down in heaps together masses began to die off. During the age of Babur epidemic of malaria broke out in India that time Babur eldest son Humayun was effected by malaria then Babur shifted to his son at Agra so that the court physicians might attend to him but it was declared that case is negative. The return of the Mughal to Delhi had not ended the Afghan danger and the Mughal came an ace of being thrown out of India again following the death of Humayun the Akbar become of ruler of Mughal dynasty. Akabar was the great ruler of Mughal dynasty in 1556 at the time most of the cities of Northern India were affected with plague and a large number of people died of it. In 1575 again Gujrat suffered badly from this scourge it is longer for six months.

A contemporary historian Munammad Arif Qandhari rightly observed “The plague occurred not only on account of the contamination of water and air but also on because of misrule and oppression of the Afghan the Abyssinians and the Mirza, The calamities was wide spread of all over Gujarat. In this period the mortality was very high an average near about hundred carts loads dead bodies were everyday taken out for burial from the city of Ahmadabad, Broach, Pattan, and Baroda in fact all over the Gujarat spread this epidemic. In the same year Munim Khan was the in charge of Bengal this province also affected by plague even climate of Bengal is very Unhealthy even normal days routine of Bengal province is very difficult to common people there had been always various kind of disease. Every day the news of death of the amir and the servants reached to the Munim Khan. Akbar courtyard is well known to all over India AbulFazal was the famous historians noted in his *Akbarnama*. He gives list of officer who died of it at Gaur after their return from Orissa

The most important among them were Munim Khan, Haji Khan, Hayder Khan, Mirza Quali khan, Ashraf Khan was died in the Epidemics. After that the first the quarter of 1616 A.D Plague broke out in some places of Northern India and gradually it became more violent. These dreadful calamities first overtook some parganas of the Punjab and spread up to Lahore as a result of which a large number of people gradually lost their lives. During the period of Jahangir when the Jahangir was stay at Ahmadabad heavy mortality among the Indian and Europeans this epidemic

was the same as the so called influenza which caused a heavy loss of life in India in 1618. During the region of Shahjahan when a severe famine was ravaging the whole of the Deccan, the people suffering were further aggravated by the outbreak of plague which came in the wake of the famine. Shahjahan emperor tried his level best to relieve the sufferings of the people caused by famine but he could not do anything to save the people from the havocs of the Deccan. In 1660 on the occasion of the Aurangzeb accession to the throne a terrible bubonic plague a virulent disease not less dangerous than the famine due to the epidemic the moral of the Imperial became low.

In 1662 terrible epidemic known as hill-fever (Jwarparbat) broke out in Mathurapur. In Mughal period was not free India from the scourge of small pox also during 1670-1677 Calicut witnessed the outbreak of small pox which frightened the carpenter away and necessitated the hauling of boats to another place where workmen could be available even some of the domestic servants of English factory contracted the disease and at least three of them died. An illness akin to malaria was responsible for intense headache and the death of many. In 1687 during the siege of Golkunda by Mughal Soldiers that time Plague broke out again and nearly depopulated Hyderabad and also caused havoc in the royal camp. When Aurangzeb returned to Bijapur in October – November 1688 a deadly bubonic plague broke out in the city and the camp. It killed about near about the thousands of people are affected including the royal family and Nobel family. Jaswantsing son, Mohmaddiraj and other Nobels died. Plague caused as much loss of livestock as of human beings. The loss of army – horses was affected from the plague.

## **Conclusion**

The natural calamities have impact on the all sector of income sources of the country like society, economy, agriculture trade and commerce, employment, industries, life of style of human being life is disturbed of all human kind. Every calamities immediate effect on the economy system. Natural calamities occur agriculture is badly affected and production of food grains and raw materials is much lowered down. Prices of things is high up and it is a create difficult condition for common people. The natural calamities impact of every root of economic stability of a country. In India agriculture is the main source of livelihood and so the most valuable asset



of the people. Agriculture provide all types employment of the bulk of the people and it is the main source of the national income of our country even in the medieval India agriculture is the principal source of the state. more than the population of India is live in the rural area there life depend on Agriculture. Adam Smith a prominent thinker expresses his view on the agriculture “Agriculture is the source of all wealth of the state and the wealth of all the citizens”.

Natural calamities have been influencing the course of history of the different countries of the world. In the medieval India there was no higher judiciary system to control the emperor he was free from every agency nobody can asked the any questions or complaint against him because king was supreme of all authority. Mughal emperor was not answerable to any one of the kingdom. But some of the ruler from the Mughal dyansty was took all possible measures to check the occurrence of these calamities. The ruler form the Mughal dynasty tried their best to fight again the all natural calamities, they provide the free distribution of food grains, reduction of taxes, construction and repair of the roads, digging and repair of canals ponds, well tanks, making administrative changes adopting new economy policy, bringing waste land under the cultivation, arranging the facility for migrate people. All the mughal ruler from Babur to Aurangzeb attached much importance to the adoption of relief measures and through them tried their best to relief the affected people. As per AbulFazal the famous courtier of the Akbar he said Akbar had human attitude towards the suffering masses of all castes and creeds. This is evident in 1583 Akbar opened free kitchens. This years World health day comes at a time when the world is engaged in a precedence battle against the Covid 19, which has claimed thousands of lives so far. It is occasions to remind humanity to not only maintain personal hygiene but also not to temper with nature. It is time for all Indians and every global citizen to become proactive warriors in the Cause of protecting nature so that the planet.

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