Development of Trade in the Seventeenth Century

Gujarat and Northwestern India

In northwestern India, one of the major features of this period was the growth in the entrepôt character of Surat and a consequent devaluation of other ports in the neighbourhood to a position of its satellites and feeder ports. Thus ports of varying degrees of importance such as Diu, Broach, Chaul, Dabhol and others declined in their participation in oceanic trade, losing much of this to Surat. This was the result of a number of factors such as the decline of the Portuguese, the entry into the trade of the English and the Dutch, deliberate Mughal policy of the development of Surat as an outstanding emporium, and the further growth of the trade from western India to west Asia as a major phenomenon of this period. These factors operated at various times and had major effects on Indian Ocean trade and should be considered in detail.

Surat's role as the major port of outlet for oceanic trade in this region meant that the major export commodities, cotton piece-goods and indigo, had to be brought into Surat from neighbouring ports. Thus Surat became the chief wholesale market for textiles. This is seen in the failure of attempts by European traders to establish factories in neighbouring ports such as Broach. Similarly, in respect of import goods, Surat was the chief distributing point for such goods along the coast and into the interior. It played a similar role for the re-export of goods not produced in this region. The chief among these was pepper which came to Surat along the west coast from Canara and Malabar where a few Surat merchants had control of the market. Of similar nature was the role played by Surat as a redistributing point for southeast Asian goods, spices and tin but this was a role that was to decline after the 1620's for reasons to be noted later.

The decline of Portuguese seapower in the western Indian Ocean and the gradual loss of many of their settlements along the west coast of India gave an initial fillip to Indian trade. Ports under Indian jurisdiction whose trade had paid protection costs and customs dues to the Portuguese were now freed of these costs. This liberation of Indian trade had its effects in an increase in the volume of trade to the Persian Gulf and southern Arabia. In
In the seventeenth century, the Persian Gulf, Indian ships sailed into Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. When the Portuguese lost Hormuz in 1622, the Gulf trade fell into the hands of the English and Indian merchants. The English took full advantage of this situation and became completely free from the Persian Gulf, Hormuz, and the east coast. The Portuguese also grew in importance, especially in Hormuz, the export of Indian Ocean trade. However, as the focus shifted to the trade between the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, the trade in the Gulf was transferred to the English and Indian merchants. This led to the decline of the Persian Gulf in the seventeenth century, especially in Hormuz. The participation of the two Companies, English and Dutch, in the growth of this trade, especially in Hormuz, and the transfer of trade to the Persian Gulf, was significant. As a result, the trade route led to the decline of the Persian Gulf and the rise of Hormuz. The participation of the two Companies, English and Dutch, in the growth of this trade, especially in Hormuz, and the transfer of trade to the Persian Gulf, was significant.
The Seventeenth Century

The Seventeenth Century was a time of great change and exploration. European powers expanded their influence across the globe, and Indian nations faced new challenges and opportunities. This period saw significant developments in science, technology, and commerce, as European powers sought to establish a foothold in the New World.

In 1600, the English East India Company was founded, marking the beginning of Britain's involvement in India. The company's activities were not limited to trade; it also played a role in the political and social landscapes of the region. The company's presence in India was not always peaceful, and it often found itself at odds with local rulers and other European powers.

The Seventeenth Century was also a time of scientific and cultural exchange. European explorers and traders brought new ideas and technologies to India, while Indian scholars and artists explored the possibilities of cross-cultural dialogue. This period witnessed the rise of a new class of educated Indians who sought to incorporate European ideas into their own cultural practices.

The Seventeenth Century ended with a series of events that would shape the course of Indian history. The Mughal Empire, which had dominated much of the Indian subcontinent for centuries, began to decline in the late 17th century, paving the way for a new era of political and social change. The legacy of the Seventeenth Century would continue to influence India's development for generations to come.
tions with the Bijapore ports of Vingurla and Rajapur and to the south the old ties with Mangalore, Calicut, Cannanore and other Malabar ports were maintained. With the decline of Portuguese hold on the pepper-producing states of Malabar, Surat merchants dominated the pepper exports. Surat became the major exporting point for Malabar pepper to west Asia.

On the east coast of India, Surat had a strong trading connection with Masulipatnam. Through this link, western Indian and west Asian goods were brought to Masulipatnam and from there Coromandel and Bengal goods were taken to Surat. Later, direct links were forged between Surat and Bengal, a major growth area in the seaborne trade of India. Bengal and Bengal silks, muslins, sugar, rice, other food grains, and edible oils were imported into Surat, much of this for re-export to west Asia. In return, goods of Bengal and Bengal were said to be of western Indian origin.