

Section II: MEDIEVAL INDIA

Sectional President's Address

INDIAN OCEAN IN THE SHAPING OF LATE MEDIEVAL INDIA

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Madam President, Respected Scholars and fellow delegates.

I am extremely grateful to the executive committee of the Indian History Congress for asking me to preside over the Medieval Indian History Section of its seventy-fourth annual session. It is a huge and unexpected honour that comes from my fellow-workers. I feel highly elated and humbly thank you for the trust reposed in me. I take this less as recognition of my academic achievements than as a gesture of encouragement from the great national forum of historians in India.

In this address I would like to place before this august assembly a subject on which I have been working for the last several years. As the title suggests, my study looks into the way the Indian Ocean circuits shaped the nature and contours of late Medieval India. The frequent movement of people, commodities and ideas through the Oceanic space particularly after 1500 emitted certain type of forces and dynamics that helped to break the relative isolation of the hinterland processes from coastal economy and bridge as well as integrate the vast bulk of production process of terrestrial India with the exchange processes of maritime India by creating subtle channels of connectivity and linkages cutting across various borders of polity, languages and ethnicities.¹

The beginnings of this processes were perceptible in a feeble way with the circulatory processes initiated by the Jews linked with Cairo Geniza who established commercial networks from Broach in Gujarat up to coastal south east India from 10th century onwards,² followed by the setting up of the trading-cum-religious networks of the Rasulids of Yemen in the 13th century from coastal Gujarat to Coromandel³ and later the al-Karimi networks in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries stretching from Mamluk Egypt to coastal western India.⁴ In most cases the primary and secondary production centres catering to the commercial needs of these maritime trade centres were located in their immediate vicinity and the connectivities of the latter with the deep interior were obstructed by rigid boundaries of regional polity, language and hurdles of wilderness. Consequently, the impact of overseas trade on the economic activities in the interior and remote hinterland was relatively and very often negligible in many parts of India until 1500.

I

By 1500 the waters of Indian Ocean experienced intense process of commodity circulation thanks to the trigger given to commercial expansion with the entry of the Portuguese and later the Dutch as well as with the increase in the consumer classes in the Asian gun powder empires like the Safavids of Persia, the Mings of China and

the Mughals of India. Meanwhile the eastward movement of the Ottomans from 1516 onwards to procure cargo from the Indian Ocean brought them to the ports of Red Sea, Persian Gulf and even to the Gujarati port of Diu (1538) and the Kerala port of Vizhinjam (1538).⁵ Thanks to increasing demand for cargo from these five different directions, there was an equally stimulated effort to expand production, which eventually intensified connectivities between the newly emerging hinterland and centres of exchange.

During the first hundred years after the entry of the Europeans in India, spices formed the major item of maritime trade so much so that it could rightly be called 'the century of spices'. Of course, textile trade from Coromandel with South East Asia and from Gujarat and Konkan with East Africa also happened in a considerable degree during this time period; but it had only a secondary role to play in the 16th century India. Textiles were taken by the Portuguese private traders from Coromandel to South East Asia mainly for procuring its spices, while the textiles from Konkan and Gujarat were carried to East Africa for procuring the Menomotapan gold, besides ivory and slaves, and the East African gold was used heavily for financing the spice trade of the Lusitanians from Malabar.⁶

Initially the Portuguese used to take from the pepper ports of Kerala about 1,04,920 kgs of pepper,⁷ which increased to 30,000 quintals by 1505/6,⁸ whose value was around 79,800 *cruzados* in Malabar; however in Portugal it fetched for them 6,60,000 *cruzados*.⁹ The difference out of this transaction was 580,200 *cruzados*, which went to the Portuguese as profit, but after having deducted protection cost and other expenditure related to shipping and transportation. In 1509 the volume of pepper taken to Lisbon from the spice ports of Kerala like Cochin, Quilon and Cannanore was 40,000 quintals, having the value of 106,400 *cruzados* in Kerala; however its value in Lisbon was 8,80,000 *cruzados*. This shows the magnitude of value of Kerala's trade at this point of time. However, during the period between 1510 and 1580 the volume of pepper-trade fluctuated: it stood between 15,000 and 20,000 quintals, whose market value was between 39,900 *cruzados* and 53,200 *cruzados* respectively in Kerala.¹⁰ Recent researches have shown that Portugal was not the only destination to which pepper was flowing from the ports of Kerala during this period. Through Marakkar traders it entered the Red Sea ports of the Ottomans and the markets of Saffavid Persia rather regularly.¹¹ In 1520s when the total production of pepper was estimated to be about 16,000 *bhars*¹² (i.e., 26,69,280 kilograms), out of which the Portuguese managed to take only about 20,000 to 30,000 quintals of pepper annually to Lisbon, from where it was further taken to Antwerp for further distribution in different parts of Europe.¹³ This formed only 40% of the total produce of pepper. Out of the remaining, about 5,00,490 kilograms i.e., 19% of the total produce went through the ghat-routes to Coromandel ports and 25% for trade in different Asian markets including the ports of Persian Gulf and Red Sea, while about 4,17,075 kilograms i.e., 16% of the total production was used for domestic consumption.¹⁴

The ever-increasing demand from the Asian markets of Ming China, Saffavid Persia, the Mughals and the Ottomans, along with that of the Portuguese intensified the expansion of pepper cultivation in Kerala and south Canara. In 1587, Ferdinand Cron, the commercial agent of the German mercantile houses of the Fuggers and the Welsers in Cochin, writes that about 3,00,000 quintals of pepper were produced yearly in India,¹⁵ which when compared with the figure of 1520s shows that there

was an increase of 600 % in pepper production in the hinterland of Kerala during the gap of 60 years.¹⁶ The significant increase in pepper production is further supported by Francisco da Costa, who spent 35 years as the Portuguese official for pepper trade in Cochin, and according to his calculation the total production of pepper in 1603 was 1,00,000 bhars or 2,58,000 quintals.¹⁷ Though pepper production increased in the hinterland by 600%, only 3. 10 % of the total produce went to Europe for trade by the end of the 16th century, while 15.50 % was consumed domestically.¹⁸ The remaining pepper that was about 81. 40% was transhipped to the markets of the Mughals, Ming China, Saffavid Persia and the Ottomans.¹⁹

An increase in the maritime trade of Kerala was followed by expansion of pepper cultivation into the interior part of Kerala and consequent flow of wealth into the pepper hinterland in an unprecedented way, which in turn accelerated the hinterland-coastal connectivities. The value of annual import trade of Cochin through the channels of intra-Asian trade in the last quarter of sixteenth century was 7,34,900 pardaos.²⁰ Following the unprecedented flow of wealth to hinterland because of intensified trade, the junctional points of such trade became centres of relative power-concentration, causing several secondary and satellite power units to emerge in the hinterland as a parallel development to the formation of “the maritime city-states” of Calicut and Cochin on the waterfront. The most important secondary political unit among them was Vadakkenkur with its capital at Thodupuzha, which being the heartland of pepper production was called the pepper-kingdom by the Portuguese and the Dutch.²¹ The ruler of Vadakkenkur with his capital at Thodupuzha, which is located about 80 kilometers in the interior, used to receive an annual remuneration of 72,000 reis from the Portuguese for being their ally and ensuring regular supply of pepper to Cochin for their trade.²² This is also indicative of the nature of connectivity that evolved between the centres of pepper production in the interior and centres of its exchange on the sea front.

The flow of bullions and later copper to the hinterland of Kerala as pepper money from the Atlantic exerted a considerable impact on its societal, economic and cultural processes. Though gold and silver were imported initially as pepper money, the highest demand was for copper, which was imported about 4000 quintals in the first decade and 6000 quintals in the second decade of the sixteenth century.²³ A large chunk of this imported copper was consumed in the south itself, where it was used in a big way for the manufacturing of temple bells, bronze/copper utensils like chembu, kuttakam, uruli, varpu etc., of the aristocratic families and bhojanasalas or feeding centres of temples. Concomitant to this process was the unprecedented dissemination of the artisan groups like copper-smiths and bronze smiths in the major centres of trade and religion in Kerala.

Simultaneously the immense flow of wealth from maritime trade to the hinterland and the consequent monetization stimulated literary and cultural productions in an unprecedented way in the inland parts of Kerala, which are necessitated by the new forms of bhakti tradition disseminated through the *Adhyatma Ramayanam* of Ezhuthachan, (1495-1575)²⁴ and *Jnanapana* of Poonthanam (1547-1640).²⁵ The waves of this new bhakti tradition started spreading from the low-lying paddy cultivating zones to upland regions where spice-cultivation used to take place and where new forms of wealth started reaching from intensified spice-trade. In 1580s about 1, 70, 000 *cruzados*

used to enter the markets of Kerala annually as pepper money.²⁶ In 1629 gold coins worth 2,884 000 *reis* and uncoined gold worth 15, 184 000 *reis*, besides silver worth 29, 481000 *reis* reached the port of Cochin as pepper money.²⁷ A major share of this wealth flowed to the pepper-producing upland regions of Kerala. The mass copying, writing and circulation of the new bhakti literature by the scribes to meet the growing needs of the expanding devotional space of Kerala involved a huge labour process that was sustained by the surplus from intensified pepper trade and spice cultivation. In the midst of these new developments the deities of upland regions like Sasthavu and Muthappan, whose sacred shrines and sites were then located in the upland regions on the periphery of the early Vaishnavite and Saivite movements, started experiencing radical transformations with new definitions and new meanings. Sasthavu, which was a deity often linked with Bodhisattva cult of Buddhist tradition, was now presented as Harihara Suthan or son of Vishnu and Siva in the midst of these new bhakti developments, providing a converging point for both Saivite and Vaishnavite traditions in the spice producing upland regions, while Muthappan another deity in the uplands of northern Malabar was increasingly depicted as incarnation of Krishna.²⁸

II

From seventeenth century onwards textiles formed the major cargo taken for trade from the various maritime centres of exchange, particularly with the rise of Europe as a new market for Indian textiles. With the 'Indian cloth started functioning as currency in Africa, a wage good in South East Asia, and a fashion article in Europe'²⁹ we find growing regional specialization in textile production happening particularly in the vicinity of the ports of Bengal, Coromandel, Gujarat and Konkan

The Konkan ports used to provide maritime outlets to the hinterland products of Vijayanagara and Bijapur kingdoms in the sixteenth century. By 1550 the income from customs duty of Goa was 68000 *pardaos*. Since the customs duty then levied was 4.5%, the actual value of trade then happening in this port was around 15,11,096 *pardaos*.³⁰ However by 1571 the income from customs house of Goa was 1,18,000 *pardaos*, out of which tax income from textile trade in Goa was 12110 *pardaos* and from silk trade was 4200 *pardaos*.³¹ Textiles reached Goa mainly from across the ghat, particularly from Bijapuri territories as well as from the terrains of erstwhile Vijayanagara kingdom. Belgaum and Darwar were the main cotton producing enclaves in the kingdom of Bijapur.³² In 1587 Ferdinand Cron, the agent of the German business houses of the Fuggers and the Welsers, noticed about 800 to 1000 oxen moving between Goa and the hinterland in Deccan procuring cargo.³³ Through the same route a portion of the wealth derived from Goa's maritime trade also flowed back into the hinterland either as return cargo or as bullions. Sometimes cloth was brought to Goa from Gujarati production centres for further transshipment to East Africa. In 1611 the price of the cloth item *bertangi* in Gujarat was 100 *xerafins*; but it was priced at 200 *xerafins* at Goa, and 620 *xerafins* at Menomotapa,³⁴ which information is also indicative of the levels of profit accruing at different markets. In 1634 about 14,000 *corjas* (equivalent to 700 *bahars* or 2,80,000 pieces) of cloth that were bought at Goa for 2,64,000 *xerafins* were sold at 1,270,000 *xerafins* in Mozambique.³⁵ This

wealth was then conveniently converted into Menomotapan gold, or slaves and ivory, which the Portuguese *casados* brought back to Goa.

The Portuguese ports of Goa, Chaul, Bassein, Diu and Daman were the main doors through which textiles from the Deccan were taken to East Africa to procure gold, slaves and ivory. Adjacent to these ports there evolved a long chain of weaving centres supplying different varieties of cloth to meet the demand from Africa. Immediately after the Portuguese occupation of Chaul from the sultan of Ahmednagar in 1521³⁶ attempts were made to connect its textile trade with the markets of East Africa. In 1530s it was decided that the customs duty on the various categories of cloth taken to Mozambique and Sofala should be paid at Chaul, where the African ivory was also to be sold in return. This was to give economic stimulus to the emerging settlement of the Portuguese in Chaul, whose traders obtained textiles from the various weaving villages of Deccan. The connectivity with the weaving centres in the Deccan helped the Portuguese to dispatch annually two fleets from Chaul to the ports of east Africa with textiles in the second half of the sixteenth century,³⁷ and later the number of vessels carrying textiles from Chaul to Mozambique varied between one to three.³⁸

However the textiles from the Konkan played only a secondary role in the textile circuit of the times, mainly because of the fact that they were often viewed as inferior to the cloth of Gujarat.³⁹ Through the port of Chaul textiles along with steel from Deccan were also taken to Persia and Yemen by mid-seventeenth century.⁴⁰ By 1610 the annual income from the customs collection of Chaul was 31,200 *xerafins*, which meant that the total value of its trade was about 6, 92, 650 *xerafins*.⁴¹ As the major share of its trade was textiles, a considerable chunk of this wealth coming as profit went into the hinterland from where textiles were procured. In the seventeenth century most of the ports of Konkan through which textiles were taken to overseas markets were controlled by the Portuguese, who bagged straight 4.5% as customs duty. A substantial share of the profit went into the hands of a wide variety of merchants, out of whom the Portuguese *casado* traders stood prominent, followed by the Saraswat Brahmins of Goa, the *bantias* of Diu and the Muslim merchants of Daman.

The Bijapuris for long kept Dhabul as their main maritime trade centre, through which textiles produced in Belgaum and Kolhapur were transhipped to the markets of Saffavid Persia. In fact the land routes from the textile production centres of Belgaum and Kolhapur to Dabhul were under the protection of the Adilshah.⁴² Later by 1680s with the recurring wars between the Mughals and the Marathas to control the textile hinterland of Deccan and with the erasure of the Bijapuris from the scene, Dhabul started declining as a port and clothes from its vast feeder hinterlands began to move either to Coromandel ports, particularly after the establishment of Maratha rule in Tanjavur under Ekoji or to Surat controlled by the Mughals.⁴³

The major maritime outlets for Gujarati textiles in the seventeenth century were Diu, Daman and Surat. In 1574 the customs houses of Diu and Daman were auctioned for an amount of 1,34, 000 *pardaos*,⁴⁴ which would mean that the actual value of trade happening in these ports was about 29,77,780 *pardaos*. With the increasing flow of Gujarati textiles from Daman and Diu to East Africa, where the Portuguese *casado* traders and *bantias* sold them for procuring gold, ivory and slaves, the value of trade in these Gujarati ports increased in an unprecedented way. In Diu it rose to 54, 27,900 *xerafins* in 1610, while in Daman it was 12, 25, 440 *xerafins* and in

Bassein, which was one of the most active trading centres on the Konkan, it was 31,99,680 *xerafins*.⁴⁵

Gold from Menomotapa formed the major value-intense commodity that was taken to India by these traders as return cargo.⁴⁶ Vitorino Magalhães Godinho holds the view that by 1591 the gold export from Southeast African markets was about 7.16 kilograms.⁴⁷ Recent studies have shown that the annual average of gold exported out of Southeast Africa was 1000 kilograms around 1600, out of which 830 kilograms were taken to Goa.⁴⁸ The trade agents and Indian brokers of the Saraswat Brahmins of Goa and the banias of Diu used to take textiles to the markets along the river Zambesi or to Sofala for retail trade. There were also traders from Diu, operating often as agents of Cambay merchants, who used to take as many as 40 dhows to Mrima coast and the various Swahili towns, where they conducted trade with the help of their African collaborators.⁴⁹ In the interior markets of Africa the Indian merchants and their partners used to sell Gujarati textiles on the basis of the length of elephant tusks and invariably the ivory pieces that they brought back to coastal western India were relatively very long and of superior quality. By the end of the sixteenth century the volume of African ivory taken to India was about 40,000 to 50,000 pieces.⁵⁰ Melloe Castro estimated in 1753 that textiles and other Indian wares that moved to Mozambique from Diu, Daman and Goa were worth 6,00,000 *cruzados*, while the Mozambican wares reaching India were of the value of 2000,000 *cruzados*.⁵¹ As the investment was done in the form of commodities and the profit was to be assessed on the basis of the value of the return cargo, the profit for Indian merchants from the outcome of this African trade was around 334%.⁵²

The Mughal port of Surat turned out to be one of the biggest outlets for the cloth produced in the hinterland of Gujarat, Deccan and the Northern India.⁵³ With the Akbar's introduction of new technologies in the manufacturing of cotton and silken cloths aimed at quality innovation, skill up-gradation and making Indian pieces excel the Persian and European ones,⁵⁴ there was an eventual acceleration in the process of textile production catering to the taste of the consumer classes of the Ottomans, the Saffavids and the Europeans. The foreign experts were used to teach the Indian weavers about the method of quality innovation in cloth-making, at times mixing the Iranian, European and Chinese patterns with Indian. The cities of Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Lahore and Ahmedabad became the laboratories where these technological and quality-innovating experiments were frequently done, causing them eventually to become the major pockets for craft-production.⁵⁵ As per the details obtained from 1624, the Dutch used to invest about 2,46,050 florins annually for procuring various types of textiles from Surat.⁵⁶ The huge investment in the textile trade of Surat by the English, the French, the Challebis linked with the Ottoman markets⁵⁷ and the Yaariba merchants of Oman, who also had a fortified warehouse at Surat in 1690s,⁵⁸ caused it to evolve as the chief junctional point of major commodity streams in the Indian Ocean. Bullions formed a significant component of return cargo to the ports of Gujarat. The bullions and other cargo carried by the imperial ship of Akbar in 1577 was worth the value of 6,00,000 *cruzados*,⁵⁹ while those of Rahimi, actually belonging to Jahangir's mother Maryam -uz Zamani, was worth 1,00,000 pound.⁶⁰ During the period between 1585 and 1595, which corresponds to the period immediately after Akbar's incorporation of coastal Gujarat into Mughal economy, about 246.29 tons of silver reached the mint of Ahmedabad, which rose to 290.72 tons of silver during the

period between 1596 and 1605.⁶¹ This is also reflective of the value of import trade of Gujarat.

The intensification of maritime trade in textiles along coastal western India was followed by the extension of weaving activities to new geographies and the consequent intensification of cotton cultivation in the immediate neighbourhood of these maritime enclaves. The inventories of some 121 deceased people of Ottoman Damascus for the period between 1686 and 1717, shows that out of 27,313 *piasters* of textiles obtained from the various shops of Damascus about 2,092 *piasters* of textiles were of Indian origin. In the recent study of Colette Establet,⁶² it becomes clear that the oft repeated categories of cloth in these inventories were *alaja* (including Bairoch *alaja* and *alaja* from Dah-l), *atlas*, *sûsi*, *daraya*, *betilles*, *bindal* and *yamani* (including Bairoch *yamani*),⁶³ which in turn also throw light on the different geographies of specialized textile production in India from where these goods moved to the Ottoman market of Damascus. The textile hinterland extended from the interior of Punjab to Karnataka on the west and from Bengal to Tamilnadu on the east. The proliferation of weaving activities to the interior of India coincided with the expansion of cotton cultivation to larger areas like Berar, Darwar, Belgaum, southern Maharashtra, Aurangabad, Burhanpur, Gujarat, Lahore, Multan, Ajmer, Allahabad and Awadh on the west.⁶⁴ The stimulation in maritime trade followed by intensification of weaving activities acted as magnets that attracted more and more labourers from the country side to the new types of occupations related to the cotton processing, weaving and dyeing activities, besides causing some to switch over to the cultivation of cotton, which in turn intensified the hinterland –coast connectivity.

III

Nagapattinam, Mylapore, Pulicat and Masulipatnam were the principal textile ports of Coromandel.⁶⁵ In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese *casado* traders used to take textiles from these ports to South East Asia on a regular basis to procure spices, particularly cloves, mace and nutmeg which they in turn supplied to Lisbon-bound vessels of the Portuguese crown. Initially the Chetty merchants from Pulicat, who had to face tough competition from the Gujarati traders bringing cloth from Cambay and Chaul, used to pump Melaka with textiles.⁶⁶ In 1514 the value of textile trade between Coromandel and Melakka was 100, 000 *cruzados*⁶⁷ and this as per the value of the early seventeenth century meant tentatively about two million yards of cloth.⁶⁸ The large volume of trade in textiles went hand in hand with intensified process of textile manufacturing in the neighbourhood of these ports. This led to unlocking of labour and consequent migration of artisans from the environs of temples, where cloth manufacturing used to take place earlier, to coastal enclaves of the merchants in the vicinity of the major maritime trading centres.⁶⁹ Thanks to these new developments by 1600 about 4, 10,000 pieces of textiles worth the value of 4,30,000 Spanish dollars were taken annually from the ports of Coromandel to South East Asia.⁷⁰ The flow of textiles to Southeast Asia increased to 17,60, 000 pieces by 1641, whose value was around 17,60,000 Spanish dollars.⁷¹ The large flow of cotton cloth to Southeast Asia further accelerated demand for more textiles, which acting as magnets attracted the artisans to move more and more from the inland regions towards the coast in the vicinity of the ports like Nagapattinam, Porto Novo, Devanampattinam, Kunimedu, Mylapore and Pulicat. Recent studies have shown that by sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries, 80% of the weaving centres were in the immediate neighbourhoods of major ports of Coromandel.⁷²

The growth of textile trade through Masulipatnam coincides with the consolidation of political power of the Qutb Shahis, who had shifted their base to Hyderabad by this point of time, and the subsequent integration of eastern Deccan with the maritime economy. In the beginning of seventeenth century, textiles and other cargo from Northern Coromandel moved to Mocha, Achin, Arakan, Pegu and Tennasserim.⁷³ The demand from the various European commercial companies and the trade connectivity with Saffavid Persia, particularly after the fall of Portuguese Hormuz in 1622, raised the production of painted chintz from Masulipatnam in a big way. By 1682, the English exported about 4,579,000 yards and the Dutch 4,844,500 yards of textiles from Masulipatnam.⁷⁴ The fact that some traders of Masulipatnam came from such a distant places like Sayamapeente (about 208 miles away in the interior), Nagulavancha (located about 117 miles away from the port) and Wentapalem (distant by about 104 miles)⁷⁵ shows the intensity of connectivity between the port and the economy of distant hinterlands. In interior places like Nagulavancha, out of 690 households, 170 households were involved in weaving and related activities, while 130 households were engaged in trade, which together formed 43% of the total households.⁷⁶ Eventually the banjaras, who seem to have entered Deccan in a big way with the army of Shah Jahan in 1630 as carriers of provisions, used to take cotton from distant cotton growing enclaves in the Deccan to the weaving centres along the coast and in return they carried salt back into the interior, a process which intensively activated the market mechanisms of the hinterland.⁷⁷

Bengal having the specialization for producing luxury cotton, silk and mixed cloth produced fabrics more for the luxury markets of Europe than for the Indian Ocean societies that mostly needed low-cost fabrics. Sonargaon in Dhaka produced the best quality muslins. Between 1580s onwards the good quality muslins like *khasas* and *malmals*, besides silks, were sent frequently from Bengal ports to Europe via overland route or Cape route.⁷⁸ With the increase in European demand for Bengal fabrics, there was intense proliferation of weaving activities in Bengal with a large number of looms for manufacturing silk and muslin textiles. By late seventeenth century the textile trade of Bengal provided job for about 100,000 people in the manufacturing sector.⁷⁹ In one of the weaving enclaves like Radhanagar alone there were 5000 looms producing silk and mixed textiles with an annual output of 2,40,000 pieces that fetched a total amount of 15 lakhs rupees at an average price of 6¼ rupees per piece.⁸⁰ With the increase in maritime trade and subsequent demand for weaving activities, there was an extension of cotton cultivation in the neighbouring areas like Orissa and Patna.⁸¹

IV

The stimulation in maritime trade along coastal India caused different forms of mercantile organizations and community-based commercial activities to evolve in the principal hubs of trade both on the coast and in the interior. A large number of traders with better organizational capabilities for long distance trade and wider networks in the Indian Ocean as well as in the interior like the Saraswat Brahmins of Goa, the Muslim merchants of Daman and Surat, the Kaphol banias from Diu, Chetties and Komatis from Coromandel, besides the Indo-Portuguese and some of the European private traders began to emerge as merchant capitalists.⁸² From the beginning of

seventeenth century on, the Saraswat Brahmins began to emerge as traders, bankers and revenue farmers in Goa.⁸³ Mangoji Sinay from Salcete took up the right of customs collection on tobacco, silk and cotton being brought to the city,⁸⁴ while Vitula Naique was the *rendeiro* for the collection of customs duty charged at *Passo de Santiago*,⁸⁵ which was the main ford between Goa and the mainland. He also was one of prominent suppliers of saltpeter to the Portuguese. Krishna Sinay and Nana Chati were other prominent *rendeiros* or tax-farmers in the city of Goa in 1640s who were also the leading bankers of the city.⁸⁶ Meanwhile many traders from different cultures started settling down in the city, diluting the Portuguese element in the city. We also find Nana Sinay conducting trade and banking business in the city of Goa as a commercial representative of Gema Bhai Vena operating from Sanguiser near Bombay. Nana Sinay took up the contract to collect customs duties on coral brought to the city in 1655.⁸⁷

By 1750s the traders from the Saraswat Brahmin business families, like the Mhamais, Kushta Sinai Dhempe, Govind Sinai Navelkar, Shaba Sinai, Anta Sinai and Rama Pai, who were involved in transoceanic trade with Brazil, Mozambique and Macao, emerged as merchant capitalists in Goa, where later its capital Panjim was built with the wealth obtained as customs duties from these merchants.⁸⁸ The Saraswat traders used to do their business either as joint stock companies such as Bulla Nayyak, Vitoba Nayyak and Upea Suba. They also had individual firms like that of Mhamai Kamat.⁸⁹ The huge demand for Brazilian tobacco in India made the private traders of Goa frequent Bahia (in Brazil) with Indian wares, including textiles from Kolhapur, Dharwar and Belgaum, Chinese silk obtained from Macao, salt-peter and diamonds. In return, tobacco from Brazil was brought to India, where it was widely used for chewing, smoking and sniffing.

The concept of joint stock companies of Indian merchants for the smooth management of trade probably emerged for the first time in northern Coromandel in the second half of the seventeenth century. It was the Dutch who promoted this idea and the association of merchants of Pulicat was eventually made to become a joint-stock company during the time between 1665-1680. The Dutch soon spread this concept to Masulipatnam, Palikollu, Draksharama, as well as Rajamundry, located in the Godaveri delta.⁹⁰ In Masulipatnam there were four joint-stock companies, in which 58 local merchants took shares worth the value of 300 pagodas per share and invested 21,300 pagodas for conducting trade.⁹¹ The mercantile associations and the locally organized joint-stock companies minimized the power of the producer to decide on the price and quality of his produce.⁹² This model of organizing local merchants into joint stock company was also introduced in Madras by the English, though it later ended up in failure, because of disunity of the merchant community.⁹³ During this period there was a move in Coromandel towards “gradual subjection of producer by the merchant capitalist”, as Kanakalatha Mukund argues.⁹⁴

In 1680 even the Portuguese too worked out an idea of forming a joint-stock company of the banias in Diu for conducting trade with East Africa. Since the Gujarati textiles formed an essential and vital commodity for exchanges in Africa, viceroy Conde de Alvor permitted *mahajan* (the assembly of bania traders) of Diu in 1686 to form a joint-stock company (known as *Companhia de Comercio dos Mazanes*) for the purpose of conducting trade with East Africa. This bania company was allowed to send two or three vessels annually to Mombasa and Melinde from Diu. However

in return, the banias were required to give money to the Portuguese to meet their expenses of wars with the Omanis, which the Portuguese then repeatedly waged along the coast of Konkan and East Africa. Though the monopoly of the Mazanes Association was temporarily suspended in 1693, in 1701 it was again revived by incorporating the mercantile wealth and personnel from Diu, Surat and Cambay.⁹⁵ The commercial company of the banias and the individual merchants from this community began to invest huge capital in East Africa. During the time span between 1723 and 1730 the Portuguese owed an amount of 2,40,000 *cruzados* to four principal Indian traders and this formed 83% of the total public debt of the Portuguese in Mozambique. Between 1745 and 1754 the debt of the *Junta de Comercio* of Mozambique to the banias stood between 3,00,000 to 3,75,000 *cruzados*, suggesting the amount and degree of dependence that the Portuguese activities of Mozambique had on the Indian mercantile capital. Meanwhile, during the same period the customs duty paid in Mozambique by the banias of Diu and Daman for the textiles from Cambay and the return cargo of ivory, slaves and gold rose to 78,000 *cruzados*.⁹⁶ On the same line, the Muslim traders of Daman like Baxira Mucali also pumped Indian mercantile capital to Mozambique in a big way in 1720s.⁹⁷

There may be dozens of other trading groups like the Komatis, the Chuliyas and the Chetties of Coromandel, the Tamil Pattars, the Jews, the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala, the Parsis, the Armenians and the Bohras in Mughal terrains who emerged as merchant magnates at different time periods, thanks to their participation in intensified transmarine commerce. However the saga of success of these merchants or their mercantile organizations as well as institutions had only a short life span because of the monopolistic commercial goals of early colonial powers.⁹⁸ These traders were not merely merchant capitalists in the sense the term was often used, but “collaborative merchant capitalists”, whose economic stature actually depended on their ability to present themselves acceptable and receptive before the early colonial masters and to collaborate with them in their economic and political projects.⁹⁹

V

The maritime circuits in the Indian Ocean played a considerable role in shaping the nature of agricultural activities and the pattern of land-utilization in late medieval India, consequent to which the rural landscape of India began to change considerably. As we had seen earlier in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries cotton was planted wherever it grew as it fetched more profit than food crops. The first ring of geography in the immediate neighbourhood of maritime centres of exchange had the immense pressure to move towards cotton cultivation in the seventeenth century. Even places like Goa which are not conducive for cotton cultivation, also became laboratory for testing the feasibility of cultivating cotton. Due to the high demand for cotton in international markets, cotton saplings were repeatedly planted at different sites in Goa during the period between 1776 and 1794, although the venture was not profitable.¹⁰⁰

An ‘American crop’ that reached India through maritime channels and changed the agrarian scenario of its interior regions was tobacco. It is said to have been introduced in India in the second half of the sixteenth century by a Jesuit priest Luis de Gões, who was the brother of Pero de Gões, donatory of the captaincy of Paraíba do Sul in Brazil.¹⁰¹ Very soon the consumption culture of tobacco spread to different

parts of India, following which it was cultivated in various regions in the vicinity of its major ports. Moreland refers to the availability of tobacco leaves in Gujarat in 1613.¹⁰² In 1620 tobacco was exported from Masulipatnam to Mocha and Arakan.¹⁰³ Francois Bernier refers to the dealers of tobacco in Bengal during the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁰⁴ In the early decades of seventeenth century, Surat- Broach area in Gujarat and Masulipatnam and its hinterland emerged as the principal specialized regions for the cultivation of tobacco.¹⁰⁵ With the wide spread culture of tobacco consumption in India for chewing, smoking and sniffing, the cultivation of tobacco was promoted by the local rulers as a wealth generating mechanism from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards and its cultivation was quickly extended to Bijapur, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Gujarat and south India.¹⁰⁶ Even in Kerala, its cultivation was extended by the Dutch, consequent to which Muttam near Chertalai and Kurunadu near Ernakulam became the major centres of tobacco cultivation promoted by the king of Cochin. It was the Saraswat Brahmin merchants like Perimbala, Wittula Nayak, Wittula Kamat who took up king's tobacco farming in these places in the second half of the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁷ In 1671, the most important source of income for the king of Cochin was tobacco cultivation, which prompted him to ban its cultivation by others.¹⁰⁸

The other plants and crops from America like potato, tomato, chilli, papaya, pine-apple, peanuts, cashew-nuts which eventually transformed the dietary habits of the subcontinent, also reached India through maritime channels.¹⁰⁹ They were initially cultivated in the neighbouring enclaves of European settlements on the coast, from where they were eventually taken to the interior parts of India both through the trails of Christian missionaries and traders. In course of time the demand for these 'American' crops rose so high that their cultivation got quickly extended to the countryside, following which the agrarian landscape of India began to get remarkably changed by the beginning of 19th century. Now no Indian can think of a food item without potato or chilli or tomato.

The food tradition of bread (*pão*) and cakes, besides a variety of culinary culture, that reached India through maritime circuits spread along the length and breadth of the country. The food tradition of *vada-pão* which is very strong in Maharashtra and Konkan regions is suggestive of the merging of the European food culture with Indian food tradition; but the major ingredient is potato that reached India from America, as in the case of samosa of North India. Similarly the Portuguese loan words like *mesa* (table), *cadeira* (chair), *janela* (window), *toalha* (towel), *mestre* or *mestri* (master), *leilão* or *lelam* (auction), *cinzel* or *chinter* (angling rod, chisel), *batalhão* or *pattalam* (regiment), *chave* or *chavi* (key), *cozinha* or *kusini* (kitchen) etc.,¹¹⁰ which are seen in most of Indian languages, reached the interior parts of India through the networks of maritime-inland connectivities realized through the various groups of traders and the Christian missionaries, who actually introduced many of such things over there for the first time.

VI

With the intensification of maritime trade and the consequent increase in secondary production more and more in the interior, the junctional points of major trade routes acquired characteristics of urbanity, where circuits of Sufis and Bhakti movements also used to converge. The merchants, weavers, artisans and craftsmen of these emerging towns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries found their social position

relatively improving with the intensification of production and maritime exchange and with the relatively feeble amount of wealth reaching them as wages. They needed an ideology that would recognize their new social position and assert and legitimize the culture of work, which they happily found in Sufism and Bhakti movements that was spreading to different parts of India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By challenging the Brahminical social order that despised human labour, these heterodox movements made themselves exceptionally acceptable to the various craft-groups and merchants linked with the trade circuits, who in turn sustained the diverse programmes of these religious movements that predominantly addressed their spiritual, social and psychological issues and concerns.¹¹¹

VII

The above discussion shows that there was an unprecedented concentration of wealth in most of the maritime trade centres of India because of the intensification of overseas commerce in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the monopolistic commercial goals of the early colonial powers, which controlled the trade of most of these maritime enclaves and appropriated a major chunk of its profit, did not allow the remaining profit to evenly reach the various Indian economic players involved in production and exchange processes. Depending on the degree of involvement of these economic players in the overseas trade of the early colonial powers, the remaining profit was shared and distributed among them rather unevenly through diverse means, so that a hierarchy of beneficiaries suiting their agenda might operate for them. In places like Goa, Bassein, Daman and Diu, the mainstream maritime trade of the Portuguese declined in the seventeenth century with the advent of the Dutch and the English and in this gap the big Indian merchants like the Saraswat Brahmins, Daman Muslims, and banias emerged to manage the networking between production centres of inland India and the overseas markets; however they had to pay the required amount of customs duty to the Portuguese. In such places, as the sharing of profit with the Portuguese was relatively less when compared to the Dutch and English enclaves, there was an inordinate concentration of wealth in the hands of these Indian merchants, causing them to evolve as merchant capitalists or better “collaborative merchant capitalists” in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These merchant magnates invested their profit for further productive ventures both in India and East Africa. The attempts to procure large bulk of textiles from the interior weaving villages of India for the various markets of Europe, Asia and East Africa, helped to intensify the weaving process in the hinterland, which in turn necessitated the expansion of cotton cultivation to the length and breadth of the country. On the reverse cycle, this led to a process of circulation of wealth from maritime fringes to the interior and through different recycling processes a considerable share of it later reached either the coffers of the state or the religious-cum-social institutions and movements.

However, in places like Kerala, Coromandel and Bengal, where the mainstream maritime trade was conducted by the Dutch, or the English or the French, the Indian traders had only a secondary role to play. The merchants who formed joint-stock companies or the individual merchants in the Coromandel stood mostly as a bridge between the producer and the company, which actually did the large bulk of overseas commerce. Though some of the traders of Coromandel and Bengal were involved in commercial activities with Saffavid Persia and Southeast Asia, they formed only an insignificant strand, when compared with the large bulk of trade of the commercial

companies. The early colonial powers who took into their hands by force the major share of overseas trade of Coromandel and Bengal also appropriated the largest chunk of profit out of it. The chances of Indian merchants in Coromandel for wealth accumulation often rested in their ability to reduce the power of the producer to dictate the price and quality of the produce and their emergence to merchant capitalists happened at the cost of the producer, who was invariably given low wages.

The increase in maritime trade in spices in the sixteenth century accelerated the production process in the interior of Kerala almost 600%, causing many power edifices to emerge at the junctional points of inland trade routes and sustaining the Bhakti movement that entered spice producing upland regions through the devotional works of Ezhuthachan and Poonthanam. The convergence of commodity circuits at the nodal centres of maritime India did not stop at the coastal rim at all; instead they used to go on circulating within terrestrial India as well, breaking the walls of isolation of regions and emitting forces for economically linking otherwise scattered geographies within the subcontinent. The tracks of military expeditions of the period and trails of the traders, weavers, missionaries, sufis and bhakti saints, which at times surprisingly converged at different intersecting points, were also the channels of commodity and wealth movements between coast and hinterland. Circuits of goods went hand in hand with circuits of new crops, people and ideas from the maritime to the inland on an onward cycle and vice versa on a reverse cycle. These circuits, despite the maneuverings of early colonial powers, created interconnectedness between the various regions within the subcontinent, emitting forces and dynamics for a larger cohesion as well as integration and causing shared traditions of production and culture of work to evolve among them. The cumulative benefits of these developments finally merged into the larger processes that eventually helped Aurangzeb to formulate an almost pan-Indian empire in the sub-continent by the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century.

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10. Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin and the Maritime Trade of India*, pp.167:179; 266.
11. Pius Malekandathil, *Maritime India*, pp.112-6.
12. One *bhar* was equivalent to 166.83 kilograms.
13. Marino Sanuto, *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, tom.IV, p.544; tom. XVII, p.191; tom.XXVII, p.641; Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin and the Maritime Trade of India*, pp.166-167; K.S. Mathew, *Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century*, pp.114-129. Though the Portuguese got only 52,459 kilograms of pepper in 1502, the export to Europe increased to 944,262 kilograms of pepper in 1503. In 1517 about 2,309,875 kilograms of pepper and 129,574 kilograms of ginger went to Europe.
14. This percentage-wise estimate is made on the basis of the information given in a document written in the second decade of the sixteenth century. As per this document the total production of pepper was estimated to be about 16,000 *bhars* (one *bhar* is equivalent to 166.83 kilograms) i.e., 26,69,280 kilograms. Out of this, 2500 *bhars* (4,17,075 kilograms) were consumed domestically. About 3000 *bhars* (5,00,490 kilograms) were taken to Coromandel ports through the ghat-route. About 600 *bhars* (1,00,098 kilograms) went to Diu by sea for further distribution in Gujarat and Persian Gulf areas. About 9900 *bhars* (16,51,617 kilograms) went to Europe, Hormuz, the Red sea and the ports of Bengal. Raymundo Antonio de Bulhão Pato, *Cartas de Affonso de Albuquerque*, tom.IV, pp.174-6; M.N. Pearson, *Coastal Western India: Studies from the Portuguese Records*, New Delhi, 1981, pp.27-32.
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21. Antonio Antonio da Silva Rego (ed.) *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa*, vol.III, Lisboa, 1963, p.310; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Les Finances de l'état Portugais des Indes Orientales (1517-1635): Materiaux pour une Etude Structurale et Conjoncturelle*, Paris, 1982, p.306; Diogo do Couto, *Decada XII*, Lisboa, 1778, p.286.
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72. See Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Textiles and Weavers*, p.7; S. Jeyaseela Stephen, *Expanding Portuguese Empire*, p.159.
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78. Niels Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans and Companies: The Structural Crisis in the European-Asian Trade in the early Seventeenth Century*, Copenhagen, 1973, p.166; Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720*, Princeton, 1985, pp.183-6; Sanjay Subramaniam, "Cochin in Decline: 1600-1650: Myth and manipulation in Estado da India", in Roderich Ptak (ed.), *Portuguese Asia: Aspects in History and Economic History*, Stuttgart, 1987, p.65.
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80. Om Prakash, "From market-Determined to Coercion-Based Textile Manufacturing in Eighteenth century Bengal", in Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy (ed.), *How India Clothed the World*, p.240.
81. Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, pp.43-44 note 45.
82. Merchant capitalist here means a social agent who uses whole or a part of the accumulated capital for the generation of not of 'use-values' but of exchange values'.
83. M.N.Pearson, *Coastal Western India*, pp.97-111.
84. Mangoji Sinay was also a *rendeiro* of tobacco, silk and cotton during this period. HAG, *Conselho da Fazenda*, Mss.1163, fol.19v; Mss.1164, fol.62v; M.N.Pearson, *Coastal Western India*, p.101.
85. To know more about the diverse types of commercial activities of Vitula Naique see HAG, *Conselho da Fazenda*, Mss.1161, fols.88-89, Mss.1162, fol.144; See also Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India*, Delhi, 1990, pp.87-100.
86. ANTT, *Junta da Real Fazenda do Estado da India*, Lo.6, Petição 12 November 1654; *Ibid.*, Provisão 15, ec.1654; *Ibid.*, Provisão 29 Dec.1657. M.N. Pearson gives a long list of Saraswat Brahmins who held different types of the *rendas*. For details see M.N.Pearson, *Coastal Western India*, p.101.
87. HAG, 656, *Livro das arrematações das rendas*.
88. Celsa Pinto, *Trade and Finance in Portuguese India. A Study of the Portuguese Country Trade, 1770-1840*, New Delhi, 1994, pp.60-73. The shifting of capital to Panjim happened in 1843.
89. R.J. Barendse, *Arabian Seas, 1700-1763*, vol.IV: *Europe in Asia*, Leiden, 2009, pp.1469-70.
90. *Ibid.*, pp.97-8; 105.
91. *Ibid.*, p.100. There were about 26 merchants in the joint-stock company of Palikollu, where the share price was 250 pagodas and the total investment was 21, 300 pagodas.
92. *Ibid.*, p.104.
93. *Ibid.*, pp.106-121.
94. Kanakalatha Mukund, *The Trading world of the Tamil Merchant: Evolution of Merchant Capitalism in the Coromandel*, Hyderabad, 1999, p.169.
95. Luis Frederico Dias Antunes and Manuel Lobato, "Moçambique," in Maria de Jesus dos Martires Lopes(ed.), *O Imperio Oriental, 1660-1820*, vol.V, tomo 2, Lisboa, 2006, p.101; Manuel Lobato, "Os Regimes de Comercio externo em Moçambique nos seculos XVI e XVII" in *Portugal e o Oriente: Passado e Presente, Revista Povos e Culturas*, Lisboa, 1996, pp.309-10; R.J. Barendse, *The Arabian Seas*, p.333; E.A. Alpers, "Gujarat and the Trade of East Africa", in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol.9, 1, 1976, pp.38-41; Luis Frederico Dias Antunes, "A Crise do Estado da India no final do seculo XVII e criação das Companhias de Comercio das Indias Orientais e dos Baneanes de Diu", in *Mare Liberum*, Numero 9, 1995, pp.19-29.
96. *Ibid.*, pp.317-8.
97. Luis Frederico Dias Antunes and Manuel Lobato, "Moçambique", p.316.
98. See also Irfan Habib, "Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India", *Journal of Economic History*, vol.29, 1, 1969, pp. 32-78.
99. Pius Malekandathil, *The Mughals, the Portuguese and the Indian Ocean*, p.135.

100. Remy Dias, *Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the Comunidade System, 1750-1910*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to Goa University, 2004, pp.212-42.
101. Philomena Sequeira Antony, *The Goa-Bahia Intra-Colonial Relations, 1675-1825*, Tellicherry, 2004, p.228. For early use of tobacco in Mughal court see Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, p.50.
102. W.H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, Delhi, 1962, p.148.
103. Joseph Jerome Brenning, *The Textile Trade of Seventeenth Century Northern Coromandel*, p.20.
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105. B.G. Gokhale, "Tobacco in Seventeenth Century India", in *Agricultural History Society*, vol.48, No.4, Oct. 1974, p.485.
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108. *Ibid.*, pp.129;166; 171.
109. Jose E. Mendes Ferrão, *A Aventura das Plantas e os Descobrimentos Portugueses*, Lisboa, 1994.
110. P.M. Thomas, "Linguistic Indebtedness of Hindi to Portuguese Language and Portuguese Scholars (A Study based on Portuguese Loan words in Hindi and 'Grammatica Indostana')", in K.S. Mathew, Teotonio R de Souza and Pius Malekandathil(eds.), *The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India, 1500-1800*, Fundação Oriente, Lisbon/IRISH, Tellicherry, 2001, pp.19-25.
111. For a detailed discussion see Pius Malekandathil, "Medieval Cities: Theoretical Perceptions and Meanings", in Yogesh Sharma and Pius Malekandathil (ed.), *Cities in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 8-11. Irfan Habib also discusses the issue of artisan participation in the Bhakti movements of North India from a different perspective. Irfan Habib, "The Historical Background of the Popular Monotheistic Movements of the 15th-17th Centuries", in Bisheshwar Prasad (ed.), *Ideas in History*, Bombay, 1969, pp.6-13.