



INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA DURING 17th CENTURY: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract- This paper presents and profiles the cultural, monetary and country issues existed among India and Asia during the archaic period and explicitly the seventeenth century. Maritime and overland exchange archaic world led to enormous scope communication between the Europe and Asia. The exchanging exercises significantly affected the general public, economy and commonwealth in the two districts. Exchange viewpoints have likewise been featured in this examination. After the ascent of Islam in Arabian Peninsula for right around 300 years the oceanic exchange was overwhelmed by Arab sailors and dealers. This exchange was for the most part mindful in joining the two corridors of significant distance exchange between the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean. From around eleventh century onwards the Europeans began to bit by bit supplant Arabs as the predominant oceanic brokers. The early lead was taken by Italian shippers. Instantly, from there on the Portuguese figured out how to arise as the pioneers in the abroad Trade. During this period India arose as one of the significant focuses of sea exchange. Here again Portuguese were the principal Europeans to set up their hold in the entire of Indian Ocean and India as the fundamental place for their exchanging exercises Asia. Indian vendors likewise assumed a pivotal part and held significant offer in oceanic exchange from fifteenth century onwards. From the start of the seventeenth century there was extreme contention between the Dutch and British to control the maritime exchange Asia and Europe. The fundamental items which were imported in Europe were flavors and specifically pepper in the beginning stage. The recorded outline introduced in this paper uncovers that from thirteenth century food things including rice and various products of the soil silk became principle things. In sixteenth and seventeenth hundreds of years indigo, saltpeter, cotton and silk materials and sugar ruled the fares to Europe. The Europeans brought for the most part woolens, a couple of extravagance things and fundamentally bullion. Taking everything into account the equilibrium of exchange was in support of its. One huge highlight be noted here is that the portion of Asian dealers in Indian fares was a lot higher than the European exchanging organizations.

Key Words – Arabian Peninsula, Economic, Exports, Polity, Oceanic trade, On-land trade, Traders

I. INTRODUCTION

For a long time the historiography of Medieval India's external trade links was characterized by an over emphasis on the maritime trade and a neglect of the overland trade connections with Central Asia and Iran. A significant reason for this imbalance was the availability of rich source material on the former and the relative lack of information on the latter. The situation has improved in recent years due to the work of several scholars who have carefully used both Asian and European sources to highlight the significance of the overland trade.

1.1 MEDIEVAL PERIOD TRADE MERCHANDISE

The caravan trade was an important feature of the economic life of the Delhi Sultanate. In the thirteenth century Khurasani merchants used to come to India for selling horses and buying slaves. There was a large demand in the Islamic region for the latter and even Sufis engaged in this trade. Raw Silk was imported from Iran and Afghanistan. Merchants and travelers also used to bring camels to India. Weapons were obtained from Khorasan and Iraq. The Multani merchants used to bring expensive cloth from the Islamic region for sale in Delhi. Conversely, Indian cotton textiles were popular outside the sub-continent. Indigo was an important export from India. Swords made in India were sent to Turan. The historian Minhaj us Siraj records that most of the inhabitants of Lahore were traders who used to travel to Khorasan and Turkistan frequently with passes obtained from the Mongols that guaranteed safety. According to the fourteenth century traveler Ibn Batutah, Silk fabrics of Nishapur were imported trade but also contain frequent references to the overland trade of the Armenian and other merchants. A large number of accounts were written in the early nineteenth century by European and Indian travelers to Punjab, Afghanistan and Central Asia like Mir Izzat Ullah, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Henry Pottinger, William Moorcroft, etc. They provide detailed information on various aspects of the contemporary caravan trade much of which is also relevant for 17th and 18th century period.

II. METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESES OF THE PRESENT WORK

For the purpose of this study, exploratory methodology of research has been used. The literature available in this regard has been obtained from various sources. The historical perspective in those works has been analyzed appropriately to investigate the state of affairs with regards to trades and practices prevailing in 17th century between India and Asia. Based on the inputs obtained from those works, hypotheses have been formulated. Those hypotheses have been used to answer the relative historical facts and the gaps so observed in tracing the social, economic and polity issues prevailing in trade relations of India with Central Asia. It is worth to be mentioned here that a lot of historical research contemplating the trade, trade links, societal development, trade economics and the then existing polity have been helpful in formulating the following hypotheses.

Hypotheses

- Number [1] The two regions India and Central Asia shared extensive commercial links during 17th and 18th centuries' period.
- Number [2] The caravan trade was not intermittent and confined to luxury goods alone.
- Number [3] Among various trading groups, the Indian merchants were the most important from the standpoint of the volume of their business as well as their geographical spread.
- Number [4] The political class was oblivious and kept a positive attitude towards commercial activities.
- Number [5] The trade links between India and Central Asia continued to be strong during the medieval period in spite of political disruptions in India, Afghanistan and Central Asia.

III. TRACKING THE DECLINE IN THE PORTUGUESE POWER

"So exceptionally far as the abroad exchange of the Indian vendors is concerned, the decay of the Portuguese ocean power in the western Indian Ocean at the turn of the seventeenth century gave an underlying fillip to Indian sea exchange. This brought about an expansion in the volume of exchange to the Persian Gulf and southern Arabia. The Indian boats could stay away from Hormuz in the Persian Gulf and sail direct to Gulf ports like Basra or Bandar Abbas (Gombroon). At that point with the deficiency of Hormuz by the Portuguese in 1622, the traffic to the Persian Gulf turned out to be totally free and the Gujaratis exploited this opportunity. The fall of Hormuz additionally worked with the passage of the Dutch and the English organizations into this exchange. Their dynamic association in the exchange of the area added to the development of business venture in the western Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century. The Indian sea exchange was additionally adjusted in the seventeenth century by the development of the Dutch and the English organizations in the Indian Ocean. The fundamental element of this modification was the incredible accentuation on the west Asian exchange to the detriment of the exchange Southeast Asia which was the primary trait of the Indian abroad exchange the earlier century. In spite of the fact that the withdrawal of the Portuguese freed exchange the western Indian Ocean, in the event of the east, the image was totally unique. The Dutch continued in the strides of the Portuguese in impressive imposing business model of zest exchange yet with more noteworthy effectiveness and mercilessness The Dutch syndication was genuine and practically successful by the center of the seventeenth century". The outcome was that the Indian dealers felt the pressing factor distinctly and in this manner the Gujaratis nearly deserted Trade and Commerce in The Medieval World 18 the exchange with Southeast Asia as was exemplified by the way that not very numerous boats were making journeys to Sumatra after 1618. Once more, the Dutch triumph of Malacca in 1641 and Macassar in the Celebes in 1669 prompted a significant separation of the Indian sea exchange with the Malay landmass. Be that as it may, the Indian dealers, particularly from the Coromandel, Gujarat and Bengal, attempted to go around the Dutch endeavors to control their exchange by moving their activities to Acheh which turned into an enormous market for Indian materials as likewise a significant acquirement focal point of pepper and tin on account of the broad exchange carried on by the Acheh vendors with the ports of Sumatra and Malay archipelago.

"Be that as it may, from around 1660, the Indian traders were given passes generously for Acheh and Malacca, and they created the majority of the open doors at Acheh. In any case, they never surrendered to the Dutch interest of avoiding the Malayan ports. Kedah, that was a significant supplier of tin, however not a maker of the ware, was frequented by dealers from the Coromandel. In the further north, Indian ships routinely visited Bangeri and Phuket notwithstanding Tenasserim and Pegu. Yet, the Dutch triumph of Bantam in 1682 and the subsequent avoidance of Indian transportation from the port brought about the

deficiency of the Java exchange for the Indian, particularly Coromandel, materials. Furthermore, all the while, the obtainment of Chinese and Japanese merchandise, especially copper, at Bantam endured as well. Nonetheless, a piece of this misfortune was made up by the increment in Indian delivery to such ports as Johor, Lama and Pankor. Apparently from around the end of the seventeenth century forward, there was a particular decrease in the exchange of the Indian vendors with Malay archipelago". In spite of the fact that the Dutch prevailing with regards to keeping the Indian dealers out of various Malayan ports, for the remainder of the locale, the Indian shippers acclimated to the pressing factors created by the Company by moving their activities to different ports in the space as opposed to by lessening their exchange. The close relinquishment of the exchange to the Indonesian archipelago prompted the accentuation paid by the Gujaratis on the Red Sea and Persian Gulf exchange. Accordingly it is sensible to hold that the later seventeenth century was the 'brilliant time' of Indian sea exchange just as the trade exchange of Indian textile materials.

"In spite of the fact that the control of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf exchange by the Gujaratis was unaffected by the exercises of the Companies, what was starting to influence this was, in any case, the section of the private English endeavor into this exchange the late seventeenth and mid eighteenth century. The English private brokers comprised of two gatherings: the workers of the English East India Company and the supposed free traders got comfortable India. Their exchange was both to toward the west and toward the east areas of India's sea exchange. The exchange the westerly heading reached out to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf areas, other than the ports in the western shoreline of India. It is obvious from the Dutch delivery records that the development of the English private transportation was most likely to the detriment of the Gujarati exchange. While the quantity of boats visiting Bengal from Surat in the mid eighteenth century was around fifty, it dwindled to a stream by the 1730s. It has been assessed that the complete number of Gujarati armada in the late seventeenth century was above and beyond 100, of which ordinarily two had a place with the Mughals while the incomparable Surat dealer, Mulla Abdul Goffur, alone claimed seventeen. It was from around the 1760s that there was a meaningful development in the toward the east exchange to the detriment of the exchange to western Indian Ocean which was depicted as a 'business unrest' by Holden Furber".

IV. HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE OF 17TH CENTURY TRADE ECONOMICS

It needs to be mentioned that while the caravan trade between India and Central Asia did not get much attention in earlier times, the topic of Indian merchant colonies in Russia and Central Asia and their business was the subject of much research by Soviet scholars, a couple of which have been published in 1958 and 1965 were compilations of writings and archival material on this topic. These volumes were used by Surendra Gopal in his articles published in the sixties which gave a succinct account of the establishment of the Indian merchants in Russia and their economic activities.

Gopal's work was followed by Stephen Dale's *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600-1750*, (Cambridge Cambridge University Press 1994) the first monograph, in English, on the topic. Dale established the strong presence of the Indian merchants, hailing mainly from Multan, in Safavid Iran, Uzbek Turan and Russia. According to Dale, the Indian mercantile Diaspora, representing an extension of the Indian regional 'world-economy', was engaged in the sale of Indian commodities and money lending. By its latter role, it performed the critical function of providing capital in relatively under developed economies. Dale also highlighted the role played by Afghan trading nomads (powindas) in the caravan trade. The Multani Diaspora based in Astrakhan and Iran began to decay from the early eighteenth century due to the simultaneous decline of the Safavid and the Mughal empires and the restrictions put on the Indian merchants by the Russian state [1] [2].

4.1 OVERLAND TRADE

In an article written in 1994, Muzaffar Alam focuses on the close economic relations between Mughal India and Central Asia which were uninterrupted even in times of political hostilities [3]. He notes that the Mughals and the Uzbek rulers promoted this trade as it provided them with much needed commodities. Alam also notes that the caravan trade with Iran and Central Asia was an important factor in the prosperity of the province of Punjab in the seventeenth century. He agrees with Dale that there was a disruption in the trade in the early eighteenth century due to political convulsions.

Neel Steensgaard notes that the Indian caravan trade with Persia and Turkey was brisk in the early decades of the seventeenth century [4]. Cotton textiles were the main commodity sent from India while bullion was imported into it. The Kandahar route continued to be in use after the Anglo Portuguese capture of Hormuz in 1622 but there was a gradual decline in the trade, especially in the second half of the century. The likely reason for this was declining demand for Indian textiles in Persia and Turkey. Giles Veinstein notes that there was a large demand in Ottoman markets for Indian textiles which arrived by maritime and overland routes [5]. The import of Indian textiles stimulated local cloth production, especially of the coarser varieties as a result of which Indian imports began to comprise on high-quality varieties.

While most of the above mentioned works deal with the seventeenth century caravan trade, the eighteenth century caravan trade forms the backdrop of Jos Gommans in "The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, c. 1710-1780 (New Delhi Oxford University Press 1999)". Gommans argues that India's trade links with Central Asia were active during this period. India's considerable demand for war horses was met by the breeding grounds of Central Asia. The decline of the Mughal Empire did not affect the trade as the new rulers like the Nawabs of Awadh, the Marathas, etc emerged as substantial buyers. The horse trade was in the hands of Afghans trading pastoral nomads and individual traders who could use their stock to set up independent political power as was done by the founders of the Rohilla state. Gommans also looks at the impact of the rise of the Durrani Empire and increasing Russian role in Central Asia on the overland trade.

4.2 MARITIME TRADE

"It is in the period after Vasco da Gama's arrival in India in 1498 that the establishments were laid for the introduction of the cutting edge world [6] and into which the way was cleared for British predominance on the Indian subcontinent in the nineteenth-century. In the mid seventeenth-century, the Dutch (1606) and the English (1607) set up their first general stores in Quite a while trying to wrest control of the productive flavor exchange from the Portuguese. Following the loss of the Portuguese in 1615, the Dutch and the English Companies would spend a significant part of the seventeenth century in the battle to get restraining infrastructure rights over the exchange of specific flavors, and exchanging advantages for other important merchandise like materials and opium. The decrease of the Dutch grasp on Asian sea exchange after 1670, the waning rivalry from France in the later 50% of the eighteenth century, and the triumph of Bengal in 1757, set Britain soundly on a direction towards regional and business authority on the land and in the sea" [6].

"The Indian sub-mainland, in any case, had been associated with the edges of Europe, the Near East and Central Asia (just as East and Southeast Asia) not for quite a long time, but rather for a few centuries before 1498. The primary Indians are thought to have headed out to Central Asia roughly 2,000 years prior, where they added to the developing overland exchange of the trans-Eurasian Silk Route, which (unexpectedly) they 'outlasted' [7]". The primary sea contacts are thought to have been made across the Indian Ocean from India between 3,000 [8] and 5,000 [9] years prior. These exchange networks most likely didn't vanish after 1498, or even after the 1750s, yet have for quite some time been forgotten in the well known accounts of the period [10]. "Also, their reality challenges teleological depictions of European development in Asia (at any rate all things considered [11], just as the degree to which this period can be viewed as the defining moment or 'unrest' [12] in the exchanging history of the subcontinent."

V. TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

In view of the historical background tracked as above, the hypotheses formulated have been checked for confirmation or rejection. The results of the same are produced below. Based on these, the final results are discussed and concluded under section 6 of this study.

- Number [1] The two regions India and Central Asia shared extensive commercial links during 17th and 18th centuries' period : - **Accepted**
- Number [2] The caravan trade was intermittent and confined to luxury goods alone: - **Rejected**
- Number [3] Among various trading groups, the Indian merchants were the most important from the standpoint of the volume of their business as well as their geographical spread: - **Accepted**.
- Number [4] The political class was oblivious towards commercial activities: - **Rejected**.

Number [5] The trade links between India and Central Asia continued to be strong during the medieval period in spite of political disruptions in India, Afghanistan and Central Asia: - **Accepted.**

VI. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

There are varied opinions on India's economic relationship with Central Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This study aims to demonstrate that the two regions shared extensive commercial links during this period. The caravan trade was not sporadic and confined to luxury goods alone. On the contrary it was of regular nature and it involved several essential commodities. This trade was the means by which the two regions obtained commodities that were not available locally. The effort in this study will highlight the role of various trading groups that were involved in this trade- the Afghan nomadic tribes, the Indian merchants, the Annenians, the Uzbeks, etc. Among these groups the Indian merchants were the most important from the standpoint of the volume of their business as well as their geographical spread. During this period, they had established colonies in several places in Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia. It is also worth to be focused about the relationship between the ruling classes and the caravan trade in this ambitious work. Contrary to the earlier held impression that the political class was oblivious to the interests of traders, it is now being accepted that they displayed a positive attitude towards commercial activities. It will be shown here that the Mughals, the Uzbek Khans and the Safavids were aware of the importance of the trade and undertook several measures to promote it. The occasional period of hostility between them did not affect the flow of commodities between their realms.

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