

Dutch Trade During Theperiod Of Jahangir

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of European commercial activity in India during the seventeenth century witnessed the growing presence of the Dutch East India Company, which sought to establish profitable trade networks in the Indian Ocean region. During the reign of Jahangir (1605–1627), the Dutch gradually entered the competitive commercial environment dominated by the Mughal Empire and rival European powers. This paper examines the nature, development, and impact of Dutch trade activities in Mughal territories, particularly focusing on their establishment of trading centres at Surat and Pulicat along the Coromandel Coast. The study analyses the diplomatic negotiations between Dutch merchants and Mughal authorities, highlighting the policies that facilitated foreign trade and regulated commercial privileges. It also evaluates the commodities exchanged, including textiles, spices, and precious goods, which contributed significantly to regional and global trade networks. Furthermore, the research explores the challenges faced by the Dutch due to competition with other European trading companies and local merchants. By examining Dutch commercial expansion during Jahangir's rule, this paper provides insight into the early phase of European economic influence in India and its long-term implications for Indo-European trade relations.

Keywords:-*Dutch East India Company, Surat, Pulicat, European Maritime Trade, Indo-European Commercial Relations, Seventeenth-Century Trade Networks.*

Introduction:

One important factor which helped India's trade in Seventeenth Century was the arrival of Dutch and English traders. The Indian traders welcomed these traders for they helped to break the Portuguese monopoly of sea trade, and in course of time helped to establish a direct link between Indian and European markets. Like Poartguese, Dutch and English traders also desired to establish a monopoly in trade and to make fortified establishments so that they could defy the local rulers.

In 1602 the "Dutch East India Company" was formed and the Dutch states General the Dutch Parliament gave it a Charter empowering it to make war, conclude treaties, acquire territories and build fortresses. They soon turned. out Portuguese from

the Malaya straits and Indonesian islands and in 1623 defeated English attempts to establish themselves there. They also established trading depots at Surat, Broach, Cambay, Ahmedabad, Cochin in Kerala, Nagpatnam in Madras, Masulipatnam in Andhra Pradesh, Chinsura in Bengal, Patna in Bihar and Agra in Uttar Pradesh. In 1658 they also conquered Sri Lanka from the Poartguese domination. Hence though the main interest of Dutch laid not in India but in Indonesian Islands of Java, Sumatra and Spice Islands, yet they made beginning of their trade from India during the period of Jahangir.

Despite vehement Portuguese opposition Dutch established themselves at Masulipatnam, obtaining a farman from the ruler of Golkunda in

1606. They also established themselves in the spice islands so that by 1610 A.D. they predominated in the spice trade but they quickly realized that spices could be obtained most easily against Indian textiles. The cloth produced in the Coromandal coast was most acceptable and also Cheapest to carry hence they spread towards south from Masulipatnam to the coromandal coast obtaining Pulicat from the local ruler and making it a base of their operations.

During the period of Jahangir trade was brisk. The Dutch were outing the Portuguese from the markets of India because they had greater resources at their command than the Portuguese.

Dutch did not come in conflict with English because of their different spheres of operation. Dutch worked on the East Coast. Their factories being at Pulikat, Masuli-patnam and adjoining territories. There was no friendly feeling between Dutch and English, one wanting to drive out the other Dr. John Fryer writes :-

“The first of September only 7 of our 10 ships returned from Mechlapatan with their wounded men and teen Hulks who had met the Hollanders and tried their force”¹. Six days since these a thousand men under Dutch Colours with a dozen carriages with great brass pieces marched by out of shot of our leaguers and fixed their standard with the moors in fight of St. Thomas²

Trade Centres During Jahangir and Dutch Activities There

Agra—Commerce flourished at Agra in the time of Akbar and also in the beginning of the reign of Jahangir.

Importance of Agra was due to its being:-

- A. Capital of Empire.
- B. Indigo trade.
- C. Greatest spice market.
- D. Situation of the city at the junction of all the roads from distant countries.

All goods must pass this way as from Gujrat, Thatta, from Kabul Kandhar or Multan Deccan, from Deccan or Burhanpur to those places and the roads carry indescribable quantities of merchandise,

especially cotton goods”³. but as “Francisco Palesert” writes “Since this King (Jahangir) devoted his life to enjoyment, violence has taken place of justice, Governors have drained the people dry, consequently the country is impoverished”⁴.

Only industry of importance in Agra was carpet manufacturing. “Though the city was full of artisan in great number who can imitate nearly whatever they see but design nothing by themselves”⁵.

Lahore: - It was important for overland trade with Kabul, Kandhar Persia etc. River Ravi (which flows part the city of Thatta (Sind)) carried a large trade in shallow drought vessels. Lahore was famous for its carpet manufacturers. But it was losing its early importance under Jahangir. Trade of Lahore this time may be called dead for exports were Limited to the requirements of Persia and Turkey because the profit could not stand the great cost of overland transit.

Palseart writes, Agra exports to Lahore most of the spices which we sell here (for the local consumption is very small when the King is not here or there is no camp) also all kinds of white cotton goods ivory, quick silver, vermilion, turbans and dougs. Multan was the capital of Lahore and commanded the route to Persia which went by way of Qandhar. Its most important products were sugar, opium, cotton goods, sulfer and best camels.

Thatta— was the capital of Sind. It had a very important port named “Lahri Bandar” where all large vessels anchored. It was a good hinterland. It declined after the fall of Ormuz⁶. Important manufactures of this place were cotton goods, silk, ivory and ebony.

Satgaon— was an important part in the east. Various agricultural products of Bengal and its textiles products were sent out from Satgaon.

Bengal— Agricultural wealth of Bengal was very great. In fact Jahangir had no idea of mineral wealth that was so great, of Bengal. But trade in agricultural was flourishing⁷. Rice is exported to all parts of India as well as to Goa, Malabar, Sumatra, Moluccas and Sunda.

Patna—yielded annually 1000 to 2000 mounds of silk which was sent to Gujrat and Agra. “Formerly English had a factory at Patna but owing to heavy losses trade was discontinued”⁸. Probably influenced by British setback in Patna trade, Dutch did not try their fate in Patna trade.

Berhampur: - It was an important gateway for Deccan, situated on the way from Surat to Agra. English had a regular factory at Berhampur for sale of woolen clothes, lead, tin, satin, velvety etc. In case some improvement in administration should follow the death of present king, it would be necessary to have a factory for sale of such goods or others”⁹. It seems, Dutch also wanted to open their factory at Berhampur but because of prevailing maladministration out there they were avoiding it.

Surat— was the Chief seaport belonging to Jahangir. All goods of both imports and exports must be shipped and landed by boat. Since Portuguese had lost Ormuz, the trade of Surat merchants with Persia had been carried at freight by English ships and those of Dutch. Practically none of the goods that Dutch carried on freight could compete with what they sent themselves to Persia. So that the traffic was a great benefit to merchants of Surat without causing injury to Dutch and the freight covered the expenses of the Company’s ships. Some merchants who had small vessels sent them along with Dutch ships laden with cotton, rice and other goods.

“The reason why our chief factory is located in Surat is that ships must be unloaded and left there and the goods forwarded thence to the places where they are wanted”¹⁰

There was nothing to be bought in Surat apart from a few baftas which were woven at Nausari and Rander¹¹. Dutch were forced to purchase baftas, candekins, chelas etc. in retail because they had not the money to buy the same in Broach or Ahmedabad during rains, unless in order to do so they would have to be constantly involved in debts for loans carrying interest. The banias” were making a large profit and had raised the monthly rate of interest from 1 to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ percent, if loans were taken yearly and they raised it much higher at the later stage. The

amount of loss on interest was a matter of great importance.

Customs duties there were 3 percent on all imports and exports of goods and 2% on money either gold or silver. During the reign of Jahangir these duties were collected for the King by the Governor “Mir Jahan Quli Beg” but formerly they were assigned to various lands as salary which was definitely a loss of net income to the emperor. Broach - 20 Kms landward from Surat, the town’s trade depended on weaving industry and produced best known fine “baftas” and other clothes for Mozambique and South Java. Dutch wanted to establish a factory there but people of the area were mostly poor artisans and tolls were levied there on goods whether brought there for consumption or merely in transit, the rate being 1 per cent. It would therefore be an excellent thing if we could contact for this toll or obtain an exemption from the King”¹².

Cambay — It’s trade declined considerably. Formerly in Cambay “Kafilas”¹³ used to come every year but decline of Portuguese trade affected Cambay a great deal.

“Cambay is celebrated for manufacture of agates, Cornelian and other stones coming from mines . the vicinity of Ratanpur in the native state of Rajgupta, Rewa Kanth”¹⁴.

Kashmir - It yielded nothing for export to Agra except Saffron. The goods sent from Agra in turn were cotton cloth yarn for local consumption, pepper and opium. Kashmir was basically a pleasure resort for Jahangir and his nobles. Indigo Trade- Bayana¹⁵ indigo was most famous and best in quality. Bayana or modern Biana had 3 crops of indigo. First year’s cutting of the crop was called “Nauti”. Cutting in second year was “Zarhi” while final cutting was “Katel”. Zarhi Indigo was superior in quality to both others.

Dutch bought indigo from Bayana which was 30 Rs. per mound while indigo of Mewat, “Koli and Gorsa”¹⁶ was 20 Rs. per mound. Hindu and Moslem merchants had been living for years at Ghanowa, (Chief area of indigo production in Bayana) and were involved in indigo trade. They

usually made advances against indigo, some months before hand binding the debtor to sell indigo to no one else. Hence it was very difficult for Dutch to buy indigo of better quality in cheaper prices. It could be made possible only if one or two experienced men could be sent in the end of August or the beginning of September to Ghanowa or adjoining village and should have bought whatever was really good.

However, in Bayana proper, the rich and substantial merchants like “Mirza Sadiq”¹⁷ and “Ghazi Fazil” who sow most of indigo, usually sold it to Dutch merchants. Since the quality was superior the price was one rupee more than the rate of Ghanowa.

Drug Trade — Borax, Spikenard and Sat ammoniac were items of Dutch E. I. C’s regular trade. Borax was found in Eastern mountains (probably Tibet) in the dominion of a very powerful King named “Raja Bikram”. “Taklakot” was the place where Borax was found in abundance, it occurred in a river which flowed through the eastern mountains into a great lake called “Mansarovar”.

Borax was dug twice a year and supply was sufficient to supply whole world. was sold at a low price of 4 to 5 Rs. per mound. It was brought to Agra in bales packed in sheepskin and there the Dutch merchants packed it in bladders which were filled with bitter oil to prevent deterioration from long keeping or from its natural qualities.

“Spikenard” was not sown but grew wild in mountains. It was considered a valuable drug for stiffened limbs. Sal ammoniac was found at Thaneshwar. The usual price was 7 to 7 Rs. per mound. Earlier Dutch used to purchase it but later they ceased due to no profit.¹⁷

“Saltpeter” was found in many places near Agra. It was formerly cheap and was in small demand but later on its demand was increased by Dutch and English hence the old price of 1 Rs. for a mound was raised up to 2 or 2 Rs. and rose steadily.

Spice Trade— The principal resources of the Dutch before development of their lucrative trade with China and Japan was their monopoly of cloves, mace and nut- megs. The chief Indian market for these spices laid in Northern India.

“Dutch have Batavia and Molluccos from where Nutmegs worth more alone than all we have in India, they being as powerful for men, Riches and Shipping in Batavia as in Europe”¹⁸.

Dutch sphere of influence was spicing trade. In Golkunda and Ahmednagar people were poor and their consumption of spices was too little and was sufficient for trade. On the other hand Mughal soldiers ate spiced food very readily and consequently their consumption was proportionately greater. Some wealthy banias of Agra maintained agents in Golkunda with two objects particularly to buy diamonds and spices which their people in Masulipatnam sent to Dutch to Agra.

Surat was supplied with 25,000 lb of cloves annually and Dutch wanted to increase their profit by raising the quantity to 50,000 lb with increase of nutmeg and mace and reducing supplies to coromandal court by the same amount. Palseart writes “What I want to urge is that our employers should send to the coromandal only so much spice as is consumed locally in the carnatic, Golkunda and the vicinity, an amount which I conjecture to be less than 200 mounds or 10,000 lb of cloves and as much nutmeg with 6 sockels of mace”¹⁹.

Pelsaert’s point was that they should make the best of it by sending adequate supplies direct to their own factories in that region instead of selling large quantities on the East Coast which were brought to Agra by Indian merchants.

Dutch supply of cloves to Agra was large but consumption was required to be encouraged. For this purpose Dutch merchants had to reduce the prices from 100 or 80 Rs. to 60 Rs.²⁰ as were during Portuguese and the whole quantity because the low prices induced everyone to buy and in villages, the women and children wore necklaces made of cloves.

Dutch had not a large supply of silver and Gold at their disposal like Portuguese hence Dutch merchants made some proposals to solve the problem.

Pelsaert writes..... “We import Silver in large quantities, manufactured by us into articles which are here in common use. Provided the workmanship is good, half the silver might be paid

for manufacture, which would give ample payment for Dutch work, or in any case manufactured goods would yield quite as much profit as reals²¹ or the Holland dollars and could meet the taste of the nobles everywhere without loss to us. It would be well therefore for the first trial to manufacture such goods as the following to the value of 8,000 to 10,000 reals-of-eight and to the same amount in gold.

1. Feet for Katels or bedsteads, hollow and as light as possible but artistically wrought.
2. Aftabs or ewers used by Moslems for washing the hands.
3. Betel boxes.
4. Fan handles.
5. Handles for fly switches.
6. Dishes and cups with covers²²

Most of these goods could be sold in the place or the military camp to the good profit, honour and reputation of the company by an agent familiar with the language and customs of the country, who could at the same time prevent all the occasional difficulties which arise where ever trade is attempted from the improper procedure due to the insatiable greed of the governors and this could be done without increasing expenditure". Dutch had a monopoly of cloves, mace and nutmegs. As there was a great demand of spices in Northern India so by selling them the Dutch were able to purchase Indian goods. From "Admiral Matedieff's Report"²³ we get a first glimpse of their trading in 1607 in which he made an attempt to study Asiatic trade of Dutch from the following stand points (1) Pepper (2) Other Spices (3) Gujrat (4) Coromandal (5) China and Japan.

He was against developing the Gujrat trade and wanted to develop and participate in the Coromandel trade for the commodities of this coast were much in demand in the Far East whence Gold and Silver could be obtained in a triangular trade. That is how the Dutch and English obtained gold and silver later. In Japan there was no great demand

for European and Indian goods, but there was a great demand for raw silk, hides and skins as Japan was and still today is extremely poor in cattle. These goods could be had in Siam where Indian cotton goods were in demand.

As Japan was the only country in the East which freely allowed the export of silver so Indo-Japanese trade via Siam and Indochina was an absolute necessity for the Dutch who were restricted in their business deals in India by the shortage of silver. So Indian cotton goods were sent to Siam and Indochina. Hides obtained from Siam and raw silk from Indochina were sent to Japan where they were exchanged for silver. This silver was inverted in Indian goods which were sent out to Europe.

The following Dutch invoice of the "Naerden" from Masulipatnam, October 1621 gives us an idea of the commodities the Dutch in India were then interested in following Table:-

Goods	Quantities	Value in Guildens
Pepper About	156,000 lb(avoir)	36,457
Saltpetre	47,500 lb"	2,964
Saltpetre(refined)	8,700 lb"	1,170
Diamonds	-	1,326
Borax	650 lb (avoir)	175
Yarn	5,400 lb "	2,390
Guinee cloth	65,000 Yards	11,918
Moorcas		
(Superior Calico)	900 pieces	3,154
Betilles(Muslins		
from Deccan)	100 (1200 yds)	1,200
		60,754
Miscellaneous charges and some small errors		2000
Value of Cargo		62,754*

From Akbar to Aurangzeb" by Moreland, P. 319

Conclusion:

Hence Jahangir, an ease loving monarch in whose hands was placed the destiny of men of his empire. It was no wonder that the people of his empire

were grooming under the weight of hardships. The irresponsible and corrupt administration gave the opportunity to Europeans and trade of the empire passed into the hands of foreigners. Of Course, the Dutch flourished their trade during the reign of Jahangir. They were successful in establishing their factories at the important places in India. They tried to monopolise in spice trade and were successful in their attempts to a large extent along with indigo trade. The Dutch started their trade from India and finally established themselves in South East Asia. Thus the reign of Jahangir and land of India were good omen for Hollanders to set them up in the most competitive field of trade and commerce both in India and S.E. Asia.

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3. Voyage of Pyrard De Laval” (1608-1611) by Albert Grey Vol. II, PP. 248-249.
4. Jahangir’s India” of Francisco Palseart by W. H. Moreland and P. Geyl. Page 6..

5. Remonstrations of Francisco Palseart Page 6 (Palseart sailed far East in 1618 as an assistant in the Company).
6. Ormuz was in possession of Portuguese who lost it later to Mughals.
7. Voyage of Pyrard De Laval” by Albert Grey P 38.
8. Pelsaert” “Jahangir’s India”, Page 7.
9. Francois Pelsaert” Remonstrations, Page 38.
10. Remonstrations of Francois Palseart” Dutch officer of Trade - Page 41.
11. Nausari is a short distance south of Surat, Rander, formerly an important place lies on the Tapti between Surat and Sea.
12. Francois Palseart Jahangir’s India, Page 43.
13. Many coasting fleets of small craft.
14. The travels of Pietra-Dello-Vella in India” by Edward Grey Vol. I, Page 61.
15. Place near Agra (S.W.) is famous for fine quality of indigo.
16. Koli is modern Aligarh. “Gorsa” is Khurja district of Bulandshahar (U.P.).
17. Palseart writes, Mirza Sadiq is oldest merchant at Bayana. Jahangir’s India Page
18. Travels in India Sir Thomas Roe Page 206.
19. Sockel was the name applied to the packages in which mace was handled they varied greatly in weight at Jahangir’s period,
20. 60 Rs. is price quoted in Ain-i-Akbari about 1594 A.D
21. Real was worth about 2 Rs. in India.
22. Remonstrations of Francois Pelsart (Page 27).
23. Economics History of India under Mughals” Dr. D. Pant. Page 155.

