

CHAPTER - IV

OTHER TRADE CENTRES AND PORTS

Towns in India were non-industrial in character. They were firstly religious and pilgrimage centres like Banares, Puri, Allahabad, etc.; secondly, political centres such as seats of Government like Pune, Tanjore, etc., and thirdly, trade centres like Surat, Agra, etc. The second type of town was the most common of all. The urban handicrafts were mainly to be found in it. They mainly manufactured luxury goods or artistic wares. The demand for these products was mainly local, though some of them were also exported in sizable quantities. Their mainstay was the considerable patronage extended to them by the local chieftains or rulers and their Courts.

In Western India, in the 18th century, there were many important trade centres. These centres played very important role in connection with the foreign trade of our country.

Mandvi. It was a seaport of Cutch. It is situated in 22°50' N and 69°32'E, on the coast of the Gulf of Cutch, 36 miles south-west of Bhuj. A considerable commerce was carried on between this place and the British settlement of Bombay. The principal article of produce was cotton, which was inferior to cotton grown in the neighbourhood of Surat and the Gulf of Cambay. Merchants of Bombay had their agents to transact their business. Some trade was carried on with the Persian Gulf also.¹

Bhavnagar. Bhavnagar was another important place in Gujarat of cotton trade in the 18th century. The town of Bhavnagar was founded by Bhausingji in 1723. It lies in 21°45'N and 72°12'E.²

Bhavnagar supplied large quantities of cotton to Surat. This cotton was further exported to China. In 1780's, Bhavnagar provided about 39 percent and in 1805, Broach Paragana provided 17 percent of the exportable cotton of Gujarat.³

In the last quarter of the 18th century, Bhavnagar exported 1,25,000 khandis of cotton yearly.⁴

Cambay. It was one of the commercial centres of Gujarat.

In the earlier times, it was a celebrated place for the manufacture of chintz, silk and gold stuffs. But in the 18th century, Cambay declined commercially. When Forbes visited this city, there were few poor weavers and there were no eminent merchants in the town. The decline of Cambay was because of rise of Surat. Indigo was always a staple commodity at Cambay. Even in the 18th century, large quantity of indigo was manufactured. Corneliens, agates and beautiful stones called 'Mocha stones' formed a valuable part of trade at Cambay. Corneliens were black, white and red. The variegated stones were found at a place which was at a distance of 60 miles from Cambay.⁵

Large quantities of piece goods manufactured at Ahmedabad were annually shipped from Cambay to Bombay.⁶

The English East India Company had a factory there to provide an investment of piece goods for the English markets and it had also a little trade in corneliens and agates.⁷

Jambusar. It was a trade centre in Gujarat. It is situated in 22°3'N and 72°48'E. It is in the Broach district of

Gujarat. The town was occupied by the British in 1775 and remained in their possession until 1783, when it was restored to the Marathas.⁸

From this place, trade was carried on in cotton, piece goods, grain and oil with Bombay and other places.⁹

Ahmedabad. Ahmedabad was founded by Ahmed Shah in 1411 A.D. on the site of the earlier Hindu town of Karnavati and Ashwal.¹⁰ The Portuguese Duarte Barbosa (1521) described it as "very rich and squarer supplied with houses of stone and cement". In Sir Thomas Roe's time (1615), "it was a goodly city as large as London". From 1572 to 1709, it renewed its greatness under the Mughal Emperors; from 1709 to 1809, it dwindled with their decline.¹¹

James Forbes visited Ahmedabad in the second half of the 18th century. While describing trade of Ahmedabad, he says:

The greatest variety of the rich gold and silver flowered silks and satins, called Kimcobs and allichars, were manufactured at Ahmedabad, together with silk and cotton goods of almost every description; the trade in indigo was very great; the best workmen in steel, gold, ivory, enamel and inlaid mother of pearl, met with great encouragement; it was also celebrated for excellent paper and lackered ware, in cabinets, boxes and ornaments. Few traces of this commerce now remain, except a few small manufactures of chintz and kimcobs; and some of lackered work, ornamented with gold and silver, for escritoirs, boxes and palanquins, only made when they are previously bespoke. They began and finished for me an elegant sandalwood escritoir, lackered with black and gold in ten days.¹²

In the 18th century, the English East India Company purchased the piece goods produced at Ahmedabad and the adjacent places.¹³ Ahmedabad was also a silk weaving centre and raw silk from North Bengal was brought there for producing fine silk.¹⁴ The piece goods of Ahmedabad were sent to Surat for further transportation.¹⁵

In the beginning of the 18th century, the Marathas started imposing exactions in the region of Gujarat. The marauding bands of the Marathas disturbed the people in this region and hence from 1734, many weavers of Ahmedabad started migrating to Surat.¹⁶

Broach. It was one of the important commercial centres of Gujarat. It was a place of considerable trade. Very extensive cotton manufactures were carried on there. Large consignments of raw cotton from the adjoining districts were exported in boats to Surat and Bombay to be shipped for China and different parts of India.¹⁷

It had trade in onyxes, cornelians and agates. The cotton clearers and spinners resided in suburbs of Broach. The weavers produced fine baftas and muslins. The Broach muslins were inferior to those of Bengal and Madras.¹⁸ The produce of neighbouring country such as cotton, cotton-yarn, piece goods, etc., were sent from Broach to Surat.¹⁹

The merchants of the Dutch Company also traded at Broach. It was reported in January, 1785, that the Dutch had bought goods to the tune of Rs.50,000.²⁰ The piece goods were also manufactured at Broach. A large number of weavers resided there.²¹

Broach was more famous for its cotton trade. It could export about 1600 bales of cotton.²² But sometimes, the cotton was of a bad quality and full of seeds, dirt and leaves.²³ The cotton of Broach was sent to Canton in China. But the merchants of Canton sometimes complained that Broach and Jambusar cotton had always been worst than from Bhavnagar and Cutch.²⁴

It was an urban centre and was located close to the main caravan route to Delhi and Agra.²⁵ It was captured by the English in 1772. The English succeeded in drawing there the commerce of wheat, cotton and cloth. The revenue which the English drew was about 4 lacs rupees.²⁶ In 1783, it was handed over to Sindhia but was re-taken by the British in 1803.

Kalyan The Mughals captured Kalyan in Maharashtra in 1689. It is now a wellknown Railway junction on an hour's run from Bombay. Peshwa Balaji vishwanath re-established Maratha sway over the place in 1719,²⁷ and appointed one Ramchandra Mahadeo Chaskar Joshi as its Subhedar. In April, 1780, the British launched a campaign for capturing Kalyan. During the month of April, the British captured Parsik and Belapur strategic places near Kalyan and entered triumphantly on 10th May, 1780.²⁸

Some metals such as iron, lead, steel, tin, copper and saltpetre and Portuguese paper were sent from Bombay to Kalyan.²⁹ Kalyan was occupied by the English in 1780. The English were interested to develop trade of Kalyan.³⁰

The merchants brought goods from Bombay and they sold it in Kalyan. At Bombay, they were charged custom duties and again they had to pay custom duties at Kalyan. But Kalyan Resident advocated abolition of custom duties on the goods to encourage trade and traders in 1781. The Kalyan Diary mentions. -

*For this purpose, you may, perhaps, think it worthy of consideration, to discontinue the collection of all Duties and Customs whatever both at the Bunder & Gates, either for some limited Term, or at least while the Army remains here. Merchants, Shopkeepers & Handicrafts people will be encouraged by this means to settle in the Town. It will be a great Encouragement to the Salt & Grain Trade and think there is every reason to hope that an inconsiderable Revenue given up for a short time only, will be amply compensated when it shall be thought proper to revenue the usual Imposts.*³¹

This request of Kalyan Resident G.Horsley was accepted by the Government of Bombay and they ordered discontinuance of levy of custom on goods and introduction of free trade. However, the privileges were given only for short period until the British Army was stationed at Kalyan. These concessions were sanctioned in June, 1781.

The English Company had its own Ganja and Bhang farms in Kalyan. The following farms belonging to the Hon'ble Company were sold to the highest bidders for a period of four months in the year 1781 at the undermentioned rates, viz.

*The Arrack Farm to Dorab Furdunjee at Rs.360 per month, Ganja and Bhang Farm to Muddum Lusci-man at Rs.11-2-66 per month.*³²

Under the Maratha Rule, there was a Maratha mint at Kalyan. The Bombay Government took the Maratha mint at Kalyan, sent there a supply of copper for being minted into East India Company's coins.³³

It seems that gunpowder and lead were available for purchase at Kalyan.³⁴

Customs duties were collected at five places at Kalyan. These places were Kalyan, Bhiwandi, Vajreswari, Panvel and Pen. Regular custom houses were established there by the Marathas. In the year 1781, the amount of customs at Kalyan was estimated at 2,50,000 rupees.³⁵

Bankot. Bankot was near Bombay. The trade of this centre remained small, but the Government received an annual income of Rs.12,000. from the octroi duties.³⁶ Articles of export from this place consisted of cocoanuts, betelnuts and small quantities of small fish and fins.³⁷ The Arab traders brought to Bankot many commodities from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. In the latter part of the 18th century, there was a lot of chaos and disorder in north Konkan. Naturally, it affected trade of Bankot.

Bombay factory's letter to the Directors, dated 22nd July, 1755, clearly shows the importance of Bankot for the commercial purpose -

The Marathas growing every day more powerful, we find it very difficult to procure live provisions, and in particular, horned cattle, and the chief supply

*we get for our marine is from the Siddis country to which Bankot is contiguous, and from which, we can always be supplied.*³⁸

In 1756, the English took possession of it and changed its name to Port Victoria. William Price was appointed Chief of the place and was instructed to settle terms of agreement with the Marathas as to the Company's privileges in the new acquisition. In April, 1756, he succeeded in concluding a friendly treaty with Ramji Pant (Maratha Sardar of Peshwa) by which the English were to get five villages besides Bankot, and free-trade in those parts. The important articles of this treaty were as follows:-³⁹

- iii) Customs are to be levied by the Marathas on goods which pass up this (Bankot) river only at Gorgom and Marr (Mahad) and not any fees or impediments in any of the intervening places;
- vi) As the Marathas export from thence annually for the use of their southern forts, etc., grain of all kinds to the amount of about Rs.40,000/-, it is agreed to be exempted from paying any duties at Fort Victoria, and in consideration thereof, the Hon.Company's goods to the amount of Rs.1,50,000/- to be free from all customs whatever as far as Poona upon certificates being produced on both sides;
- vii) No additional inland duties whatever to be levied on the English goods but only the usual fees;
- ix) The Marathas have free liberty to export their salt

rafters, small timber, etc., for the use of their Sarcar or Government, free of duties;

- x) The Marathas to use their endeavours to prevent the Dutch from trading at Rajapore.

The President of Bombay factory sent Spencer and Byfield to Poona to settle the Gheriah and Deccan Matters with the Peshwa.

With regards to the Presidency of Bombay, they were to insist on the following four articles:⁴⁰

- that the Dutch be forever excluded from the Nana's (Peshwa) dominions;
- that sanads in respect of Fort Victoria and the Fort of Eswatgar be delivered to the English, as also sanads for importing goods to Poona from Fort Victoria to the annual amount of Rs.1,50,000/- free of all duties;
- that the Maratha fleet shall not molest any vessel having an English pass; and
- that the English be granted the entire fishery of Mahim river.

Spencer and Byfield succeeded in settling a treaty of agreement with the Peshwa on 12th October, 1756. The proposals of Bombay with regard to the Dutch and Fort Victoria were granted but not the one referring to Mahim river.⁴¹

It seems that pepper was produced in neighbouring region of Bankot. And the President of Bombay instructed the English

authorities at Bankot to encourage the inhabitants to plant a sufficient number of trees.⁴²

At Bankot or Fort Victoria, the English tried to encourage trade. Merchants were allowed free liberty to trade both of buying and selling to whom they pleased, without any restriction. And if they chose not to sell their goods, they were permitted to carry them away after the customs were duly collected.⁴³

Bassein. The region of Bassein remained in Portuguese hands until its seizure by the Marathas in 1739.⁴⁴

The Maratha Government made efforts to bring the port in flourishing condition by providing houses to traders, who came and settled there.⁴⁵ The traders of Bassein exported sugar to Bombay and Surat in 1788. Among other articles of export from this port, rice was notable one. It seems that the people of Bassein had not learnt the art of refining sugar.⁴⁶ The Government with a view to bring prosperity to the port, exempted the merchants of Bombay and other places which traded with Bassein from octroi duties levied on export-import goods.⁴⁷

Chaul. Barbosa (1515) noted that wheat, rice, millet and gingelly, besides fine muslins and calicoes, produced in the Bahamani kingdom were exported from Chaul. A few miles inland from Chaul was a big market where "they bring their goods laden on great droves of trained oxen with pack-saddles, like those of Castille; a driver drives 20 or 30 oxen before him".⁴⁸ From this place, chiefly calico and fancy goods and some pepper were exported

to Red Sea and Persian Gulf. French ships entered into the port loaded with artillery, firearms, copper and cloth, in 1717. It is noted that even though upper Chaul was a considerable seaport in ninth decade of the 18th century, it did not regain its former importance under the Marathas.⁴⁹ Jaggery, betelnuts, sugar, garlic, turmeric, cocoanuts, wheat, grass, etc., were the commercial articles of export-import trade from this place. Further, it appears that considerable trade of tobacco was carried on at the harbour and it was an important centre of tobacco.⁵⁰

Pen and Panvel.

The port of Panvel rose to importance in the 18th century. Various goods were brought from Deccan to Panvel. These were groceries, rice, cloth, tobacco, jaggery and chillies. The town had a number of merchants. The dried salt fishes were sent from this place to Deccan.⁵¹

Pen and Panvel were important ports in the region of Kalyan and Bhiwandi. They were good centres of exports and imports.⁵²

Octroi duty was levied on all the goods of exports and imports. All the imports in Pen port came from Bombay.⁵³ Pen was a centre of traffic between Deccan and seacoast.⁵⁴ From Pen, ships loaded with rice went to Bombay. Panvel was a trade centre between Poona and Bombay.⁵⁵

It emerged as an important port alongwith the rise of Bombay. Trade in groceries, rice, cloth, tobacco, jaggery,

chillies, etc., was conducted through Panvel to the different trade centres of Maharashtra.

Pen and Panvel were the good centres for dried salt fishes which were exported from these places to the region above the Ghats.⁵⁶

Rohe. It was one of the important ports in the 18th century. A number of goods were imported and exported from this port. They included salt, cocoanuts, rice, jaggery, wheat, nagli, timber, oil, tobacco and cloth. Dried salt-fish was one of the important articles that was exported from this centre.⁵⁷ It functioned as an important place of loading the goods to be sent through the passes of Gadhavlot and Kumbha to other provinces of Deccan.⁵⁸

This port was a good place for trade of animals too. The tax was levied on the sale of animals and on the animals that used to come for sale here. Among the animals brought here for sale, horses were the chief.⁵⁹

Rajapur. In 1318 A.D., Allauddin Khilaji opened the way to the south which was never again shut. From this time, Rajapur was an important town in South Konkan area. It was handed over in 1713 to Angria, the chief of the Maratha Navy.⁶⁰ Hamilton (1688 to 1723), a traveller, writes that earlier both the English and the French had their factories at this place. Further he states that it was deserted in 1720.⁶¹ Under the able

leadership of Angria, the town again began to flourish as a trading centre from 1734-35. When Arabs desired to re-open trade at certain ports of Chhatrapati Shahu, they were permitted to open trade with Rajapur. Horses were brought from Muscat to this place for sale by the Arabs. It was famous for the horse trade and its fame as a centre of horse trade spread far and wide and consequently, merchants from different parts of Maharashtra used to flock to this place. In the 18th century, it assumed great importance mainly for the trade of Arab horses.⁶²

At Rajapur, a considerable number of weavers were familiar with the manufacturing of cloths. There were bankers and wholesale merchants who commanded large supplies of capital and who used to advance money to weavers of cloth goods in order to obtain the merchandise for both internal and foreign commerce. Generally, the calico from this place was exported to Bombay.⁶³

Rajapur was also famous for the trade of salt. Numerous ships carried the salt from here to other places.⁶⁴ In those days, salt was costly.⁶⁵

The English opposed strongly the Dutch merchants at Rajapur. The treaty between Bombay and the Marathas of October, 1756, states -

*The Dutch goods will not be permitted to be loaded at Rajapur. The Marathas to use their endeavour to prevent the Dutch from trading at Rajapur.*⁶⁶

A place called Jaitapur was a port and merchandise of Rajapur was transported from Jaitapur port.

Junnar. Junnar is probably one of the oldest trade centres of western India. Its importance as a trading centre continued even in the 18th century. Its location near the Nane-Pass which was one of the highways of trade between the Deccan and the West Coast of Maharashtra contributed to its rise to prominence.

The District Gazetteer writes that it collected millet and rice from Konkan. It indicates that its imports were salt, cocoanuts, dried fish, oil, grain, groceries, timber, cotton, silk yarn, etc. The chief articles of trade of this centre consisted of paper, women's robes, rice, wheat, gram, millet, sheep, etc.⁶⁷

Yeola. Fine and rich silk or coloured silk was sent from Yeola in the 18th century.⁶⁸ Hence, the crafts attracted numerous artisans from Gujarat and the territory of Nizam. The migration of skilled craftsmen from adjoining territories contributed to the growth of the population of town. In order to settle in the town, numerous craftsmen were offered land on favourable terms by Raghuji Patil in 1667. And this led to the rise of the town from that year. Its imports were mainly raw silk threads.⁶⁹

Kolhapur. Kolhapur, or as it seems to have been formerly called Karveer, is, perhaps, one of the oldest religious and trade centres in Western India. Under the Marathas, especially after 1730, when it became independent of Satara, Kolhapur rose in importance. In 1782, the seat of Government was transferred from Panhala fort to Kolhapur.⁷⁰

When the town was growing in the 18th century, the people built houses without any order wherever sites could be had. As the city increased in size, weekly markets came to be held outside the walls. Beyond the walls, ten suburbs or Peths were founded.⁷¹

Solapur. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Solapur was being tossed from one kingdom to another (Nizam-shahi and Adilshahi), the historical details of which need not be traced here. After Rajaram's flight to Jinji in 1689, in the course of their numerous raids, the Marathas levied contributions as far as Solapur.⁷²

In 1767-68, during the reign of Peshwa Madhavrao -I, Mangalwar or Madhav Peth was founded through the efforts of Udhava, Vireshvara (the Killedar of Fort in Solapur), the Killedar who had brought to the notice of Madhavrao, the lack of suitable market place in Solapur. Madhavrao personally paid a visit to Solapur on December 13, 1768, and granted about 17 acres of land to Jagadevappa Shete from Savargaon.⁷³

It was about the same time that Phaltan Peth also, came into existence. This area was inhabited mainly by the commercial families of Gujar from Phaltan. Both the Mangalwar Peth and Phaltan Peth could not cope with the needs of the growing trade and increasing population of the town. By 1802, a few more wards seem to have been created to meet the situation. In the Peshwa Daftar, we have a reference to such wards as Shanwar, Guruwar, Somwar, Begam Pura, etc. Col. James Walsh described in 1804,

Solapur as a "town having well established Peths, encircled by well-built walls and gates".⁷⁴

In the last decade of the 18th century, raw cotton began to come to Solapur market. Naturally, it grew steadily in importance as a trade centre, owing to its large cotton trade. The abundant production of cotton in that district and some other parts near it, greatly helped the growth of the weaving industry in the city. The cotton in that area was produced in such large quantities that much of it was exported.⁷⁵

Karwar. In the 18th century, Karwar in Karnataka was famous for the pepper trade. The English factory had been established at this place for pepper only. Pepper and rice were exported from Karwar to Bombay. There was a great demand for pepper in Europe, so the Governor of Bombay, all the time, insisted on buying pepper at proper rates. Karwar was a convenient place to collect the pepper produced in the adjacent region.⁷⁶

It also supplied rice to Bombay. In the year 1721, 7000 bales of Basrur rice were provided for Bombay.⁷⁷

Pepper of Karwar came from Honavar. Karwar factory sold iron, guns and lead to the King of Sondha. The imports of Karwar were mainly the metals such as iron, lead and broad cloth. Broad cloth was produced in England. A type of cloth called as scarlet cloth had no demand in India. The English merchants faced difficulties in selling that cloth.⁷⁸

Rice, like pepper, was transported to Bombay. This rice was collected from Mangalore area. Contemporary record states -⁷⁹

The two thousand five hundred bales of rice that is yet at Mangalore, we will sent for from thence.

In 1719, the English factors at Karwar collected a rupee per ton as the tonnage-duty but this was resented by the merchants in that region. Saltpetre also was sent from Karwar. In 1721, one hundred Surat maunds of Saltpetre was sent to Bombay. Horses from Muscat were brought by the ships of King of Karnataka and those were landed at Karwar.⁸⁰

The ships belonging to Madras sometimes visited Karwar. A ship carrying horses from Muscat came to Karwar in the year 1721.⁸¹

Sometimes, the rice, which was not in good condition, was sent to Goa. In 1721, 1000 bales of old rice were sent to Goa.⁸²

While describing the trade of Karwar, Milburn says-

During the period of English had a factory here, a considerable trade was carried on with Persia and Arabia. From the former place were imported almonds, dates, rose-water and raisins, and from Arabia - horses, drugs, etc. Of European goods, iron, lead, sword blades, knives, branch coral and weaving apparel for the Portuguese, were imported; and the return were:

*Pepper, free-on-board, 22 Darwar pagodas per candy,
Coarse brown cloth - 2 rupees per piece,*

Coarse brown muslin - 3 ditto,
 Goa Arrack - 20 to 25 rupees per hhd (hogshead)
 Schiraz wine - 40 rupees per chest,
 Rose-water - 40 ditto.

Besides which cardamum, cassia, nux vomica, some bezoar,
 and a few other trifling articles were to be procured.
 The best pepper on the coast was produced in this
 district.⁸³

Thus, Karwar was famous for pepper and rice
 and it imported broad cloth, metals, horses from other places.

All these commercial centres played an important
 role in the commercial activities in Western India in the 18th century.
 The trade volume of these centres was not as large as that of
 Surat or Bombay but they supplied whatever commodities were produ-
 ced in the adjacent regions. They contributed to the commerce in
 their own ways and helped the growth of trade of Western India
 in the 18th century.

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