

CLASS: 7
HISTORY
CHAPTER- 6
TOWNS, TRADERS AND CRAFTSPERSONS
MODULE -4/4

- **Fishing in Troubled Waters: Masulipatnam**
- The town of Masulipatnam or Machlipatnam [literally means, fish port town) lay on the delta of the Krishna river. In the seventeenth century it was a centre of intense activity.
- **Dutch and English East India Companies** attempted to control **Masulipatnam** as it became the most important port on the Andhra coast. The fort at Masulipatnam was built by the Dutch.
- The **Qutb Shahi** rulers of Golconda imposed royal monopolies on the sale of textiles, spices and other items to prevent the trade passing completely into the hands of the various East India companies.
- Fierce competition among various trading groups- **the Golconda nobles, Persian merchants, Telugu Komati Chettis, and European traders**- made the city populous and prosperous.
- The Mughals in the seventeenth century started extending their power to Golconda and their representative, the governor Mir Jumla who was also a merchant, began to play off the Dutch and English against each other. In 1686-1687, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb conquered Golconda.
- This caused the European Companies to look for alternatives. It was the part of new policy of the English East India Company that it was not enough if a port had connections with the production centres of the hinterland. The new company trade centres, it was felt, should combine the political, administrative and commercial roles.

- As the Company traders moved to Bombay, Calcutta [present- day Kolkata] and Madras [Present day Chennai], Masulipatnam lost both its merchants and prosperity and declined in the course of eighteenth century.

New Towns and Traders

- In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, European countries were searching for spices and textiles, which had become popular both in Europe and West Asia.
- The English, Dutch and French formed **East India Companies** in order to expand their commercial activities in the east.
- Initially, Indian traders like **Mulla Abdul Ghafur and Virji Vora** who owned a large number of ships competed with them.
- However, The European Companies used their naval power to gain control of the sea trade and forced Indian traders to work as their agents.
- Ultimately, the English emerged as the most successful commercial and political power in the subcontinent.
- Indian textiles were in great demand in Europe and West Asia. More and more people began to engage themselves in the crafts of spinning, weaving, bleaching, dying, etc.
- However, this period saw the decline of the independence of craftspersons. They now began to work on a system of **advance payments** which meant that they had to weave cloth which was already promised to European agents. Gradually they lost their freedom.
- Weavers no longer had the liberty of selling their own cloth or weaving their own patterns. They had to reproduce the designs supplied to them by the Company agents.

- The eighteenth century saw the rise of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, which are major metropolitan cities today.
- The crafts and commerce also underwent major changes as the local or native merchants and artisans were moved into “Black towns” established by the European companies within these new cities.
- The Black towns were mainly for native traders and craftspersons.
- White towns were for only Europeans. They occupied the superior residencies of Fort St. George in Madras or Fort St. William in Calcutta.

ELSEWHERE:

- **Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus**
In the fifteenth century European sailors undertook explorations of sea routes. They were driven by the desire to find ways of reaching the Indian subcontinent and obtaining spices.
- **Vasco da Gama**, a Portuguese sailor, sailed down African Coast, went round the Cape of Good Hope and crossed over to the Indian Ocean. He reached Calicut in 1498, and returned to Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. He lost two of his four ships, and out of 170 men at the start of the journey only 54 survived. He was followed by English, Dutch and French sailors.
- On the assumption that the earth was round, **Christopher Columbus**, an Italian, decided to sail westwards across the Atlantic Ocean to find a route to India. He landed in the West Indies in 1492. He was followed by the sailors and conquerors from Spain and Portugal, who occupied large parts of Central and South America.