CHAPTER I

MARITIME ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE AGES

IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
Historically the Indian Ocean has always been in prominence and of strategic importance ever since humans navigated the oceans. It has provided a great highway along which have travelled peoples and goods.\(^1\) In fact, it has been the highway for transmission of ideas, culture and religion from East Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Europe that have intermingled over the millennia to give shape to a uniquely interlinked world. Ancient Egyptians were the first people to extensively navigate and venture into the Indian Ocean, particularly the Arabian Sea. Then came the Arabs who navigated the Indian Ocean and spread the teaching of Islam to Indonesia and along the coast of Africa. The Chinese navy also engaged in trade and exploration along the coast of South Asia in their seaworthy vessels, even before the arrivals of the Europeans in the fifteenth century. The arrival of Europeans was the most significant turning point in the history of the whole Indian Ocean.\(^2\) The economic boundaries of the Indian Ocean world expanded to encompass direct linkages with Europeans and later with the American markets by the eighteenth century.

European economic penetration, combined with the decline of indigenous military power led inevitably to the rise of Great Power rivalry in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean has gradually emerged as a pivot in the economic and geopolitical configurations of the superpowers as a result of the power vacuum and reciprocal escalation in the region.

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2. ibid, p.3.
PRE-EUROPEAN ERA

According to the history of navigation the Egyptians were exploring the Indian Ocean as early as about 2,300 B.C.,\(^3\) when they sent maritime expeditions to the land of Punt,\(^4\) in the western part of the Indian Ocean in search of gold and incense. Punt is now identified as the country known as either Mozambique or coastal Somalia. Later, the Egyptians also made an attempt to link the Red Sea and the Mediterranean by a canal\(^5\) but could not succeed. After the Egyptians, Phoenicians appeared in the Indian Ocean in connection with the creation of the port of Ezion-Geber at the gulf of Aqaba, in the Red Sea and increased their maritime exchange with the coastal states. They also forged an alliance with Solomon, the King of Israel, and built a navy in 945 B.C. and they sailed to the region known as Ophir from which they brought back gold, silver, ivory and exotic animals and birds including apes and peacocks.\(^6\) The Phoenician navigations in the Indian Ocean continued from the tenth to the seventh centuries B.C. - from the reign of King Solomon of Israel to that of Egyptian King II, that is, 400 years. The expeditions may have taken place even earlier, perhaps about 2,900 B.C., were numerous until about 2,200 B.C. The journey to Punt during the period of 2800-2100 B.C. is not mentioned in the Egyptian annals, but they began again during the second dynasty (2081-1938 B.C.) and records mention them continuously until the twentieth dynasty (1190-1075). Early twentieth century B.C. trade was mostly confined in the northeastern part of the Indian Ocean because it was aided by an irrigation canal, which


\(^4\) ibid. p.18.

\(^5\) The first attempt to link the Red Sea to the Mediterranean by a canal was made by Queen Hetshepsut (1490-1475 B.C.) and later by the Pharaoh II in the seventh century B.C.

\(^6\) Toussiant, n.3, p.20.
was navigable in high water through the Isthmus of Suez, built by the Egyptians, during the twelfth Dynasty (1938-1756 B.C.) and operated almost continuously until the Canal was filled in A.D. 775. Archaeological excavations in different parts of the region indicate interactions among the first known-civilizations of Egypt, Sumer and Mohen-jo-Daro in the Indus Valley. Apart from these interactions, there is sufficient historical evidence supporting the fact that oceanic navigation played a significant part in promoting trade and the exchange of culture among the ancient peoples of South Asia, the Middle East and East Africa owing mainly to the Egyptian exploration in the Indian Ocean.

After the downfall of Cyprus and Assyrian power in 550 B.C., the Persians established the first local imperium. The Persians later expanded their territory from Indus, now in Pakistan, to the Mediterranean and from the Caucasus to the coast of the Arabian Sea (illustrated in Map 1.1). Darius, King of Persia, after the annexation of empire, established an extensive maritime link between Egypt and South Asia exploring more maritime routes in different regions. King Darius I gave a commission to Seylax, a Greek sailor, to lead a Persian expedition from Indus to the Gulf of Suez in 510 B.C. This expedition was a successful one and established communications between the Red Sea and the Indus. King Darius also resumed ancient Egyptian plans of linking the Mediterranean and the Red Sea by a canal which was made during the reign of Queen Hatsepsut (1490-1475 B.C.) and finally executed by him in the sixth century B.C. King Darius' reign saw the largest expansion of the Persian empire. Persia never became a sea power in the Indian Ocean as it was content with domination in the rimlands. However, before it fell to the armies of the Greek conqueror, Alexander the Great, in

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7 ibid, p.18.
8 D.G.Keswari, "Indian Cultural and Commercial Influence in the Indian Ocean from Africa and Madagascar to Southeast Asia", in Historical Relations Across the Indian Ocean, pp.32-43.
DURING THE PERSIA EMPIRE'S

ALEXANDER AND THE GREECO-ROMAN ROUTES

the fourth century B.C., the Persian empire promoted intensive economic and cultural links between east and west as merchants from many lands moved along its highways.\textsuperscript{9} It was only in A.D. 228, after the decline of the Roman Empire, that Persia emerged again as a regional naval power under the Sassanids when it regained sovereignty from the Parthians.\textsuperscript{10} Between 531-571 B.C., Persia built a powerful fleet and became dominant in the Gulf region.\textsuperscript{11}

It was in 329 B.C., about a thousand years after the Egyptians visited Punt, that Alexander the Great of Greece, on his way to the Punjab ordered Nearchus to explore the route to India. Nearchus built a river flotilla from the Indus to the Euphrates, a distance of 1400 miles.\textsuperscript{12} Nearchus the Cretan, admiral of Alexander, collected all information regarding the route to India and was prepared to face any opposition on his way. Nearchus and his troops reached the high-water mark of his Asiatic conquest by invading Hindustan. But in the end his troops got discontented due to the hot Indian weather and returned to Europe. However, his victorious army advanced eastwards following the line of march inland across the highlands of Central Persia and Afghanistan and through the Khyber. But he and his troops could not return by the same route in the depth of winter. With experience and knowledge, Nearchus went homeward by water and found a direct route through Potamia. In spite of all the privation and losses, Nearchus along with his army travelled 1400 miles by sea and were probably the first examples of a huge army being transported by sea in the Indian Ocean region.

\textsuperscript{9} Kenneth McPherson, \textit{The Indian Ocean, A History of People and the Seas} (Delhi, 1993), p.46.
\textsuperscript{10} Rasul B. Rais, \textit{The Indian Ocean and the Superpower} (New Delhi, 1983), p.16.
\textsuperscript{11} George Flado Hourani, \textit{Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times} (Princeton, 1951), p.34.
In the fourth century B.C., Alexander the Great overthrew the Achaemenid empire and ruled from Athens to the Indus and into Central Asia. Alexander led his army from Macedonia through the Mesopotamian heartland of the Middle East into Iran and Afghanistan and beyond to the mouth of the Indus (see Map 1.2). Before returning westward along the Baluchistan coast and ultimately back to the former cities of Persepolis and Susa.\textsuperscript{13}

In thirty B.C. the Romans conquered Egypt and created a new dimension through the establishment of direct maritime relations between Egypt and India. This period marked the beginning of the great commercial expeditions of Eudoxus and his successors. Though pioneering, these were hardly more than adventure-voyages. In the Roman era, the main trading station was in India at Arikamedou near Pondicherry. Information and evidence about visits by the Romans to India and the vestiges of the Roman era, like intaglios, carnelian seals, coins and pottery are found on the banks of the Ariancoupan River.\textsuperscript{14}

Among the early Asiatic seafarers were the Arabs and the Chinese who were trade rivals in the Indian ocean (see Map 1.3). According to Neville Chuttick, the Arabs played an important role in navigation in the Indian Ocean. Evidence for this is found in Sumerian records circa 2,000 B.C. wherein, it is mentioned that Arabs imported timber from Megan (Oman) to India (owned by Arabs traders of Oman). The advance of the Arabs' skill in navigation provided inspiration to the Persians and the Greeks to widen their knowledge in navigation. The Omani ports and the Persian Gulf became important especially to the eastern trade (which intermittently passed through the southern

\textsuperscript{13} K. McPherson, n.9, p.48.

\textsuperscript{14} Toussiant, n.3, p.34.
ARABS AND CHINESE SEA ROUTES

Asian ports like Aden). By the first century A.D., the Western region of the Indian Ocean saw a vast movement of culture and colonisation develop, which later spreading to the eastern port of the region. This era also saw the expansion of the Kingdom of Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula. The ports of Gujarat were raised for communication with the Far East by the pre-Islamic Arabs. The Arab traders extended their colonies into the coastland of East Africa, the Malabar and Gujarat coasts of India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Laccadive Islands in the ninth century A.D. In the seventh century the Arabs set up an outpost in Eastern Africa and began in the eighth century A.D. to spread Islam in Benadir coast, Mogadishu, Brawa in Somalia, Comoros island, Mozambique etc. By the tenth century A.D. Islam had spread to the Indonesian islands. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D. the Jewish trade became more restrained in the Indian Ocean because of the domination by Egyptians and Hindus. The Jewish merchants used the Indian Ocean from Aden with eastern Asia merely following the Islamic sea route.

Chinese navigation also played a crucial role in the early centuries in the Indian Ocean. As Arabs spread Islam from the Atlantic to the Arabian Sea and into Central Asia in the seventh and eighth centuries, the Chinese empire also expanding from Central Asia to the Pacific under the T'anz and Sung dynasties (619-1279) were further stimuli for the expansion of Indian Ocean trade in eighth and ninth centuries and for the evolution of another great cultural system in the Middle East. According to A. Toussiant, the Indian Ocean might well have become a Chinese lake from 1200 to 1433 A.D. because this period saw the height of Chinese maritime activity in the Indian Ocean.15 From the ninth century A.D. onwards, the Chinese became the masters of the high seas. Under the Sung dynasty (960-1127) naval construction progressed remarkably and toward

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the end of the tenth century used a primitive compass. Under the Sung of the South (1127-1279) the Chinese carried out considerable naval actions in Indonesia up to the Gulf of Bengal. The Mongols of China contacted and established ports at Sri Lanka, Calicut on the Malabar coast and Ormuz in the Persian Gulf and later Chinese merchants contacted Kaveripattinam and Quilon. During 1291 the entire route of China was followed by Marco Polo who was accompanied by a Mongol prince to Iran.\textsuperscript{16}

During the Ming dynasty the first expedition by Cheng-Ho in 1405 with 63 vessels and 27,870 men failed to succeed and the expedition which followed it between 1405-1409 reached Calicut after passing through Java and Ceylon. The third expedition in 1411 was resisted by the King of Ceylon\textsuperscript{17} and the fourth expedition went up to Ormuz during the period of 1413-15. Again under Cheng-Ho the fifth (1417-19), sixth (1421-22) and seventh expedition (1431-33) were organised and reached places like Aden, Mogadishu and Malini in eastern Africa. Even during the reign of I-Tsing in the seventh century, an expedition undertook the entire maritime voyage going via Sumatra and Malaysia. All these maritime adventures of the Chinese had very few effects in the Indian Ocean in terms of Chinese migration. It was during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that Chinese expansion by means of emigration became important in Indonesia. Toussiant stated that more than 30 ports in the Indian Ocean were visited by the Chinese sailors and everywhere all they asked was eagerly granted. In the middle of the fifteenth century A.D. the Chinese navy withdrew from the Indian Ocean region and never returned again. Wang Gungwi believes that the Chinese expeditions were "unnecessary and wasted" and "their main effect was to confirm Chinese prejudices that

\textsuperscript{16} Toussiant, n.3, p.77.

\textsuperscript{17} Devendra Kaushik, \textit{Perspective and Security in Indian Ocean Region} (New Delhi, 1982), p.11.
voyage to distant lands was of no great benefit to China and that they could be discontinued without any serious consequences to Chinese politics or Chinese economy.\textsuperscript{18}

Maritime activities were well-regulated at that time in India too. Radha Kumud Mookerji collected sufficient evidence to show that India was to be considered one of the oldest maritime powers of the world.\textsuperscript{19} The Vedas are the most ancient scriptural evidence which provide reference regarding the sea-going vessels and very active coastal trade in ancient India. The Mahabharata too indicates Sahadeva's journey by sea and the war with the \textit{Mlechchas} and conquering of some islands\textsuperscript{20} and the navy was known as the Angas of the army.\textsuperscript{21} In India, the earliest representation of ships, boats and other maritime activities can be traced in the Ancient Indian art of Mohen-jo-Daro dating back to 2500 B.C.\textsuperscript{22} which illustrate many designs of ocean going ships along with the details of the kinds of wood that could be used for ship-building.\textsuperscript{23}

During the reign of Ashoka, relations with Sri Lanka and other far-off countries indicate the existence of a well-established naval department. Even under Samundra Gupta there was a well-organised flotilla of hundreds of ships. During the rule of the South Indian dynasties like the Cheras, Pandyas and Cholas, Indian sea power extended its way to Malaya, Indonesia and Indo-China. The Shailendra dynasty which wrested

\bibitem{18} Wang Gungwi, \textit{The Chinese and the Countries Across the Indian Ocean in 'Historical Relations Across India'}, p.63.
\bibitem{21} P.K.Ramachandra Dikishtar, \textit{War in Ancient India} (Madras, 1948), p.287.
\bibitem{22} Pant, n.20, p.247.
\bibitem{23} Mookerji, n.19, p.13.
power from Srivijaya by transporting a large army across the Bay of Bengal\textsuperscript{24} was established in Java in A.D.782. Both these dynasties were hostile to the Chola dynasty in South India and naval confrontation lasted for a century. During the thirteenth century, the Shailendras attacked Sri Lanka but they failed to attain their objective. The role of the navy was very crucial and could not be ignored even in those days. Continued fighting between the local powers resulted in weakening them and consequently the Arabs got an opportunity to suppress the local powers and thereby establish their own supremacy. The fourteenth century saw the Vijayanagar empire claiming supremacy over the seas, the last of the local maritime empires in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{25} The Vijayanagar Kings assumed titles as the lords of the eastern, western and southern ocean and the empire possessed more than three hundred ports.\textsuperscript{26}

During Mughal rules too, particularly in Akbar's reign, there was a naval department mainly for navigation in the rivers. Their main ship-building was concentrated in Bengal, Kashmir, Allahabad and Lahore. Akbar had in his fleet 3,000 vessels, which were later reduced to 768.\textsuperscript{27} One of the main reasons for the naval weakness of the Mughals was their commitment to Central Asian traditions which did not recognise the importance of the sea. Consequently, the Mughal empire could not stand up to the European navies in the Indian Ocean.

Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha navy, was in fact, a terror to British, Portuguese as well as Mughal naval vessels. He established quite a firm tradition in

\textsuperscript{24} Bushwar Prasad, \textit{The Royal Indian Navy} (New Delhi, 1964), p.2.
\textsuperscript{25} Elliot and Dowson, \textit{History of India}, vol.IV, p.103.
\textsuperscript{26} K.P. Singh, \textit{The Politics of Indian Ocean} (New Delhi, 1974), p.3.
\textsuperscript{27} Toussiant, n.3, p.5.
naval warfare. He was the first Indian ruler to realise the importance of protection of the coast-line. With the advantage of naval power he controlled the whole of the Konkan and fortified, within 25 years the entire sea-coast from Mundve to Malabar. He set up many ship-building centres in Vijayadurga, Kolaba, Sindhuvarga, Ratnagiri, Anyanvela etc. At the time of his death in 1680, the Maratha navy was a most capable and efficient force. Indeed, after the death of Shivaji, the Maratha navy reached the peak of glory under the command of Takaji who fought against the English, Dutch and Portuguese navies which made him the greatest naval hero of India. Later, unfortunately, the Maratha navy clashed with the Mughal navy and gradually this conflict weakened their power. The downfall of the Marathas proved to be an invitation to the Europeans.

EUROPEAN ERA

With the advent of gun-powder and larger ships the European navies came into the Indian Ocean without much difficulty and opposition from the native people. European vessels, both merchants ships and fighting ships regularly sailed into the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans where they fought with their naval rivals. Gradually the naval supremacy of some European powers enabled them to control the high seas and deny opportunities to their European and local rivals in the region. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries great changes took place when Europeans completely controlled the entire Indian Ocean region and thus began the era of European imperialism in the

29 Mookerji, n.19, p.62.
30 Panikkar, n.15, pp.8-9.
Indian Ocean. For 400 years, the history of the Indian Ocean became one of colonial rivalries and struggles among the Western Powers. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to attain supremacy in the Indian Ocean followed by the Dutch, the English, and the French, who came to India for trade but were the first to have idea of establishing a territorial empire in India mainly because of the political instability of India.  

(a) Portuguese

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to dominate the Indian Ocean region after the ancient invasion of the Greeks. The discovery of the Cape of Good Hope route enabled Vasco-da-Gama to reach Calicut on the Indian west coast on 11 May 1498 A.D. with naval vessels, the biggest of which, the San Gaberial, being less than 120 tonnes. During that period there were no local powers that exercised sufficient maritime power to control the entire region. The local ruler of Calicut, the Zamorin, welcomed Vasco considering him to be a new trade partner. But very soon in pursuit of monopolistic ends, the Portuguese used naval superiority to eliminate the Indian littoral and Arab sea power in the region. The first naval clash took place in 1503 between the ships of the Zamorin and the Portuguese. With their superior maritime technology, the Portuguese defeated all the local rulers in India as well as in the coastal


32 The Greeks are the first European to sail in the Indian Ocean under Admiral Nearchus, in 326 B.C.

33 Panikkar, n.15, p.38.

34 ibid, p.38.

35 Rais, n.10, p.19.
states of Africa. Gradually the Portuguese captured strategically situated ports in a great
carc from Sofala to Malacca from which they dominated the sea lanes and the economic
hinterlands of the Indian Ocean. The objective of this broad strategy was to direct
indigenous goods to Portuguese controlled ports as a means of dominating the trade in
spices and pepper to Europe.\(^{36}\) The most important base was Mozambique, on the east
cost of Africa opposite Madagascar. The Portuguese captured Goa on the west coast
of India in 1510 because of its central position in the maritime trade between the Deccan
Sultanates and the Middle East. It became the headquarters of the Portuguese in the
East.Ormuz was seized in 1515 because it was linked via Tabrig to the markets of
Central Asia and located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Diu was seized as it was
located close to the great cotton and silk textile exporting area of Gujarat.\(^{37}\) Malacca
was controlled in 1511 by the Portuguese and became a major spice market in the straits
connecting the Indian Ocean with the shallow seas of the archipelago. The Portuguese
position was precarious and their activity purely commercial. The Portuguese were the
first to settle in Macao in 1557 because of the differences among Chinese officials\(^{38}\)
(see Map 1.4).

By the late sixteenth century, the Portuguese had lost most of their major
possessions like Colombo, and along the Malabar coast and Goa because of local
opposition and resistance in the region. In the Persian Gulf, the Portuguese were driven
out and along the East African coast north Mozambique (1700) because Sultanate of
Oman emerged as maritime power in the Arabian sea. The Portuguese also had strong

\(^{36}\) *The Indian Ocean*, n.1, p.11.

\(^{37}\) McPherson, n.9, p.162.

rivals among the other European powers, mainly the Dutch and English. The Portuguese superiority lasted for about a century in the Indian Ocean region. The failure of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean was due to the constant conflicts with regional powers and also domestic weaknesses and political developments in Europe. Also, the discovery of Brazil, directed Portuguese energies towards the new world which greatly contributed to her retreat from the Indian Ocean region.  

(b) Dutch

Portugal was followed by the Dutch expedition which reached Bantoal (Indonesia) in 1595, on the island of Java (see Map 1.4). Within six years, the Dutch had made about fifteen expeditions comprising sixty ships. However, initially the Dutch were interested in Java, Sumatra and Spice Island where spices were produced and they avoided confrontation with Portugal in the Indian Ocean. In 1602, the Vereenigle Oostindische Compagnia or the United East India Company was formed in Holland for the promotion of Eastern trade which was passed by the Dutch Parliament. The States General had created a charter empowering it to make war, conclude treaties, acquire territories and build fortresses. Gradually, conflict started between the Portuguese and the Dutch (1597-1641). The Dutch seized Malacca, Cochin (1663) along with smaller settlements on the Malabar coast of India. The new Dutch settlement at the Cape in 1652, then running east before the prevailing wind in the forties of south latitude

39 Toussiant, n.3, p.132.

40 ibid. p.132.

41 The Indian Ocean, n.1, p.11.
PORTUGUESE AND DUTCH TRADE ROUTES

Map 1:4

Portuguese Trade Routes
Portuguese Controlled & Towns
Dutch Trade Routes

ENGLISH AND FRENCH SEA ROUTES FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Map 1:5

English Trade Routes
French Trade Routes

and entering the archipelago by way of the Sunda strait. In the western part of the Indian Ocean, the Dutch captured Mauritius (1683) and the Cape of Good Hope. In the seventeenth century the Dutch used their base at Jakarta as a springboard from which to capture Portuguese bases such as Malacca, Galle, Colombo, Jaffna and Cochin. Both the English and the Dutch were primarily interested in the spices of insular Southeast Asia and South Asia and began their commerce in these areas. By the late seventeenth century, the Dutch had driven out all their European rivals and forcibly incorporated indigenous merchants and producers into the Vercenigle Oostindische Compagnia's commercial empire.

In the long run, the Dutch however had little success because they badly neglected some of the strategic areas and also the Dutch naval forces were based only in Surabaya on the periphery of the Indian Ocean. With a superior naval force the English captured the Bay of Bengal and the last battle took place near Hooghly in which the Dutch were defeated and dealt a crushing blow.

(c) French

In the seventeenth century when the Portuguese and the Dutch retreated, the English and the French established their companies in the Indian Ocean region (see Map 1.5). The French organised an East India Company in 1604 and the first trading factory was set up at Surat in 1668. By the year 1527, the French reached the Malabar

42 Geoffrey Baraclough, n.38, p.160.
43 The Indian Ocean, n.1, p.12.
44 ibid, p.13.
coast but failed to penetrate into the area until 1735. Their strategy was to seize the Cape from the Dutch and to set up a station in Southern Madagascar but they could not succeed. Mauritius was seized in 1735 and Port Louis was found to be a good natural harbour on the island and developed into a major naval base. In 1721 they secured Mahe and it became a commercial centre. On the eastern coast of India, the French possessed major stations such as Pondicherry and Chandernagar but they did not stay long in French hands due to the British gaining sea control of the Coromandel coast of India. The French did collaborate with local rulers in South India and with the Russian Tsars to oust Britain from the Indian Ocean region but this could not be successful owing to the changes in the balance of power in Europe. In 1805, French naval power was defeated in India in the Battle of Trafalgar by the most distinguished British admiral, Nelson and the Indian Ocean became a ‘British Lake’ in 1900.

(d) Britain

The first English expedition to the Indian Ocean was launched during 1577-80, through the Pacific Ocean. Initially it was only an exploratory mission and not a trade expedition. In 1595, the British appeared again in the Indian Ocean through the Cape route and began to show interest in the region. The species of insular Southeast Asia and South Asia became the British commerce region with the support of indigenous rulers. The English East India Company was formed in 1600 and a gradual penetration using

46 Dieter Braun, The Indian Ocean (Delhi, 1983), p.5.
47 Alliance in 1798-1801, France and Russia.
49 The Indian Ocean, n.1, p.11.
its sea power greatly enhanced British political and military influence in the Indian Ocean region. The first trading centre was established in 1611 at Masulipatnam on the eastern coast of India. And in 1613 another was set up at Surat on the eastern coast of the Indian Ocean (see Map 1.5). In 1615 a conflict broke out between the English and the Portuguese. The Dutch and English made a treaty to eliminate the Portuguese from the region. The British seized Hormuz in 1622 from the Portuguese and after that the British became the fearless masters in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{50} By 1639, the British had already occupied Borneo, Sumatra, Surat, Broach and Cambay and gained the village of Madras on the central Coromandel coast as its first territorial possessions in Asia.\textsuperscript{51}

The battle of Plassey in 1757 was a turning point for the British. The defeat of France finally and radically changed equations in the South Asian region. The British expanded their territory by defeating the Indian kings in both South and North India.\textsuperscript{52} By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British held most of South Asia and gained Sri Lanka from the Dutch along with Malacca, and Cape town, as well as the major part of the Mascarenes from the French. In 1820 Britain gained control of the entire region and local rulers began to seek her protection. The British seized Aden in 1839 and attained unchallengeable naval supremacy in the Mediterranean with the acquisition of Egypt and Cyprus. The Mediterranean route to India became a private subway for the British who controlled Gibraltar, Malta and Port Said. The network of oceanic transportation in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean developed under British

\textsuperscript{50} William Wilson Hunter, \textit{A History of British India} (Delhi, 1972), pp.310-30.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{The Indian Ocean}, n.1, p.12.

\textsuperscript{52} Rais, n.10, p.25.
hegemony. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British had gained Burma, Maldives, Seychelles, Laccadives, Chagos, Andamans, the Malay Peninsula and had moved to the Cape to seize a major share of Southern Africa. The Red Sea and Persian Gulf came under British dominance only in 1900 and control of the Suez Canal and the Red Sea from Egypt and Aden, the Persian Gulf from Bahrain to Oman. By the end of the nineteenth century the Indian Ocean became a 'British Lake' with control over all the important approaches and the existing Pax Britannica remained unchallenged till the Second World War (Map 1.6). Britain's Asian conquest and her victory in the Battle of Trafalgar made her the dominant global power. She achieved domination and pervasive political influence in the region through a combination of effective political strategies, efficient use of sea power sealed with naval forces in all strategic areas.

The Indian Ocean played a crucial role in World Wars I and II. In World War I the ocean had not become so important in the strategic struggle because the war was mainly confined to two areas - the Middle East and East Africa. German submarines were active in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and their military strategic operations did not involve the Indian Ocean. The British had realised the importance of the Middle East, especially the Persian Gulf, after World War I because of Gulf oil as well as the Indian Ocean from a naval strategic point of view. A strategic agreement was signed between Britain and the United States to strengthen military power in the region. The treaty was signed in Washington in 1922, where both Britain and the US agreed to participate in the region whenever they were required.

54 Braun, n.46, p.6.
During World War II, the Indian Ocean played a leading role in 1940. Germany and Italy advanced into North Africa leading to clashes with Britain and in the eastern region the Japanese Navy attacked Java and captured it. The Japanese Navy also occupied the islands of Andaman and Nicobar and conducted a raid on Colombo. Allied troops were sent to the Persian Gulf and there was a joint Anglo-Soviet action against Reza Shah (Iran) to prevent him from joining with the Axis Powers. In the eastern part of the Indian Ocean, the British withdrew their troops because of the loss of two British warships, the Prince of Wales and Repulse, and the fall of Singapore into Japanese hands. The Indian Ocean region was left defenceless against Japan's air strikes. On the other hand the American navy defeated the Japanese in the Battle of the Coral Sea and so saved the Indian Ocean from Japanese domination. However, Britain achieved victory in World War II. Despite the loss of power and vigour she continued to hold her colonial territories in the Indian Ocean region.

For almost 200 years Britain had exercised predominant military power in the Indian Ocean region, established bases at key points and along sea lanes. After the end of World War II, foreign domination became weak in the colonial regions because of the economic burden of the two world wars and their devastating effects. This made it difficult to maintain the requirements of security, administration and the excessive cost of social commitment. There was also the rise of nationalist movements of the peoples of Asia and Africa. On the other hand, Britain also felt that its immediate interests lay in preserving the 'Atlantic Community, i.e., West European military unity with American and Canadian backing. She also relied on South Africa, Australia, New

Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and Federation Cooperation to serve her interests on the region. As a matter of fact, Britain began to face serious economic problems at home and the Labour government was compelled to review its policies towards the colonies in 1968. Gradually most of the littoral states were given independence - India, Pakistan, Burma and Sri Lanka in 1947-48, Indonesia in 1949, Malay in 1975, Singapore in 1963, Somalia and Malagasy in 1960, Tanganyika in 1961, Kenya 1963, Aden and Mauritius in 1978.\textsuperscript{57} Even though Britain had withdrawn her forces from the sub-continent of India and Africa, she continued to possess quite a few strategic territories in the Indian Ocean such as, Aldabra island, Fraquhar and Desroches from the Seychelles group of islands which were amalgamated into the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)\textsuperscript{58} in 1965. This also included Diego Gracia which lies in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

The British interest in the Indian Ocean still continued because her trade with the region was 22 percent of all her overseas transactions and 40 percent of her overseas investments were based in this region.

The Labour government announced in 1968 the withdrawal of British forces from east of Suez by the end of 1971 and opted for decolonisation in the region. The British withdrawal from the Indian Ocean region left a power vacuum. The littoral states were too weak and sharply divided on ideological, political and territorial issues to fill the vacuum. Moreover lack of strong naval powers in the region provided opportunities to the superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. The main intention and interest of the superpowers entry into the Indian Ocean was motivated by political, security and economic resources. The superpowers moved their naval forces in the Indian Ocean in

\textsuperscript{57} Kaushik, n.17, p.16.

\textsuperscript{58} Indian Ocean Atlas, p.6. Interesting facts and data are given in Report on International Indian Ocean Expedition UN.
early sixties to fill the power vacuum left by the British. The Soviet Union was interested in political influence among the littoral states, whereas the US was interested in oil from the Middle East. Gradually, both the US and Soviet Union started deploying their naval forces and acquired naval and air bases in the Indian Ocean. US bases in the region include Diego Garcia, Bahrain, Masirah and access to the Australian bases of North-East Cape, Backburn Sound etc.\(^{59}\) The Soviet Union made treaties of friendship and cooperation with Afghanistan, North and South Yemen, India, Iraq, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique and Syria. The USSR converted the island of Socotra at the mouth of the Red Sea into an important military base and Berbera, Cam Ranh Bay of Vietnam and Dahlak islands of Ethiopia were her other naval bases.\(^{60}\) On the other hand, the littoral states raised their voice against the militarization of the region and wanted to make it a 'zone of peace'. In 1971, the 26th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations declared the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace (IOZP) but the UN resolution could not be implemented due to the superpowers who refused to cooperate until 1990. The Cold War ended in 1990 and both the superpowers have reduced their naval forces from the region. Although the Cold War is over, the region still remains in a state of high tension due to local instability and the acquisition of advanced weapons by littoral states. The Indian Ocean looks like it will remain neither a peaceful nor a stable region.

\(^{59}\) U.N. General Assembly A/AC 159/1, 5 May 1974, Ad Hoc Committee in the Indian Ocean, p.20.

A well known historian of the Indian Ocean, Augusts Toussiant has stated that "the victory of the Indian Ocean is only the beginning. In more than one respect developments in the Indian Ocean will decide the future of Afro-Asia and Australia." 

The Indian Ocean gradually seaborne became very important to many nations because it occupies a unique position, where it connects both Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The Indian Ocean plays a crucial role on the east as ships can sail from Bay of Bengal in the Indian Ocean to the countries of the Pacific Ocean through a number of straits such as Malacca, Sunda, Bali, Lombok, Sumba, Ombai, the Timor sea etc. The Indian Ocean also facilitates internal trade, commerce and communication through rivers such as Salween, Irrawaddy, Ganga, Indus, Shatt-al-Arab and Zambegi. On the other hand, the northern, eastern and western parts of this ocean remain open throughout the year for national and international trade and communication. But whereas in the southern part beyond the 50° south latitude the ocean is covered by iceberg and packice. The Indian Ocean littoral states especially in the Middle East produce large quantity of oil and most oil bound for Europe passes around the Cape of Good Hope and to East Asia through the South Asian peninsula and thence through the Straits of Malacca. In this way, the Indian Ocean become an ocean for naval power competition between superpowers for their national interests.

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