Chapter One

Introduction

The discipline of history, with the passage of time, has extricated itself out of the shadows of ruling elites and priestly classes. The new generation of historians is concentrating more on social and economic phenomena, which seem to have contributed more to the making of history. Still, it is possible to identify historical themes, which require further scholarly attention. Maritime trade of India is one of them. Since antiquity, the sea has posed a variety of challenges to humanity. The whole world witnessed the anger of the Indian Ocean on 26 December 2005, when the tsunami claimed thousands of lives in one sweep in southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the sea has also provided livelihood to the millions. Therefore, the Indians viewed the sea as both a giver and taker. It gave *amrit* (nectar) and *halahal vish* (deadly poison) when the gods and the demons churned it.\(^1\) However, what attracts the students of history is not the sea itself, but the attitude of people towards it. The course of history depended on how the people inhabiting the coasts utilized the sea.

There is a consensus among historians that India enjoyed flourishing maritime trade in antiquity.\(^2\) Pliny complained the annual drain of fifty million

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\(^1\) According to Hindu mythology, the sea gave many gifts, which included nectar, poison and even Lakshmi (goddess of wealth). The gods and demons came together to churn the sea with a mountain and a snake named Vasuki acting as a chord, Dipalvali Debroy and Bibek Debroy, *The Vishnu Purana*, p. 11.

\(^2\) Sacotra originated from Sanskrit *Sukh-dwipa* that literally translates into an island of pleasure. A.L. Basham admits that India witnessed maritime contacts with the outside world, yet he remarks that "certain over-enthusiastic Indian scholars have perhaps made too much of the achievements of ancient Indian seafarers." It represents the old notion about the limited participation of the Indians in sea trade. For details, see A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, Vol. I., p. 226.
sesterces to India in return for its grass and roots. A. L. Basham feels that the name of Sacotra could be of Indian origin.³ The Sangam literature alludes to the ships coming to its port without slackening their sails.⁴ It is generally believed that the fall of the Roman Empire generated a decline in the maritime trade of India, which was ultimately revived by the Europeans. Big gaps existed in the studies of the Indian Ocean maritime trade between the fall of the Gupta Empire in the sixth century and the arrival of Vasco Da Gama in 1498 AD. With the passage of time, scholars like K.N. Chaudhuri and Andre Wink started acknowledging the birth of Islam and its positive impacts on the trading world of the Indian Ocean. Still, more scholarly attention is required on these historical aspects. The present work is an attempt in this direction.

As discussed above, several scholars have explored the diverse features of maritime trade in the Indian Ocean. Most of them have focused on a period dominated by the activities of the Romans up to the Gupta period or various European trading companies on the Indian coasts. If at all they refer to the pre-European phase, it is done merely to provide a background to highlight the pervasive European influence in the commerce of the Indian Ocean. For instance, Sanjay Subrahmanyam deals primarily with the emergence and growth of the Portuguese power in Asian seas. Surender Gopal in his book, Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat in 16th and 17th Centuries, (1975), focuses on the impact of the Europeans on the commerce of Gujarat during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. K.N. Chaudhuri in his book, Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750 AD, (1985), covers period from the rise of Islam to 1750 AD. However, he fails to acknowledge the changing practices after the rise of the Fatimids in Egypt

³ A. L. Basham, op. cit., p. 228.
around second half of the tenth century. In the second section of the book, he mainly concentrates on various practices adopted by the Europeans in the Indian Ocean trading world. Historians like Om Prakash and K.S. Mathew also devote their attention to the Europeans, the Dutch and the French respectively.

At this juncture, we may consider a few writings dealing with the period of our interest. In his book entitled, *Arab Sea-faring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, (1951), G.F. Hourani attributes the expanding activities of the Arab merchants in the Indian Ocean to the rise of Islam, the caliphate and Baghdad. He highlights the direction of monsoons in determining the course of seaborne traffic, besides exploring the contribution of the Arabs in improving the craft of shipbuilding. He feels that the Arabs were familiar with the southwest monsoons, but favoured northeast monsoons. According to him, the art of reading stars was first learnt in the vast expanse of the Arabian deserts. He also applauds the Arabs for their important invention, i.e. lateen (fore and aft) sail. *Dhows*, with their fore and aft sails, were more suitable to catch the wind. Maqbul Ahmad's work entitled *Indo-Arab Relations: An Account of India's Relation with the Arab World from the Ancient upto Modern Times*, (1969), essentially covers the same ground as Hourani's. The former argues that the emergence of Baghdad heralded the era of a golden age in Indo-Arab trade, when the commodity structure underwent a considerable transformation and colonies of the Arab merchants appeared on several Indian ports. He attributes a shift in this traffic to the crusades, the decline of the caliphate, Mongol invasions and European intervention. Though Hourani and Maqbul Ahmad offer interesting insights into the subject under study, yet they have focused only on the western segment of the Indian Ocean.

W.H. Moreland's *From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A Study in Indian Economic History*, (1923), and *A Short History of India*, (1936), and A.L. Basham's *The Wonder that was India: A Survey of the History and Culture of Indian Sub-continent before the Coming of the Muslims*, (1954), study
some aspects of the Indian maritime trade. However, it was Radha Kumud Mookerji, who pioneers this area with his book entitled, *Indian Shipping: A History of the Seaborne Trade and Maritime Activities of the Indians from the Earliest Times*, (1962). It is devoted entirely to the Indian participation in the sea trade. This work constitutes a long survey bringing out the role of Indian merchants in maritime trade, right from Rig Vedic times to the middle of the twentieth century. The writer explores various Sanskrit, Pali, Persian and Chinese sources to highlight Indian participation in the trading world of the Indian Ocean. Though the work concentrates largely on the ancient period, yet the author has provided a separate chapter to the time span extending from the eighth to sixteenth century. He characterizes Malabar as a 'key of Hind'.

He designates the sultan of Gujarat as 'the lord of the sea'. He finds that Indian rulers were fully aware of the benefits of sea trade and the challenges posed by the Europeans. The sultan of Ahmedabad even joined an Afro-Asian league against the Portuguese expansion in 1509 AD. He identifies a series of important ports in the medieval period. Ports of Cambay, Calicut, Quilon, Bassein, Agashi and Chaul witnessed considerable sea traffic. He also pays some attention to the craft of shipbuilding. He asserts that Indian vessels were larger than their European counterparts. This work is indeed a comprehensive survey, which has been developed from contemporary sources. The author succeeds in proving his point that Indians were aware of the profits of the sea and they traded with distant countries sailing in their vessels. However, the absence of an analytical approach hampers this pioneer work.

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6 This limitation is amply compensated realizing the overall contribution of this work. This was a period when objective history was fondly pursued and sources were expected to speak for themselves.
K.N. Chaudhuri in his work entitled, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750 AD*, (1985), followed Braudel's famous treatise on the Mediterranean during the time of Philip II. Braudel invented the concept of *La Longue Durée* and K.N. Chaudhuri treats the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean, lying between the Red Sea and the Chinese waters as one economic unit, revealing a single pattern of trade. Divided into two sections, the book devotes a full chapter to the development of maritime trade from the seventh to the middle of the fourteenth century. The author argues that the emergence of the Islamic caliphate as a large unified empire and the rise of the Tangs in China provided a great impetus to long distance commerce. He shows that the Arabian tribes, even prior to the rise of Islam, were engaged as intermediaries between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea, because the Red Sea was avoided on account of the presence of reefs and other dangers. He argues that the Islamic conquests of Persia, Iraq, Syria and north Africa enabled the Muslims to work upon the sea. He believes that the introduction of a partial official monopoly by the Sungs (969 AD) in China led to the emergence of numerous towns on the Chinese coasts. He attributes the rising demand for luxury goods in the Islamic world to cultural habits (expanded consumption of luxuries). He maps the direction of trade routes in the Indian Ocean, besides highlighting the nature of piratical activities. He studies the commercial practices of merchants in medieval times. He devotes some space to the craft of shipbuilding. Despite his commendable effort, the author fails to appreciate the contribution of Indian merchants in the trading world of the Indian Ocean. Nor does he take into account the maritime activities in the Bay of Bengal, whereas the Chinese sources frequently attest to the numerous tributes sent during the Chola period and later by the sultans of Bengal during the fourteenth and fifteenth century. This work concentrates more on the European practices and changes brought by them in the trading world of the Indian Ocean.
Kanakalatha Mukund’s study, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant: Evolution of Merchant Capitalism in the Coromandel*, (1999), perceives an inter-relation between urbanization, temples and trade. She finds that two contradictory developments were taking place in the ninth century Tamilnadu. Firstly, there was a considerable increase in agricultural production that resulted in the growth of population. She feels that it created new zones of markets. These markets, in return, generated more demands of quality goods that increased trade. She argues that merchants were, however, not given their due in the structural hierarchy of the society. She also studies the important role played by the temples in ‘the circulation of the resources.’ She suggests that the donations given to the temples were re-circulated in the form of loans to village assemblies and individual merchants. She feels that it was a convenient method to pump out the treasures from military conquests into village economy. She shows that the temples and *brahamdeya* grants initiated the process of urbanization in the Chola lands, and urbanization expanded to the Pandaya kingdom when the Cholas declined. The urbanization, as a result, encouraged mercantile activities in the Coromandel coasts. She notices some kind of specialization in the mercantile communities. There were cloth merchants (*saliya-nagarttar*) and oil merchants (*sankarappadi-nagarattar*). Contradicting the old notion of plunder, she illustrates that military campaigns of the Cholas, in Ceylon and southeast Asia, were motivated to benefit mercantile activities. She argues that after the conquests, one can study the prominent presence of Tamil guilds in Ceylon and southeast Asia. She highlights the point that the Vijayanagara empire imposed Telugu elements in Tamil areas in the form of *nayakas*. She proves that these *nayakas* controlled the resources of Tamil areas through their control over temple managements. She finds them remitting various taxes to increase trade in their areas. Ports were converted into ‘security

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havens' to lure the international sea-traffic. She strengthens her argument of foreign elements in Tamil areas with the study of increased temple donations by the merchants and guilds, which were granted to earn legitimacy in Tamil lands. She remarks that these phenomena pumped more capital in the village markets. As a result, she records considerable presence of Tamil merchants in Malacca and other southeast Asian countries around the fourteenth century.

*Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, Vol. I, (1999), by Andre Wink is an interesting work on the expansion of Islam in India and southeast Asia. The author has attempted to integrate social, economic and political phenomena that contributed in the making of the Indo-Islamic culture. It is not directly related to the study of maritime trade, yet the first three chapters of the work dwell heavily on mercantile activities in the India Ocean. Encouraged by their conquest over Persia and newly acquired maritime skills, the Muslim armies and merchants visited distant regions and revived economies of Europe, Asia and Africa. The author asserts that 'in monetary terms the result of the Muslim conquest was the transition to a unified currency based on the gold *dinars* and silver *dirhams*, and simultaneously with it, a dramatic increase of volume of precious metals in circulation.' According to him, at the advent of Islam, there was an acute shortage of precious metals in trade. Muslims plundered ecclesiastical hoardings of gold in the Byzantine, India and Africa and brought them into circulation in world markets. Their conquests and subsequent plunders brought precious metals in circular movement and sustained commerce in three continents namely, Asia, Africa and even Europe. He attributes the Turkish invasions upon India to its commodity structure. India was self sufficient in almost all products. It acquired precious metals in return for its exports. The second wave of Islamic invasions in India was aimed to secure hoarded gold and silver. The author also studies the trading diasporas of Muslims, Jews and Christians in India. Almost every diaspora in India was connected to the maritime trade.

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Mapillas and Lubbais enjoyed favourable contacts in Muslim world. Lubbais traced their origin to the Arabs. Similarly, the persecution of the Jews and Christians in Roman times brought them to south India, where they used to trade in earlier times.

Interestingly many important articles have appeared in various books and journals dealing with maritime trade in the Indian Ocean. Abraham L. Udovitch's article, 'Commercial Techniques in Early Medieval Islamic Trade', in D.S. Richards, ed., *Islam and the Trade of Asia: A Colloquium*, (1970), examines the scope of trade in the Islamic world. He studies whether the prohibition against usury affected the flow of trade in the Islamic area of influence. He finds that contrary to perceived notions, Islam was very conducive to mercantile operations. The Hanafite jurists discussed the problems of commenda and different currencies at length. He asserts that the theologians were aware of the 'need of trade' and 'the customs of merchants,' which targeted the 'attainment of profits.' He argues that they worked to bring these objectives into legitimate commercial activities. He highlights that *mufawade* or universal partnership was formed between two men of equal status i.e. equal wealthy Muslim merchants. He adds that the members in universal contract were liable for any obligation taken by any one of them. He studies *inan* or limited investment partnership that was formed between two merchants for a specific period or commodity. He opines that commenda was a contract between merchants who entrusted their capital to an agent manager, who traded with the capital and came with the returns previously agreed upon. He remarks that in case of failure, the investors lost their capital and agent his time. He proves that there was no shortage of credit in executing commercial transactions because the theorists also permitted the partnership of penniless (*sharikat al mafalis*). He adds that in such kind of partnerships, the partners came together to collect credit that was available to them as per their reputation. Thus, he highlights that able merchants faced no dearth of credit if their venture seemed profitable to others. He concludes that
there were ample provisions in legal doctrines to provide freedom to the merchants to form various contracts between the members of same religion or others. Every kind of contract was given some amount of legitimacy as long as it ensured profits to the participating parties.

Simon Digby’s comprehensive attempt in *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I*, (1984), is a balanced reconstruction of India’s maritime trade during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He highlights the elements of continuity and change in the oceanic trade since the Roman times, but concentrates on the developments pertaining to the above-mentioned period. According to him, the disruption of the Silk Route led to the emergence of direct navigation between the Persian Gulf and China. Recovery of the Red Sea route and the emergence of powerful states in southeast Asia contributed to the growth of oceanic commerce. Criticizing the Euro-centric view of maritime trade, he examines the diplomatic relations between Delhi sultanate and China, besides considering the policies of numerous petty chiefs based in the Malabar, the Chola rulers and Bengal sultans. He attached considerable importance to the impact of political ideology of the Chinese Ming monarchy which was based on Confucian and traditional ideals of sovereignty. The Chinese believed that their emperor had the mandate of heaven and hence should command respect of the whole world. He argues that the tributes from several medieval states were an important characteristic of Chinese polity and trade. He studies the commodity structure in the Indian Ocean, with reference to pepper, spices, porcelain, silk and cotton cloth. He traces the emergence of several ports on the Indian Ocean coasts that received ships from the Persian Gulf and southeast Asia, besides highlighting the role of the Chinese ports of Canton. He explores the technological aspects of building such vessels as *junks* and *dhows*. He finds that *junks* were huge and carried a great load in comparison to *dhows*. He divides the entire maritime trade of the Indian Ocean into two sectors, with south Indian locations acting as the ports of trans-shipment because the ships owing to
their slow speed were unable to cover the whole distance in favourable seasons. He notes that India remained a big exporter of cotton textiles, drugs, spices, teakwood precious stones and a wide range of exotic luxuries, while her imports were limited to strategic war animals, spices, medicaments, rarities, toys and exotic textiles. He feels that the balance of maritime trade mainly tilted towards India. India got gold and silver, in return for its commodities, due to its advantageous position in the maritime world of the Indian Ocean. He is also conscious of the armed character of the Indian Ocean commerce owning to the wide prevalence of piracy. He also perceives an interrelation between three factors viz. armed character, maritime trade and expansion of Muslim influence.

Thus, it appears from the above discussion that modern historians, to an extent, accept that the Indian Ocean trade continued to flourish even after the decline of the Roman Empire. Some features of the Indian Ocean trade in the medieval times as uncovered in these works are summarized as under:

New zones of consumption appeared, rulers began to patronize trade and merchants became more mobile and dominant in the society. Though the trade of the Persian Gulf declined during the eleventh century, it began to revive in the thirteenth century. Emergence of the Islamic empire brought a great amount of prosperity. Vast amount of hoarded precious metal was brought into circulation. New zones of consumption appeared and the merchants benefited from such a scenario. The entire Indian Ocean from the Red sea to Canton was brought into one economic zone. Ships completed the entire journey from the Persian Gulf to China before the eleventh century, but the practice was discontinued in favour of south Indian ports acting as places of trans-shipment between the two sectors of the Indian Ocean. The theologists backed merchants in their trading ventures. They gave legitimacy to practices like joint contracts, limited contracts and commenda to help the merchants in the attainment of profits. As a result, new ports emerged in the Indian Ocean. The rulers also patronized trade and attracted its flow to their respective capitals.
Unfortunately, no work so far has attempted to study the revival of the Red Sea under the Fatimids and the participation of the Sungs around the eleventh century. The period saw the division of the Indian Ocean into two zones. The *dhows* dominated western sector, comprising the Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf and Red Sea, whereas the Chinese *junks* ruled the eastern sector consisting of the Bay of Bengal, Malacca Straits and Chinese Sea. The practice of sailing the entire distance of the Indian Ocean was abandoned and the south India became the place of trans-shipment, where the *dhows* from the western sector met the Chinese *junks* of the eastern sector. Disruption of the central Asian routes under the Mongols increased the traffic in the sea. Smuggling of silk worms to promote sericulture out of China and new patterns of consumption changed the commodity structure in the Indian Ocean trade. Porcelain and other bulk cargo became as important as anything else. Rulers displayed increased interest in the sea to patronize trade. The period also coincided with the emergence of some of the most powerful kingdoms bordering the Indian Ocean. The Fatimids consolidated their power in Egypt, whereas the Cholas emerged in south India. Gujarat and Bengal were conquered by the Delhi sultans in the thirteenth century. Srivijaya was founded in the southeast Asia around the same period. The Sungs, when expelled from north China, established their capital at Hangchow in southern areas in early twelfth century. Faced with the declining revenues, the Sungs also promoted maritime interests of China. Therefore, it is evident that the Indian Ocean trade underwent tremendous changes after the eleventh century.

In the present work, an attempt has been made to explore some dominant characteristics of maritime trade of the Indian Ocean. The study stretches up to the end of the fifteenth century, when Vasco da Gama reached Calicut. Arrival of the Europeans introduced new elements in the Indian Ocean trade. Craft of shipbuilding underwent tremendous change. State sponsored piracy and protection were new phenomena. Flow of trade was also diverted away from the
Persian Gulf to break the monopoly of the Arabs and Persians. Thus, this work treats the period between c.1000- c.1500 as a viable chronological unit.

In this entire project, a considerable amount of evidence has been drawn from the contemporary sources. These sources can be divided into three broad categories, namely Indo-Islamic, European and Chinese. In the Indo-Islamic sources Al-Beruni, Ibn Khurdazbeh, Wassaf, Qalaqashandi, Al Umari, Ibn Battuta, Abdur Razzaq and Ibn Majid Ahmad have been of immense value. These sources provide a detailed picture of their times. The Muslims were particularly interested in cultural, social, economic and religious phenomena of India. They also recorded vivid details of the products of India. Ibn Majid has described sailing techniques in the Indian Ocean. They also studied the condition of the Muslims and the general attitude of Hindus towards them. Sometimes, these works are hampered by religious prejudice. Nevertheless, with critical scrutiny, these shortcomings are easily removed.

Merchant Sulaiman came to India from Basrah in the beginning of ninth century. He prepares time charts for the time taken to sail from one destination to another. He finds that ships sailed to Quilon from Muscat in one month. According to him, the Arabs were given proper security and freedom in the Balhara (the Rashtrakutas) kingdom. He refers to the Balhara rulers as the king of kings. Sulaiman went to China and undertakes the study of different countries on the list of sea merchants in the Indian Ocean. Ibn Buzurg, another reputed sailor in the Indian Ocean, lists many difficulties that the sailors encountered on the sea. He also narrates the episodes signifying how the wisdom of the captains can save or destroy the ships on the sea. He includes many unbelievable stories like that of a big fish and a giant bird in his narratives. Still his account is important in light of his vast experience in the Indian seas.

\textsuperscript{9} Known as \textit{Rookh}, it was supposed to be a giant bird that destroyed ships on the sea, but its authenticity has not been proved till date.
Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan traveller, was born in Tangiers in 1304 AD. Born in a pious Muslim qazi family, he studied theology. At the age of twenty one, he was sent to Mecca to broaden his knowledge by interacting with other learned men. This was the beginning of his long chain of travels that continued up to 1354 AD. He visited north Africa, Mecca, Persia, Iraq, Istanbul, India, Maldives, Ceylon and China. It is estimated that he travelled around 75,000 miles and he is the only Muslim who visited all the Muslim states of his time. His account is invaluable in many respects. During his visits, he enjoyed close relations with the rulers. Many a time, he was assigned the prestigious post of qazi. He became the chief qazi of sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq for eight years, but towards the end he fell in disfavour and was almost on the verge of persecution. But the sultan changed his mind and sent him on an important mission to China. He was accompanied by Amir Zahiruddin the Zanjani, a man of letters, and a eunuch and cup-bearer. But this mission met with disaster in Malabar. Ibn Battuta, familiar with the temper of the sultan, decided to continue his mission to China. On his way back from China, he reached Malabar. He sailed directly to Arabia from Malabar. On his way, he again visited Muscat, Hormuz, Shiraz, Baghdad and Damascus. He reached Fez in 8 November 1349 AD (almost after the absence of twenty four years). His autobiographical memoir is important for political, economic and social conditions. He occupied the important post of qazi in Delhi and Maldives. He was familiar with the two dominant languages namely Arabic and Persian used throughout Asia. He also visited many other courts. As a result, his experiences became authentic and invaluable. Though many a time, religious sentiments come in his assessment of events, yet this does not reduce the value of his work. He presents interesting facts on the social structures of his time. He finds that betel was in demand because socially it was seen as a mark of respect and honour. He records that in Malabar, Hindus did not let Muslims enter their

houses and practiced discrimination against them. At the same time, he finds that the rulers were very considerate towards them (Muslims). During his journey from India to Ceylon, he noticed war-galleys and fortified ports, belonging to the different rulers. He records naval warfare among Indian rulers. He himself joined the naval campaign of Malipattan against Maldives. He also finds people of Chitgaon (Satgaon) using war ships against Lakhnauti. He records that both junks and dhows were constructed in India. He is also meticulous in recording commodity structure of different sectors of the Indian Ocean.

Kamaladdin Abdur Razzaq Ben Jalala–al-din Ishak-as Samarkandi, or better known as Abdur Razzaq, started for Vijayanagar empire in 1441 AD. He was employed in the court of emperor Mirza Shah Rukh in Herat (Persia). He travelled up to Hormuz via land and boarded a dhow from there. He reached Calicut. When he reached the imperial court of Vijayanagara, he was warmly welcomed. However, his itinerary ended on a bitter note. His account of sea journey records various challenges and difficulties one had to face. Talking about his first boarding on the ship, he remarks, "as soon as I caught the smell of the vessel, and all the terrors of the sea presented themselves before me, I fell into a deep swoon, that first three days respiration alone indicated that life remained in me." He also describes in detail the commodities exchanged in the Indian Ocean trade. He finds that horses always accompanied men from Hormuz to India because they fetched handsome prices in India. Describing the use of war-elephants by the Indian rulers, he writes, "each elephant has a separate compartment (on his back), the walls of which are extremely solid, and the roof composed of strong pieces of wood." He also tells how they were caught. When

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the elephants went for drinking water, "they (men) dig a trench and cover the mouth of it over, but very lightly. When the elephant falls into it, two or three days are allowed to elapse before anyone goes near him." We are informed that thereafter one man hit the animal and second one showed sympathy and gradually elephants began to obey the one who was sympathetic towards it.\textsuperscript{13} He praises the merchants of Calicut for their adventurous spirit. He also notices the employment of Tchini-betchegan (sons of the Chinese) on the ships to ward off the pirates.\textsuperscript{14} He ridicules the emperor of Vijayanagara who promised him a better reward if he would come with more authentic proof next time. Abdur Razzaq writes, "if, when once I have escaped from the desert of thy love, I reach my own country, I will never again set out on another voyage, not even in the company of a king."\textsuperscript{15} He is also one of the few Indo-Islamic historians who provide us the first hand account of the Indian Ocean sea trade and south Indian society in the fifteenth century.

Ibn Majid Ahmad, a reputed pilot of the fifteenth century, wrote an important manual of sailing, \textit{Kitab al-Fawad Usul al-Bahr wal-Qawaid}. Interestingly, it was he who guided the Portuguese ship, Santa Maria (of Vasco da Gama), to the port of Calicut from Africa. Translated by G.T. Tibbets, (1971),\textsuperscript{16} these manuals considerably increase our understanding of sailing techniques employed in medieval times. Ibn Majid Ahmad had the first hand knowledge about the Indian Ocean and its challenges. Unlike Ibn Buzurg, his account contains less fantasies and more scientific calculations. He studied navigational skills of the Indian Ocean with reference to his understanding of various methods

\textsuperscript{13} Abdur Razzaq, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 19.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 42.

like Manazil (lunar mansions), Akhnan (rhumbs), Diyars (routes), Qiyas (star altitude measurement), Isharat (signs), Hulul al shams wa'l-qamar (revolution of the sun and moon), Aryah wa'l-mawasim (winds), Mawasim al bahr (seasons of monsoons), Alat al safina (instruments of ships) and Siyasat (relation with the crew and passenger). He considered coastal sailing useful, but did not find it suitable for the skilled sailors like him. To him, only deep sailing promised more adventure and involved more skills. He suggested that the real caliber of a pilot was revealed by his efficiency to tack deep seas. He illustrated that it was not only Pole Star but other stars also that helped in accurate calculations. He gave isharat (signs) equal importance. He remarked that with accurate observation of the signs, one could easily find his way in the sea. It was also helpful during the day (when the stars are invisible). He records that the coasts of Gujarat were infested by sea snakes, whereas the palm leaves floating on the sea pointed to Andaman and Nicobar islands. He warns the fellow captains to avoid laziness and be alert. He advised them to wash their eyes with cold water before taking down any calculation. He also found the compass to be faulty and considered it prudent to double-check the calculations made from the compass.

The second category comprises of the European sources. The Portuguese ventured in the Indian Ocean around the end of fifteenth century. They came armed with technology and innovations. However, many peddlers, merchants and missionaries, who came to Asia to trade and reap the fruits of Christianity respectively, preceded their (the Portuguese) venture. Marco Polo, Nuniz, Nkitin, Nicolo Conti, Odoric and Marignoli fall in this category. Since the Europeans were more interested in the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean, their accounts are very useful. Even when these narratives are conditioned by hatred towards the Muslims, they unknowingly managed to convey the role of Islam in
expanding mercantile networks in the Indian Ocean. These sources also shed ample light on the craft of shipbuilding in the area.

Marco Polo, a Venetian traveller, has left fascinating accounts of his journey in Asia. His father Nicolos Polo along with his brother had already visited the Chinese court in the second half of the thirteenth century (after 1260 AD). Nicolos was requested by Kublai Khan (1215-1294 AD) of China to bring more missionaries from the Pope. He, however, failed to get a larger number of missionaries from the Pope Gregory of Piacenza (1271 AD), but he brought Marco Polo with him to China. Kublai Khan received them graciously. Marco Polo, by then, had learnt many customs and languages of Tartars. The Great Khan sent him to Yunnana province as his ambassador. Marco Polo observed many customs and rituals of the Yunnana. He reported all the details to the emperor. The emperor was so impressed that he employed him in his service for seventeen years. Marco Polo, during his stay in China, visited several provinces. He possessed a keen sense of observation and every minute detail attracted him. He also learnt many languages but failed to learn the Chinese.¹⁷ Marco Polo is silent about the famous Chinese Wall and it created doubts whether he visited China extensively or not. Still, these shortcomings did not rob him of his accomplishments. He is often referred to as 'the king of travellers.' During his return journey from China to Venice, he sailed the Indian Ocean routes in the last decade of thirteenth century.

Marco Polo supplies comprehensive information regarding geographical locations of ports and routes. He minutely describes various customs and practices of the Asians. He provides vivid details of pirates of the sea, construction of the ships and commodities traded in the Indian Ocean during the thirteenth century. He finds petty rulers of Konkan encouraging piracy from their ports. He was sharp enough to observe that it was the Muslim merchants who

¹⁷ All the names of the cities and places are given in the language of the Tartars and not Chinese.
were not bringing any veterinary doctor with them to India, so that imported horses continued to die of ill treatment and their demand remained high. He praises the honesty of Indian traders who never robbed other's goods. Therefore, Marco Polo's account is important for understanding the various aspects of economic, social and political life in Asian countries around the thirteenth century.

John of Monte Corvino (1247-1328 AD) is another European missionary, who visited India in the medieval period. He was sent by the Pope Greory X to spread Christ's teachings in Cathay (Canton). He stared from Tabrez in 1291 AD via sea routes. He spent some time in Malabar and the Coromandel. He supervised missionary activities in the Church of Saint Thomas for five years. He died in China and it is said that people from all religions joined his funeral. He remained the only reputed missionary in China during those times because the other missionaries sent by respective Popes failed to rouse a similar response. John, on the other hand, claimed to have converted thousands of people both in India and China. Apart from his missionary activities, John also provides details of navigational methods and commodity structures in the Indian Ocean. He confirms that the voyage from Arabia to China was divided into two journeys. He informs that Malabar acted as a place of trans-shipment. He records the importance of the monsoons and how the ships had to stick to them meticulously to avoid dangers, "and they cannot make the voyage but once in a year, for from the beginning of April till the end of October the winds are westernly, so that no one can sail towards the west; and again 'tis just are contrary from the month of October till March. From the middle of May till the end of October the winds blow so hard that ships which by that time had not reached the ports whether they are bound, run a desperate risk, and if they escape it is great luck.‘" Like any other traveller, he also observes the strange practice of the stitching of Indian ships.

He describes the flora and fauna of India. Cultivation of ginger, areca-nuts, cinnamon, pepper are recorded in his letters. He also finds that oxen were considered the sacred animal in India. Pointing towards Muslim dominance in the Indian Ocean trade, he observes that Muslims inhabited coastal areas, whereas Hindus populated the hinterlands.

John de Marignolli came from a respectable family in Florence. His family derived its name from the ancestral village Marignolli. The manuscript of John de Marignolli was found, incidentally, lying in chronicles of Bohemia. There is not much known about his family but there is a street in Florence near the Cathedral, now called Via de Cerretani, bearing marks, that formerly it was called Gia de Marignolli. The date of the travels of Margignolli is not exactly known, but he visited India and China in the first half of fourteenth century and he recorded his eastern travels in 1355. His work contains much confusion because he sometimes confuses the names of localities and commodities. Even his Latin had errors. So he wrote that Phison (the Ganges of India) is the same Yellow river in China. Nevertheless, his account is important in many other aspects. He records the customs and products of different communities inhabiting the Indian Ocean coasts. He also observes that pepper was dried and not scorched as erroneously believed in the west. He finds that the Christians of Saint Thomas enjoy various privileges like duties of public weighing office. He remarks that these Christians were the proprietors of pepper gardens, and not the Muslims. He vividly describes the Adam Peak and its flora and fauna.

Nicolo de Conti, a Venetian, was born in a noble family. His family shifted to Damascus and from there he started his travels in the first half of fifteenth century. Nicolo Conti is important for his vivid details of south Indian polity and

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20 Ibid., p. 178.
economy. He landed at the famous port of Cambay and found it reputed for precious stones called sardonixes. He also witnessed the practice of sati in Gujarat. He records that pepper, camphor and other spices were also obtained from southeast Asia. He observes that pepper was not burnt but dried under the sun.\(^{21}\) He notices the practice of cannibalism in Andaman and Nicobar and some areas of Sumatra.\(^ {22}\) He visited the tomb of Saint Thomas and found Nestorian Christians living there. Their leader had huge finances at his disposal. He (the leader) even received one ounce of silver from each head of the family and thus possessed much wealth.\(^ {23}\) He did not find cherry and apple in India. To Nicolo Conti, Indians were idol-worshipers following numerous ways of prayer.\(^ {24}\) He also records different commercial practices prevalent throughout India. Some people employed only barter, whereas other used iron nails like currency. He remarks that gold of some standard was acceptable at some places. To his astonishment, even the Venetian ducats were used for commercial transactions in India. He was himself a merchant who wanted to earn profits. His account is that of a merchant, and not of any imperial ambassador. He notes the commodity structure of each locality with a merchant's perspective. He remarks that the merchants of Calicut were so rich that they traded in their own ships. He also supplies the list of commodities that were imported into India from southeast Asia.

Athanius Nkitin, a Russian came to India around 1468-70 AD. He sailed down the Volga to the Caspian Sea. He was captured and then released by the Tartars. He touched the port of Chaul (Konkan). He went to Bidar, but found great contrast between the living standards of the nobility and general masses.


\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 16.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 33.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 27.
The former were rich and corrupt whereas the latter were miserable. He also records the presence of foreign slaves in the army of Janoor (?) sultan. These slaves were brought from Khurasan, Oroban(?), Surmesk(?) and Chegotan(?). Like Marco Polo, he also observes Indians feeding their horses poorly on *khichris* (cooked rice) and boiled rice. At Bidar, he saw as many as 20,000 horses for sale in the market. He also hints at the security needed to protect merchant towns. At Bidar, around 100 mounted bodyguards guarded the city with lanterns in their hands throughout the night. The demand for good horses was immense in India. Discussing the ethnicity of the pirates, he finds that Indian pirates were mostly Hindus. He studies different ports in the Indian Ocean. About the prosperity and fame of Cambay, he remarks that its reason was the availability of a large number of commodities like *talach, damask, khan khota*, whereas Calicut was visited to obtain pepper, ginger, colour plants, cloves, cinnamon, aromatic roots. Hormuz was the ‘vast emporium’ of the world and Dabul was an extensive port. He also hints at coercion by the petty rulers. He was threatened by the ruler of Janoor to accept Islam or part with his horse. Thus, Nkitin is an important contemporary source for exploring the medieval trading structure of the Indian Ocean.

Hieronimo de Santo Stefano, a Genoese merchant, visited India towards the end of the fifteenth century. He recorded his memoirs in September 1499 AD from Syria. His tale of woes highlights various challenges before the merchants

25 Nicolo Conti, p. 10.
27 Ibid., p. 15.
28 Ibid., p. 11.
29 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
30 Ibid.
in distant zones. In India, he landed at Calicut and went up to Sumatra. At Pegu, the Sultan withheld his payments and his companion Adorno died there while waiting. Then at Sumatra, his goods were confiscated on the pretext that these belonged to his deceased friend and the king had claims to it. Stafano managed to get some of his goods back and started his return journey, but met with the worst of monsoons in the sea. He had almost lost his life in a shipwreck. Stafano, in spite of his sufferings, managed to highlight some interesting facts about the contemporary times. He finds that *dhow* were made of 'timber of which were sewn together with cords and sails made of rush mats'.\(^3^1\) In fact, during his return journey, there was rain on the way and the water remained struck in the ship due to the absence of deck and it sank. He had to swim out with a wooden piece of plank till another ship rescued him in the morning.\(^3^2\) He also observed the custom of polygamy in Malabar. He found that the pepper was dried under the sun and not scorched as was believed in Europe. He also found that the Coromandel was blessed with many sandalwood trees.

Duarte Barbosa was a Portuguese writer, who was employed in the Portuguese factory of Cananor. It is not confirmed whether he came to India in 1500 AD with the fleet of Pedro Alarez Cabral or with Galician Jao da Navo in 1501 AD. Underlining the importance of Duarte Barbosa's work, Correa, a Portuguese officer writes:

> "I.....shall write nought concerning the lands, people and trade, as there are several who have occupied themselves therewith, of which I have seen certain volumes and especially a book on these matters composed by Duarte Barbosa, writer of the Cananor factory; therefore I shall labour only to write"

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\(^3^1\) Hieronimo de Santo Stefano in *India in the Fifteenth Century*, Eng. Tr., R.H. Major, p. 1 (hereafter cited as Stefano).

\(^3^2\) Ibid., p. 8.
very fully the noble deeds wrought by our Portuguese, militant in these parts of India, both great and small." 33

He is not far from truth realizing the contribution of Duarte Barbosa. The latter possessed a keen observation and provides considerable information on all the fields. He concentrated on commercial practices, social customs and polity of not only India, but also Africa and southeast Asia. Talking about Hormuz, he remarked, "in this city are many merchants of substance, and many very great ships. It has a right good harbour where many sorts of goods are handled which come hither from many lands...........they bring hither spices of all sorts, and diverse kind....pepper, cloves, ginger, cardamoms, eagle-woods, brasil-woods, myrobalans, tamarind, saffron, indigo, wax, sugar, rice (cocoa-nuts, as well as great abundance of precious stones, porcelain and benzoin...they have also great plenty of Cambay, Chaul and Dabul clothes, and from Bengala they bring many synbafos." 34 Talking about the Jain merchants of Gujarat, he praised them for non violence, but also found them to be "great usurer, falsifiers of weight and measure and many others goods and of coins, and great liars." 35 In Konkan, he also recorded the presence of 'white men.....as well as merchants of great wealth.....and many ships of the Moors came thither from Mecca, the city of Adem, Ormus,Cambaya and Malabar.' 36 He understood the dynamics of the Indian Ocean and advised the rulers (the Portuguese) to rule with sobriety instead of coercion. He requested the king of Portugal not to lose friends among the


34 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 93.

35 Ibid., p. 112.

36 Ibid., p. 175.
Indian rulers, with reference to stubborn attitude of some of the Portuguese officials posted in India. Similarly he also provided important details of Indian shipping, and these have been discussed at relevant sections of the present work.

Tome Pires, another Portuguese official and the first Portuguese ambassador to China, did not come to limelight till Armando Cortesao discovered his manuscripts in Bibliotheque de la Chamber des Deputes in 1937 AD. He provides considerable information regarding the Portuguese operations in southeast Asia. He wrote his account during his stay in Malacca between 1512-1515 AD. It also highlighted the commercial dynamics of the Indian Ocean that existed before the Portuguese arrival, and the latter were so zealously trying to subvert them to their advantage. Tome Pires, many a times, managed to present real factors behind the scenes. His judgement that Cambay stretched two arms one towards Malacca and second to Aden confirmed the practice of intra-trade, even prior to the age of capitalism. Highlighting the importance and prosperity of Hormuz, he remarked, “This city was founded on account of the port.” He is one of the few travellers, who refer to the Hindu merchants of Cambay with proper name, that is Banias (Banians). Referring to the importance of the ports in any country, he said, “A kingdom without ports is a house without portals.” He felt that if the Portuguese gained the control of the coasts, the Muslims of the interiors would lose their power (and he suggested that they had done the same with the Indians).

37 In this letter dated 12 January 1513, he complains that captain Diogo Correa adopted harsh disposition forcing “people of this country (Cannnanor) to rise against him.” He also repents ignorance of his merits in the appointment for the post of ‘J° D’ Avils.’ Duarte Barbosa, pp. xxxviii-xlii.


39 Ibid., p. 57.
fully understood the importance of Indian textiles in trade with southeast Asia.  
Regarding Malacca, he was the one who highlighted the states incorporating even pirates in the state building to ensure security of the ports and developing navigational skills. Tome Pires sometimes punctuates his description with his hatred towards the Muslims, yet his account is usually very informative. His work offers a meticulous study of various Indian Ocean ports with their customs, locations and commodity structures.

Among the Chinese sources, the present study relies considerably on Chau Ju Kua who has provided a general survey of the countries around the Indian Ocean. Though the work provides ample understanding of the Coromandel, yet it is not a first hand account. Chau Ju Kua collected entire information from the foreign merchants who visited China. In spite of this shortcoming, the work enables us to form a general idea of the Chinese attitude towards maritime trade in the Indian Ocean and the countries bordering it. He was the Chinese inspector of the ports. He did not travel to any of the ports outside China, but he was inquisitive enough to enquire from the merchants, who came after trading there. Thus his account is not the first hand narrative, yet it is valuable in certain other aspects. It records the views of the sailors and merchants, and thus, reflects what many others were feeling and seeing in the Indian Ocean. His account can be termed as a collection of accounts of many other unsung heroes of the sea. It is invaluable for its information of the Coromandel. It records the Coromandel exporting pearls and silk threads to China. It informs that Indian kings employed large number of war-horses and elephants. It provides detailed lists of various commodities and their locations in the Indian Ocean sectors. No doubt, Chau Ju Kua was ill informed regarding the origin of putchuk, yet his fallacy highlights how the merchants, sometimes, hid

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original sources of commodities to make them appear exquisite in other areas. Chau Ju Kua failed to provide much information regarding the commercial practices among the mercantile classes. His work is also not particular about the nature of mercantile activities carried out at different sectors of the Indian Ocean. Still Chau Ju Kua's account can be termed as the encyclopaedia of the commodities and places involved in the Indian Ocean maritime empire around the thirteenth century. Perhaps, his greatest achievement is that he recorded whatever he learnt in its originality without indulging in his own judgments like most other oriental authors. Sometimes, he also provided information from administrative point of view. For example, he informs us that the foreign merchants used to hide pearls in their linens and the handles of umbrellas to evade duties on them.\textsuperscript{41} He also highlights merchants' ways of testing the purity of the products in the absence of any scientific methods. He suggested that the merchants often counterfeited rose water, but its purity could be easily checked if one put it into glass bottle and saw bubbles while shaking it.\textsuperscript{42}

In the present study, some other Chinese authors like Ma Huan have also been cited, but the information has been gathered through the works, which have quoted these writers. Ma Huan was the scribe on the ship of the celebrated Chinese general Cheng Ho. Cheng Ho commanded the Chinese naval fleet throughout the Indian Ocean from 1405 to 1433 AD. It sailed to distant ports of India (Calicut, Quilon, Satgaon), the Persian Gulf (Hormuz), the Red Sea (Aden and Jeddah) and Africa (Mozambique and Milind). Ma Huan in his account highlights the role of various maritime states like Malacca, Burnei and Bengal in the Indian Ocean trade. These kingdoms sent tributes to the Chinese court in

\textsuperscript{41} Chau Ju-Kua, \textit{Chu-Fan-Chi}, Eng. Tr., F. Hirth and W.W. Rockhill, \textit{Chau Ju Kua: His work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} Centuries}, p. 230 (hereater cited as Chau Ju-Kua).

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 203.
fifteenth century. He also recorded the prosperity of various Indian Ocean ports like Quilon, Calicut and Aden etc.

The present study consists of nine chapters. An attempt has been made to cover political, economic and technical aspects of the Indian Ocean trade, with particular reference to India's role in it.

The first chapter primarily concentrates on the scope and objectives of the study. It examines important works of contemporary travellers like Marco Polo, al-Qalaqshandi, Ibn battuta, Wassaf, Chau Ju kua, Abdur Razzaq, Conti, Nuniz, Stafano, Marignoli and John of Montecorvio. These works throw a flood of light on the subject under study. It is essential to identify their chief characteristics. In the preceding pages, we have already reviewed the writings of modern scholars like G.F. Hourani, Radha Kumud Mookerji, Maqbul Ahmad, Simon Digby, K.N. Chaudhuri, Kanakalatha Mukund and Andre Wink. This exercise enables us to trace the evolution of historiography on the subject and frame our own themes for research.

The second chapter deals with the historical setting of the Indian Ocean trade. It studies the geographical features of various regions, bordering the Indian Ocean. It surveys the general characteristics of the Indian subcontinent, Arabian peninsula, Persian plateau, southeast Asian countries and China to highlight their impact on the natives. It attempts to highlight socio-economic structures of the different societies, touching the Indian Ocean, to trace the new patterns of consumption. It undertakes a brief survey of western Europe after the eleventh century, as its economic recovery had deep impact on the Indian Ocean trade. Indian spices began to be consumed in the distant markets of Europe. It briefly discusses different commercial practices, which were developed by Italy to strengthen the institutions of banking and financing. These developments cannot be seen in isolation from corresponding trends in the Islamic world and the Indian subcontinent.
The third chapter investigates the characteristics of the ports in the Indian peninsula. Contrary to the conventional method, it is not a general survey of all the various ports. An attempt has been made to identify the chief trading emporiums in different regions like Sind, Gujarat, Konkan, Malabar, the Coromandel and Bengal. Daibul was an important port of Sind. Cambay witnessed tremendous growth after the eleventh century. It stretched its right arm towards Aden and the left towards Malacca.\textsuperscript{43} Besides, exploring the factors responsible for transforming ordinary ports into chief trading emporiums in India, an effort has been made to identify some important international ports of Asia like Aden, Hormuz, Malacca and Canton. The international ports have been studied to identify dominant characteristics, if any, which converted small ports into chief trading emporiums, not in any one region but throughout Asia.

The fourth chapter deals with the navigational methods in the Indian Ocean. Navigational skills required a considerable experience and understanding of the sea. An attempt is being made to explore the different methods of sailing in the sea; whether the sailors employed compass, a stellar or sail directly with the help of stars. It examines the possibility of sailing under a cloudy sky in medieval times. It considers on various hazards that merchants encountered on the sea. Dependence on the winds made storms a natural enemy, which could be avoided only with well-planned schedules of sailing. Piracy was a serious threat for the merchants. The precautions taken by the ships also come in the ambit of this chapter. It also discusses the various kind of shipping technology, prevalent in the Indian Ocean. The shipbuilding required great skills and only the well-constructed ships could avoid catastrophes on the sea. Towards the end, some dominant kinds of shipbuilding traditions prevalent in the Indian Ocean are discussed. We have considered only such ships that were sea-going and actually

\textsuperscript{43} Tome Pires, Vol. I, p. 42.
contributed to the growth of sea trade. A survey has also been undertaken to identify the various classes, which met the demand of good sailors and other members of crews on board in the Indian Ocean.

The fifth chapter deals with the commodity structure in the Indian Ocean. India was self-sufficient in economic products. Different climatic zones promoted wide range of vegetations. Cultural habits also encouraged maritime trade. Spices and other exotics products were in great demand in western Asia due to rising prosperity and changing eating habits. Foods became more exotic than ever before. Indian trade was more oriented towards export. India was exporting a wide range of products, e.g. textiles, leather, vessels, precious stones, spices and food grains. Indian imports were confined mainly to war animals and exotic toys. Ma'abar was importing horses worth 2,200,000 dinars, which were annually collected from temples and courtesans in south India. Indians, with their vast range of products, were successful in extracting massive gains. Coastal areas of Gujarat, Malabar, the Coromandel and Bengal had their specialized commodity structures. Precious stones were imported from Ceylon and worked upon to manufacture exquisite jewellery in India. These expensive pieces of jewellery catered to the demands of rich clients throughout Asia and Africa.

The sixth chapter deals with the mercantile communities. It explores the origin of different groups involved in the maritime world of the Indian Ocean. India was home to several communities like Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus and

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44 In the third chapter, only those ports have been taken into consideration that dominated the Indian Ocean trade. These ports (or chief trading emporiums) amply highlighted the character and demands of a good port. Instead of surveying every kind of ship, it was more appropriate to study shipbuilding traditions of the sea-going vessels only, because these vessels encountered entirely different challenges than the ships navigating a river or lake.

45 Abdullah Wassaf, Taziyatu-I Amsar wa Tajriyatu-I Asar, portion relating to India Tr., H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, The History of India as Told by its Own Historians, Vol. III, pp. 33-34 (hereafter cited as Wassaf).
Chinese. All these people participated in the flourishing sea trade. This chapter examines the role of religious identity in mercantile operations. For it was more appropriate to identify merchants with reference to their religions in absence of clear-cut national boundaries. However, the Chinese have been studied with reference to their nationality. This chapter uncovers the factors that contributed to the growth and decline of sea merchants. It attempts to find whether or not these merchants could be studied under the concept of diaspora.

The seventh chapter concentrates mainly on the commercial practices of the merchants. Sea trade involved considerable distances and thus merchants had to devise ingenious methods, like commenda, hundi and hawala to avoid complications. The chapter also studies the efforts of theologians to provide legitimacy to commercial transactions in the absence of any set international institutional norms and practices. It explores the role of Islam in promoting commercial transactions. It is built on the hypothesis that Islam, being present in almost every region bordering the Indian Ocean, might have provided international set of commercial regulations to the medieval sea-merchants. The chapter examines the different types of coinage employed in maritime trade. It also focuses on the problem of paucity of coinage, if any, in such a vast network of sea trade. Barter was an important practice in commercial transactions. Reputation of the Indian merchants in the eyes of contemporary writers has also been discussed. Towards the end, the chapter points out some general characteristics of mercantile guilds.

The eighth chapter constitutes a study of the rulers and their attitude towards the maritime trade. It is unfortunate that not much attention has been paid to this important aspect in the earlier works. Our investigation shows that the political orientation of the ruling elite went a long way in deciding the fate of

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46 The Chinese were never assimilated in Indian culture. Even the contemporary sources address the Chinese with reference to their nationality and not religious identities, like the Buddhists, Confucians and Taoists.
maritime trade in any given region. The chapter, therefore, attempts to study the rulers' relations with the sea merchants. It examines whether or not the wealth of the sea merchants brought them into clash with the rulers. It explores the idea whether Indian rulers were really indifferent towards the sea. It also attempts to find the answer to the question whether or not the Indian rulers participated directly in sea trade, and if yes, then why did they fail to compete with state sponsored companies of Europe. It also highlights the concessions and benefits the Indian rulers offered to attract the flow of maritime traffic to their ports.

The ninth chapter consolidates all the findings of the previous chapters and prepares the general assessment of what the present work has been able to achieve. It reviews the existing opinions of the recent scholars in the field of the Indian Ocean maritime trade and enriches the same with the findings of the present academic enterprise.