

TOPIC: AMSTERDAM PORT: Rise

Golden Age: 1585 - 1672

17th Century was golden age for Amsterdam. Ships from the city sailed to N. America, Indonesia, Brazil and Africa and formed the basis of a worldwide trading network. Its merchants financed expeditions to the four corners of the world and acquired overseas possessions. These were later turned into Dutch colonies. The most imp. of these was the East India Company (founded in 1602) ^{the first stock exchange of the world}

— This was the first multi-national corporation to issue stocks to finance its business. By allowing the sailors to invest in the cargo that they transported, it created an incentive for individual sailors to be vested in the goods they created.

— By 1660's its population had reached an optimum level so as to

support agriculture, finance and commerce. Besides, it was a city of migrants who were Lutheran Protestant Germans, French Huguenots, Portuguese and Spanish Jews, and also Flemish refugees (who flocked there after the fall of Antwerp)

— A seaport in Amsterdam, North Holland, Western Netherlands — located on the bank of IJ Bay and North Sea Canal that connected it to North Sea (derived from a dam on River Amstel)

— Amsterdam was given to the Burgundian empire of Philip the Good in the 15th Century (trading item fish from South, mainly herring and grain from the Baltic countries).

— Netherlands broke away from the Spanish empire and ended the supremacy of the Catholic Church. (a haven for Protestants)

— Annexation of Portugal to Spain in 1580. Netherlands was forced to go to India

— Holland was called the Dutch Republic in the 17th Century (1588-1795) i.e. most part of present day Netherlands. The Dutch Republic was a Confederation of seven provinces

declined in 18th Century due to decline of fishing industry and loss of technological superiority in ship building. The Dutch market saturated - could not compete with the superior British technology or navy. After defeat in the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-84) it lost most of its colonial possessions and trading monopolies to the English East India Company. (Dutch colonies include large part of the world from America to Asia to S. America. They also occupied many African countries like Ghana, S. Africa, Angola, Namibia, Senegal and the Ivory Coast).

5.10 Trade in the Seventeenth Century

Seventeenth century trade undoubtedly belonged to the Netherlands, more specifically to Holland and its chief port of Amsterdam. This port, along with its substantial financial operations, not only took over the Spanish-American trade, it displaced the Portuguese successfully within the Asiatic trade, and in Europe it took over the entire Baltic and Mediterranean trades.

As has been mentioned the Netherlands came to be known as the United Provinces after they successfully rebelled against Spanish rule. The United Provinces was an assembly of seven states presided over by a Council of States. Holland was one of the seven states : the others were Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland, Overijssel, Friesland and Groningen. Of all these states the state of Holland was the richest and the most powerful and this frequently led to clashes between it and the House of Orange which was feudal, and not at all maritime, in nature. Since the House of Orange governed five of the seven states its numerical strength in the council was weighty but Holland soon emerged as the dominant force in the Council due to the success of her maritime ventures.

We have to take two factors into account when we study the emergence of a world economy centered on Amsterdam. First the

fact that the United Provinces had a very small land surface with practically no natural wealth in the shape of minerals and metals meant that its expertise had to be confined to the seas, and second the fact that the country was so small meant that as Amsterdam gradually emerged as the core area some amount of specialization and cooperation between the core area and other areas were inevitable. Therefore the United Provinces followed an economic system based on the division of labour in regions. Leiden, Haarlem and Delft lived on industry, Dordrecht situated on the Rhine made its living from revenues and inland trade, the Hague was the political capital, Rotterdam which contained the second largest port after Amsterdam controlled the fishing trade and conducted trade with the rest of Europe and Amsterdam was the centre of the world economy in the seventeenth century.

What lay behind the success of the Dutch? First, lacking any other resource whatsoever, they developed a shipping industry which was unrivalled anywhere else in Europe. The natural outcome of this was the development of a fishing fleet, subsequently a merchant fleet, and finally a navy as well as a simultaneous market for secondhand ships that was quite unique in Europe.

Second, the states of the United Provinces although Calvinist in the main, believed firmly in the principle of religious toleration. The outcome was that religious minorities, persecuted by other countries, made their home in the United Provinces and brought their wealth and expertise with them. Even the very poor, if willing to work, could always find work in Holland. The sack of Antwerp in 1585 brought in a group of wealthy merchants to the United Provinces. The Scottish Reformed, the Wallon Reformed, the Dutch Reformed, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Menonites, Jews and even some Catholics settled there. Many simply came to the United Provinces to seek their fortune. Thus by a combination of the Protestant ethic, frugality and the spirit of capitalist enterprise the Dutch emerged as the foremost economic power in Europe.

The result of this influx of immigrants was that over a third of Amsterdam's population was of foreign extraction. The city grew fast; from 50 000 inhabitants in 1600 it grew to 200 000 in 1700. Historically, the foundations of Dutch commercial prosperity were laid through fishing. The Dutch were natural mariners and they were

schooled in the North Sea in fishing, coasting, long haul navigation and coastal warfare.

The fishing in the North Sea was of four kinds ; inland fishing, herring fisheries, cod fishing off the coast of Iceland and finally the harpooning of whales. Amsterdam was the chief centre for the Arctic whaling industry and this was organized into a monopoly of the Northern Company in 1614. The fishing industry not only led to Dutch commercial prosperity, it also led subsequently to the development of a massive shipping industry famed both for the sea worthiness of its boats and the innovativeness in technique.

By 1570 the Dutch had come up, through varied experiments, with a new type of vessel that they called the flute or flyboat. The advantage of the flute was that it could be handled by a smaller crew about 20% less than in conventional vessels at that time and it therefore substantially cut down shipping costs over long voyages.

Another reason for the Dutch advantage over shipping was their low cost. This was because the Dutch were able to directly import the timber and other necessary raw materials from the Baltic whose trade they were controlling by the end of the sixteenth century. As early as in 1560 the Dutch captured 70% of the Baltic trade and Amsterdam replaced Antwerp as the European market for Baltic grain. Accordingly a powerful second industry grew up in Saardam near Amsterdam. This was the famed Dutch ship building works. The Dutch trained a group of skilled craftsmen and overseers of such ability that they could turn out a warship at two months notice. With their wealth from fisheries, and with the development of their own ships, the Dutch were now in a position to take on the rest of European trade.

A characteristic feature of the Dutch seaborne trade was the *rederij* which was a flexible co-operative system whereby people joined together to buy, build, own, charter or freight a ship and its cargo. Until the middle of the seventeenth century the skipper or master of a vessel was often a part owner and therefore directly interested in the sale of his cargo. Each *reder* contributed capital (in varying degrees) and they ranged from wealthy merchants to deck hands. This immense capital participation and general involvement contributed greatly to the success of Dutch maritime enterprises.

The control of the Baltic trade led to the successful penetration of

the southern (Mediterranean) trade by Dutch shipping. We know that Charles V of Spain went bankrupt in 1557. Yet vast amounts of grain were needed to carry on the enormously profitable Spanish-American trade on which not only Spain, but also the whole of Europe, now depended. Soon the Dutch fleet was supplying Seville with Baltic grain. By doing so the Dutch successfully penetrated the southern trade, it soon controlled the trade of the Mediterranean as well.

It has been estimated that Dutch prosperity was not based merely on the luxury trade from the East, which it conducted after the birth of the V.O.C. in 1600. This trade was immensely profitable nevertheless, and more so after the Dutch displaced the Portuguese from Asian trade. Other mercantile joint stock companies were floated by the Dutch Government in this century for trading with the Caribbean and North America. Of these the activities of the V.O.C. were the most spectacular, yet it must be remembered always that the initial foundations of Dutch commercial success lay in such unfashionable commodities such as fisheries, grain and naval stores-trade in which accounted for over 60% of the circulating capital in the United Provinces.

Very soon the Dutch were carrying almost five sixths of the goods in the Seville-Atlantic trade. Wheat, rye, naval stores and manufactured goods went westwards in exchange for silver, salt, wool and wine.

In fact by the end of the sixteenth century the Dutch had accomplished what has been called the 'silent takeover of Seville' for after the collapse of the Fuggers and the withdrawal of credit by the Genoese there remained only the Dutch who now stepped in to finance the Seville-Atlantic trade through their carrying trade (with merchandise and not money). In return the Dutch paid the Spanish Crown its stipulated revenue and by this means the Dutch gained a secure foothold in the Caribbean and American trade. The trade essentially became one of grain versus bullion.

Holland's maritime activities therefore encompassed the whole of the European continent from Scandinavia and Russia, via the Rhine and the Alps to Poland. After 1590 this maritime network extended through the Straits of Gibraltar to the Mediterranean. After the takeover of the Atlantic trade had been accomplished the Dutch

turned their eyes towards Asia. By 1612 the V.O.C. was well entrenched in the Levant. Success in Asia was therefore only a step away.

... in the Seventeenth Century

৩. সতেরো শতকের বাণিজ্য : *Rise of Amsterdam*

এই শতকের মূল আকর্ষণ কেন্দ্র ছিল নেদারল্যান্ড বা হল্যান্ড যার প্রধান বন্দর ছিল আমস্টারডাম। আমস্টারডামকে কেন্দ্র করে প্রকাণ্ড বাণিজ্যিক কর্মকাণ্ড ও আর্থিক লেনদেন চলত। স্পেনীয়-আমেরিকান বাণিজ্যের কর্ণধার ছিল এই বন্দর, এই বন্দরের উৎপত্তি পর্তুগালকে এশিয়ার বাণিজ্যিক জগত থেকে সরিয়ে দেয়। এই বন্দরই ছিল ভূমধ্যসাগর ও বালটিক সাগরীয় বাণিজ্যের ভরকেন্দ্র।

হল্যান্ড বা নেদারল্যান্ড স্পেনীয় শাসনের বিরুদ্ধে বিরূপ প্রতিক্রিয়া দেখালে ও বিদ্রোহ করলে যুক্তরাজ্যে পরিণত হয় (United Provinces)। সাতটি রাজ্য দ্বারা পরিচালিত ও Orange-এর কাউন্সিল দ্বারা শাসিত হল্যান্ড হল সাতটি রাজ্যের একটি রাজ্য। অন্যান্যরা হল, জিল্যান্ড, ইটরেঙ্ক্ট, গেডারল্যান্ড, ওভারজিসেল, ফ্রিসলেভ ও গ্রোনিংগেন। হল্যান্ড ছিল এদের মধ্যে সবথেকে শক্তিশালী ও ধনী রাষ্ট্র। তাই অধিকাংশ সময়ই অরেঞ্জ পরিবারের সঙ্গে তার সংঘর্ষ লেগে থাকত। এই পরিবার প্রকৃতির দিক থেকেই সামন্ততান্ত্রিক ছিল, যার কোনো বহির্দেশীয় বা সামুদ্রিক বাণিজ্যের বিস্তৃতি ছিল না। অরেঞ্জ পরিবার সাতটি রাজ্যের পঞ্চপ্রধান শাসক ছিল, যার জন্য অসংখ্য শক্তিশালী ক্ষমতা ও শক্তির সমন্বয়ে ও তাদের সান্নিধ্য তার সংগঠনকে বলিষ্ঠ করে তুলেছিল, তবে হল্যান্ডের বিচারে তুলনামূলকভাবে তার সামুদ্রিক শক্তি বিশেষ প্রাধান্য পায়নি। হল্যান্ডের সাংগঠনিক শক্তির উৎসই ছিল সামুদ্রিক বাণিজ্যের অভাবনীয় সাফল্য।

আমস্টারডামকে কেন্দ্র করে বিশ্ববাণিজ্যের কর্মকাণ্ডকে আলোচনা করতে হলে দুটি বিশেষ কারণকে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া উচিত। প্রথমত, যুক্তরাজ্যে বা নেদারল্যান্ডে ক্ষুদ্র ক্ষুদ্র জমি প্রাকৃতিক সম্পদের প্রাচুর্য অর্থনৈতিক জীবনে এনে দেয়নি, বিশেষ করে খনিজ ও ধাতব সম্পদকে কেন্দ্র করে কোনো ভারী শিল্প এখানে গড়ে ওঠেনি। তাই খুব স্বাভাবিকভাবেই সমুদ্রের জলসম্পদকে কেন্দ্র করে সামুদ্রিক বাণিজ্যের কর্মকাণ্ড বিস্তার লাভ করে। দ্বিতীয়ত, ক্ষুদ্র পরিসরে গড়ে ওঠা ওই দেশের মূল ভরকেন্দ্র

আমস্টারডামকে কেন্দ্র করে গড়ে ওঠায় অন্যান্য বিস্তীর্ণ অঞ্চলের সঙ্গে অনিবার্যভাবেই একটা বোঝাপড়া নৈকট্য এবং লেনদেনের সম্পর্ক গড়ে ওঠে। এই প্রসঙ্গে কিছু বিশেষীকরণ প্রক্রিয়া (specialisation) মূল এলাকার সঙ্গে বিস্তীর্ণ প্রান্তরের ঘটেছিল। তাই এই দেশ “শ্রমের বিভাজন” এই তত্ত্বের উপর অর্থনীতিকে সাজিয়েছিল। লেডেন, হারলেম এবং ডেল্ফট প্রভৃতি স্থানের অর্থনীতির ভিত্তি ছিল শিল্প। ডর্ডরেস্ট রাইন নদীর তীরবর্তী হওয়ায় কৃষি থেকে রাজস্ব ও অন্তর্বর্তী বাণিজ্য ছিল এই স্থানের আয়ের উৎস। হেগ ছিল রাজনৈতিক দিক থেকে প্রধান কার্যালয় (রাজধানী), রটারডাম দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম বন্দর হিসেবে (আমস্টারডামের পর) স্বীকৃতি লাভ করেছিল। সামুদ্রিক মৎস্যচাষ ও তা নিয়ে ইউরোপের অন্যান্য দেশের সঙ্গে বাণিজ্যে আমস্টারডাম খ্যাতি অর্জন করেছিল। এইভাবে আমস্টারডাম সতেরো শতকে বিশ্ব অর্থনীতির মূলকেন্দ্রে পরিণত হয়েছিল।

নেদারল্যান্ডের এই সফলতার কারণ ব্যাখ্যা করতে হলে অন্যান্য সম্পদের যথেষ্ট অভাবকে বিশেষ গুরুত্ব দিতে হয়। সমুদ্র ও সামুদ্রিক জীবনযাপনকে কেন্দ্র করে গড়ে ওঠা জাহাজ নির্মাণ শিল্প যা ক্রমে ইউরোপের বাজারে অপ্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতার আসন লাভ করে, মৎস্য জীবিকার বিস্তার ও উন্নতি, বাণিজ্যিক জাহাজ, মৎস্য শিকারের জাহাজ, সবেতেই তার একচেটিয়া কৃতিত্ব ও কর্তৃত্ব ছিল। হল্যান্ডের ধর্মীয় মতবাদ ছিল ক্যালভিনপন্থী, যদিও হল্যান্ডবাসীরা সহিষ্ণুতার পথ ও মতে বিশ্বাসী ছিল। তাই অন্যান্য রাষ্ট্রের মতো ধর্মীয় অত্যাচার ও বিভাজন এই দেশে অনুপস্থিত থাকায় সংখ্যালঘুদের আশ্রয়স্থল হয়ে উঠেছিল হল্যান্ড। তার ফলে অতিরিক্ত সম্পদ ও বিশেষত সমাহার এই দেশে লক্ষ করা যেত। এমনকী খেটে খাওয়া ও পরিশ্রমের বিনিময়ে মূল্য পাওয়া যায়—এই তত্ত্বে বিশ্বাসী আর্থিকভাবে দুর্বল শ্রেণীও এই দেশে এসে রোজগারের মাধ্যমে জীবনধারণ করত। ১৫৮৫ সালের পর অ্যান্টওয়ার্প বন্দরকে কেন্দ্র করে ধনপতি সওদাগর ও বাণিজ্যিক গোষ্ঠীর সমাহার হয় এই দেশে। এদের মধ্যে The Scottish Reformed, The Wallon Reformed, The Dutch Reformed, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Lutherans, ইহুদি এবং ক্যাথলিকরাই ছিল প্রধান বসতিস্থাপক। তাই ভাগ্যান্বেষণের এক অপূর্ব সুযোগ ও স্থান ছিল হল্যান্ড ভূমি। প্রোটেস্ট্যান্ট ধর্মীয় সম্প্রদায়ের আনাগোনা তাদের মিতব্যয়িতা এবং ধনতান্ত্রিক উদ্যোগপতি সুলভ উৎসাহ হল্যান্ডবাসী বা ডাচদের ইউরোপের অর্থনৈতিক শক্তির আধার করে তুলেছিল।

এর ফলাফল ছিল, আমস্টারডামের এক-তৃতীয়াংশ জনসংখ্যা ছিল বিদেশি এবং অভিবাসীদের অতিরিক্ত আগমন ও অন্তঃপ্রবাহ শহরাঞ্চলকে দ্রুত বৃদ্ধি করেছিল, যার ফল জনসংখ্যার ওপরও পড়েছিল। উদাহরণ হিসেবে ১৬০০ সালের কথা বলা যায়—যখন ৫০,০০০ জনসংখ্যা ১৭০০ সালে বৃদ্ধি পেয়ে দাঁড়ায় ২০০,০০০।

ঐতিহাসিক দিক থেকে ব্যাখ্যা করলে বলা চলে যে হল্যান্ডবাসীর বাণিজ্যিক সমৃদ্ধি প্রাথমিকভাবে মৎস্য শিকারের মধ্যেই আবদ্ধ ছিল। সামুদ্রিক অভিযান ছিল এদের প্রাকৃতিক ধর্ম। তাই উত্তর সাগরকে ঘিরেই এদের জীবনযাত্রার আধার তৈরি হয়েছিল। মৎস্য ব্যবসা, উপকূলবর্তী বাণিজ্য ও অন্যান্য কর্মকাণ্ড, দূরবর্তীস্থানে ভ্রমণ এবং উপকূলীয় যুদ্ধবিগ্রহে এরা পারদর্শিতা অর্জন করেছিল। মৎস্য শিকারের ব্যবসাকে চারভাগে ভাগ করা যায়। অন্তর্বর্তী মৎস্য ব্যবসা (আন্তর্দেশীয়), সামুদ্রিক (শুটকী) মৎস্য ব্যবসা, আইসল্যান্ডে কড মাছের ব্যবসা এবং তিমি শিকার। তিমি মাছের আড়তে পরিণত হয় আমস্টারডাম এবং এই ব্যবসায় আমস্টারডামই মূলকেন্দ্রে পরিণত হয়। ১৬১৪ সালের মধ্যে এই শিল্পে একচেটিয়া অধিকারও সে (Northern Company) লাভ করে। মৎস্য ব্যবসা ও শিল্পের সঙ্গে জড়িত ছিল জাহাজ ব্যবসা। তাই নিত্যনতুন নৌকা ও জাহাজ নির্মাণ শিল্পে নতুন কলাকৌশল প্রয়োগ করে অভিনবত্বের সৃষ্টি করেছিল। এইসকল শিল্পই ছিল হল্যান্ডের সম্পদ সৃষ্টি ও সমৃদ্ধির মূল উৎস।

১৫৭০ সালের মধ্যে ডাচরা বিভিন্ন পরীক্ষানিরীক্ষার মধ্যে দিয়ে নতুন ধরনের নৌকা বা জলে চালিত ভাসমান যান আবিষ্কার করে যার নাম ছিল flute বা ভাসমান নৌকা। এই ধরনের যানের প্রধান সুবিধাই হল নাবিক বা লোকশক্তির স্বল্পতা। সুদূরে জলযাত্রার ব্যয়ের সংকোচনের জন্য এই যানের ব্যবহার জনপ্রিয় হয়ে ওঠে। এর ফলে জাহাজের যাত্রার খরচ অনেক হ্রাস পায়।

ব্যয়ের এই স্বল্পতাই জাহাজ নির্মাণ শিল্প এবং জলযাত্রায় ডাচদের বা হল্যান্ডবাসীদের প্রধান সুবিধাজনক ক্ষেত্র করে দিয়েছিল। তারা নামমাত্র ব্যয়ে কাঁচা কাঠ এবং শিল্পের প্রয়োজনীয় কাঁচামাল বালটিক সাগরীয় অঞ্চল থেকে সংগ্রহ করত ও আমদানি করত। ষোলো শতকে বালটিক সাগরীয় অঞ্চলের বাণিজ্যের অধিকাংশই ডাচরা নিয়ন্ত্রণ করত। এইভাবে ষোলো শতকের মধ্যভাগ তথা ১৫৬০ সাল নাগাদ ডাচরা বালটিক অঞ্চলের ৭০ শতাংশ বাণিজ্য অধিকার করে এবং এইভাবে অ্যান্টওয়ার্প বন্দরের স্থানে আমস্টারডাম ইউরোপের বাজারে রূপান্তরিত হয় যেখানে বালটিক অঞ্চলের শস্য ও উৎপাদিত দ্রব্যের বাজারি কারবার চলত। জাহাজ নির্মাণ কার্যাবলী ডাচদের দ্বিতীয় শিল্প বলে গণ্য হত। সমুদ্রযাত্রায় পারদর্শী একশ্রেণী দক্ষ কারিগরদের প্রশিক্ষণ দিত এবং তারা জলযুদ্ধে দুমাসের মধ্যে পারদর্শিতা বা ক্ষমতা অর্জন করত। সারডামে (Saardam Ship Building Works) দুমাসে যুদ্ধের জাহাজ বা Warship তৈরি হত। মৎস্য ব্যবসায় অভাবনীয় উন্নতি ও বিপুল লাভবান হওয়ার জন্য উদ্বৃত্ত অর্থ বা ধনসম্পদ জাহাজ নির্মাণ শিল্পের কাজে লাগিয়ে উন্নতির সূচনা করে। এইভাবে হল্যান্ড সমগ্র ইউরোপের বাণিজ্যের কর্ণধার হয়ে ওঠে।

ডাচদের সামুদ্রিক বাণিজ্যের অন্যতম বৈশিষ্ট্য ছিল রিদারজি (বা rederje) প্রথা, যা ছিল নমনীয় পারস্পরিক বোঝাপড়ায় গড়ে ওঠা একটি প্রথা যেখানে ইচ্ছুক ব্যক্তির একত্রে যোগদান করত, বেচাকেনার সম্পর্ক চলত, জাহাজ নির্মাণ করত এবং সনদ নিতে পারত। সতেরো শতকের মধ্যভাগ পর্যন্ত মালবাহী জলযানের নাবিকরা জাহাজের অর্ধেক অংশীদার হিসেবে থাকত, যার জন্য অন্যদিকে মালবাহী জাহাজ কেনাবেচার কারবারে ও বাণিজ্যিক কার্যাবলীতে উৎসাহ ও উদ্দীপনা থাকত। এই কারবারে প্রচুর মূলধন বা পুঁজি বিনিয়োগ করে সওদাগরী ব্যবসায়ীরা ডাচ সমুদ্র বাণিজ্যের উদ্যোগকে সাফল্যমণ্ডিত করে তুলেছিল।

বালটিক সাগরীয় বাণিজ্যের পরিচালনা ও নিয়ন্ত্রণ অপরদিকে ভূমধ্যসাগরীয় (দক্ষিণাঞ্চলের) অঞ্চলে প্রবেশেরও সাফল্য এনে দিয়েছিল। ১৫৫৭ সাল নাগাদ স্পেনের পঞ্চম চার্লস দেউলিয়া (আর্থিক দিক থেকে) হলেও প্রচুর পরিমাণে খাদ্যশস্যের মাধ্যমে স্পেনীয়-আমেরিকান বাণিজ্য চলত যার লভ্যাংশের সিংহভাগ শুধুমাত্র স্পেন ভোগ করত না, সমগ্র ইউরোপেরও তার ওপর নির্ভরতা ছিল। হল্যান্ডের বাণিজ্যিক জাহাজ বালটিক অঞ্চলের খাদ্যশস্য ভূমধ্যসাগরীয় অঞ্চলে সরবরাহ করত। সেভিল বন্দরের মাধ্যমে এই লেনদেন চলত।

পূর্বাঞ্চলের বিলাসবহুল দ্রব্যাদির আমদানি ও রপ্তানি বাণিজ্যের ওপর সম্পূর্ণভাবে ডাচদের সমৃদ্ধি ও উন্নতি নির্ভর করত না। ডাচরা কালক্রমে পর্তুগালকে পিছনে ফেলে (এশিয়ায় বাণিজ্যে) স্বয়ংসম্পূর্ণতা লাভ করে। অন্যান্য যৌথ সঞ্চয়ী কোম্পানির বাণিজ্যিক তরীও ডাচদের দ্বারা চালিত হত, তারা ক্যারিবিয়ান উপকূল ও উত্তর আমেরিকার সঙ্গে বাণিজ্যিক সম্পর্ক স্থাপনে উদ্যোগী ছিল। তবে ডাচদের বাণিজ্যিক সাফল্যের প্রাথমিক ভিত্তিভূমি বিলাসবহুলহীন দ্রব্যাদি ও ক্ষেত্রের ওপর নির্ভর করত, এদের মধ্যে মৎস্য ব্যবসা, খাদ্যশস্য বিনিময়, নাবিকদের আনাগোনা প্রভৃতি উল্লেখযোগ্য। নেদারল্যান্ড বা হল্যান্ডের শতকরা ষাট শতাংশ পুঁজি এদের মাধ্যমেই সরবরাহ হত। এমনকী সেভিল আটলান্টিক বাণিজ্যের ৫/৬ অংশ দ্রব্যাদি ডাচদের মাধ্যমেই সরবরাহ হত। পূর্বের গম, রাই, হস্তশিল্প ও শিল্পোৎপাদিত পণ্যের বিনিময়ে পশ্চিমের রূপো, নুন, উল ও মাদক দ্রব্য পূর্বাঞ্চলকে সরবরাহ করত।

ষোলো শতকের শেষার্ধে ফুগারদের পতনের পর (অর্থনৈতিকভাবে) এবং আর্থিক জগতে ঋণদাতার ভূমিকা থেকে জেনোয়ার পশ্চাদ্দপসরণের পর ডাচরাই সেভিল-আটলান্টিক বাণিজ্যের নীরব কর্ণধারে পরিণত হয়। ব্রডেলের মতে এ হল “The Silent takeover of the Seville-Atlantic economy”। এই বাণিজ্যের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় পুঁজি বিনিয়োগকারী হিসেবেও তার ভূমিকা বৃদ্ধি পেল। স্পেনের রাজকর্তৃপক্ষকে এর বিনিময়ে হল্যান্ড নির্দিষ্ট সংখ্যক রাজস্ব পাঠিয়ে দিত, যা

প্রকৃতপক্ষে ডাচদের নিরাপদ পদক্ষেপ বলে অভিহিত করা হয় ক্যারিবিয়ান ও আমেরিকার বাণিজ্যের ক্ষেত্রে। এই বাণিজ্যিক পদক্ষেপ শস্যের বিনিময়ে রূপো আমদানির ব্যবসা নামেও খ্যাত ছিল।

এইভাবে হল্যান্ডের সামুদ্রিক বাণিজ্য সমগ্র ইউরোপের সীমারেখাকে স্পর্শ করেছিল। ভৌগোলিক সীমারেখার দিক থেকে উত্তরের স্ক্যান্ডিনেভিয়া ও রাশিয়া হয়ে রাইন নদীর উপত্যকা ও আল্পস পর্বতমালার সন্নিহিত অঞ্চল থেকে পোল্যান্ডের বিস্তীর্ণ প্রান্তর। ১৫৯০ সালের পর এই সামুদ্রিক বাণিজ্যের ক্রিয়াকলাপ জিব্রাল্টার প্রণালীর মধ্যে দিয়ে ভূমধ্যসাগরীয় অঞ্চল পর্যন্ত বিস্তার লাভ করে। আটলান্টিক বাণিজ্যের হাত ধরেই ডাচরা এশিয়ার দিকে দৃষ্টিপাত করে, তাই এশিয়ায় তাদের সাফল্য একসত্তর অগ্রসর হওয়ারই নামান্তর।

The Dutch Economy in the Golden Age (16th – 17th Centuries) : RISE OF AMSTERDAM

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In just over one hundred years, the provinces of the Northern Netherlands went from relative obscurity as the poor cousins of the industrious and heavily urbanized Southern Netherlands provinces of Flanders and Brabant to the pinnacle of European commercial success. Taking advantage of a favorable agricultural base, the Dutch achieved success in the fishing industry and the Baltic and North Sea carrying trade during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries before establishing a far-flung maritime empire in the seventeenth century.

The Economy of the Netherlands up to the Sixteenth Century

In many respects the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic inherited the economic successes of the Burgundian and Habsburg Netherlands. For centuries, Flanders and to a lesser extent Brabant had been at the forefront of the medieval European economy. An indigenous cloth industry was present throughout all areas of Europe in the early medieval period, but Flanders was the first to develop the industry with great intensity. A tradition of cloth manufacture in the Low Countries existed from antiquity when the Celts and then the Franks continued an active textile industry learned from the Romans.

As demand grew early textile production moved from its rural origins to the cities and had become, by the twelfth century, an essentially urban industry. Native wool could not keep up with demand, and the Flemings imported English wool in great quantities. The resulting high quality product was much in demand all over Europe, from Novgorod to the Mediterranean. Brabant also rose to an important position in textile industry, but only about a century after Flanders. By the thirteenth century the number of people engaged in some aspect of the textile industry in the Southern Netherlands had become more than the total engaged in all other crafts. It is possible that this emphasis on cloth manufacture was the reason that the Flemish towns ignored the emerging maritime shipping industry which was eventually dominated by others, first the German Hanseatic League, and later Holland and Zeeland.

By the end of the fifteenth century Antwerp in Brabant had become the commercial capital of the Low Countries as foreign merchants went to the city in great numbers in search of the high-value products offered at the city's fairs. But the traditional cloths manufactured in Flanders had lost their allure for most European markets, particularly as the English began exporting high quality cloths rather than the raw materials the Flemish textile industry depended on. Many textile producers turned to the lighter weight and cheaper "new draperies." Despite protectionist measures instituted in the mid-fifteenth century, English cloth found an outlet in Antwerp's burgeoning markets. By the early years of the sixteenth century the Portuguese began using Antwerp as an outlet for their Asian pepper and spice imports, and the Germans continued to bring their metal products (copper and silver) there. For almost a hundred years Antwerp remained the commercial capital of northern Europe, until the religious and political events of the 1560s and 1570s intervened and the Dutch Revolt against Spanish rule toppled the commercial dominance of Antwerp and the southern provinces. Within just a few years of the Fall of Antwerp (1585), scores of merchants and mostly Calvinist craftsmen fled the south for the relative security of the Northern Netherlands.

The exodus from the south certainly added to the already growing population of the north. However, much like Flanders and Brabant, the northern provinces of Holland and Zeeland were

MA 11 already populous and heavily urbanized. The population of these maritime provinces had been steadily growing throughout the sixteenth century, perhaps tripling between the first years of the sixteenth century to about 1650. The inland provinces grew much more slowly during the same period. Not until the eighteenth century, when the Netherlands as a whole faced declining fortunes would the inland provinces begin to match the growth of the coastal core of the country.

Dutch Agriculture

During the fifteenth century, and most of the sixteenth century, the Northern Netherlands provinces were predominantly rural compared to the urbanized southern provinces. Agriculture and fishing formed the basis for the Dutch economy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. One of the characteristics of Dutch agriculture during this period was its emphasis on intensive animal husbandry. Dutch cattle were exceptionally well cared for and dairy produce formed a significant segment of the agricultural sector. During the seventeenth century, as the Dutch urban population saw dramatic growth many farmers also turned to *market gardening* to supply the cities with vegetables.

Some of the impetus for animal production came from the trade in slaughter cattle from Denmark and Northern Germany. Holland was an ideal area for cattle feeding and fattening before eventual slaughter and export to the cities of the Southern provinces. The trade in slaughter cattle expanded from about 1500 to 1660, but protectionist measures on the part of Dutch authorities who wanted to encourage the fattening of home-bred cattle ensured a contraction of the international cattle trade between 1660 and 1750.

Although agriculture made up the largest segment of the Dutch economy, cereal production in the Netherlands could not keep up with demand particularly by the seventeenth century as migration from the southern provinces contributed to population increases. The provinces of the Low Countries traditionally had depended on imported grain from the south (France and the Walloon provinces) and when crop failures interrupted the flow of grain from the south, the Dutch began to import grain from the Baltic. Baltic grain imports experienced sustained growth from about the middle of the sixteenth century to roughly 1650 when depression and stagnation characterized the grain trade into the eighteenth century.

Indeed, the Baltic grain trade (see below), a major source of employment for the Dutch, not only in maritime transport but in handling and storage as well, was characterized as the "mother trade." In her recent book on the Baltic grain trade, Mijla van Tielhof defined "mother trade" as the oldest and most substantial trade with respect to ships, sailors and commodities for the Northern provinces. Over the long term, the Baltic grain trade gave rise to shipping and trade on other routes as well as to manufacturing industries.

Dutch Fishing

Along with agriculture, the Dutch fishing industry formed part of the economic base of the northern Netherlands. Like the Baltic grain trade, it also contributed to the rise of Dutch the shipping industry.

The backbone of the fishing industry was the North Sea herring fishery, which was quite advanced and included a form of "factory" ship called the herring bus. The herring bus was developed in the fifteenth century in order to allow the herring catch to be processed with salt at sea. This permitted the herring ship to remain at sea longer and increased the range of the herring

fishery. Herring was an important export product for the Netherlands particularly to inland areas, but also to the Baltic offsetting Baltic grain imports.

The herring fishery reached its zenith in the first half of the seventeenth century. Estimates put the size of the herring fleet at roughly 500 busses and the catch at about 20,000 to 25,000 lasts (roughly 33,000 metric tons) on average each year in the first decades of the seventeenth century. The herring catch as well as the number of busses began to decline in the second half of the seventeenth century, collapsing by about the mid-eighteenth century when the catch amounted to only about 6000 lasts. This decline was likely due to competition resulting from a reinvigoration of the Baltic fishing industry that succeeded in driving prices down, as well as competition within the North Sea by the Scottish fishing industry.

The Dutch Textile Industry

The heartland for textile manufacturing had been Flanders and Brabant until the onset of the Dutch Revolt around 1568. Years of warfare continued to devastate the already beaten down Flemish cloth industry. Even the cloth producing towns of the Northern Netherlands that had been focusing on producing the "new draperies" saw their output decline as a result of wartime interruptions. But textiles remained the most important industry for the Dutch Economy.

Despite the blow it suffered during the Dutch revolt, Leiden's textile industry, for instance, rebounded in the early seventeenth century – thanks to the influx of textile workers from the Southern Netherlands who emigrated there in the face of religious persecution. But by the 1630s Leiden had abandoned the heavy traditional wool cloths in favor of a lighter traditional woolen (*laken*) as well as a variety of other textiles such as *says*, *fustians*, and *camlets*. Total textile production increased from 50,000 or 60,000 pieces per year in the first few years of the seventeenth century to as much as 130,000 pieces per year during the 1660s. Leiden's wool cloth industry probably reached peak production by 1670. The city's textile industry was successful because it found export markets for its inexpensive cloths in the Mediterranean, much to the detriment of Italian cloth producers.

Next to Lyons, Leiden may have been Europe's largest industrial city at end of seventeenth century. Production was carried out through the "putting out" system, whereby weavers with their own looms and often with other dependent weavers working for them, obtained imported raw materials from merchants who paid the weavers by the piece for their work (the merchant retained ownership of the raw materials throughout the process). By the end of the seventeenth century foreign competition threatened the Dutch textile industry. Production in many of the new draperies (*says*, for example) decreased considerably throughout the eighteenth century; profits suffered as prices declined in all but the most expensive textiles. This left the production of traditional woolens to drive what was left of Leiden's textile industry in the eighteenth century.

Although Leiden certainly led the Netherlands in the production of wool cloth, it was not the only textile producing city in the United Provinces. Amsterdam, Utrecht, Delft and Haarlem, among others, had vibrant textile industries. Haarlem, for example, was home to an important linen industry during the first half of the seventeenth century. Like Leiden's cloth industry, Haarlem's linen industry benefited from experienced linen weavers who migrated from the Southern Netherlands during the Dutch Revolt. Haarlem's hold on linen production, however, was due more to its success in linen bleaching and finishing. Not only was locally produced linen finished in Haarlem, but linen merchants from other areas of Europe sent their products to Haarlem for bleaching and finishing. As linen production moved to more rural areas as producers

sought to decrease costs in the second half of the seventeenth century, Haarlem's industry went into decline.

Other Dutch Industries

Industries also developed as a result of overseas colonial trade, in particular Amsterdam's sugar refining industry. During the sixteenth century, Antwerp had been Europe's most important sugar refining city, a title it inherited from Venice once the Atlantic sugar islands began to surpass Mediterranean sugar production. Once Antwerp fell to Spanish troops during the Revolt, however, Amsterdam replaced it as Europe's dominant sugar refiner. The number of sugar refineries in Amsterdam increased from about 3 around 1605 to about 50 by 1662, thanks in no small part to Portuguese investment. Dutch merchants purchased huge amounts of sugar from both the French and the English islands in the West Indies, along with a great deal of tobacco. Tobacco processing became an important Amsterdam industry in the seventeenth century employing large numbers of workers and leading to attempts to develop domestic tobacco cultivation.

With the exception of some of the "colonial" industries (sugar, for instance), Dutch industry experienced a period of stagnation after the 1660s and eventual decline beginning around the turn of the eighteenth century. It would seem that as far as industrial production is concerned, the Dutch Golden Age lasted from the 1580s until about 1670. This period was followed by roughly one hundred years of declining industrial production. De Vries and van der Woude concluded that Dutch industry experienced explosive growth after 1580s because of the migration of skilled labor and merchant capital from the southern Netherlands at roughly the time Antwerp fell to the Spanish and because of the relative advantage continued warfare in the south gave to the Northern Provinces. After the 1660s most Dutch industries experienced either steady or steep decline as many Dutch industries moved from the cities into the countryside, while some (particularly the colonial industries) remained successful well into the eighteenth century.

Dutch Shipping and Overseas Commerce

Dutch shipping began to emerge as a significant sector during the fifteenth century. Probably stemming from the inaction on the part of merchants from the Southern Netherlands to participate in seaborne transport, the towns of Zeeland and Holland began to serve the shipping needs of the commercial towns of Flanders and Brabant (particularly Antwerp). The Dutch, who were already active in the North Sea as a result of the herring fishery, began to compete with the German Hanseatic League for Baltic markets by exporting their herring catches, salt, wine, and cloth in exchange for Baltic grain.

The Grain Trade

Baltic grain played an essential role for the rapidly expanding markets in western and southern Europe. By the beginning of the sixteenth century the urban populations had increased in the Low Countries fueling the market for imported grain. Grain and other Baltic products such as tar, hemp, flax, and wood were not only destined for the Low Countries, but also England and for Spain and Portugal via Amsterdam, the port that had succeeded in surpassing Lübeck and other Hanseatic towns as the primary transshipment point for Baltic goods. The grain trade sparked the development of a variety of industries. In addition to the shipbuilding industry, which was an obvious outgrowth of overseas trade relationships, the Dutch manufactured floor tiles, roof tiles, and bricks for export to the Baltic; the grain ships carried them as ballast on return voyages to the Baltic.

The importance of the Baltic markets to Amsterdam, and to Dutch commerce in general can be illustrated by recalling that when the Danish closed the Sound to Dutch ships in 1542, the Dutch faced financial ruin. But by the mid-sixteenth century, the Dutch had developed such a strong presence in the Baltic that they were able to exact transit rights from Denmark (Peace of Speyer, 1544) allowing them freer access to the Baltic via Danish waters. Despite the upheaval caused by the Dutch and the commercial crisis that hit Antwerp in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the Baltic grain trade remained robust until the last years of the seventeenth century. That the Dutch referred to the Baltic trade as their "mother trade" is not surprising given the importance of the Baltic markets continued to hold for Dutch commerce throughout the Golden Age. Unfortunately for Dutch commerce, Europe's population began to decline somewhat at the close of the seventeenth century and remained depressed for several decades. Increased grain production in Western Europe and the availability of non-Baltic substitutes (American and Italian rice, for example) further decreased demand for Baltic grain resulting in a downturn in Amsterdam's grain market.

Expansion into African, American and Asian Markets – "World Primacy"

Building on the early successes of their Baltic trade, Dutch shippers expanded their sphere of influence east into Russia and south into the Mediterranean and the Levantine markets. By the turn of the seventeenth century, Dutch merchants had their eyes on the American and Asian markets that were dominated by Iberian merchants. The ability of Dutch shippers to effectively compete with entrenched merchants, like the Hanseatic League in the Baltic, or the Portuguese in Asia stemmed from their cost cutting strategies (what de Vries and van der Woude call "cost advantages and institutional efficiencies," p. 374). Not encumbered by the costs and protective restrictions of most merchant groups of the sixteenth century, the Dutch trimmed their costs enough to undercut the competition, and eventually establish what Jonathan Israel has called "world primacy."

Before Dutch shippers could even attempt to break in to the Asian markets they needed to first expand their presence in the Atlantic. This was left mostly to the émigré merchants from Antwerp, who had relocated to Zeeland following the Revolt. These merchants set up the so-called Guinea trade with West Africa, and initiated Dutch involvement in the Western Hemisphere. Dutch merchants involved in the Guinea trade ignored the slave trade that was firmly in the hands of the Portuguese in favor of the rich trade in gold, ivory, and sugar from São Tomé. Trade with West Africa grew slowly, but competition was stiff. By 1599, the various Guinea companies had agreed to the formation of a cartel to regulate trade. Continued competition from a slew of new companies, however, insured that the cartel would be only partially effective until the organization of the Dutch West India Company in 1621 that also held monopoly rights in the West Africa trade.

The Dutch at first focused their trade with the Americas on the Caribbean. By the mid-1590s only a few Dutch ships each year were making the voyage across the Atlantic. When the Spanish instituted an embargo against the Dutch in 1598, shortages in products traditionally obtained in Iberia (like salt) became common. Dutch shippers seized the chance to find new sources for products that had been supplied by the Spanish and soon fleets of Dutch ships sailed to the Americas. The Spanish and Portuguese had a much larger presence in the Americas than the Dutch could mount, despite the large number of vessels they sent to the area. Dutch strategy was to avoid Iberian strongholds while penetrating markets where the products they desired could be found. For the most part, this strategy meant focusing on Venezuela, Guyana, and Brazil. Indeed,

by the turn of the seventeenth century, the Dutch had established forts on the coasts of Guyana and Brazil.

While competition between rival companies from the towns of Zeeland marked Dutch trade with the Americas in the first years of the seventeenth century, by the time the West India Company finally received its charter in 1621 troubles with Spain once again threatened to disrupt trade. Funding for the new joint-stock company came slowly, and oddly enough came mostly from inland towns like Leiden rather than coastal towns. The West India Company was hit with setbacks in the Americas from the very start. The Portuguese began to drive the Dutch out of Brazil in 1624 and by 1625 the Dutch were losing their position in the Caribbean as well. Dutch shippers in the Americas soon found raiding (directed at the Spanish and Portuguese) to be their most profitable activity until the Company was able to establish forts in Brazil again in the 1630s and begin sugar cultivation. Sugar remained the most lucrative activity for the Dutch in Brazil, and once the revolt of Portuguese Catholic planters against the Dutch plantation owners broke out in the late 1640s, the fortunes of the Dutch declined steadily.

The Dutch faced the prospect of stiff Portuguese competition in Asia as well. But, breaking into the lucrative Asian markets was not just a simple matter of undercutting less efficient Portuguese shippers. The Portuguese closely guarded the route around Africa. Not until roughly one hundred years after the first Portuguese voyage to Asia were the Dutch in a position to mount their own expedition. Thanks to the travelogue of Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, which was published in 1596, the Dutch gained the information they needed to make the voyage. Linschoten had been in the service of the Bishop of Goa, and kept excellent records of the voyage and his observations in Asia.