

Spectrum's

A brief history of

Modern India

Advent of the Europeans in India

stop
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Portuguese Lose Favour with the Mughals

- The Portuguese acts of piracy also resulted in conflict with the imperial Mughal government. In 1613, the Portuguese offended Jahangir by capturing Mughal ships, imprisoning many Muslims, and plundering the cargoes.
- An enraged Jahangir ordered Muqarrab Khan, who was the then in charge of Surat, to obtain compensation. However, it was during the reign of Shah Jahan, that the advantages which the Portuguese enjoyed in the Mughal court were lost forever.
- Also lost were the hopes of converting the royal family and Mughal India to Christianity, a hope that the Portuguese held because of the welcome accorded to them and their religion by Akbar and Jahangir.
- **Capture of Hooghly** They monopolised the manufacture of salt, built a custom house of their own and started enforcing strictly the levy of duty on tobacco, which had become an important article of trade since its introduction at the beginning of the 17th century.
- The Portuguese not only made money as traders but also started a cruel slave trade by purchasing or seizing Hindu and Muslim children, whom they brought up as Christians.
- In the course of their nefarious activities, they seized two slave girls of Mumtaz Mahal. On June 24, 1632, the siege of Hooghly began, ending in its capture three months later.
- Shah Jahan ordered the Bengal governor Qasim Khan to take action against the Portuguese. A siege of Hooghly finally led to the Portuguese fleeing.

Decline of the Portuguese

- By the 18th century, the Portuguese in India lost their commercial influence, though some of them still carried on trade in their individual capacity and many took to piracy and robbery. In fact, Hooghly was used by some Portuguese as a base for piracy in the Bay of Bengal. The decline of the Portuguese was brought about by several factors.
- The local advantages gained by the Portuguese in India were reduced with the emergence of powerful dynasties in Egypt, Persia and North India and the rise of the turbulent Marathas as their immediate neighbours. (The Marathas captured Salsette and Bassein in 1739 from the Portuguese.)
- The religious policies of the Portuguese, such as the activities of the Jesuits, gave rise to political fears. Their antagonism for the Muslims apart, the Portuguese policy of conversion to Christianity made Hindus also resentful.
- Their dishonest trade practices also evoked a strong reaction. The Portuguese earned notoriety as sea pirates. Their arrogance and violence brought them the animosity of the rulers of small states and the imperial Mughals as well. The discovery of Brazil diverted colonising activities of Portugal to the West.
- The union of the two kingdoms of Spain and Portugal in 1580-81, dragging the smaller kingdom into Spain's wars with England and Holland, badly affected Portuguese monopoly of trade in India.

Decline of the Portuguese

- The earlier monopoly of knowledge of the sea route to India held by the Portuguese could not remain a secret forever; soon enough the Dutch and the English, who were learning the skills of ocean navigation, also learnt of it.
- As new trading communities from Europe arrived in India, there began a fierce rivalry among them. In this struggle, the Portuguese had to give way to the more powerful and enterprising competitors.
- The Dutch and the English had greater resources and more compulsions to expand overseas, and they overcame the Portuguese resistance.
- One by one, the Portuguese possessions fell to its opponents. Goa which remained with the Portuguese had lost its importance as a port after the fall of the Vijayanagara empire and soon it did not matter in whose possession it was.
- The spice trade came under the control of the Dutch, and Goa was superseded by Brazil as the economic centre of the overseas empire of Portugal. In 1683, after two naval assaults, the Marathas invaded Goa

Significance of the Portuguese

- Most historians have observed that the coming of the Portuguese not only initiated what might be called the European era, it marked the emergence of naval power. The Cholas, among others, had been a naval power, but it was now for the first time a foreign power had come to India by way of the sea.
- The Portuguese ships carried cannon, and this was the first step in gaining monopoly over trade—with the threat or actual use of force. The Portuguese declared their intention to abide by no rules except their own, and they were intent on getting a decisive advantage over the Indians and over the Indian Ocean trading system.
- In the Malabar of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese showed military innovation in their use of body armour, matchlock men, and guns landed from the ships. The Portuguese may have contributed by example to the Mughal use of field guns, and the 'artillery of the stirrup'.
- It cannot be forgotten that the missionaries and the Church were also teachers and patrons in India of the arts of the painter, carver, and sculptor. As in music, they were the interpreters, not just of Portuguese, but of European art to India.
- The art of the silversmith and goldsmith flourished at Goa, and the place became a centre of elaborate filigree work, fretted foliage work and metal work embedding jewels.
- However, though the interior of churches built under the Portuguese have plenty of woodwork and sculpture and sometimes painted ceilings, they are generally simple in their architectural plan.



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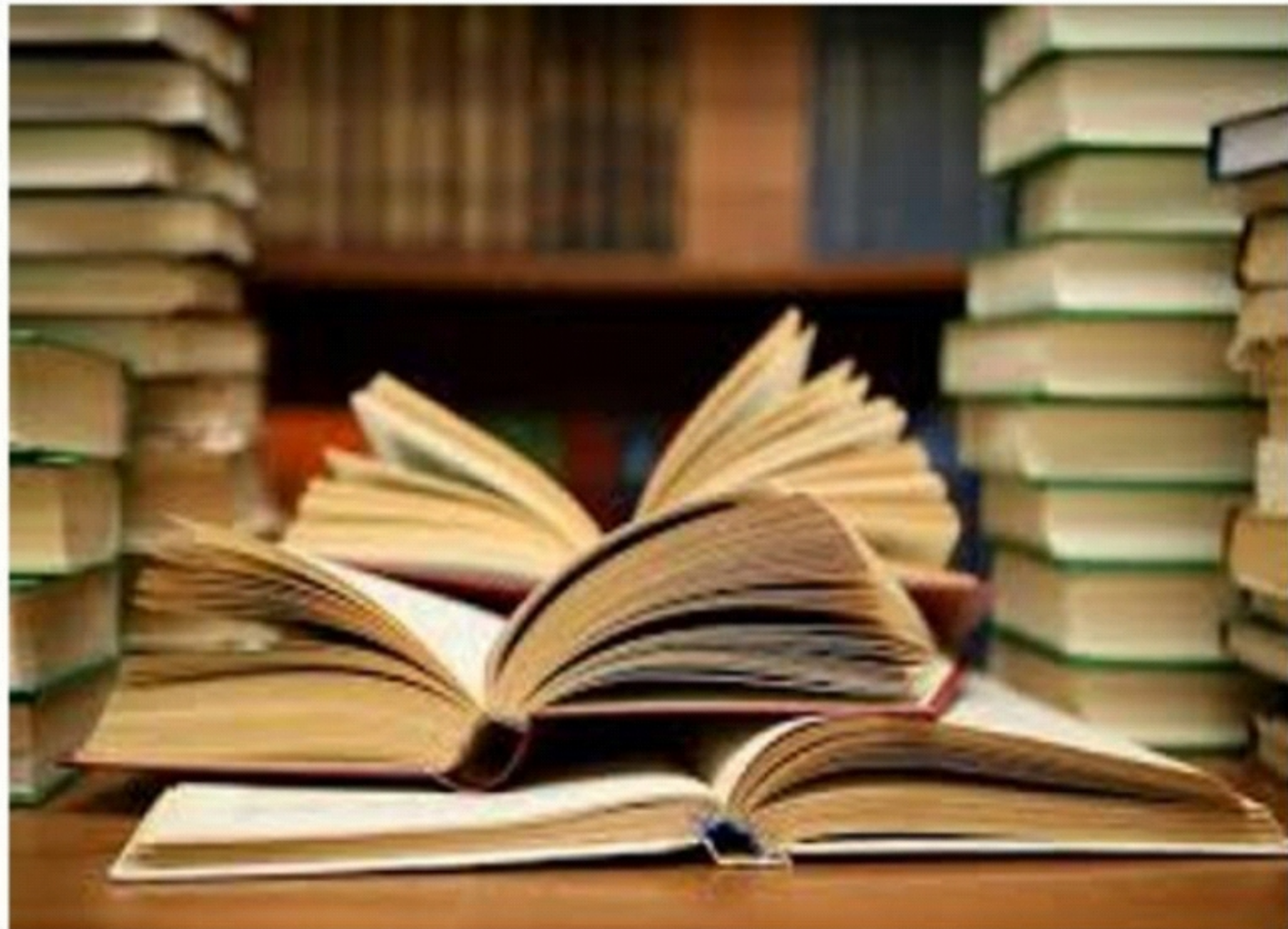


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