

Blueprint To Bluewater



THE INDIAN NAVY 1951 – 65

Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh AVSM, (Retd.)

1

A PEEP INTO OUR MARITIME PAST

A Resume of India's Maritime History from Her Hoary Past to 1950

On March 28, 1958, standing on the quarterdeck of *INS Mysore*, the second cruiser to be acquired by independent India's Navy, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said,

From this ship I look at India and think of our country and its geographic situation - on three sides there is the sea and on the fourth high mountains - in a sense our country maybe said to be in the very lap of an ocean. In these circumstances I ponder over our close links with the sea and how the sea has brought us together. From time immemorial the people of India have had very intimate connections with the sea. They had trade with other countries and they had also built ships. Later on the country became weak. Now that we are free, we have once again reiterated the importance of the sea. We cannot afford to be weak at sea ... history has shown that whatever power controls the Indian Ocean has, in the first instance, India's seaborne trade at her mercy, and in the second, India's very independence itself.

Named after peninsular India which juts into its centre and occupies a unique position, the Indian Ocean washes the shores of the entire East Coast of Africa, the South Coast of Arabia, the Southern shores of Iran and Baluchistan, the Malaysian Peninsula and Indonesia's Sumatra. The Eastern and Western waterways at the Straits of Malacca and Babel Mandeb control ingress into and egress out of the Ocean. The former leads to the Indonesian Archipelago, the South China Sea, the Far East and the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean, while the latter controls the entrance to the Red Sea. The 'chokepoint' controlling the landlocked Persian Gulf in the North West is Hormuz, then known as Ormuz, while Al Adan (Aden) at the Southern tip of Arabia, was the home and main base of the Arab corsairs for centuries. The Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, the two offshoots of the Ocean, wash the 5600-kilometre-long shores of the Indian Peninsula and those of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma and the island of Sri Lanka which is separated from India

by the narrow Palk Strait.

The Indian Ocean has always been regarded as an area of great geopolitical significance because of its unique features and India as its centre of gravity. It was Sardar K.M. Panikkar who observed:

In spite of the vastness of its surface and the oceanic character of its currents and winds, the Indian Ocean has some of the features of a landlocked sea. The Arctic and the Antarctic, circling the Poles have but little connection with inhabited land. The Pacific and the Atlantic lie from the North to the South like gigantic highways. They have no land roof, no vast land area jutting out into their expanse. The Indian Ocean is walled off on three sides by land, with the Southern side of Asia forming a roof over it. The continent of Africa constitutes the Western wall, while Burma, Malaya and the insular continuations protect the Eastern side. But the vital feature which differentiates the Indian Ocean from the Pacific or the Atlantic is not the two sides but the subcontinent of India which juts out far into the sea for a thousand miles to its tapering end at Kanyakumari. It is the geographical position of India that changes the character of the Indian Ocean.

The major islands in the Indian Ocean are neither as numerous nor as evenly spread out as those in the Pacific. The major ones are Sri Lanka and Malagasy, while the minor ones are Socotra (near the Arab Coast, Zanzibar and Seychelles off Africa's Coast), Mauritius and Reunion (on the Tropic of Capricorn, the Lakshadweep group and the Maldives near the west coast of India), the Bahrain group (near the Persian Gulf, the Andaman and Nicobar group in the Bay of Bengal) and the Diego Garcia group (in the Chagos Archipelago).

The bays, gulfs and bights of the Indian Ocean have also assumed considerable geopolitical significance over the years. The Persian Gulf, virtually a landlocked sea with its only link with the Ocean at Hormuz; the Arabian Sea which separates the Indian and Arabian peninsulas; the Gulf of Aden, entry to which is controlled by the island of Socotra; the Red Sea whose gate-post is at Babel Mandeb; the Bay of Bengal separating the Indian and Malaysian peninsulas and the Gulf of Malacca, entry into which is commanded by Singapore, have all played a significant role in shaping the region's maritime history.

Oceanic activity and oceanic traditions developed in this region before any other part of the earth because of the unique feature of the monsoons and the growth of the nucleus of civilisation around this ocean. Centuries before the development of seafaring activities in the Aegean Sea, oceanic traditions had been developed by the littoral states of peninsular India.

For centuries, politico-military thinkers have appreciated the naval and geopolitical importance of landlocked countries establishing links with the seas by acquiring sovereignty over waterways or even over land corridors. For instance, the potential of their presence in the Indian Ocean or even in its seas, bays and straits, had led some major powers to attempt to gain access to this ocean overland, even in the last century. The British appreciation of the balance of power in and around Asia after World War II and its future plans made during the 1940s also catered for these contingencies. What is most striking and not generally known is the fact that Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the great ruler of the Punjab, had also realised the importance of establishing a link with the sea after his victory over the Pathans and Afghans during the third decade of the last century. To quote a historian, "If the Punjabi empire was to expand any further, it could only be across the Sindh desert to the sea or across the Sutlej to India. (the portion of India then held by the British)". The British were clever enough to persuade the Maharaja to sign a commercial treaty in December 1832 and to make him abandon his plans to extend his empire to the sea. These facts and today's rivalry between superpowers to establish their presence in the Indian Ocean confirm the wisdom of the observation made centuries ago by KhairoddinBarbarosa, the Egyptian Admiral, "He who rules on the sea will shortly rule on the land also."

A careful analysis of the sequence of events in our maritime past reveals the fact that during the last five millennia, those who came to India overland from other parts of the world mainly through the mountain passes in the North West, did rule some parts of the Indian sub-continent for a while. But they were eventually absorbed in the mainstream of Indian culture and traditions and, over the centuries, became an integral part of the Indian milieu. Some of these were the Aryans, the Pathans, the Moghuls, the Afghans, the Sakas and even the Huns. But there were those who came by sea, - the Portuguese, Dutch, French, British, Germans, Danes, Flemish, Armenians and the Jews - during the last two millennia, who maintained their identity even though they stayed here for hundreds of years, some of them holding sway over considerably larger areas and for longer periods than those who came overland.

There are five distinct periods in India's maritime history - the Hindu period extending from our hoary past to the middle of the 15th Century A.D.; the Portuguese period from the closing years of the 15th Century to the end of the 16th Century; two British periods, one from 1612 to 1830 and the other from 1830 to 1947; and the Indian period which commenced on August 15, 1947. The British period is divided into two parts, because in 1830 the East India Company's Navy in India underwent two major changes; it was constituted as a combatant Service and given the name Indian Navy and the first ship of the Service to sail under steam, the 411-ton *Hugh Lindsay*, covered the distance from Bombay to Suez in 21 days, thus ushering in the era of steam propulsion.

Ancient Indian literature such as the Vedas, Buddhist Jatakas, Sanskrit, Pali and Persian literature, Indian folklore and mythology, and even the Old Testament, bear testimony to the fact that as far back as the

days of Mohenjodaro, Lothal and Harappa (3000 to 2000 B.C.), i.e., during the Indus Valley Civilisation, there was considerable maritime activity between India and the countries in Africa, Southern Europe, Western Asia and the Far East. Seals and potsherds portraying anchors, tools and kitchen implements made of coral and mussel shell found at these places and in Java, Sumatra, Indochina, Sri Lanka and Egypt, and a huge dry-dock recently unearthed at Lothal in Gujarat, further confirm the existence of India's seaborne trade not only with these countries, but also with Sumer, and Crete, and other countries in Central Asia and Persia at that time. The late Professor Buhler, the well-known German Orientalist, observed that passages in ancient Indian works indubitably establish the existence of navigation of the Indian Ocean by its littoral states in ancient times and the subsequent trading voyages undertaken by Hindu merchants to the shores of the Persian Gulf and its riverports.

Further evidence of such activities is available in the littoral linguistic works of the Indian peninsula, viz., in Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi, Konkani, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Oriya and Bengali writings; in the writings of foreign travellers and historians - Chinese, Arabic and Persian - in the evidence available from archaeology-epigraphic, monumental and numismatic; in Indian and foreign art, and in foreign literature - English, Greek, Portuguese, French, Dutch, Persian, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Thai, Malay, Burmese and Sinhalese.

The extent of the commercial and cultural influence of India and her seaborne trade using indigenously built ships during the Hindu period (pre-Christian era to the middle of the 15th Century AD) is evident from some little-known facts such as the existence of the *Matsya Yantra* (the fish machine), a magnetised iron fish floating on oil and pointing to the North, serving as a primitive compass used by Indian seafarers for several millennia) *Matsya* was the first incarnation of 'Vishnu' whose last incarnation was the *Buddha*; the similarity in the names of some of the places in Southern and South East Asia such as Socotra which is a derivative of the word *Sukhadhara* (container or island of happiness), Sri Lanka which originally was *Sioarna Alankar* (gold ornament), Nicobar which was derived from *Nak-Dweep* (the island of the naked) and Calicut which originally was Kallikote (in Kannada, a stonefort); references to Indians as Klings in Thailand and Telangs in some parts of Burma because of the conquests of these countries by the Kalingas and Andhras millennia ago; the similarity between the Thai and Oriya scripts due to the long Kalinga rule over Thailand; the scriptures recited every morning by the monks, even today, in a Buddhist temple in Japan, are in the 6th Century A.D. Bengali script; and the fact that in 323 B.C. eight hundred Indian-built sailing vessels were used for the transfer of the weary and demoralised army of Alexander the Great from the mouth of the Indus to the shores of the Persian Gulf.

While the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean were used during this period mainly for purposes of maritime trade, the Bay of Bengal provided a highway for the countries on the Eastern seaboard to embark on proselytisation, cultural and colonising missions to Sri Lanka and countries as far as the

Indonesian archipelago and Japan.

Considerable maritime activity took place in the waters around India during the Hindu period. As described by Megasthenes, the royal shipyards of the Mauryas built seagoing ships of various classes. The War Office of Emperor Chandragupta had, as one of its six boards, a Nav Parishad (Board of Admiralty) which controlled national shipping. During the days of Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd Century B.C., his sister, Princess Sanghamitra sailed from Tamralipta in Bengal to Sri Lanka on her historic mission of spreading Buddhism there. Ashoka also had a strong seagoing fleet and used it for regular commercial intercourse with Syria, Egypt, Cyrene, Macedonia and Epirus. Between 200 B.C. and 250 A.D., for a period of nearly half a millennium, the Andhras carried out maritime trade with Western Asia, Greece, Rome, Egypt, China and some other Eastern countries and even set up embassies and consulates in some of these countries. Roman coins discovered in India, especially in the South, establish the existence of trade between these countries even before the dawn of the Christian era. Persecution at the hands of the Romans forced some Jews to flee Rome and take refuge in Malabar in 68 A.D. Large sailing vessels built by the Cholas, Pandyas and Keralas of South India and the Kalingas of Orissa were used for trade, passenger traffic and naval warfare. These ships were considered excellent for navigation across the oceans as their lower parts were reinforced with triple planks in order to enable them to withstand the force of gales and tempests. Some of the leading communities in organising sea-borne commerce were the Manigramman Chetties, Namdasis, Valangais and Elangais of South India. It is a well-known fact of history that during the first decade of the seventh century, a ruler of Gujarat, who was faced with defeat at the hands of his enemy, sent his son with thousands of followers comprising cultivators, artisans, warriors, physicians and writers in over 100 vessels to Java. There they laid the foundation of a new civilisation whose contribution to the world was Borobudur, a temple town of buildings and sculptures in the Indian style of that period, depicting the life of the enlightened one - a unique monument to Lord Buddha.

A strong naval fleet was maintained on the Coromandel Coast by the Cholas (985-1054 A.D.). The Chola emperors, Rajaraja I and Rajendra I, had strong armadas which were used to capture Sri Lanka. In 1007 A.D. the Cholas launched an expedition against the Sri Vijayas, who at that time ruled the Malayan Peninsula, Java, Sumatra and some neighbouring islands and the sea areas contiguous to them, and defeated them to bring the Malayan Peninsula under their sovereignty.

The existence of trade in various commodities between India and Europe for at least three millennia has been confirmed by evidence from various sources. India maintained trade relations with the Phoenicians, Jews, Assyrians, Greeks, Egyptians and Romans during the earlier centuries and with the Turks, Venetians, Portuguese, Dutch and English during the later centuries of the period. While India imported a limited number of items such as tin, lead, glass, amber, steel for arms, coral and medicinal

drugs from Europe and West Asia, Arabia supplied frankincense to India for use in her temples. The items exported to Europe, North Africa and West Asia included wool from the fleece of sheep bred on India's north-western mountain ranges, armour, onyx, chalcedony, lapis lazuli, jasper, resinous gum, furs, asafetida, musk, balm, myrrh, embroidered woollen fabrics, coloured carpets, silk which was considered most valuable and was exchanged by weight with gold, various types of cotton cloth ranging from coarse canvas and calico to muslins of the finest texture, peacocks, apes, oils, brassware, ivory, ebony, pearls, sugarcane extracts, salt, indigo, drugs, dyes, rice, sandalwood, timber for building ships, aromatics, pepper, cinnamon and edible spices which were, during the later years, mainly traded for precious metals, especially gold. The existence of trade relations is confirmed by the fact that the word for peacock is *hiki* in Hebrew and *tokei* in Tamil and by the fact of the adoption of certain Tamil words by the Greeks and vice versa, for there was considerable sea-borne trade between Greece and South India during the Hindu period. It is interesting to note that the words for rice, ginger, cinnamon and foreign merchants in Greek and Tamil respectively are *oryza* and *arisi*, *zingiber* and *inchiver*, *karpion* and *karava* and *Iaones* and *Yavana*.

In April 800 A.D., as described in the 199th Chapter of the Japanese document *Ruijukokushi* an Indian was cast up on the shores of Japan and some seeds of the cotton-plant, which was so far unknown to that country, were found in his ship and sown in the provinces of Kii, Awaji, Sanuki, Iyo, Tosa and Kyushu. Thus, cotton was introduced into Japan. There is also the evidence of Herodotus (450 B.C.), who wrote that the Indian contingent of Xerxes' Army wore (cotton) garments which had been woven from the "wool which certain mild trees in India bear instead of fruit that in beauty and quality excels that of sheep." It was India, therefore, that introduced the use of cotton in the Far East as well as in West Asia and Europe.

The sensational discovery of the regularity of these seasonal winds of the South-West Monsoon by a Greek named Hippalus in 45 A.D. helped maintain and develop trade between India and the West, as has been described in *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. His discovery helped him in finding a direct route to Malabar which was far shorter than the older coast-hugging route. Towards the end of the summer months, "ships used to depart from the mouth of the Arabian Gulf or Kane on the coast of Arabia Felix and sail straight in 40 days to Muziris (modern Kodungallur) on the West Coast of India. They began their homeward voyage in December by sailing with the North-East Wind entered the Arabian Gulf, met with a South or South-West Wind and thus completed the voyage by using the trade winds throughout the period." The discovery of the directions and regularity of the monsoon air currents was a major contributory factor towards the continuance of maritime trade over the centuries between India and the Western countries.

The existence of oceanic navigation during the earlier centuries of the Christian era is further borne out by the writings of the celebrated Chinese monk, Fa Hien, who came to India overland to study Buddhism

at Bud-dhagaya, Sarnath and Varanasi in 413 A.D. On his homeward journey he sailed from Tamralipta in Bengal and 14 days later reached Sri Lanka where he embarked for Java. He called at the Nicobars before passing through the Straits of Malacca and sailing back to China.

During the period from the 5th to the 12th centuries Hindu supremacy over the Eastern waters reached its zenith with the Sri Vijaya Empire ruling the entire sea area between India's eastern seaboard and the Far East. The cultural and colonising expeditions of the Sri Vijayas took them to such farflung areas as Sumatra, Burma, the Malay Peninsula, Java, Thailand and the countries in Indochina. Besides spreading Hindu culture, the Sri Vijayas maintained regular political and commercial intercourse with the Cholas, Pandyas and Keralas. However, as a result of rivalry between the Cholas, the Tamil Kings, and the Sri Vijayas, a series of sea battles were fought between their navies towards the end of the 10th century A.D., resulting in the weakening of these empires and opening the way for Arab supremacy in the region. About the same time, the rulers of Gujarat and Calicut also maintained large fleets of sailing vessels for commercial purposes which sailed with cargoes of silk carpets, precious stones, pearls, ivory, spices and other valuable goods to Europe and West Asia. With the weakening of the Indian rulers, the seaborne trade routes between the two regions passed into the hands of the Arabs who became great intermediaries of maritime commercial intercourse.

The Arabs acted as a trade link between the East and Europe during this period. They used to transfer the Indian merchandise to the Venetians who supplied the Indian goods to the European markets, where they were in great demand. The Venetians soon became immensely prosperous which aroused the jealousy and cupidity of the seafarers of the other nations, i.e., Spain and Portugal, and other Mediterranean countries, which led to the beginning of a quest for establishing a direct route from Europe to India.

Ships had been traversing the Indian Ocean for several millennia carrying valuable merchandise and cultural emissaries between India and the West. Cities that directly engaged in the maritime trade or stood on the ancient trade routes continued to grow in importance and prosperity. Some of these centres of commerce were ancient Chaldea, Babylon, Nineveh, Ophir, Tadmor and the ports in the Mediterranean, Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The Phoenicians had for some years arrogated to themselves a major share in the Mediterranean trade but were later driven out by the Assyrians, Greeks and Romans. The Arabs, however, continued to hold sway over the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea region.

Alexandria was developed by Egypt into the most important port in the world during the days of the Ptolemies. Ptolemy Philadelphus planned to construct a canal between the Red Sea and the Nile, a hundred cubits wide and thirty cubits deep in order to transport Indian goods to Alexandria wholly by water, but for reasons not known, this project was never undertaken and thereafter a new port called Berenike was developed on the Western shore of the Red Sea. Ships from India carried merchandise, sailing from Tatta at

the head of the lower delta of the Indus or other ports on the west coast to the coast of Persia and, after following the Arabian shore, to Berenike. From Berenike the goods were carried overland to the city of Koptos, which was very close to the Nile, where they were loaded into ships which navigated along a canal to Alexandria. Carthagian merchants carried Indian goods to all Mediterranean ports. During the period of Egyptian supremacy, the northern countries of Europe received Indian goods which were carried overland from India to Oxus from where they went to the regions bordering the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea.

The Roman Empire monopolised the trade with India for many years after its conquest of Carthage, Egypt and Syria while Alexandria continued to be the principal port for Indian merchandise. Later, however, the conquest of Persia and Egypt by the Mohammedans deprived the European countries of the use of Alexandria for trade and access to Indian merchandise. This led to the founding of Basra at the head of the Persian Gulf which controlled the movement of merchandise in both easterly and westerly directions and became as important a trading centre as Alexandria.

The Arabs, who later gained control of the trade routes, stopped supplying Indian goods and an alternative was found in the overland route to Constantinople and eventually Constantinople became the focal point for the movement of merchandise from India to European trade centres.

The movement of goods engendered a bitter struggle between Venice and Genoa over the Eastern trade and subsequently led to Venetian supremacy over this trade. With the annexation of Constantinople and the trading routes to India by the Turks towards the end of the 15th century and with the continued piracy on the Alexandrian trade route by the Egyptians, a new pattern of rivalry emerged, involving South European, North African and West Asian countries over trade with the East. Since mastery over these trade routes had a direct bearing on the power and prosperity of these nations, these countries had acquired adequate seafaring experience and expertise, an alternate route to India was now sought to be established by some of these countries.

Sailing down the West Coast of Africa in 1487, in quest of a different route skirting the African and Asian coasts, the Portuguese Navigator, Bartholomew Diaz, discovered the Cape of Storms, later to be renamed the Cape of Good Hope. To complete the work done by Diaz, Vasco-Da-Gama was deputed by King Manoel of Portugal in July 1497, i.e., five years after the discovery of the West Indies by Columbus. The King's astrologer, Abraham Ben Zakut, having studied his horoscope, found it favourable for the discovery of the sea route to India, raising high hopes of success in the venture. Four ships, the *Sao Gabriel* (120 tons) commanded by Vasco-Da-Gama, the *Sao Raphael* (100 tons) commanded by his brother Paulo-Da-Gama, the *Berrio* (50 tons) under the command of Nicolas Coelho and a 200 ton storeship, set sail from Belem on March 25, 1497. A violent storm was encountered while rounding the Cape and the crew, which wanted to go back, hatched a mutiny. But Vasco-Da-Gama suppressed the

mutiny by arresting the ring-leaders and threatening to throw them overboard. In March 1498, the *Sao Gabriel* and *Sao Raphael* reached Mozambique, the storeship having returned to Portugal after transferring her stores and the *Berrio* having been found not sea-worthy was broken up and cannibalised to repair the other ships. Vasco-Da-Gama now needed a pilot to take him to India by sailing across the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea and not by hugging the coast which the Arabs would resist. He found a seafarer from Gujarat, Davane, who was an experienced navigator and knew the seas contiguous to Africa, West Asia and India very well. His expert pilotage not only provided security from the jealous Arabs but also helped Vasco-Da-Gama to proceed to Melinde from where the ships sailed on August 26, 1498. Had Davane not assisted Vasco-Da-Gama, the Portuguese would not have reached India for some more decades and if this had happened, the course of India's maritime history could well have been different.

Compared to the feats of Columbus and Magellan, Da Gama's discovery of the sea route to India was of no great significance. The importance of his achievement, however, lies in the fact that while the seas were regarded by the Arabs as a pathway for carrying out maritime trade, the Portuguese were the first to lay claim to sovereignty over these waters to project their national interests and influence. This claim was further sanctified by a bull of Pope Calixtus III which considered the seas they sailed to be their possession. The Portuguese thus began considering themselves to be lords of the seas which justified the confiscation of the merchandise of all ships that sailed without their authority. Thus, "it may truly be said that India never lost her independence, till she lost command of the sea in the first decade of the 16th century," observed Panikkar.

Though the papal bull justified the Portuguese claim to sovereignty of the seas and Da Gama's strong stand at the Court of the Zamorin of Calicut, it displeased the latter, and the challenge to the ruler's limited sea power led to a series of indecisive skirmishes and sea battles off the coast of Malabar in the years that followed. The Portuguese intruders were detested by the Arab traders, who joined hands with the Zamorin and in 1500, the Portuguese Admiral, Pedro Cabral, bombarded Calicut. Eighty ships of the Zamorin, manned by 1500 intrepid sailors and reinforced by the ships of a rich Arab trader, Khoja Amber, pushed him back southwards to Cochin. Two indecisive battles were fought, one off Cochin in 1503 and the other off Chaul in 1508. In 1509 the next battle of importance was fought off Diu when ships of the Zamorin, under the command of the courageous Kassim and reinforced by an Egyptian fleet under Admiral Mir Hussain, fought against a strong Portuguese force led by Don Francesco d'Almeida. This battle also failed to produce a decisive result because of the treachery of the Sultan of Gujarat which led to the Egyptian fleet sailing away in disgust. The Indian Ocean was thereafter dominated by the Portuguese, with Albuquerque, the great commercial empire-builder and statesman, bringing the area under Portuguese supremacy.

Under the leadership of the AH Marakkars, however, the Zamorin's fleet played an outstanding role by

giving valiant battle to the Portuguese for well over ninety years. The Marakkars, who had their headquarters at Ponnani, a natural harbour South of Calicut, held sway over the waters around Calicut. The most illustrious name in the family of the Al Marakkars was that of Kunjali Marakkar II, who sank a number of Portuguese ships (the tally in the particular year being as high as 50) and struck terror in the hearts of the Portuguese forces. For some reasons, however, Mohammed Kunjali Marakkar, the third Kunjali to command the Zamorin's fleet, was the last of the Kunjali Admirals. He won many a battle against the Portuguese, though eventually he fell out with the Zamorin leading to the gradual weakening of the Zamorin's fleet and eventually its capitulation to the Portuguese. The main contribution of the Kunjalis during the 16th century was that for over 90 years they prevented possible Portuguese incursions in the mainland by harassing their fleet and keeping them at bay.

In 1510, following his failure to defeat the Zamorin, Albuquerque seized Goa and its surrounding areas. Operating thereafter from Goa which occupied a commanding position in the prevailing scenario on India's western seaboard, Albuquerque hounded the Arab traders out of their favourite haunt and subdued the Sultan of Hormuz relegating him to the level of a vassal of the Portuguese ruler. He also developed Socotra into a powerful naval base with a well-defended fort, established a strong government in Cochin after bypassing the Zamorin. He brought immense power and wealth to his country by exercising mastery over the Arabian Sea. In 1513, he mustered a strong naval force and seized and fortified the Straits of Malacca. After prolonged negotiations, he also established amicable relations with the ruler of Pegu, who controlled the Arakan Coast in Burma. The Portuguese supremacy over the waters around India reached its zenith during the days of Albuquerque.

In 1580, Portugal joined hands with Spain against the British but the Spanish Armada suffered a crushing defeat. This changed the course of events around the globe, one of its offshoots being the decline of Portuguese power in the Indian region. It is a moot point that if the Spanish Armada had triumphed, as some historians aver, India would in all probability have become a Portuguese dominion and the United States, a Latin American country!

The Dutch first exploited this sudden change in the power equation by forming the Dutch East India Company at Amsterdam in 1592. Their first merchant fleet reached India in 1595 but they did not challenge Portuguese supremacy. Instead, they occupied Java and established a naval base at Batavia. Meanwhile, the British and the French also decided to benefit from fishing in India's troubled waters and came to India during the earlier years of the 17th century.

It is thus apparent that while the Hindus controlled the trade routes until the beginning of the 15th century, the Arabs took over the main bulk of it from them for a while with a short period of overlap. But supremacy over these routes passed into Portuguese hands towards the end of the 15th century. The Portuguese then reigned supreme for nearly a century but with the defeat of the Spanish Armada and their

decline came the ascendance of British maritime power in India and the Indian Ocean.

The main component of the navy of the Mughal ruler, Akbar was a fleet of ships and craft based at Dacca. These were used for operations in rivers and creeks for the protection of deltaic South Bengal from the Magh (Burmese) and Feringhee (half-caste) pirates who had the support of the Arakanrulers. Akbar had a full-fledged Admiralty which looked after the supply of ships and smaller craft, recruitment of suitable personnel for the ships and craft, security of rivers and waterways and collection of port revenue. The Mughals, however, did not appreciate the importance of building up a bluewater navy and developing seaborne trade and commerce. Nevertheless, shipping and ship-building, oceangoing and riverine, flourished during the Mughal days in various parts of India such as Bengal, Kashmir, Lahore and Surat. There is evidence available to establish the high standard of technology maintained in the construction of these vessels.

While Akbar had a formidable and versatile navy, Aurangzeb's navy was superior in size and efficiency. Besides naval ships, he had four ships at Surat for carrying Haj pilgrims free of cost to Mecca but he lost some of his larger ships to British pirates because of the lack of adequate seagoing naval ships to provide security.

The Honourable Company of the Merchants Trading to the East Indies, better known as the East India Company, was founded by the British on December 31, 1600 by a Royal Charter of Queen Elizabeth I. A ship of the Company, the *Hector*, with Captain Hawkins as the Commanding Officer, arrived in Surat bringing a letter to Emperor Jahangir requesting for permission to trade with India. Hawkins reached Agra on April 16, 1609 and permission for trade was duly granted and trading facilities promised by the Emperor. But the Portuguese did not appreciate the British encroachment on their trade preserves. The British sensed this and sent a squadron of warships, the *Dragon*, the *Osiender*, the *James* and the *Solomon*, under the overall command of Captain Thomas Best, which reached Swally, the roadstead of Surat, on September 5, 1612. This date is regarded by the British as the foundation day of the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) because on this day a squadron of their warships arrived in India for the first time and the Indian Marine was formed.

Since Portuguese monopoly over trade in the region had been challenged by the British, they attacked the ships of the Indian Marine on October 29, 1612 off Surat with four galleons and forty other craft but had to admit defeat after a protracted battle. They withdrew, leaving the British as masters of the land and sea area around Surat. The British proceeded to set up factories and formed a fleet of Indian small craft known as Ghurabs (the British called them Grabs) and Galivats for the protection of their seaborne commerce from the Portuguese. The sobriquet "The Grab Service" by which the British Indian Navy was known for many years does not necessarily bracket it with the pirates of various nationalities who at that time had infested the waters around the Indian peninsula.

The Indian Marine at that time consisted mainly of some warships built in England and a larger

number of smaller vessels built in India. The Ghurabs were heavy beamy vessels (about 300 tons) of shallow draft and were armed with six guns ranging from 9-pounders to 12-pounders while the Galivats were smaller craft (about 70 tons) mounting half a dozen guns comprising 2-pounders and 4-pounders. Hindu fishermen from the Konkan Coast constituted the crews of these vessels.

The Jack of the Indian Marine has an interesting history. It was the late Commander (Special) G.E. Walker, the Judge Advocate General of the RIN immediately before Independence, who 'discovered' the fact that the Jack flown by the Indian Marine in 1612 was the flag worn by ships on the American side during the War of Independence when they rejected the Union Jack. The Jack of the Indian Marine was thus the first flag of the USA which over the years developed into the present 'stars and stripes'. The Indian Marine's Jack had seven red and six white stripes and, in the position occupied by the stars today, displayed the St. George's Cross. This flag forms a part of the insignia of the existing RIN Association, a society of British officers who had served in the RIN before Independence.

The second major battle with the Portuguese took place in 1614 with the Indian Marine emerging victorious. The East India Company was granted further trading rights by Emperor Jahangir. In the following years. King James I appointed Sir Thomas Roe his Ambassador to the Moghul Court. Merchandise manufactured at the Surat factories started moving by sea to the West for trade with the Persian Gulf ports in 1618. Having had the monopoly of trade in these ports for nearly a century, the Portuguese tried to block the passage of these ships across the Arabian Sea but were successfully thwarted from doing so by the British who annexed Hormuz from the Portuguese in 1622 and thus began their uninterrupted trade with Persia. This, however, did not deter the Portuguese from seeking another battle at Swally in 1630 where they were defeated once again and a truce was declared, leading to the East India Company's ships being granted access to the Portuguese ports.

The change in the balance of power in this region didn't escape the notice of the Dutch who, in their efforts to consolidate their base at Batavia (now known as Jakarta), captured the Strait of Malacca in 1641 and drove the Portuguese away from the Eastern gateway to the Indian Ocean. Realising the strategic importance of Colombo as a naval base for launching operations for the annexation of the Indian mainland, the Dutch then befriended the ruler of Sri Lanka which helped in driving the Portuguese away from Colombo also, in 1654. Soon thereafter, they made inroads into the Portuguese bastions on the Malabar Coast. This was rendered even more effective by the main base of the Dutch at Batavia, their control of the Strait of Malacca and the advanced operational base at Colombo. Cochin was captured in 1663, this feat was further made possible by the British preoccupation with other problems but their friendly relations with Emperor Shahjahan prevented the Dutch from making any forays into the waters around Surat where the British factories were situated. However, a year later, Shivaji, the Maratha ruler, carried out an attack on Surat by land but this attack was repulsed by the British forces.

In 1662 infanta Catherina of Braganza, the Portuguese princess, was given in marriage to King Charles II of England and Bombay was ceded by the Portuguese to him as a part of his dowry. The official version of the transfer document described the gift as 'the Port and Island of Bombay in the East Indies, together with all the rights, profits, territories and appurtenances thereof whatsoever/Since, however, it was virtually impossible for King Charles II to administer Bombay successfully from England, he transferred it to the East India Company at an annual rental of 10 pounds in 1668 - one of the most significant events in Bombay's variegated history.

In 1685 Sir John Child was appointed the Admiral of the East India Company's land and sea forces between the Persian Gulf and Kanyakumari and soon decided, despite his counsellors' advice to the contrary, to adopt an aggressive policy towards the Moghuls. Having taken on a far superior force, Child suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of the Moghuls who, with the support of the Sidis' fleet, captured most of Bombay island and besieged Child in the Bombay Castle, which is now known as the Naval Barracks. Peace was, however, restored by redeeming Bombay on the payment of 15,000 Pounds in 1690 and some kind of a reconciliation having been effected between Aurangzeb and the Company. Meanwhile, in 1685 the Indian Marine Headquarters was shifted to Bombay and the Service was rechristened the Bombay Marine in 1686.

The Danes appeared on the scene in 1698 and, after obtaining the permission of Prince Azim-us-shan, grandson of Emperor Aurangzeb, set up their trade. They set up a factory and hoisted the Danish flag in Serampore, Bengal, by 1755. The British authorities forcibly seized Serampore in 1801 but restored it immediately. In 1808, however, a detachment of British troops from Barrackpore occupied Serampore once again. The Danish East India Company recovered it later but in 1844 the Danes left the country after transferring all their assets to the British Government.

The earlier decades of the 18th century witnessed the emergence of an Admiral of Shivaji's Maratha Fleet, the distinguished Kanhoji Angre, whose name became a legend during his own lifetime. His exploits are written in letters of gold in the annals of the navies of India. Shivaji was a firm believer in the doctrine 'Jalaim Jasya, Valaim Tasya' (he who rules the sea is all-powerful) and his admiral, Tukoji Angre, and the other Angres that followed him, put this doctrine into practice. The fleet of Kanhoji, Tukoji's son, menaced and considerably reduced British trade between Bombay and the lower Malabar Coast and captured Colaba from the Sidis in 1706. A year later, maritime trade in the Indian Ocean was threatened by Arab pirates operating from Muscat who plundered a large number of ships. Equipped with a fleet of 10 Ghurabs and 50 Galivats, the Maratha Fleet, under the command of Kanhoji Angre, challenged the Arab fleet and drove it away from the Indian Ocean. Thereafter, Kanhoji established mastery over the Konkan Coast by fortifying his base at Gheria (Vijaydurg). The fortress at Gheria was manned by a specially trained garrison, armed and provisioned to withstand severe attacks from land and sea and prolonged periods of

blockade. Behind the fortress, built on a river front was a dockyard, equipped to build larger and sturdier sea-going vessels than were in use at that time.

By this time the Portuguese had been reduced to an insignificant sea power and consequently the Sidis and then the British faced a strong challenge from the Maratha Fleet. The size, manoeuvrability and firepower of the Maratha Fleet continued to grow. As a result the British Council were compelled to build corvettes for the Bombay Marine, to escort the merchant ships of the Company and prevent their capture by Angre's fleet. In 1717 the Governor of Bombay, Charles Boone, decided to attack Gheria with a strong fleet under the command of Captain Barleu. A bitter engagement followed; the Marathas forced the Company's ships to beat a hasty retreat after inflicting severe damage on them and killing a large number of the Company's soldiers and sailors. Undeterred by the near Catastrophe, Charles Boone carried a surprise attack on Gheria on November 5, 1718 and silenced many Maratha guns after a ship-shore artillery engagement. Next day, however, when his forces landed, the Maratha guns, which had been strategically positioned to cover the entire beachhead, mowed them down and forced the few British survivors to withdraw from the scene.

The Governor of Bombay then made a petition to the King of England for naval reinforcements. Four warships under Commodore Ma thews were sent to provide support to the fleet of the Bombay Marine. The British fleet aided by Portuguese ships attacked Colaba, 5 miles from Gheria, in October 1722 but were successfully repulsed by the Marathas who inflicted damage on the enemy, entailing losses of ships, men, guns and ammunition and forcing them to retreat to Bombay.

Soon an attempt to seize Gheria was made by the Dutch who appeared on the scene, having been angered by the capture of some of their ships by the Maratha Fleet. They attacked Gheria in 1724 with a powerful squadron of seven men-of-war, each mounting 30 to 50 guns, but were beaten back after suffering heavy losses.

The superiority of the Maratha Fleet over bigger and better equipped ships of England, Portugal and Holland and even those of the Moghuls and the Arabs stretching over several decades was mainly due to Kanhoji's tactics. He used a large number of adequately equipped light, strong and fast craft which could surround the heavier vessels of the enemy and simultaneously attack them from all sides, thus overwhelming the crews of the enemy ships. Then they would board them and put them out of action by setting them on fire or by scuttling them.

Kanhoji Angre's career was cut short with his death in 1729; he had had the unique distinction of maintaining naval supremacy over the sea area off the Konkan Coast for many years.

In 1733 the British and the Sidis signed a treaty of alliance to fight the Angres. Kanhoji's son Sambhaji captured some British merchant ships on December 16, 1735 inflicting a heavy blow on British trade. The

British wooed the Peshwas of Poona, who were not quite friendly with the Angres, and a treaty of alliance was signed in 1739 between the two. By this time the might of the Maratha navy, whose control of the seas now extended from Kutch to Cochin, severely hampered British trade.

Meanwhile, in 1735, in order to build ships at a site closer to the scene of action, the British transferred their naval dockyard from Surat to Bombay. Led by Admiral Watson with his 16 ships and 1400 sailors, and Lieutenant Colonel Robert Clive with his 1400-strong infantry and a company of artillery, supported by the Peshwas with their land forces, four *Ghurabs* and forty *Galivats*, the combined forces besieged and captured Gheria in 1756, reducing Maratha sea power to naught. It may not be out of place to mention here that only a year later, the Battle of Plassey would see Admiral Watson and 50 sailors of the Marine assisting Clive in defeating Siraj-ud-Daula's forces.

In the second decade of the 18th century Ostend, Antwerp and other Flemish towns had deputed merchants to Bengal onboard a ship laden with merchandise. The Ostend Company set up in 1722 with the blessings of Nawab Murshid Kuli Khan set up a factory in Banki Bazaar, south of Chan-demagore. However, faced with considerable opposition from the other European trading communities, the Nawab's Charter was withdrawn in 1727. Soon thereafter, a naval engagement took place between the Flemish and Nawab's forces which resulted in the defeat of the former and their withdrawal from India.

The French entered the scene in 1740 to challenge British sea power in the region. They began their operations by capturing Mauritius and converting it into a strong naval base and then sending a strong fleet into the Bay of Bengal to intercept and capture British merchant ships. The war of Austrian succession in Europe in 1744 saw the British and the French in opposing camps and Dupleix, the French Governor of Pondicherry, decided to act. Having already decided to capture the entire South Indian region, he used the French Fleet, which was under the command of La Bour-donnais, to launch an attack on the British Fleet which was led by Captain Peyton. The French Fleet succeeded in driving the British Fleet up the Hooghly. In southern India, they captured Madras after neutralising the British forces in a brief encounter.

the importance of sea power as an essential factor in maintaining supremacy over land areas contiguous to the sea. La Bourdonnais was thus allowed to return to France in 1747 and the British regained command of the seas around India once again. They also brought six powerful ships and several small craft of Boscawen's Fleet to the Bay of Bengal in 1748 and besieged Pondicherry. This siege, however, was not successful but the British continued to make their presence felt by annexing strategic and important regions. One of these was Chandernagore, a French possession, which was captured by Admiral Watson, assisted by Clive, in 1756. Watson died in 1757 and the British Fleet, under the command of Admiral Pocock, attacked Madras. Despite some reverses suffered at the hands of the French, the British land forces took the offensive and defeated them in the Carnatic War. The British were left masters of the

entire sea area around India after Admiral Pocock defeated the French naval force under D'Ache, and the French Fleet was driven away from the Indian waters.

However, the French made their presence felt a few years after The British annexation of Pondicherry, when Admiral Suffren, a redoubtable naval tactician, appeared on the scene with a reinforced French Fleet and attacked the British Fleet which was at that time under the command of Admiral Sir Edward Hughes. A series of encounters ensued but, following a treaty between England and France, the Indian Ocean was converted into a British lake when Admiral Suffren and his Fleet left the area. The later half of the 18th century saw the extinction of Portuguese power in India, the British seizure of the island of Salsette and other Portuguese holdings in India and the British victory over Haider Ali's navy at Honavar and Mangalore.

Haider Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan, were formidable adversaries who had inflicted a severe defeat on the British and came very close to wrecking the power of the East India Company. But their operations were confined to the south and did not directly affect the fortunes of India as a whole. Haider Ali was a remarkable man and a notable figure in Indian history. He had some kind of a national ideal and possessed the qualities of a leader with vision. Continually suffering from a painful disease, his self-discipline and capacity for hard work were astonishing. He realized, long before others did, the importance of sea power and the growing menace of the British, based on their naval strength. He tried to organize a joint effort to drive them out and, for this purpose, sent envoys to the Marathas, the Nizam and Shujaud Dowla of Oudh but unsuccessfully. He started building his own navy and, capturing the Maldives, made them his headquarters for shipbuilding and naval operations. He however, died soon after. Haider Ali lamented that he could beat the English forces on land but he could not dry up the oceans and could not prevail against them in naval operations. After him, his son Tipu continued to strengthen the navy and in connection with this Tipu communicated with Napoleon and with the Sultan in Constantinople.

Nearly two and a half centuries ago, in 1753, the Germans too made an attempt to establish a footing in Bengal. Some merchants from Emden, a town in Germany, founded a company, popularly known at that time as the Bengal Company of Emden or the Royal Prussian Bengal Company. The British, French, Dutch and the Danes, who had already set up factories on the banks of the Hooghly, however, combined against the newcomers. Orders were issued forbidding their pilots, masters and mates to render any assistance to the Germans. Further, the setting up of a German establishment was prevented by the Moghul Nawab who had allowed the other Europeans to do so. A fleet of German ships, however, soon arrived, the largest of them being the *Prince Henry of Prussia*. The Germans set up a factory near Chandernagore and overcame the Nawab's opposition after paying him Rs 5,000 as a 'nazrana' (gift). The other European competitors continued to offer bitter resistance to the Germans who were unable to expand their trade nor make any

headway towards constructing buildings and warehouses for the purpose. By 1760, therefore, they decided to return to Germany and wound up their trade in India.

It is not generally known that Lord Nelson, when he was only 16, had visited Bombay and Calcutta while on board the *Seahorse*, a twenty gun ship, during its voyage to the 'East Indies' in 1775. The ship reached Bombay on the morning of August 17, 1775 and later visited Calcutta when Nelson contracted some 'distressing illness and fevers.' He was sent home onboard the Royal Navy (RN) frigate, *Dolphin* and completely recovered before reaching England. It was Carola Oman who recorded the details of Nelson's journey from the Hooghly to Portsmouth in the book *Nelson*.

In 1635 the East India Company set up a shipbuilding yard at Surat and during the first year this yard built four pinnaces and other larger vessels. This was the first record of their shipbuilding activities in India. The shift to Bombay in 1735 was necessitated by its being safer and closer to the scenes of action. It was Lowjee Nusserwanjee Wadia, ancestor of a long line of famous Parsi master-builders of ships, naval and commercial, who selected the site for the Naval Dockyard. During the course of the next 100 years this yard proceeded to build not less than 115 war vessels and 144 merchant ships, including 84 gunships for the RN. The quality of construction of these ships was of such a high order that they were acclaimed by shipbuilding nations around the globe. The Wadias proved to the world that Indian-built Malabar-teak ships were far superior in seaworthiness and far more capable of withstanding the detrimental effects of the elements, than British-built oaken ships. One of these ships, *HMS Trincomlee*, which was built by the Bombay Naval Dockyard in 1817 for the RN and which saw many battles during the period of her commission, is still in use at Portsmouth as *TS Foudroyant*, for training school and college students in seamanship and navigation. She is the oldest sail-driven warship afloat today. Her Malabar-teak hull and superstructure, despite several major modifications and damages suffered during battles and storms and in spite of continuous use for training purposes, is still as good as new and, according to a well-known shipbuilder, she is likely to remain afloat for another three centuries.

In 1986 the *Foudroyant* Trust decided to dispose of the ship and arrangements were finalised to transfer her to India so that she could be preserved as a monument to the country's millennia-old shipbuilding traditions but the Trust later changed its decision and thus the ship continues to be a training ship at Portsmouth.

A number of pirates belonging to an Arab tribe called the Joasmis arrived in the Indian waters during the earlier decades of the 19th century. They operated from the Arab side of the Persian Gulf covering the coast from Bahrain to Cape Mussendon and, with their headquarters at Ras-ul-Khymah, they held sway over the entire Persian Gulf. Originally merchants and pearl-fishers, they now took to piracy. For many years they left the ships of the East India Company alone and attacked and plundered only ships and craft belonging

to the others but since the Company ships took no action against the Arab pirates, this was interpreted by the Joasmis as a sign of weakness and later they resorted to attacking the Company's ships as well.

To set things right a fleet of 12 ships of the Bombay Marine, led by Captain Sea ton, attacked Ras-ul-Khymah in 1809 and bombarded this focal point of the Joasmis' operations but were beaten back by the well-entrenched Joasmi forces. The squadron of ships had, therefore, to return to Bombay and the Arab pirates continued to seize and plunder the Company's ships. Under the command of Captain Collier, the Company later dispatched another fleet of 11 ships under Major General Sir William Grant Keir, they blockaded the town of Ras-ul-Khymah for four days, as a result of which Sardar Hasan Bin Rehman, the Joasmi Chief, gave himself up and admitted defeat. The Arabs then guaranteed safe passage to British ships in a treaty in 1820 and the East India Company was not subjected to any further harassment.

It is not generally known that the Punjab Regiment of the Indian Army is probably the only example in the world of a landbased force having a naval craft as its cap badge with the motto *Sthdl-wa-Jal* (earlier *Khushki-wa-Tari*). This regiment was permitted to adopt the galley as an emblem because between 1796 and 1824 it took part in many military expeditions overseas.

In 1829 two important events took place - the Bombay Marine was assigned the new nomenclature, the Bombay Marine Corps, and a steam engine for ship propulsion was installed for the first time on board the *Hugh Lindsay*, a ship of the East India Company. This 411-ton ship of the Bombay Marine Corps, steamed out of Bombay on March 20, 1830 and reached Suez after 21 days of actual steaming, averaging a trifle under six knots. Thus began the gradual conversion of the Company's ships from sail to steam which was completed during the next 15 years. In 1830, there was another change in the name of the Service - the Bombay Marine Corps became the Indian Navy (IN).

The next seven years were relatively peaceful. But in 1837, a pilgrim ship of the East India Company, whilst on passage to Mecca, with a number of rich pilgrims on board, was seized and plundered near Aden. A squadron of the Indian Navy's men-of-war, led by Commander Haines, was then sent to attack Aden. However, since the Sultan of Aden was in a repentant mood and ready to pay an indemnity of Rs 3 lakh, the ships spared Aden and returned to Bombay in 1838. The indemnity promised was, however, never paid by the Sultan and consequently the Company ships returned to Aden the same year and captured it once again.

During the Anglo-Sikh War of 1848, the Indian Navy provided a contingent of 100 sailors and seven officers with their guns to participate in the siege of Multan. The Company's Navy was thus employed for land operation for the second time.

Captain Lynch led a strong fleet of the Indian Navy to attack and capture Rangoon in 1852. The Raja of Burma had refused to be cowed down by the naval might of Lord Dalhousie, the Viceroy of India at that time

and his defiance of British authority resulted in the loss of the strategic city of Rangoon. Meanwhile, Persian and Russian seafarers in the Persian Gulf began harassing the Company's ships while the latter were on passage for maritime trade. A strong fleet of the Indian Navy under Sir Henry Leeks was sent to deal with the pirates and captured Bushire (Basra) after defeating the Persian Fleet in 1853. In 1860, during a war in the Chinese waters, piracy was suppressed by ships of the Indian Navy working in tandem with those of the Royal Navy.

It was during the 1857 uprising that the two highest decorations ever to be awarded to the personnel of the Indian Navy before Independence were earned and on shore. An Indian Naval Brigade comprising 78 officers and 1740 men was assigned shore service during the uprising. Mister Midshipman Mayo of the 4th Detachment was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery at Dhaka (now in Bangladesh). This VC was later presented to the RIM (later RIN) Officers Mess at Bombay with a photograph of the young officer and is now on display at the Naval Museum at Bombay. The other recipient of the VC was Mister Acting Master G.B. Chicken of the 3rd Detachment in recognition of his desperate single-handed action in which he killed five out of a party of 20-armed men that attacked him.

Manned entirely by naval officers, a Marine Survey Department was started in India in 1863, which, during the course of the next century, has developed into a full-fledged Hydrographic Survey organisation of free India's Navy.

Hydrographic survey was being carried out by the Bombay Marine/ Indian Navy itself before the formation of the Marine Survey Department. In fact, survey work had started in 1772 and officers of the Service surveyed the coastal waters of not only India and the neighbouring countries and islands but also the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the East African Coast, the East Indies, the Philippines, the Pelew Islands in the Pacific, the Chusan Archipelago in the East China Sea and Tasmania in the Far South East. Considering the primitive instruments, the limitations of the ships used by these officers and the dangers of venturing into the unknown, the feats of eminent hydrographers such as Captains McCluer, Ross and Blair would be comparable to the most daunting expeditions undertaken in any sphere.

The Indian Navy was reorganised as a non-combatant force in 1863 with two branches at Bombay and Calcutta, which were, renamed the Bombay Marine and the Bengal Marine, naval protection of Indian waters having been taken over by the Admiralty.

Their new role was the marine survey of India and the transport of troops and Government stores, maintenance of 'station ship' duties at Aden, the Andaman Islands (Port Blair), Burma and Persian Gulf, maintenance of gunboats on the Irrawaddy and Tigris, maintenance of all Government light craft employed for military duties and the maintenance of lightships and lighthouses around the coasts of India and Burma and in the Southern portion of the Red Sea.

The nomenclature of the Service was to undergo several changes. In 1871 an Indian Defence Force with two ships was constituted and yet again in 1877 when the Government restored the combatant status to the Service, it was called His Majesty's Indian Marine once again with two divisions at Bombay and Calcutta. The Service was rechristened the Royal Indian Marine (RIM) in 1892.

The RIM did not make any significant contribution to the maritime history of this country from 1892 till the outbreak of World War I. Before the War, the main tasks assigned to the RIM were marine survey, maintenance of lighthouses and transportation of troops. During the war, however, there were notable exploits of the RIM in various theatres of naval operations. Its ships transported troops, arms, ammunition and stores to Egypt, Iraq and East Africa. While on patrol in the Suez Canal, the 'RIM ship *Hardinge*' fought against the Turks and thwarted their efforts to block the canal. During the action she suffered severe damage and lost one of her funnels but succeeded in preventing the blocking of the canal. RIM ships landed troops in Mesopotamia and its smaller ships, designed for operations in inland waters, rendered excellent service in the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Three other ships, the *Northbrooke*, *Minto* and *Dufferin*, carried out patrolling duties in the Red Sea. While carrying out these duties, the *Minto* called at Jeddah and transported some Haj Pilgrims safely back to India. The RIM was once again reverted to its non-combatant role in 1918 after the end of the war.

At the end of World War I the RIM was adversely affected by the international situation, shortage of funds and extensive retrenchment. With the task of naval defence of India once again entrusted to the Royal Navy, the combatant status of the RIM had been lost. For the services rendered by the Royal Navy, the Government of India had to pay a staggering sum of 100,000 pounds annually to the British Government. The RIM had, therefore, to be reduced to a small force entrusted with minor coastal duties. Most of the World War I veterans were demobilised and no reservists were left for calling up during emergencies. This led to the mobilisation of Indian public opinion against the wilful eradication of the country's naval and maritime traditions and a number of committees were appointed to examine the future role of the Service and to make recommendations for suitable changes or expansion. The Rawlinson Committee, the last such committee to be appointed, recommended the formation of a small combatant force, which was to be controlled from a major port by a suitably constituted administrative authority.

Though recruitment to the RIM was open both to the Indians and the British, very few Indians joined the Service at that time. The first Indian to join the RIM as an officer was Engineer Sub-Lieutenant D.N. Mukerji, commissioned on January 6, 1928. He rose to the rank of Captain and took premature retirement from service in 1950. He emigrated to England where he died on January 31, 1986.

One such officer was Lieutenant H.R. Bowers of the RIM- He had the distinction of being chosen to accompany the great explorer, Captain Scott, on his expedition to the Antarctica, in 1910. Even though he was not an Indian, he was the first representative of this sub-continent to embark on an expedition to the

South Pole. He died with Scott on his way back from the South Pole. In the *vr*fls* of Commander G.E. Walker, RINVR, author of *The Historical Background of the Royal Indian Navy*:

Lieutenant Bowers had the high honour of being selected as one of the party which made the last great journey to the South Pole itself. Scott wrote of him, I believe he is the hardest traveller that ever undertook a Polar journey, as well as one of the most undaunted. Never was seen such a sturdy, active, undefeatable little man.

Some articles belonging to Lieutenant Bowers along with the piece of the Union Jack carried by him to the South Pole are now on display at the Naval Museum at Bombay.

The first Indian to set foot on Antarctica was also, by coincidence, a Naval Officer, Lieutenant RamCharan, a specialist in meteorology, who accompanied an Australian expedition to the South Pole in 1960. After returning to India, Ram Charan prepared a valuable report on his expedition. Unfortunately, in 1961 he met a tragic death in a road accident.

Personnel from the Indian Navyals took part in the first Indian expedition to Antarctica, Expedition Gangotri, in 1981. The Navy played a major role in subsequent expeditions launched annually.

The indomitable spirit of adventure of Indian Naval personnel *h?* taken the Naval Ensign to the top of the world's highest mountain, Everest. The intrepid and renowned mountaineer of the IN, Instructor Lieutenant Commander {later Captain) Manmohan Singh Kohli has had the distinction of not only climbing to the highest altitude without oxygen but also of putting nine men atop the peak and hoisting the Naval Ensign on it for the first time in its history.

The RIM was reconstituted as a combatant force in 1928 and the White Ensign was hoisted for the first time in its history on November 11, 1928. The Indian Navy Discipline Bill, based on the recommendations of the Rawlinson Committee, was also taken up by the Legislative Assembly in the same year and, after 6 years of deliberations, the bill was passed by the Assembly and the Council of States on September 5, 1934.

A month later, i.e., on October 2, 1934, the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) came into being with the Naval Headquarters at Bombay under the Flag Officer Commanding Royal Indian Navy (FOCRIN).

The RIN was developed into a small and efficient naval force by 1939 and by the time World War II broke out, the RIN fleet comprised five sloops, a survey vessel, a patrol ship, a depot ship and a large number of small craft. Recommendations were made by the Chatfield committee in 1939 for assigning greater responsibility for the naval defence of India to the RIN. Modernisation of the Service was also recommended in order to enable the RIN to carry out these duties.

The recommendations made by the Chatfield Committee in 1939 were based mainly on the proposals put forward by the RIN for the expansion of the Service which was to be completed in five years. The main

features of the Committee's recommendations were the construction of four Bittern class escort minesweepers, development of depots and training establishments and acquisition of local naval defence equipment. Even though the recommendations were to be implemented over a period of five years, the outbreak of the War in 1939 greatly hastened the process of expansion. The annual subvention of 100,000 pounds to be paid to the British Government along with miscellaneous other charges ranging from 15,000 to 20,000 pounds was also discontinued on the condition that it would be utilised towards expanding the RIN fleet and maintaining a squadron of six escort vessels which would carry out local naval defence duties, besides assisting the Royal Navy.

Before the commencement of the War the authorities had resorted to the formation of reserves for the RIN. The Royal Indian Naval Reserve (RINR) comprised serving officers of the Indian Mercantile Marine and had two branches, Executive and Accountant, to which the Engineering Branch was also added on the outbreak of the War. The Royal Indian Navy Volunteer Reserve (RINVR) was constituted by inducting qualified members of the general public as commissioned officers and giving them six months' intensive training at Bombay. This was also done for sailors who used to be called 'ratings' at that time. In addition to the regular service 'ratings', 'special service ratings' were recruited who served for five years before being transferred to the Fleet Reserve for 10 years. These 'ratings' belonged to the cadre of the Royal Indian Fleet Reserve (RIFR). Personnel from the merchant marine were also recruited for service during the War as 'Hostilities Only (H.O.) ratings'.

During the early 1920s the Scindia Steam Navigation Company had been formed but its maritime activities were virtually limited to coastal trade as overseas contracts granted to the Company were very few. The training ship for cadets, 'SS Dufferin', was acquired by the Indian Mercantile Marine Department in 1926 and started training cadets for the merchant navy. A number of small shipping companies came into being during the early 1930s and these managed to capture a sizeable chunk of coastal trade from foreign shipping companies but the tonnage under them was virtually negligible compared to the volume of exports and imports.

On October 1, 1939 the personnel strength of the RIN was 114 officers and 1,732 ratings with the Naval Headquarters, located inside the Naval Dockyard at Bombay, and manned by only 16 officers.

When hostilities commenced, the Royal Navy undertook the task of building, commissioning and working up fast seagoing motorboats for coastal patrol and corvettes and minesweepers which were suitably armed and equipped for carrying out anti-submarine and escort duties in the waters around India. Magnetic mines posed a major threat to the merchant marine at that time and hence 263 merchant and naval ships were fitted with degaussing (demagnetising) cables by June 1941. The first Basset class trawler, HMIS *Travancore*, was built at Calcutta and commissioned into the RIN in July 1941. This was followed by five more within a year and another six soon thereafter. The first Bangor class minesweeper built

in India joined the RIN in 1943. To reinforce the RIN fleet, six sloops built in Great Britain and named after Indian rivers, the *Jumna*, *Sutlej*, *Cauvery*, *Kistna*, *Godavari* and *Narbada* were also acquired soon.

New Delhi was the focal point for command and control for the RIN. The Naval Headquarters, however, functioned from Bombay. In order, ^ therefore, to maintain effective control over the operational and organisational aspects of the Service, the FOCRIN could pay only occasional visits to New Delhi. This led to considerable delay in obtaining New Delhi's clearance on important matters as the bulk of the exchanges between the capital and Bombay had to be by correspondence or by signal. A Naval Liaison Office was positioned at New Delhi in October 1939 to reduce the time taken in processing important papers but even this proved unsatisfactory and hence, in March 1941, the Naval Headquarters was transferred from Bombay to New Delhi.

All training establishments of the RIN were concentrated inside the RIN Dockyard, Bombay when the war broke out. These were the Seamanship School, the Signal School, the Gunnery School, the Mechanical Training Establishment, the Boys' Training Establishment and the Antisubmarine School. There were no schools for training in torpedo, radar and electrical disciplines. There were also no training facilities for officers who had to undergo their basic and advanced training in all disciplines at the Royal Naval establishments in the United Kingdom.

As the tasks assigned to the RIN multiplied and its size increased, several new naval establishments came up at Jamnagar, Cochin, Madras, Coconada (Kakinada), Vishakhapatnam and Calcutta. To cope with the increased intake of sailors and the requirements of equipping the fleet, expansion and modernisation of the existing naval bases at Karachi and Bombay was taken up.

In terms of the strength of the fleet and personnel, the RIN grew extremely rapidly and thus posed grave problems of training personnel in the specialist and general tasks. For example, by June 1940 when Italy jumped into the fray, the RIN had doubled its strength and by 1942 it had expanded to nearly six times its pre-war complement.

While the fleet continued to expand, so did the number of shore establishments. To augment training of Boys at *HMIS Dalhousie* at Bombay, *HMIS Bahadur* was commissioned at Karachi. In addition, for training officers and ratings, two more establishments, *HM/SHima/m/fl*, the gunnery training establishment, and *HMIS Chamak*, the radar training establishment, were commissioned at Karachi. The other naval bases that came up about this time were *HMIS Shivaji*, the mechanical training establishment at Lonavala, *HMIS Akbar*, the ratings' training establishment at Thane, *HMIS Talwar*, the Signal School at Bombay, and a mechanical training establishment at Pilani. At Karachi, Bombay and Calcutta, ships were armed for defence and at Vishakhapatnam, Madras and Cochin, inspection organisations were set up.

The need was soon felt for a major merchant shipbuilding yard in order to neutralise wartime

mercantile marine losses. Accordingly, a site was located at Vishakhapatnam by the Scindia Steam Navigation Company but the first major ship, a freighter, could only be launched well after the War in 1948. The problem created by United Kingdom's inability to send supplies to the Allied forces in sufficient quantities, was solved by the Indian mercantile marine which shouldered the responsibility of delivering stores to places as far as Hongkong in the east and Malta in the west.

Sloops of the RIN took part in the operations in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf in 1940 under the overall command of the Com-mander-in-Chief, East Indies. The *Jumna* and *Sutlej* took part in the Battle of the Atlantic in 1941. In the same year, reoccupation of Berbera in the Gulf of Aden was made possible by the first combined operations, i.e., amphibious operations, by the Indian Army and the Royal Indian Navy. The RIN also played a vital role during the advance of the Allied forces in Sudan. While *HMIS Clive* softened up the area between Port Sudan and Massawa with her armament and *HMIS Hindustan*, *Indus*, *Parvati* and *Ratnagiri* led the attack, the port of Massawa was annexed from the Italians.

In the operations in the Persian Gulf, *HMIS Lawrence* and *Lilavati* earned distinction and two officers of the RIN were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC). These were Lieutenant (later Vice Admiral) N. Krishnan for his act of gallantry while boarding and overpowering the crew of an armed tug belonging to the Axis during Operation Countenance for the capture of Abadan in 1941 and Engineer Lieutenant (later Vice Admiral) D. Shankar who, while boarding an Italian vessel, *Cabote*, during the Persian Gulf operation in the same year, captured the crew of the vessel after going through the blazing bridge deck at considerable risk to his life.

HMIS Bengal, a Bathurst class minesweeper of the RIN, covered herself with glory on November 11, 1942 when, while escorting a Dutch tanker, *MV Ondina*, from Fremantle in Australia to Diego Garcia, she was attacked by two Japanese 10,000 ton armed merchant raiders. The raiders opened fire with 4 inch and 5.5 inch long range guns but the '*Bengal*' could defend herself with one 12 pounder gun and a few close-range anti-aircraft guns. However, instead of making an attempt to escape, the '*Bengal*' instructed the *Ondina* to increase her distance from the raiders and herself pressed home an attack. The raiders opened fire once again at 3,500 yards and the *Bengal* retaliated with her small calibre armament. Her first salvo hit one of the raiders fortuitously landed on the latter's magazine resulting in an inferno which caused the raider to blow up and sink within minutes. The second raider soon left the scene after causing considerable damage to the *Ondina* and killing a few members of her crew including the Commanding Officer. Though the *Bengal* suffered damage in the superstructure, no lives had been lost and the minesweeper was still operational. The *Ondina* was virtually immobilised but the *Bengal*, succeeded in escorting her back to Fremantle.

Lieutenant Commander W.J. Wilson, RINR, Commanding Officer of '*Bengal*', was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. Two Indian ratings also to be decorated were Leading Seaman Ismail

Mohammed, one of the 12 pounder gun's crew, who was awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal for gallantry and devotion to duty, and Petty Officer Mohammed Ibrahim, captain of the 12 pounder gun, who was awarded the Indian Order of Merit Second Class for setting an excellent example of steadiness and resolution and using his weapon to the very best advantage even after the *Bengal* had been considerably damaged by the raiders.

Ships of the RIN carried out sustained attacks on the Arakan Coast of Burma while operating from Chittagong and Koronge Island. They also provided close support to troops that had been landed by the RIN landing craft for driving the Japanese away from the area. Despite its success in operations in various theatres of war around the globe, the losses suffered by the RIN were negligible and ships of the RIN and their men were still 'raring to go' when VJ (Victory over Japan) Day arrived.

The nuclear holocaust perpetrated on the innocent residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan on August 15, 1945 led to Emperor Hirohito's surrender, hastening the end of the War. At the time of cessation of hostilities, the RIN fleet comprised seven sloops, four frigates, four corvettes, 14 minesweepers, 16 trawlers, two depot ships, 30 harbour craft, several motor launches and harbour defence motor launches and a personnel strength of over 25,000.

World War II, which was a veritable catastrophe, ended on August 15, 1945, exactly two years before India was to gain Independence. The stage was set for carrying out the post war tasks, viz., sanitising, i.e., sweeping large areas for mines and other sunken hazards in and around Indian waters, preventing any further repetition of the traumatic experience, decommissioning or assigning peace time roles to a large number of ships and craft with the RIN which had been rendered redundant and meeting the post-World War II requirements by refurbishing the RIN.

A Victory parade was held in London on June 8, 1946 in which representatives of the three Indian Armed Forces participated. The senior Indian Naval officer was Commander (later Rear Admiral) A. Chakravarti and the Naval Contingent was led by Lieutenant (later Rear Admiral) P.S. Mahindroo. In keeping with the inter-Service seniority in which the Navy was the senior service, the parade was led by the Naval Contingent.

Rear Admiral Mahindroo, who later commanded our first aircraft carrier *Vikrant*, reminisces on the occasion, "Needless to say, that as a turbaned officer leading the Naval Contingent, I was most prominent and I must have given hundreds of autographs amongst thousands of spectators who probably slept on the pavement for one or two nights to witness this historic parade."

With the end of World War II the need was felt for, firstly, assessing the requirement of future weapons and weapon platforms for the peacetime role of the RIN and to whittle the Navy down to an appropriate size for that purpose. As mentioned earlier, at the outbreak of the War the RIN fleet comprised five sloops, a survey vessel, a patrol ship, a depot ship and a number of small craft but by the time the War ended, the fleet consisted of seven sloops, four frigates, four corvettes, 14 minesweepers, 16 trawlers, two depot

ships, 30 auxiliary vessels, 150 landing craft of various types, 200 harbour craft and several motor launches and harbour defence motor launches. Personnel wise the strength had risen during the course of six years from 1,850 in 1939 to over 25,000 in 1945. These figures do not include the six ships that were lost during the War - *HMIS Pathan* (escort patrol ship) by explosion off Bombay on June 23, 1940, *HMIS Parvati* (auxiliary) mined off Massawa on April 30, 1941, *HMIS Macpherson* Strait on March 1, 1942 and *HMIS Indus* (sloop) sunk at Akyab on April 6, 1942 and *HMIS Lady Craddock* (auxiliary) sunk in the Hooghly river on October 16, 1942 - and, the men who went down with these ships. The RIN had in fact expanded by 1,800 per cent - an average annual growth rate of 300 per cent.

It was decided in 1944 to develop the peacetime RIN after due demobilisation of personnel recruited for the duration of the hostilities and decommissioning the large number of vessels acquired for wartime operations at sea, in two stages. Stage I had a time frame of two years from 1945 to 1947 for replacing the 'existing inefficient ships' by frigates and modern sloops, acquiring eight destroyers and training of personnel for cruisers that had been planned to be acquired. During Stage II, which was to be put into effect after the cessation of hostilities, the strength of the RIN would be raised to 1,500 officers and 15,000 sailors who would gradually replace the Royal Navy personnel then serving in the RIN. These plans were later modified to include aircraft carriers, cruisers and submarines.

The RIN was thus envisaged to develop into a full-fledged 'dominion' naval force towards the late 1940s and be deployed as a vanguard of Commonwealth interests. This, however, did not happen because, first, massive demobilisation undertaken after the war left only a small number of ships and trained personnel, both in the commissioned and lower-deck cadres, in the Service. Next, the scars of the mutiny which took place in February 1946 took a long time to disappear. Third, what was left of the RIN was truncated to two-thirds of its size when British India was partitioned in August 1947. Fourth, the 'land-frontiers-only' concept continued to occupy Indian minds at the highest level for many years. And, last, the gross inadequacy of funds made available during the earlier decades of Independence for the development of India's maritime force prevented it from speedily expanding into a powerful entity.

Reducing the fleet strength, which was virtually bursting at the seams, entailed paying off aging ships to a reserve fleet, returning vessels commandeered from the merchant marine to trade and consigning very old ships to breakers' yards.

Demobilisation of two categories of personnel, those who had been recruited for the duration of the hostilities and those who had been retained till the end of the War despite the expiry of their contracted periods of service during the War, was also taken up. Nearly 2,000 officers and 18,000 sailors were released by the beginning of 1947. In addition, over 700 officers and sailors of the Women's Royal Indian Naval Service (WRINS) were released and 25 officers and 25 sailors transferred to the Army Wing, viz., Women's

Auxiliary Corps, India (WACI). As far as was possible, personnel released received prerelease and post release vocational training and assistance in resettlement.

In its wake, demobilisation brought about considerable set back in the morale of the Service. Rejection of a large number of applications from serving officers for permanent commission led to acute disappointment amongst Indian officers. Sailors due for release faced the uncertainty of resettlement in civil life. To make matters worse, the existing scales of low pay and pension, inadequate travelling facilities, the poor quality of food and amenities and the ill treatment meted out to them by some of the British officers of the RIN, brought the situation to a flash point. The spark was provided by the political situation in the country which led some of the sailors to believe that the gerontocratic structure of the political parties led by Mahatma Gandhi would not be able to force the British masters to grant full freedom to the country and an armed demonstration by the uniformed Services was called for.

The combination of these contributory factors led to a mutiny by RIN personnel originating at the *Talwar*, a shore establishment at Bombay, on February 18, 1946. This soon spread to ten establishments, 56 ships and four flotillas at Bombay, Karachi, Madras, Calcutta, Cochin, Lonavljajamnagar, Vishakhapatnam, Mandapam, Aden, Bahrain, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and New Delhi.

Some of the broad features of the mutiny were:

Bombay - processions taken out by RIN sailors, shouting of slogans, burning of the American Stars and Stripes at the US Information Office, hoisting the Congress, 'Jai Hind' and Muslim League flags, lowering the Naval Ensign, acts of violence and exchange of fire at Castle Barracks between mutineers and military personnel who had been called in to quell the mutiny.

Karachi - acts of violence on the *Bahadur and the Himalaya*, a procession from there to the radar training school, the *Chamak*, and an exchange of fire between the military and the mutineers of sloop, *the Hindustan*. At other places - generally non violent measures such as refusal to work, defiance of orders and hunger strikes occurred. With rare exceptions, the behaviour of the mutineers towards their officers was courteous with the usual marks of respect.

The casualties suffered by the mutineers and the others included:

Bombay - one sailor killed and six wounded, one RIN officer killed and one wounded, two British Other Ranks wounded.

Karachi - eight sailors killed and 33, including British soldiers, wounded.

Later, in response to appeals made by political leaders of eminence such as Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the mutineers surrendered. The mutiny, however, had wide repercussions all over the country and the Central Legislative Council discussed it on February 22 and 23, 1946. When

it was taken up by the Defence Consultative Committee on March 8, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief of the three Services, recommended a high power commission of inquiry to go into 'the causes and origin of the recent mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy'.

Based on the recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry comprising three Indian Chief Justices, a Vice-Admiral of the RN and a British Major General of the Indian Army, the conditions of service, food, leave travel facilities and amenities for sailors were improved and short service commissions were offered to a large number of officers who were about to be released, thus allaying their fears about their immediate future.

One of the leaders of the mutiny, Leading Telegraphist B.C. Dutt, who was discharged after the mutiny in March 1946, has authored a book entitled *Mutiny of the Innocents*, wherein he has stated that the mutiny was the penultimate, nay, ultimate, nail in the coffin of foreign rule and that the mutineers, the real freedom fighters, had been let down by the aging political leaders from whom they had sought advice and guidance - mutineers who, he thought, were politically innocent. He said, "In India a new generation had grown by wearing the soldier's uniform and exulting in the sound of gunfire. Most of them wanted the total overthrow of the Raj. The means did not much matter. Nor were they, at that point in Indian history, the only ones to feel the way they did. Other segments of society were also similarly inclined. The leadership would not have it. They nipped what the young thought was the revolution in the bud."

The fact that the process of gaining independence was considerably accelerated by the RIN mutiny was further corroborated by the former Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral S.N. Kohli, who was serving in the 'Talwar' at the time of the mutiny. He said, "It is my view that the Naval Mutiny, coming as the culmination of a number of similar incidents in the Indian Defence Services, was largely instrumental in convincing the British that holding India was no longer feasible without the use of large-scale British force and was, 'inter alia', responsible for ushering in freedom.

When independence was eventually ushered in on August 15, 1947, the Partition Council divided the RIN into two navies - the Royal Indian Navy and the Royal Pakistan Navy (RPN) - respectively for the dominions of India and Pakistan which came into being that day. The ships and craft allocated to the two Services were:

India - four sloops *Sutlej, Jumna, Kistna, Cauvery*, two frigates *Tir, Kukri*, one corvette *Assam*, 12 minesweepers *Orissa, Deccan, Bihar, Kumaon, Rohilkhand, Khyber, Carnatic, Rajputana, Konkan, Bombay, Bengal, Madras*, one hydrographic survey vessel *Investigator*, four trawlers *Nasik, Calcutta, Cochin, Amritsar*, four motor minesweepers *130, 132, 151, 154* one motor launch '420', four harbour defence motor launches *1110, 1112, 1117, 1118* and all existing landing craft. Pakistan - two sloops *Narbada, Godavari*, two frigates *Shamsher, Dha-nush*, four minesweepers *Kathiawar, Baluchistan, Oudh, Malzva*, two trawlers *Rampur, Baroda*, two motor minesweepers *129, 131* and four harbour defence motor launches

1261,1262,1263, 1266.

Soon after Independence, negotiations were started with the British authorities for the acquisition of one cruiser, three destroyers and other craft for free India's navy. The number of ships that could be kept in commission in the truncated and reconstituted RIN was restricted by the shortage of personnel. Available trained personnel were inadequate for the numerous and varied duties that they could be called upon to perform. An easy solution to this problem could not be found as the training of personnel was handicapped by the lack of experienced instructors and the fact that a number of well equipped training establishments, which were located in Karachi, were no longer available.

However, before any concrete steps could be taken for the IN's expansion, the Navy had to undertake an amphibious operation - Exercise Peace - to land an army contingent off Junagadh in Gujarat on the Arabian Sea - the first high-water mark in the history of Independent India's navy.

Unlike the other members of the Kathiawar states which, based on their geographical contiguity to India, had acceded *en masse* to India, the Nawab of Junagadh, Sir Mahabatkhan Rasulkhanji, on the advice of his Dewan, Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto (father of Mr Z.A. Bhutto, who later became the Prime Minister of Pakistan), signed the instrument of accession to Pakistan on August 15, 1947 and ordered his troops to occupy the adjacent states of Babariawad and Mangrol, which had already acceded to India.

After having waited for two months for the Nawab of Junagadh to rectify his mistakes, the Government of India issued instructions to the Navy on October 17, 1947 to land an army task force on the Kathiawar Coast to help the Nawab change his mind. Accordingly, under the planning and control of Commodore M.H. Si L. Nott, Chief of Staff at Naval Headquarters, New Delhi, a naval force comprising three frigates *Kistna*, *Cauvery* and *Jumna*, three fleet minesweepers ***Konkan***, *Madras* and *Rohilkhand*, three landing craft for tanks *LCTs*, 1310, 1358 and 360 and one motor launch *ML 420* was placed under the command of Commander (later Admiral and Chief of the Naval Staff) R.D. Kataria. The task assigned to the force was the landing of three columns of troops with arms, equipment and armour at Porbandar, Jaffarabad and Mangrol on the Kathiawar Coast, the columns having been designated 'Named' (after Major Nambiar, the Commander of the troops) 'Jaffcol' (after Jaffarabad) and 'Rated' (after Major Ratan). After a hydrographic survey of the beach carried out by *Jumna*, the first column, Named, was landed at Porbandar by *Kistna*, *Cauvery*, *Konkan* and *Madras*, *LCTs* 1310, 1358 and 1360 and *ML 420* on October 5, 1947. The second column, Jaffcol, was landed at Jaffarabad by *Kistna*, *Jumna* and *Konkan* and *LCTs* 1358 and 1350 on October 17 and the third column, Ratcol, was landed at Mangrol by *Kistna*, *Cauvery*, *Konkan* and *Rohilkhand* and *ML 420* on, November 1. Immediately on the landing of these columns, the Junagadh Army surrendered unconditionally and the Nawab fled to Pakistan.

Soon after Independence, based on the recommendations of the first Plans Paper, the Navy's first cruiser, *HMS Achilles* (a Leander class cruiser of World War II's Battle of the River Plate fame) was acquired

from the UK. It was rechristened *HMIS Delhi* with Captain H.N.S. Brown as the Commanding Officer and Commander R.D. Katari as the Executive Officer. Out of the four landing ships for tanks (LSTs) that had been borrowed from Britain during World War II, one - *HMS Avenger* - was acquired for the RIN and rechristened *HMIS Magar* on April 11, 1949. She was essentially a tank landing ship but was also capable of carrying vehicles, landing craft, men and 2,000 tons of stores.

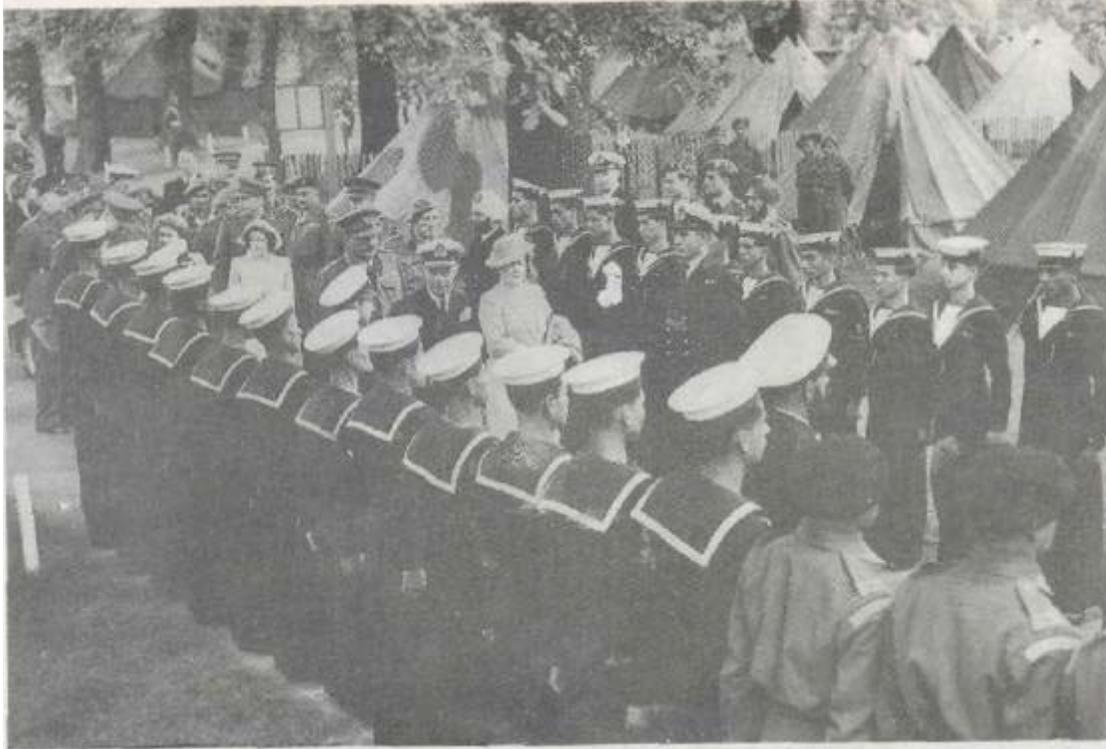
Also acquired in 1949 were three 'R' class destroyers, *HMS Rotherham*, *Redoubt* and *Raider*, which were respectively renamed *HMIS Rajput*, *Rana* and *Ranjit*, constituting the 11th Destroyer Squadron with the *Rajput* as the senior ship of the squadron.

In tune with the practice prevailing in the UK the RIN was traditionally the Senior Service in India during the pre independence period with the Indian Army and the Royal Indian Air Force in that order of seniority. Thus the order of the Service Colours in the 1939-1945 star (war ribbon) was navy blue, red and air force blue. Even after Independence, since India continued to be a 'dominion' until the formation of the republic, the prefix 'Royal' to the nomenclature of the Navy and the Air Force continued to be used and the order of seniority of the three Services remained unaltered. The Indian authorities however, decided to revise the order of seniority on the basis of relative size and historical background. Thus, on January 26, 1950 when India became a republic, the prefix 'Royal' was dropped to change the nomenclature of the Navy and the Air Force to the Indian Navy (IN) and the Indian Air Force (IAF), respectively. Along with that the order of seniority was altered to Army, Navy and Air Force.

In 1950, the stage was thus set for snipping the umbilical cord that had linked the IN to the British Navy for centuries, expanding the fleet to a size commensurate with the tasks and responsibilities of free India, establishing a number of training establishments and maintenance facilities on both coasts of the peninsula, commencing the process of indigenising the design and construction of major and minor war vessels along with the development of associated propulsion systems, weapons and equipment, and restructuring its strategic and tactical doctrine to suit the requirements of the region.



The Frigate Foudroyant built by Wadias – Master builders of the Bombay Dockyard – as HMS Trincomalee (a 46 gun ship) at Bombay in 1817. Foudroyant is the oldest warship still afloat.



The Royal Indian Naval contingent for the Victory Parade being inspected by King George VI at Regent's Park, London in June 1946. Also seen in the picture are Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, Major General A.A. Rudra and Lieutenant PS Mahindroo. *Courtesy* Rear Admiral PS Mahindroo (Retd)



Victory Parade in London 8 June 1946. Picture shows the Naval contingent led by Lieutenant PS Mahindroo. Also the senior Indian Naval officer, Commander (later Rear Admiral) A Chakraverti and Senior Army and Air Force Officers.

Courtesy Rear Admiral PS Mahindroo (Retd)



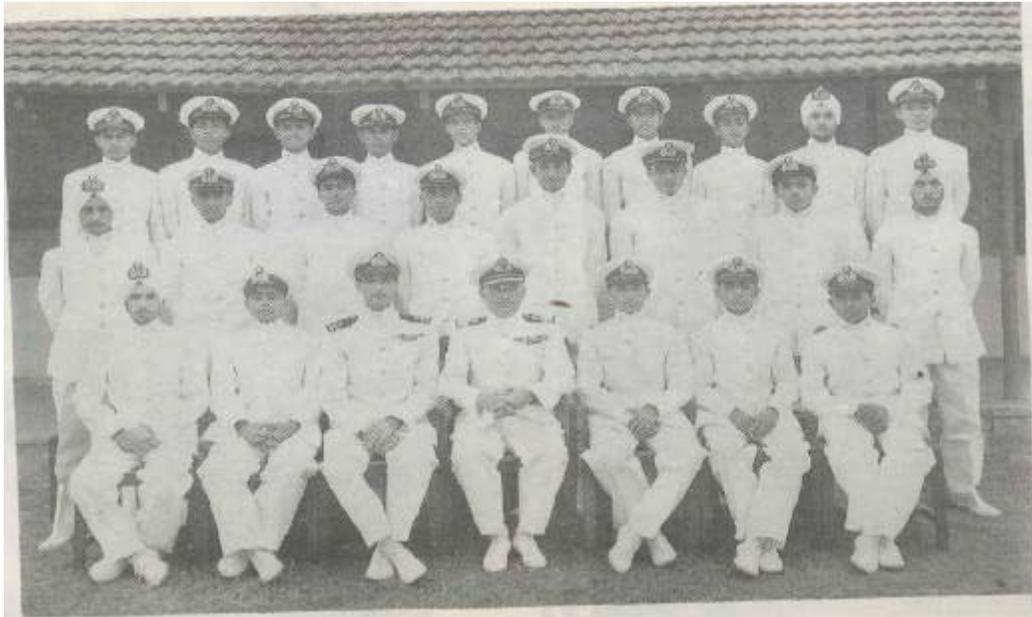
Samuel Vallabbhai Sardar Patel, then Deputy Prime Minister of India embarking on board Delhi from Gateway of India. Bombay. Also seen in the picture are Shri Morarji Desai, Shri V Shankar, Commodore HR Inigo-Jones, then Commodore-in-Charge, Bombay, Lieutenants RS Malia & MB



Chief of the Naval Staff's Exercises at sea in 1951. Admiral Sir Edward Parry, Rear Admiral G. Barnard, Captain SG Karmarkar and Air Commodore Arjan Singh on the bridge of *Delhi*

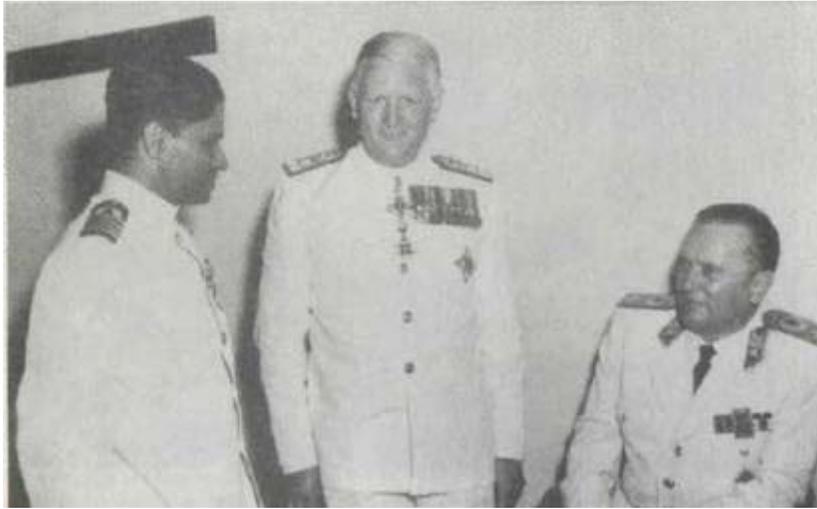


Presentation of President's Colours to the Indian Navy by President Dr. Rajendra Prasad at Bombay on 27 May 1951. Colours being received by Lieutenant MP Awati. The Indian Navy was the first Service to be honoured with the President's Colours.



First batch of Indian Naval Cadets-1951
Courtesy Commodore TS Khurana (Retd)





Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on board *Delhi* in a Sailor's mess in 1952. Also seen are Admiral Sir Mark Pizey and Commander J Cursetji.
Courtesy Admiral Sir Mark Pizey



Rear Admiral NV Dickinson Flag Officer Commanding Indian Fleet with the Fleet Commanding Officers in 1953, Captains RD Katari, SG Karmarkar and MK Heble and Commanders SM Nanda, KR Nair, KL Kulkarni and G Douglas.



Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on the bridge of *Delhi* at Queen Elizabeth M's Coronation Review of the Fleet at Portsmouth in June 1953. Others in the picture are the Fleet Commander, Rear Admiral N.V. Dickinson, the Staff Officer Operations, Lt. Cdr. DR. Mehta and the author.

President's Yacht (P3110)

INS DELHI. Flagship of
Flag Officer (Flotilla)
Indian Fleet
INS RAJPUT
INS RANJIT
INS RANA
INS GODAVARI
INS GOMATI
INS GANGA
INS JUMNA
INS KISTNA
INS CAUVERY
INS TIR
INS BOMBAY
INS KONKAN
INS RAJPUTANA
INS BENGAL

Commander JS Mehra IN
Lieut. A.W. Coelho IN
Rear Admiral
NV Dickinson CB, DSO, DSC
Captain AK Chatterji, IN
Captain RS David
LCdr GC Nahapiet, IN
Commander JD Mody, IN
Commander SN Kohli, IN
Lieut. Cdr. Inder Singh, IN
Lieut. Cdr. KK Sanjana, IN
Commander SM Nanda, IN
Lieut. Cdr. H. Sopher, IN
Lieut. Cdr. M.L. Barua, IN
Commander N. Krishnan, DSC, IN.
Commander JB Simmons, IN.
Lieut. Cdr. U. Tekchand, IN.
Lieut. Cdr. J. Chatterjee, IN.
Lieut. Cdr. R. Pinto, IN.

INS MADRAS
INS ROHILKHAND
INS MAGAR
INS INVESTIGATOR
INS SUTLEJ
SEALANDS (NAVAL AIRCRAFT)

Lieut. Cdr. H.E. Dubash, IN
Lieut. Cdr. B. Nag, IN.
Lieut. Cdr. DHR Dadabhoy, IN.
Captain SJ Henessy OBE, RN
Lieut. Cdr. S. Rajendra, IN
Lieut. Cdr. Y.N. Singh, IN

CACHELOT (DREDGER), CHILKA (OIL TANKER),
SAMBHAR (OIL TANKER), NIRMAL (HOPPER
BARGE), ELEPHANTA (TUG), ACQUEDUCT
(WATER BOAT), PYTHON (FLOATING CRANE)

IMMTS DUFFERIN
SS JANETA
SS JALAMAYUR
MV JAG GANGA
SS BHARATKUMAR
ASHOK (FISHING TRAWLER)

Captain GD Hazari
Master Capt. HM Lande
Master Capt. Rozario
Master Capt. Robson
Master Capt. Monia
Skipper Menon



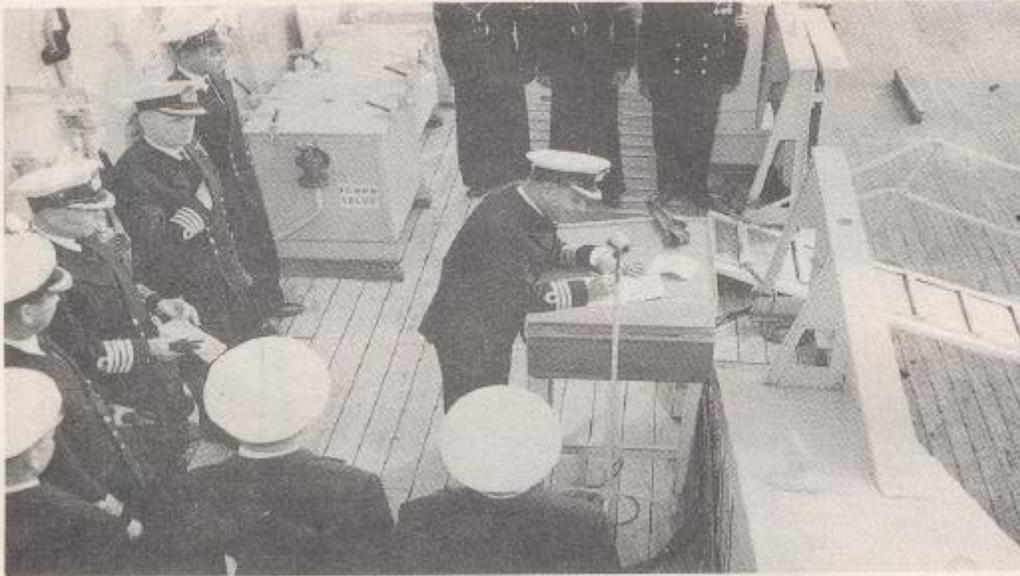
Commanding Officers of the 22nd Destroyer Squadron 1953
Commander SN Kohli, Lieutenant Commanders Inder Singh and
KK Sanjana – with General Neguib & Sardar KM Panikkar.



Commanding Officer & Officers of *Ganga* at Liverpool 1953. Also seen are Lieutenant
Commander KK Sanjana Commanding Officer, Lieutenant VEC Barboza and Sub
Lieutenant JG Nadkarni.



Inauguration of the new Electrical School, *INS Valsura* on 27 April 1955 by Lt Gen., His Highness, Maharaja Shri Digvijay Sinhji Ranjit Sinhji Jateja, Maharaja Jam Sahib of Navanagar, Raj Pramukh of Saurashtra. Also seen in the picture are Admiral Sir Mark Pizey, Commodore AK Chatterji, the then Commodore-in-Charge, Bombay and Captain NE Warner, Commanding Officer.



Commander J Chatterjee taking over 149 Minesweeping Squadron on board Karwar in August 1956.



Captain SM Nanda showing Shrimati Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, the then High Commissioner of India in UK round the *Mysore* at the time of commissioning of the ship in 1957. Also seen in the picture is Captain SN Kohli, the then Indian Naval Advisor.