



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THANE DISTRICT DURING THE PORTUGUESE REGIME

Dilip Shankarrao Telang

Dept. of History , Arts, Commerce & Science College, Wada, Dist- Thane.

Abstract :

India has been ruled by various foreign regimes Portuguese had the longest duration. In order to have unrestricted control over trade and permanent rule they always tried to keep sea shores under their captivity and that's how they got connected with Thane district. Vasai, Mahim were the places they got under control. Portuguese rule has been a long lasting influence over the religious, political and economic life of Thane district.

Key words : Portuguese invasion, trade, first colony, Vasai, missionary, Saint John, Baptist Church, architecture, plants

Explanation :

Portuguese arrived in India on 17 may 1498 after the arrival of Vasco de Gama at Kalikat harbor. This event in Indian history has a peculiar importance. K. K. Dutt says, "There has been none of the incidents that had made a huge impact on the civil world than the exploitations of sea routes. Especially Portuguese travelers made a way for other European sea explorers." ¹

Portuguese have been keeping eye on the trade in India. Especially that had keen interest in the profits in the Masala trade. In 1530 Portuguese arrived in Thane. Since then up to 1739; almost 200 years Portuguese ruled the particular area. Meanwhile they name the region as the 'Kokabe-da-Thana' ²

Portuguese knew the importance of western sea shore with regard to the trade. In 1507 Portuguese instigated local rulers to revolt against the king of Gujarat Mahmud Bedga. In 1516 Portuguese won the region of Mahim, Vadre and in 1526 they established their first colony at Vasai. ³

In 1533 they made a pact with the king of Gujarat and started building a compound wall around the Dahanu harbor. Further Portuguese captain 'Nosa Senhora da Augastia' built a new fort at Dahanu. ⁴

Then ruler of Gujarat Bahadurshaha stopped Portuguese from widening their regime but in 1534 December 23, due to problems created consistently, he left Thane and Vasai. With the defeat of Bahadurshaha, Portuguese succeeded in establishing their rule. ⁵

In 1535, Thane district got occupied by Portuguese. In later period, Thane became the centre for garments trade. Thane became popular the sugar made up of bamboo that was called as Tabassir. Unani doctors gave a lot of importance to it. Thane emerged as a centre of trade during Portuguese rule. The trade of Arabian horses was the most important business in Thane.

Ghodbandar, Choul, Sopara, Dabhol etc were the places where horses were brought for trade. This horse trade was dominated by Arabian, Turkey and Persian traders. ⁶

Portuguese established their colonies in the regions of Vasai and Konkan. Vasai region of Thane district included Sashti, Belapur, Saywan and seven harbors of Mumbai and Asheri and Karanja. Portuguese made small regions of six villages of Thane district. They made various army centers around which they built compound walls. Antonio-da-Porto destroyed more than 280 temples of Vasai and Thane. By the same time indigenous Koli people were converted to Christianity and Agari community was hybridised. After a time period those Agari people were readmitted to Hindu faith but with an altered name as Warap Agari. ⁷

After the arrival of Saint Xavier in Goa in 1542 that led to mass conversions to Christianity. In 1560 'Gonsala Rodriguez' created the first church in the region. ⁸

In 1560, Rodriguez converted more than 600 persons to Christianity. The aim shots from newly brought guns brought from Portugal were rehearsed on the stone sculpture of Gharapuri that harmed the ancient art. ⁹

In the gazette of 1879, a reference appears in which Peshwa's are mentioned to have given Koupineshwar temple along with the Ghantali Devi 4 lakh rupees maintenance cost each year. ¹⁰

With the passage of time, many of such ancient sculpture got destroyed. A classic example of ancient Indian sculpture at an ancient temple of Vyaghreshwari is a group idol of 12 gods. ¹¹

In 1609, Portuguese built Saint John and Baptist Church. The church bell at this church is considered to be the biggest church bell in India. In 1663 they began to build Saint Baptist church. In 1730 the world famous fort of Thane was undertaken. ¹²

One more positive impact of Portuguese Régime on the region was they brought huge land under agriculture in which they grew flower trees. They sent black pepper, Cardamon, Saag, sandalwood, Ginger, Dalchini etc plants to Brazil plantation. They also sent Alfonso graft to Brazil. In 1534, the Portuguese traveller Garcia-de-Orta has described Indian plants in his book Medicinal Plants in India and medicinal Fluids. ¹³

CONCLUSION :

With the arrival of Portuguese, the coastal importance of the Thane district increased. The places like Ghodbandar, Chowl, Sopara got established as trade centres. The tribal communities of Thane were converted to Christianity. Portuguese built churches and other architectures. Portuguese made Indians acquainted with Papaya, custard apple, sapota, guava, potato, tomato, green chilies, cashews etc. Portuguese Régime not just changed the political life of Thane but also made a long lasting impact on the social life of coastal region.

REFERENCES :

1. Varma Harishchandra (Editor), Madhyakalin Bharat, Vol. I, Hindi Madhyam karayalaya Nideshalaya, Delhi University, Third Edition 2004, Pp. 772.
2. Thane District Gazetteer, (Online version) Directorate Of Govt., Printing, Stationary and Pub. Maharashtra state, <https://cultural.maharashtra.gov.in>
3. Deshpande D. G., Maharashtraatil Kille, Diamond Publication Pune, Oct. 2009, Pp. 135.
4. Chile Bhagwan Pandurang, Vedh Jaldurgacha, Shivsparsh Publication Kolhapur, Sept. 2008, Pp. 26.

5. Dalavi Daud, Ase Ghadale Thane, Shrikrupa Publication Airoli, 2010, Pp. 74.
6. Ibid, Dalavi Daud, Pp. 71.
7. Ibid, Dalavi Daud, Pp. 28.
8. Ibid, Dalavi Daud, Pp. 36.
9. Ibid, Dalavi Daud, Pp. 75.
10. More Vilas (Editor), Thane Satta (Weekly) ‘Thane Special Diwali Volume’ Datar Agency, Thane 2003, Pp. 49.
11. Ibid, Deshpande D. G., Pp. 151.
12. Ibid, Dalavi Daud, Pp. 77.