

INTRODUCTION

A study of Gujarat by itself forms an interesting topic, the sixteenth century in particular is even more interesting. The period between 1500 - 1600 entails a series of activities. Beginning with the entry of the Portuguese in Gujarat, the emphasis on trade, especially in the international sphere, the Muzaffarshahi dynasty and the entry of the Mughals gave a new dimension to its history. As a result the socio - economic field was affected to some extent from the changes in the geo - politics during the said century. The sources which have been used for the study of these aspects, are mainly Portuguese, these Portuguese documents are available largely in the Archives and Libraries in Lisbon, Rome, London and Goa. The indigenous sources which are accessible in English translations are found in various Libraries.

Several studies have been made on the Indo Portuguese relations during the sixteenth century and for later periods. The sixteenth century has been chosen because Gujarat was during that time undergoing some changes. Most of its ports were brought into international trade and had contacts with Western and Eastern world. The arrival of the Portuguese enhanced the commercial prospects furthermore. Also the Sultans ruling Gujarat were industrious and were backed by able governors and administrators. They in unison defended the 'kingdom of Cambay' for a very long time. But the arrival of the Mughals jeopardized the welfare of

Gujarat. For example, in order to fight the Mughals, the Sultans had to seek the help of Portuguese. As a reward, the latter were given various areas of coastal Gujarat. In this fashion the Portuguese managed to get hold of the important centers of Diu, Daman and Bassein.

The Mughals on their part were contemplating to occupy Gujarat, and the final onslaught took place in 1573 under the able hands of Akbar. They occupied Gujarat without any rebellions or opposition. In fact the nobles of the Muzaffarishahi dynasty invited Akbar to wrest the throne of Gujarat, and he readily did it.

While dealing with the history of Gujarat during the sixteenth century the work of M. N. Pearson comes to mind. His book Merchants and rulers in Gujarat in the sixteenth century, lays emphasis on the economic aspects of Gujarat. In a compact form the trade activities, the role of the nobility in their economic capacity, and the rulers of the state are well presented. Another book à propos is K. S. Mathew's Portuguese and the Sultanate of Gujarat. Here the nobility is once again dealt with, but in a different perspective, by the author. Along with information on the four important Portuguese chroniclers of the said century and their works related to Gujarat history have been mentioned. While the above two works have been mainly based on contemporary Portuguese sources, the late S. C. Misra depended largely on the Arabic and Persian works for his studies on Gujarat.

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the Mughals' entry in Gujarat, as long as they were not bothered by them. The Mughals too did not seem to mind the Portuguese presence as long as the latter were not interested in political supremacy. In fact the Mughals were satisfied that their commercial activities which were mainly concentrated on the Gujarat coast were supported and harboured by the Portuguese.

The third and final part deals with the links between Gujarat and the Mughals. Though they did not seem strained, the brief encounter itself was proof enough to show the Mughal supremacy. In other words, since the period is only confined upto 1600 the lapse of twenty seven years was enough to show the Mughal dominance in Gujarat. During the beginning of the said century the Sultans of Gujarat were very powerful while the Mughals had yet to prove their worth in political history. The expansionist attitude which they slowly acquired made them spread their wings to Gujarat. Sultan Muzaffar Shah III, the reigning king of Gujarat was a mere puppet in the hands of nobles in Gujarat during Akbar's entry in Gujarat and so Akbar did not face any serious problem.

Nobility and the élite or the governing class forms the major part of the third chapter. Nobles were not a new phenomenon, but a fresh dimension was added on to nobility during the period of their studies. While there were nobles who were conducting trade, and were well disposed towards that Portuguese, there were nobles chosen from the merchant classes to perform

administrative duties. No longer was election or selection confined to the social aspect but the economic bearings too, found a place in Gujarat. A graphic sketch has been attempted on three people in the Gujarat Sultanate Malik Ayaz, Malik Gopi and Khwaja Safar fell into the category of nobles who were merchants and merchants who became nobles respectively.

The fourth chapter deals with the trade and commerce of Gujarat during the sixteenth century. Gujarati merchants are said to have formed the cream of the mercantile society. The network of their commercial activities covered the South - East Asian and West Asian regions and the African coast. No doubt such a vast vortex involved the role of the merchants, volume of commodities, nature of trade, finance, and banking. The internal trade covers chiefly the coastal areas. Here trade between Gujarat and Kanara coast, and that between Malabar coast and Konkan coast are discussed.

The urban economy and urbanization form the topic of the fifth chapter. The rise of certain areas in Gujarat, especially the coastal areas as international and national marts brought about a number of changes, especially urbanization of Diu and Daman. Owing to the intensive commercial activities and probably due to the Portuguese influence on them, the above - mentioned places were undergoing considerable alternations. This aspect is discussed in chapter five.

The sixth chapter deals with the agrarian economy. Due to paucity of sources for agricultural activities during this period only a preliminary study was made possible. For the period between 1500 - 1573, Gujarat was ruled by the Sultans. Hence a study has been made based partially on the agrarian economy of the Delhi Sultans. But for the period from 1573 upto 1600 the Mughals brought in their own reforms regarding agriculture. On the side of the Portuguese they followed their own method of agricultural reforms based partially on the European system.

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