

P R E F A C E

Bassein, situated on the western sea-board^{Coast} of India, is only thirty miles north of Bombay. Though the signs of an island of Bassein, as referred to in the work, are not visible today, it was surrounded by water from all the sides during the early period. Bassein was encircled by the Arabian Sea on the western side, the River Vaitarani on the northern, River Ulhas on the south and the Sopara Creek on the East, making it an island. At present, the eastern part extends to the mainland adjoining Salsette.

The present study is restricted to the island of Bassein as it existed originally, extending from Arnala (Ilha das Vacas) in the north including Agashi (Agaçaim) to Naigaon in the south and from Bhuigaon in the west to Gokhivara which is the eastern^{limit} boundary of Bassein at present. It does not include the entire Bassein taluka or the province of Bassein which was handed over^{entire} to the Portuguese by Bahadur Shah of Gujarat which extended to Caranja in the south including the entire area of Salsette, Thane, Bombay and the Elephanta island.

The period of this study is confined to just 106 years of the Portuguese era, from 1534 to 1640. Though the title of the work is 'Bassein under the Portuguese', I have restricted it to the early years of their rule instead of extending it to 1739, for various reasons. First, though enough material was available in Portuguese chronicles and relevant Portuguese historical literature, nothing was written in any of the Indian languages regarding this prosperous Portuguese city.

Secondly, this is the period of the rise and fall of the Portuguese eastern empire, the period when they became the masters

Bassein and the surrounding areas to the final conquest by Nuno da Cunha, leading to the treaty of Bassein, signed in 1534, by which Bahadur Shah of Gujarat handed over the province to the Portuguese. It contains minute details, with documentary evidence, regarding the activities of various Portuguese nobles who were responsible for the conquest of Bassein by the Portuguese. It also contains the treaty of the cession of Bassein, which is brought to light in English for the first time.

The rise of Portuguese Bassein is depicted in the third chapter. It explains how the Portuguese started to consolidate their power in Bassein. The construction of the citadel and other major buildings is discussed and some controversies settled. It describes the fortification of the fort with its ten bastions and also deals with how the Portuguese started to impose their rule outside the fort city by converting the people to Christianity, and constructing churches and organising parishes through which they established their complete control over Bassein.

Chapter four starts with the geographical location of Portuguese Bassein with the villages around. It provides the information regarding the original settlers of Bassein such as Kolis, Aagris, followed by other communities like Samvedi Brahmins, Palshe Brahmins, Somavanshi Kshatriyas, Seshvanshi Kshatriyas etc. It covers the responsibilities of various village functionaries like the Kulkarnis, Deshmukhs and Deshpandes, as well as information about food, dress, housing of the rural population, their social practices, social interaction, social welfare and social justice. It provides details about the agrarian inhabitation of Bassein, land revenue system, revenue reforms and village taxation.

It also gives details of the agricultural products, fruits and plants, markets and rural transportation.

Urban life is depicted in the fifth chapter. It gives information about the urban population including Europeans, Eurasians, Indians and others, furnishing details of their social interaction. It provides information about the food, dress and housing. It also gives information about transportation and the market facilities and religious and social customs like baptism, marriage and ^{entombment} burial. It deals with the moral problems and social welfare of the people. Finally, it provides information about the problem of slavery in Bassein.

The sixth chapter mentions the various indigenous industries of Bassein during Portuguese rule with special reference to the ^{medium} timber trade and ship-building. It also gives the details about the rural and urban markets and transportation, working of the ^{company} guild system, mode of payment, payment of workers, regulation and control of payment, ^{currency} minting and coinage. It also deals with the external and internal trade of Bassein in addition to the private trade which ultimately resulted in the downfall of Portuguese Empire.

The seventh chapter gives the background of the internal and external causes of the Portuguese decline in Bassein. The internal causes include the religious policy and the persecution of the local people by the missionaries, resulting in their migration to neighbouring provinces, the absentee landlords and the Portuguese negligence of cultivation, administrative corruption, loss of independence of Portugal, loss of heroism, ^{and so} greediness of the captains and natural calamities such as diseases, storms, famines etc.

The external causes which are discussed in this chapter are the Mughal attacks, Arab piracy, Maratha conflict and Ahmednagar trouble which added to difficulties of the Portuguese in Bassein and lead finally to their downfall.

In the concluding chapter, the socio-economic conditions of the pre-Portuguese period is compared with the time of Portuguese rule. Certain conclusions are drawn with special reference to the change of population and ownership of the land, change of social interaction, social welfare etc., in the Portuguese context. The economic changes, industries, trade routes, markets, transportation, village society are also noted.

The entire study is mainly based on the historical writings of renowned Portuguese historians like Barros, Couto, Bocarro, Castanheda, Gaspar Correa and others as well as the manuscripts I found in the Archives of Lisbon, London, Rome, Paris, Madrid and Goa.

There are six appendices at the end of the main body of the research study. The first, second and third appendices are about the Portuguese ships, Portuguese coins and Portuguese weights and measures respectively. These were ships, coins, weights and measures used in Bassein during the Portuguese period. The fourth appendix is about the Portuguese words used in the main body of the work, a list of the Marathi words used and lastly, words presently used in the local Marathi language of the Catholics of Bassein relating to the Portuguese rule. The fifth appendix is about the Bassein folk-lore. The sixth appendix refers to folk songs that show the influence of Portuguese.