

CHAPTER - VII

PRELUDE TO DECLINE

The rise and fall of the Portuguese eastern empire was so sudden that nobody could imagine that such a mighty empire extending to the distant corners of the world, would collapse so easily. Such was the case of Portuguese Bassein also. This glamorous city of the East called Corte do Norte, the richest Portuguese settlement in the East, declined so suddenly that nobody could remember that once upon a time the city was called Dom Baçaim. There are several factors responsible for the downfall of this great city. These can be divided under two major heads namely - internal and external.

INTERNAL CAUSES

Generally, the decline of the Portuguese power in India is attributed the Inquisition and religious intolerance in India. Damião de Goes, contemporary historian who was in India for some time, describes the activities of the Portuguese missionaries in Bassein. He remarks that whenever they came across an idol they burnt it or broke it. They destroyed a tank at Bassein where the Hindus used to bathe for the remission of their sins. The persecution of the Portuguese had made many Musalmans and Parsees abandon their houses and live in the dominion of Shahajahan, where they had the liberty of conscience. Many people left Bassein and lot of village land remained uncultivated.¹ Even the local non-Christians who otherwise sided

1. Damião de Goes, Calcutta Review, Vol.V, p.271.

with the Portuguese, resented the conversion policy of Bassein. Anjurkar Naik protested to the Portuguese king in his letter dated 18th December 1549.² Similarly, we get an idea of this religious persecution from a letter written by many local persons of Bassein to the king.³

Even modern historians do not ignore the harm the Inquisition did to the eastern empire. Very stringent decrees were issued throughout Portuguese India by the provincial or the court of Inquisition in Goa affecting the population of the town and parishes in Bassein. The new converts were strictly prohibited from living with the Hindus under the penalty of paying one pardão,⁴ to individuals who should prefer to charge against them. It was also determined that no convert should retain friendship with the Hindus or even have them as servants except as grooms, in which case the practice of his religion would not be allowed. On August 2, 1549, an ordinance was issued, prohibiting the Brahmins from performing religious ceremonies in public. If caught, they were fined five pardãos of which half was given to the Thanedar and half to the hospital.⁵

In Bassein, these new converts were not to employ high caste people or Prabhus nor lend them money or admit them into partnership, not even to give them shelter in their houses under

2. Mss. ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, Part I, Maço 83, No.55.

3. Brangança Pereira "Os Portugueses em Bacaim", in O Oriente Portugues, Vol.7,8,9, 1934-45 Passim.

4. Pardão - One Pardão is equal to six annas of older time and 36 paise of modern time.

5. DPI (SR) op.cit., Vol.IV, p.324.

the penalty of transportation, subject to the approval of the¹¹ viceroy.⁶ No person other than a Christian was allowed to || serve in a public office as clerk, Naik, Peon, Mukadam, receiver, interpreter, attorney, solicitor, broker or shroff. The Christians were not permitted to rent their property to the Hindus.⁷

It was moreover decreed that a roll or register of all Hindus residing in each parish of Bassein of hundred persons each, should be kept ready. Some of them were compelled to attend every alternate Sunday afternoon. They were forced to listen to the Christian doctrine or catechism where a priest was appointed purposely to inculcate the Christian faith in them. Those who remained absent were fined one tanga⁸ on the first occasion, two on the second and three for the third. This amount was paid to the persons who accused them or who complained against them.⁹ In a letter dated 18th December 1549, Anju Naik, a Hindu of Bassein as mentioned earlier, wrote to the Portuguese king regarding the forcible conversion of the people of Bassein and explained how the people were running from Bassein to other parts for shelter.¹⁰

6. DPI (SR) op.cit., Vol.IV - p.324.

At present, Prabhu is the surname of a particular community in Bassein which came from South Konkan during the 18th century. But during Portuguese times, any high-class Brahmin who generally looked after accounts, was called Prabhu. Most of them were employed as clerks during the Portuguese time.

7. J.G. da Cunha, Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., pp.143-144.

8. Tanga, equal to 2-1/2 annas or 15 paises.

9. J.G. da Cunha, op.cit., p.144.

10. Mss. ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, Maço 83-D-55. fls. 1-5_v.

When the Portuguese king was informed about the persecution of the Hindus in Bassein who were running away to take the shelter in a nearby Muslim area about 1578, orders were issued to check the emigration of the people. It was ordered to punish the Christians going against the Hindus. It was directed that these ordinances be displayed in public places.¹¹

But according to some historians, the Inquisition was not the only cause of the decay of the Portuguese power in Bassein. We can very well examine this fact from the world history or the rise and fall of other dynasties and empires. When the enthusiasm of military honour characterises the rank of the gentlemen, then the nation or dynasty or empire rises into power. But as soon as the conquests give a continued security, the mere soldiers degenerate and the old veterans are soon succeeded by a new generation, without their fathers' virtues and experience. It happened in the case of Bassein also.¹²

The decline of the city of Bassein was gradual. It did not collapse immediately after the loss of the independence of Portugal in 1580 because of the resistance of the organisation it had achieved earlier. In fact, it was its constitutionally determined corruption that kept the Estado da India from falling apart, but it also made strategic co-ordination with the imperial interest impossible.

11. DPI, (SR), op.cit., Vol. XII, pp.415-16.

12. Braz Fernandes, "Dellon", op.cit., pp.18-19.

The dissipation and the very idleness of the Portuguese led them towards a precarious position. The few men of business who were in the East, had with them the power to aggrandise themselves. The Portuguese Fidalgos who were given landed properties in Bassein, did not take an interest in cultivating it. They did not bother to come and see personally the cultivation of the property. On the contrary, they preferred to stay in Goa, completely ignoring their agricultural responsibilities. When they were forced to settle down in Bassein, they did not reside in their properties but stayed in the fort, enjoying the luxurious life through the revenue they received from these properties. This kind of absentee landlordism completely destroyed the agricultural economy.

After this change, though the Portuguese administration and trade were left in the hands of Portuguese nationals, the royal authority in Spain showed little concern over the growing difficulties of the Portuguese in the East. Portugal had no foreign policy of her own and the enemies of Spain were turned into the enemies of Portugal. Despite promises to the contrary, Spain also used the financial resources and manpower from Portugal to fight against the Dutch.¹³

The involvement of the Portuguese in the war with the Dutch rebels against the Spanish rule in Europe, had consumed

13. J. de Ameal, Historia de Portugal (Porto, 1858) pp.329.

Livermore, op.cit., pp.158-172

Braz Fernandes, Mount Poiser, Pissurlencar Collection, Goa, op.cit., p.5.

drastically the financial resources and the army of Portugal. In addition to these factors, the harsh treatment, unrewarding payment and the unimaginable hardships of journey, discouraged Portuguese youth from accepting the challenge of the East to fight against the enemies. Shortage of men became an acute problem during the 17th century. This problem was solved by employing Portuguese prisoners in the army.¹⁴ In this way, the policy of Spain was greatly responsible for the decline of the Portuguese. Though in 1640, the Portuguese regained their independence, it was too late to repair the damage done to the national and imperial economy. Meanwhile, the fabric of the Portuguese empire had been torn apart and appropriated by her North European rivals.¹⁵

There was one more factor responsible for the decadence of the Portuguese in the East. At the end of the 17th century, the military spirit of the Portuguese began to decline. Albuquerque, Almeida, heroic Pacheco and even Nuno de Cunha died unrewarded and unnoticed by their ungrateful countrymen.¹⁶

14. Mss.AHU, India, Caixa, D-53.

15. Braz Fernandes, "Antiquities", op.cit., p.518.

16. Nuno da Cunha, the founder of Portuguese Bassein died in great misery and trouble. On the instigation of his enemies, the Portuguese king removed him from the position of Governor of the East. He was not given government vessel to return home. He was so frustrated by this treatment that when he died on his home bound voyage he uttered with indignation the words in Latin "Ingrate Patria, Ossa me non Possidebis" meaning 'Ungrateful country thou shall not possess my bones'. (Ref.R.D.'Silva "Nuno da Cunha, the founder of Portuguese Bassein" in the proceedings at Indian History Congress, 1981, pp. 312-320).

In this way the chivalrous spirit which these and other illustrious heroes or heroes do mar had sailed to India, the thirst for enterprise, the hopes of distinction and the allure-ment of honour to be conferred which originally tempted the Portuguese youth from Lisbon, to become soldiers and to gain name in arms, had totally vanished.

In addition to these factors, there were many other reasons for the decline of the Portuguese in Bassein. We get enough references about the moral degradation of the Portuguese from the contemporary writings of the people, especially from the letters sent by the priests to their superiors in Portugal. In one of these letters we see that the writer accuses his own people. He writes that from the oldest to the youngest, rare were the persons who performed their duties with zeal for the service of the Crown. The graft in the administration had flourished, the martial spirit had faded, valour was non-existent and cowardice was rampant.¹⁷

Their dissipation and public notoriety was noticed not only by foreign travellers but also obvious to a few of the far-sighted Portuguese themselves. They complained to King Phillip II who was apparently zealous about the prosperity of his territory and the conduct of his delegates in the East.

17. Mss. BAL, N, 50 fls. 28-38.

We get hundreds of references of the Portuguese documents regarding the moral degradation of the Portuguese in Bassein especially in the letters written by Missionaries to their superiors in Rome and Lisbon in the Roman and Lisbon archives.

He used to write a letter to the Viceroy of each 'Mançãõ' despatch advising him to punish those who would offend public morals by their demeanour. There were repeated complaints against the highest Portuguese officials such as viceroys, captains, factors. In 1637, the viceroy, Pero da Silva, was accused of mal-administration.¹⁸

The captains were busy in private trade. They exploited the people and the merchants to satisfy their greed.¹⁹ There were many complaints against the captains and the factors of Bassein. Ultimately an ordinance was issued that no disloyal person be kept in office. If found guilty, they were sent to jail.²⁰ The major portion of the revenue was consumed for the administration and maintenance of the churches in Bassein. The priest received enough financial assistance.²¹ But many times the factory staff of Bassein did not receive payment in time.²² So sometimes the Camara of Bassein demanded financial help from Goa.

The regaining of independence in 1640 by Portugal did not improve the situation. We have a letter written by the Portuguese viceroy of Goa to the Portuguese king, dated 10.10.1684, in which he comments on the mal-administration in the Province of the North, of which Bassein was the capital. He writes about the great necessity for the North to curb its bad ways. Due to

18. Mss. AHU, Caixa 12, D.141.

19. DPI (SR), op.cit., Vol.X, p.393.

20. Ibid., p.410.

21. Mss. HAG, Livros das Manções No.93, fl.381.

22. Mss. AHU, Caixa 13 D.30.

the lack of justice in those lands, the Ovidores were only used to take huge amounts of money unlawfully.²³

NATURAL CALAMITIES

It is said that when calamities come, they come together. Portuguese power was concerned with so many difficulties that it was pushed with its back to the wall. Natural calamities added to the ill-fated Portuguese in Bassein.

In 1618, Bassein faced many disasters. At first the city suffered a terrible disease. Though most of the people in the city were affected by this disease, most of them recovered later on. All the Jesuits priests at the college of Holy Name were sickened at this time, most of the recovered but Fr. Emanuel A. Costa, the superior of the college, died.²⁴

Before his death, it is said that he foretold that the city was about to be visited by a grievous punishment. Immediately after his death on 15th May, 1618, the sky was clouded, thunder burst, and a mighty wind rose. The same night, due to the whirlwind, the waves of the sea were raised so high that the people thought that their city would be swallowed up. Many provision boats which were lying at anchor off the shores, were dashed to pieces. In the city and in the villages, houses were thrown down or became unfit to live in. The monasteries and the churches of the Franciscans and the Augustinians were utterly ruined. The three largest churches in the city, and both the houses and church

23. Mss. AHU, Caixa, 10, D.160.

24. Cordares, History of the Jesuits, Vol.VI, op.cit., 162.
J.B.Amancio Gracias "Antiquidades" op.cit., p.265.

of the Jesuits were uprooted. Nothing was more hideous than the destruction of the palm groves. Thousands of palms were torn out by the roots.²⁵

This storm was followed by a complete failure of rain that in a few months there was so grave a scarcity of food that the children were openly sold by their parents to Muslim brokers. This was stopped by the Jesuits from savings of their own scanty allowances and partly from the gifts of the rich when the fear of pressing orders were still issued that all should meet in the church of the Jesuits for prayers.²⁶

In 1623 when Pietro della Valle visited the city of Bassein, he noticed that many buildings were ruined from the great hurricane of a few years before. In 1670, Ogilvy speaks of an earthquake which had swallowed many houses none of which had been rebuilt.²⁷

Similarly at the same time, the administration of justice in Bassein had reached the lowest grade. There was no law and order in Portuguese Bassein. The governor decided to send Dr. Domingo Durando de Oliveira together with the plans and everything necessary to make the tombo of the villages of the North.²⁸

In this way, on account of the decay of the Portuguese power towards the close of the 17th century, Bassein suffered considerably. The dishonesty of the captains had left the fort

25. Cordares, op.cit., p.162.

26. Pietro della Valle, (Viaggi de Pietro della Valle il pelegirino..., Roma Dragondelli 1658-63) Vol.III, p.131.

27. Ogilvy Atlas, Vol.V, p.214.

28. Mss. HAG, Mancões No. 58-81-319.

to fall in disrepair.²⁹ Corruption and depravity were rampant among citizens of every class.³⁰

DECAY OF THE TRADE

The economic prosperity of the Portuguese seaborne empire was maintained as long as the power of the Portuguese men of war remained unrivalled controllers of Asiatic trade. After the Portuguese, many other nations vied for supremacy in the East. Holland and England became the rivals of the Portuguese in the maritime trade. Neither the English nor the Dutch had been happy with their dependence on the Lisbon market for their supplies of eastern spices. It was humiliating to the masters who established their naval supremacy and were carrying trade with the Baltic and the rest of the Western Europe.³¹

Anglo-Portuguese relations in India reflected very much the pattern of the Anglo-Portuguese relations in Europe. More than once in moments of national crisis, Portugal had turned to England for help against enemies threatening her independence. However, England had exploited all such occasions by offering its alliance to further her business interests in the trade world of Portugal.³²

At the dawn of the seventeenth century, the involvement of the English in Asiatic trade, compelled the Portuguese to buy

29. Braz Fernandes, ARMAS, op.cit., pp.5 and 109.

30. J.G. da Cunha, Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., p.146.

31. G.Luzzato, Storia Economica dell 'Eta Modernae Contemporaneo, (Padova, 1955) p.212. W.H.Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb, (New Delhi, 1972) pp.11-13.

32. H.V.Livermore, op.cit., pp. 182-184.

their neutrality with concessions. This enabled a concentration of Portuguese forces against the Dutch aggression.³³ The Dutch systematically harassed the Portuguese trade of Asia from the Persian Gulf to Japan and reduced many in the long chain of colonies. When the Portuguese were at the zenith of their power in the East, the passage of their ships was regular but at the end of 16th century and at the beginning of 17th century, the number of ships was reduced considerably. Moreover by 1635, due to the conflicts with the Dutch and English, the Portuguese reduced their sailing upto 40 ships.³⁴

Following the union of the Crowns of Spain and Portugal, the latter or the weaker partner drew up on itself the fury of the North Europeans who fought Spain under the cloak of nationalism and the banner of Reformation.³⁵ In 1640 the Portuguese regained their independence but it was too late to repair the damage done to the national and imperial economy. The centuries old fabric of the Portuguese eastern empire had been torn and appropriated by its North European rivals.

These were not the only difficulties of the Portuguese. The military weakness of their eastern empire had resulted in a change in the attitude of the local rulers who flouted the trade restrictions of the Portuguese and exploited the competitive market which was inaugurated by the arrival of the North

33. T.R. de Souza, op.cit., p.20.

34. C.R.Boxer, Dutch Seaborne Empire (Middlesex, Penguin Ed. 1973), pp.312-13. J.B.Harrison, "Europe and Asia" in New Cambridge History, (England,1970) p.660.

35. A.R.Disney, op.cit., p.24.
T.R.de Souza, op.cit., p.20.

Europeans.³⁶

Due to the hectic military activities with the Dutch during the seventeen-forties, the loading and unloading operations of Carreira were shifted to the northern ports of Chaul, Bassein and Bombay. Though the port of Bassein became busy with trading activities, this reflected adversely on the Portuguese commercial activities. It brought a lot of extra expenditure in the transport of goods and bullion from the northern parts to Goa and vice versa.³⁷ The Gujarati merchants helped the Portuguese in the transference of bullion that arrived in the North province by charging 3 per cent to take it to Goa.³⁸

As mentioned earlier, private trade was one of the major reasons of the decay of the Portuguese trade in the East. The Portuguese king complained about the private trade of the Captains of Bassein and Daman in his letter dated 13th March, 1537. He wrote that he had been informed that all the ports of the North were much harmed due to little or no care or rather on account of positive negligence on the part of the Captains who thought more of their own trade and profits than their service.³⁹

36. B.N.Ganguli, Readings in Indian Economic History, (Delhi, 1964) p.64.

37. Mss. HAG, Assentos do Conselho, op.cit., No.IX (1653-60) fls. 6-7, 160-62.

38. T.R. de Souza, op.cit., p.24.

39. Carta Regia, dated 13th March 1587 published in Arquivo Portugues Oriental, Ed.Cunha Rivara Fasc.IIIX p.106.

The economic base of the Portuguese seaborne empire was further undermined by the well-established Catholic Church, which tried to seek a new field of action in the missionary field by preaching about the human dignity of the slave. The priests working in the missionary field demanded the freedom of the slaves.⁴⁰

The Portuguese government in the East could not feed all the resources where it faced major financial difficulties. Though the sources of income dwindled away, they could not control their expenditure. Nearly three-fourths of the total income of the territory went to feed the white bureaucracy the rest being absorbed by the Church and the defence organisation.⁴¹

Finally, the cession of Bombay to the English in 1665 gave the ultimate blow to the trade of the Portuguese on the western coast in general and Bassein in particular. The British started the overall development of the port of Bombay of which the foundation was laid by Gerald Aungier, the governor of Bombay.⁴² The city of Bombay began attracting many local businessmen from Bassein who until then had invested their capital in the Portuguese trade.⁴³ Moreover the proselytising activities of the Portuguese had a very adverse impact on the trade and commerce of Bassein. Many local traders and artisans

40. Mss. HAG, No. 860, Cartas do Alforria, Joseph Wicki, O Livro, op.cit., pp.318-19.

41. T.R. de Souza, op.cit., p.171.

42. M.D.David, History of Bombay (Bombay, 1973) pp.125-130.

43. T.R. de Souza, op.cit., p.23.

found in Bombay a safe refuge against the intimidation of the Goa Inquisition, and were also active in Bassein against the Portuguese legislation regarding the orphan children of non-Christian families.⁴⁴

Later on, many Hindu of Bassein complained to the viceroy of Goa in a letter addressed to him dated 19th July, 1671, about the forcible conversion of Hindus.⁴⁵ The Prabhus of Bassein who were working as accountants, fled because of the atrocities in Bassein. After the rise of Maratha power, a good many Prabhu families of Bassein fled from their Christian rulers and sought refuge under the comparatively mild sway of the Marathas.⁴⁶ This reflected very badly on the economic life of Bassein.⁴⁷

The Portuguese soon noticed the great financial loss after the cession of Bombay. They tried to obstruct the growth of English trade at Bombay by imposing heavy transit duties on goods taken from Bassein, Kalyan and Thana and by prohibiting the transport of timber and food provisions to the island of Bombay.⁴⁸ But all the Portuguese efforts were in vain. They could not stop the economic development of Bombay.

This was the tragic picture not only of Bassein but also of the whole of the Portuguese eastern trade because the number

44. Mss. HAG. Manções, 42, fl. 136-200.

Mss. AHU, India, Caiza-39 D.34.

45. Mss. HAG, Manções, No.36, fl.257.

46. S.M.Nayak, History of the Pathare Prabhu, op.cit., p.69.

47. OP (BP) 1935, op.cit., p.195.

48. Pissurlencar, Assentos do Conselho..., op.cit., pp.245-247
W.Foster, (Ed) English factories in India, op.cit., 1670-77.

of Indian bound ships that left Portugal during the 17th century had dwindled to nearly half of that in the previous century, and the annual average came down from seven to four.⁴⁹ While a total of 705 ships left for India in the 16th century, the number of the ships that came to India in the 17th century was only 384.⁵⁰

EXTERNAL CAUSES

The external factors responsible for the decline of Portuguese Bassein can be attributed to the problems created by many enemies of Portuguese such as the Mughals, the Marathas, the Shah of Ahmadnagar and also the European rivals of the Portuguese like the French, British and especially the Dutch.

Mughal Attacks

The Portuguese came into contact with the Mughal during the reign of the Emperor Akbar when he annexed Gujarat, which was on the boundary of the Portuguese pockets in the North. The Emperor welcomed the Portuguese missionaries to his court and the Portuguese allowed him one passport free voyage to the Red Sea once a year.⁵¹ But during the reign of Emperor Jahangir, the trouble started between the Mughals and the Portuguese, when he favoured the English. As a result, the Mughals besieged Bassein in 1612 and desolated the surrounding areas. The Portuguese purchased peace with many concessions and presents.⁵²

49. Magalhaes Godinho, Os Descobrimentos e a Economia Mundial, (Lisboa 1963-65) Vol.II, pp.779.

50. T.R. de Souza, op.cit., p.121.

51. Couto, Decada IX, Cap.XIII, pp.82.

52. A.K.Nairne, History of Konkan, (Bombay, 1875), p.40.

The Portuguese captured a vessel carrying precious cargo, and sacked and burnt it.⁵³ The Mughal besieged Daman and the conflict continued for two years. Ultimately, a treaty was signed on June 7, 1615.

The Portuguese-Mughal relations entered into rough waters during the reign of Shahajahan. The Emperor did not like the Portuguese activities in Bengal. He suddenly attacked their settlement in Hubli and arrested several thousand Portuguese men, women and children who were converted to Islam and were made slaves.⁵⁴ The Mughals were not favourable towards the Portuguese at the time of the sacking of Surat by Shivaji. As the result, the Mughal captain, Lodi Khan, assaulted Bassein and Surat and plundered villages.⁵⁵

Later on, in 1672, the Mughal general Matbarkhan attacked and plundered Bassein under the pretext that the Portuguese helped the Marathas. But the Portuguese governor of Goa sent his agent to Aurangabad and silenced Matbarkhan. He also received Rs. 2 lakhs as compensation from Aurangzeb.⁵⁶ In this way, several attacks by the Mughals on Bassein weakened the position of the Portuguese.

Arab Piracy

In addition to the Mughal attacks, the Portuguese of Bassein were also troubled by Arab pirates who attacked suddenly

53. Bocarro, Decada XIII, Part I, pp.189-92.

54. Campos, History of Portuguese in Bengal, op.cit., pp.128-40.

55. Mss. HAG No. 30 fl.159.

56. Mss. HAG, Livro dos reis Vizinhas, No.4, fl.119.

thus causing panic. In 1674, six hundred Arabs pirates from Muscat landed in Bassein. They were not opposed by the Portuguese and they plundered all the churches outside the fort wall and caused much cruelty.⁵⁷ A great part of the city was destroyed by the Arabs, after they had ^{set} fire to the villages. They carried away the Fidalgos and their wives and families as prisoners. They killed the priest and razed the Church in the fort to the ground. In this way, the Arab avenged the Portuguese cruelties at Muscat perpetrated Albuquerque in 1507.⁵⁸

Portuguese-Maratha Conflict

During the earlier period of Maratha rule, Portuguese Maratha relations appeared to be cordial. The first reference regarding their contacts we get from a letter from Shahaji, father of Shivaji, addressed to the Portuguese captain of Chaul dated 26 September 1636. Shahaji was trying to save the Nizamshahi of Ahmadnagar against the combined attack of Vijapur and the Mughals. He wanted to obtain shelter for his family in the Portuguese capital of Chaul.⁵⁹

Then we have already seen how Shivaji had ordered the construction of his first twenty naval ships from Bassein. During 1657-9, Shivaji added most of the North Konkan to his kingdom and extended its boundaries to the Portuguese Province of the North, and the Portuguese became alarmed about his

57. Robert Orme, op.cit., p.46.

58. Cordares History of the Jesuits, op.cit., Vol.VI, p.162.

59. Pissurlencar, ACE, Part II, pp.113-5.

proximity. Once Shivaji requested the Captain of Bassein to allow him to attack the Sidi through the Portuguese fort but his request was turned down.⁶⁰ But when the Portuguese tried to help Mirza Raja Jaisingh in his campaign against Shivaji during the Purandar campaign in 1665, he retaliated by launching an attack on Goa, and caused great trouble for the Portuguese.

In 1674, Moro Pandit came down to the Ghats with 10,000 men and captured Kalyan. He sent a message to the Captain of Bassein fort to pay the chauth of all the Portuguese territories in and around Bassein and pressurised them to become a tributary of the Maratha king.⁶¹ In 1676, Shivaji himself advanced near Bassein and in spite of some slight hostility, fortified a place called Saivan.⁶²

They also came into conflict with Sambaji who succeeded to the Maratha throne in 1680. The Portuguese allowed the Mughal troops to cross their province of the North in their advance against Sambaji.⁶³ As the result, Sambhaji attacked the Portuguese. In this way, the Portuguese-Maratha relation which was cordial in the beginning, deteriorated after a time giving the Portuguese in Bassein an anxious time. The final

60. C.R.Boxer, 'Carreira da India', The Mariners Mirror, Vol.46, No.1, Feb.1960, p.53.

61. Robert Orme, op.cit., p.45.

62. Saivan is in the eastern outskirts of Bassein.

63. J.N.Sarkar, History of Aurangzeb, Vol.V, p.116.
Robert Orme, op.cit., p.142.

Hereafter the clash between the Portuguese and Sambhaji took very serious turn which resulted in Maratha attack on Goa.

surrender of the Portuguese in Bassein in 1739, to the Marathas, does not come under the period of this study.

PORTUGUESE-AHMEDNAGAR CONFLICT

The Portuguese came into conflict with the Nizam Shahi rulers of Ahmadnagar from the very beginning till 1600. But both of them came together against their common enemy, the Mughals. The Portuguese wanted to use Ahmednagar as a buffer state to protect their province of the North. The Portuguese king always instructed the viceroys of India to seek the help of Malik Ambar, the minister of Nizam Shah, who was trying to save the kingdom.⁶⁴ In 1599, Malik Ambar sent an army to Bassein and Chaul. Moreover, in 1613, Burhan Shah III of Ahmednagar attacked Bassein and besieged the fort. The Portuguese tried to defend it and sought the help of Adil Shah of Vijapur to settle the matter with Burhan Shah.⁶⁵ About the same time, the naval might of the Portuguese received a serious blow with the defeat of a large fleet of theirs by four English Ships in the North of Tapi.⁶⁶ In 1604, Malik Ambar gave some concession to collect revenue in Chaul but Portuguese high-handedness led to conflict and Malik Ambar captured Dabhol in 1625.

64. Radhey Sham, Life and Times of Malik Ambar (Delhi, 1968) pp. 125-26.

65. H.K.Sherwani and P.M.Joshi (Eds) History of Medieval India (Hyderabad, 1973) Vol.I, p.265.

B.G.Tamaskar "Malik Amber and the Portuguese" Journal of Andra Historical Research Society, 1946, p.105".

66. Braz Fernandes "Mount Poiser" op.cit., p.4

EUROPEAN RIVALS

The arrival of the English and the Dutch in the Indian Ocean made the position of the Portuguese more precarious. The Dutch systematically harried Portuguese trade in Asia from the Persian Gulf to Japan and reduced many of the important settlements.⁶⁷ The effect of the prolonged Luso-Dutch conflict was disastrous and devastating for the Portuguese. During the conflict, Portuguese India was bled white both in the terms of manpower and financial resources. At the close of the conflict, Portuguese glory in the East became a thing of the past. Even though only fragmentary statistical information is available, it suffices an indication of the magnitude of the total Portuguese loss.

During the decade between the year 1629-39, the Portuguese lost nearly 6000 men, 160 ships and over 75,00,000 xerafins as booty, mostly to the Dutch.⁶⁸ The Dutch were not only satisfied with snatching away some of the Portuguese colonies but tried to harass the Portuguese in all possible ways. As they could not capture Goa, they started the practice of blockading the Goan port every year at the time of the arrival and the departure of ships of the Carreira da India.⁶⁹

67. C.R.Boxer DSE, op.cit., pp.12-13.

C.R.Boxer PSE, op.cit., p.110.

Harrison, "Europe and Asia", in New Cambridge History, IV, op.cit., p.660.

68. C.R.Boxer, "Portuguese and Dutch Colonial rivalry", 1641-1661, in STVDIA, No.2, July 1958 pp.41-42.

69. Pissurlencar, Assentos do Concelho, op.cit. p.117.

C.R.Boxer, PSE, op.cit., p.202.

Harrison, Europe and Asia, op.cit., p.665.

Carreira da India was the rounde voyage between Portugal and India carrying men, cargo etc. For details see Centro do Estados Historicos Ultramarinas e a comemorações Henriquinas, pp.33-82.

Anglo-Portuguese relations in India reflected very much the pattern of Anglo-Portuguese relations in Europe as referred to earlier. However, the Portuguese did use whatever little force they could and tried diplomatic intrigues at the Mughal court to discourage English trade ambitions.⁷⁰

It was only after Captain Thomas Best had successfully resisted the Portuguese attacks on the coast of Surat in 1612 and after Captain Nicholas Dowton had made short work of a Portuguese fleet commanded personally by the viceroy of Goa in 1615, that the Mughal ruler officially sanctioned the trade activities of the English on his lands and accepted an English ambassador at his Court.⁷¹

In this way, the arrival of the English and the Dutch in India and the consequent loss of the Portuguese trade monopoly in the eastern sea, further encouraged the process of emigration on the part of Hindu merchants and traders who abandoned the centres of Portuguese trade to move into the new centres developed by the English and the Dutch.⁷²

A letter sent by the captain of Bassein to the Portuguese king regarding the plight of the people of Bassein tells how they were leaving Bassein and trying to settle in developing Bombay which came under the control of the British after 1665. After the cession of Bombay many Kunbis, Bhandaris, Prabhus (clerks) carpenters, leather workers, potters merchants, etc., ran away from Bassein to seek shelter in Bombay.⁷³ Initially,

70. H.V.Livermore, op.cit., pp.182-84.

71. C.R.Low, History of Indian Navy, (London 1877) Vol.I, pp.13-15.

72. Mss. AHU, India Caixa 92 Doc.34, (24 VIII, 1622).

73. Pissurlencer, Assentos Conselho..., Vol.IV, pp.283-84.

the English of Bombay requested the Captain of Portuguese Bassein to send these people for some time, leaving their families in Bassein. Later on, they started settling on this newly acquired island. When the Captains of Bassein noticed this emigration, they turned down the requests.⁷⁴ Meanwhile the Portuguese kings were informed about this problem. They gave many assurances to the people who were running away and requested them to come back. Their properties were restored but it was in vain. Those who left for Bombay never returned.⁷⁵ According to Duarte Barbosa, Bassein was a most important and prosperous place but already showed signs of decay at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁷⁶

Thus the decadence of the Portuguese power in Bassein was the culmination of many factors which resulted in their final downfall. They can be summarised as follows. On the death of the Portuguese King, D. Sebastião, in 1580, Portugal was disturbed by civil factions and overrun by the Spaniards. Flourishing Malabar was snatched away by the Dutch, the spirit of religious intolerance and Inquisitional atrocities drove away from the Portuguese town of Bassein all local industry, riches and talents. The absolute lack of discipline were enough to weaken beyond recover any empire in the world much less to cause Bassein to fall a prey to a powerful enemy as it subsequently did.

74. Mss. HAG, Mancões, Livro 93-fl.379_v.

75. APO (CR), Fasc.III pp.949-951.

76. Ganguli, Reading in Indian Economic History (Delhi, 1964) p.64. Barbosa op.cit., Part I, p.151.