

Early European Settlement on the Coromandal Coast

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The advent of Europeans on the Coromandal Coast advocated the Socio-political changes not in India. The Portuguese Sailor Vasco-da-Gama took up his voyage from Lisbon on July 8, 1497 for a period of 10 months he anchored his ship on 20th May 1498 at Kappakadavu in Calicut. It became a new-sea route to India and later to revolutionize the course of the mainstream of world commerce. Vasco-da-Gama's discovery kindled a new interest to know more about India and its commodities in European markets.¹

Santhome, a well known town in the city of Madras had a great importance before the establishment of the Fort St. George in 1639. It created the Portuguese history on the Coromandal Coast in a new dimension because they were the beginners to establish a Church for St. Thomas who was killed by the Brahmins at Santhas.² It is stated that in 1507 Do Francisco de Almeida, the viceroy at Goa, heard from some native Christians of Malabar that the house or chapel of the Apostle still existed on the Coromandal Coast. Four men whom he sent round by sea to make enquiries, two died, but the survivors brought back a report which was transmitted to the king of Portugal.

The Portuguese accounts state that Santhome was found in the year 1522 A.D. The establishment of Santhome later developed into a commercial centre to the Portuguese and the Portuguese began to bring dry fish and wine in his place and made contact with the native people of Madras. During the reign of Sevappa Nayak at Thanjavur, they made settlement at Nagapattanam which later grew into a big town. Father Pimenta who visited this place in 1597 stated that many Portugal's dwelled there and many people came from the coast of China, Bengal, Peru and Malacca. The Paravas, an industrious people contributed to the development of the coast and the king of Vijayanagar.³

The Paravas in that place received baptism accepted Christianity and the recognised Portuguese jurisdiction. Like Nagapatnam, in Tutucorin, a port town on the Coromandal Coast followed the same matter. In 1532 the Portuguese made their settlement in Tutucorin. Here more than 50,000 people in 1700 followed Christianity due to the interference of the Portuguese powers.⁴ The Paravas in Tutucorin were attacked by Muhammadans. The Arrival o Xaviour in 1542 changed the situation on the Tutucorin coast and many Paravas were converted into Christian faith.

The Portuguese, the first settlers of the European powers in India did not last long. Their power and prestige began to decline during the middle of the 17th Century when they lost their political importance on the Coromandal coast. Their

situations were worst when they made their conflicts with the Nayaks and the Dutch.⁵

The emergence of powerful dynasties in Egypt, Persia and North India and the appearance as neighbours of the turbulent of the Maratha power reduced the local advantages of the Portuguese in India. Political fears roused by the activity of the Jesuit missionaries and hatred of prosecution such the inquisition practiced caused reaction against Portuguese spiritual pressure. The Portuguese power was destroyed by the Dutch and the English in India and they gradually established their supremacy in South India.

The decline of Portuguese paved the way for the emergence of the Dutch. The united East India Company of the Netherlands was founded in 1602 from an earlier group of competing provincial companies. It commanded very large financial resources. In India the Dutch established its footings with the Mughals and the rulers of Golconda and developed their trade and commerce. The Dutch settled at Pulicat, north of Madras in 1607 and later at Masulipatnam, Surat and in Persia. Their command of the spices trade, the wealth of the company and the ability of their factors enabled them to secure a major share in the trade of all these areas.⁶

The dominance of the Dutch in the Tamil coast was a noteworthy one because the Dutch made a series of wars with the English and the Portuguese to establish their powers. The outcomes of the wars were their commercial relation with the Malabar and Cochin and achieved at by wars and diplomacy. The Dutch on the cornomandal coast was not silent and it wanted to defeat the English settlement on the Fort St. George. For that on 16th May 1673, while capital Daye was still absent at Masulipatnam, a Dutch fleet of thirteen ships, under Admiral Rajkot arrived at Madras and attacked the English.⁷

The British approached the king of Golconda, Venkatapeti. Their attack was not so effective because Santhome was honeycombed by the Grench who had 800 Europeans besides 250 at sea and a number of native auxiliaries. The Bombay settlement also helped the British. At last the Dutch failed in the Attack.⁸ By the treaty of Ryswick in September 1697 Pondicherry was restored by the Dutch to French.

During the 18th Century, they began to experience failure from the native ruling families and the European settlers particularly the English who wanted to defeat all the European settlements in the Indian Coasts. Due to British opposition in India and the scope for lucrative trade in the East Indies, the Dutch gradually withdrew from the Tamil Coast and moved to the East Indies.⁹

The Danish Settlement in the Madras Presidency was not so important because they much concentrated on the spread of protestant mission in South India. At first they motivated with commercial considerations, they entered in to trade and founded the Danish Lutheran Mission. The Lutherans erected churches and presented a powerful to the missionary activity of the Jesuits on 31.12.1600, Queen Elizabeth I, the Queen of England made an agreement with the merchants and signed a charter for trading with the East Indies and the Indian soil. On this basis the British established trading centers with the agreement of Indian Kings they at first established their trading organisation in Surat in 1609. Subsequently they made contact with the rulers with South India and gradually established trading organisations with them.

The establishment of Fort St. George in 1639 by Francis Day opened a new chapter in the History of British in India. Madras the birth of British rule in India emerged as a centre of the political and economic careers of the British in South India. Its wars in South India made the British the master of European settlers on the coromandal coast as well as the Kerala.¹⁰

The first footing in Tanjore was gained by the cession of Devicottah in 1749 as a reward for assistance rendered to a successful claimant to the throne. In 1765 by a treaty the whole of the Northern Circars were obtained direct from the emperor of Delhi. But the Madras Government through it more politic to obtain the consent of the Nizam also and in 1768 the five Circars of Ellore, Chicacole, Rajamundry, Moostafanugger and Goonloor were ceded by the treaty on the English.¹¹ They were agreeing to pay an annual subsidy of nine lakhs or to furnish military assistance when required.

The British were the main rival of the other European settlement on the coromandal coast as well as South India. They were waiting for an opportunity to defeat them and annex their territories. At Adyar the British and Tipu conducted four wars. According to 1792 agreement the basis of mutual restitution of territory was made and the districts of Malabar and Salem and the Dindugul division of Madura were acquired by the British. According to the treaty of 1799 the districts of Canada and Coimbatore fell into the hands of the British Government.¹²

In 1800 a new treaty was entered into with the Nizam of the Deccan, by which a considerable increase was made in the British Subsidiary force on account of which the Nizam ceded all the territories he had acquired by the Mysore treaties of 1792 and 1799. The English in all the earlier wars of the peninsula supported the cause of Mohammad Ally Nawab of Carnatic. Having in fact, the British secured him both the original possession of his kingdom and the power of retaining it. The revenue of the Carnatic were looked to for the defrayal at the expenses of the wars and with the view the present district of Chingleput, then known as the Jagir, made over to the East India Company. In accordance with this treaty, tribute was collected throughout a great part of the Tirunelveli and Madurai districts.¹³ In 1795 the company assumed the entire management of Tamil Nadu.

In the fall of Srinagapatnam in 1799 it was discovered that both Mohammad Ali and Omdat-ool-oomarah had been carrying on the treasonable correspondence with Mysore, and the treaty of 1792 having thus been infringed, the British Government resolved to assume the entire management of Carnatic.

The titular dignity of Nawab of the Carnatic was continued till 1855, when there was a failure of direct heirs. The present representative of the family bears the title of Prince of Arcot and has the position of the first native nobleman of Madras. Tranquebar was ceded by the Danes to the British in 1845.¹⁴

After the 1857 Sepoy war or the first war of Independence, Madras Presidency followed the policy of no war and it felled peace and security in this presidency. But over such a wide area of territory occasional disturbances have called for measures of military repression. The Poligars or local chieftains in the south long adhered to their independence after their country was ceded to British.

Thus the formation of Madras Presidency in 1801 opened a new chapter not only in the history of Tamilnadu but also in India. The British administrators made their conquest and consolidation in the Madras territory and the other parts of India. The administration of Madras Presidency was adhered in Bombay and Calcutta, when Calcutta was made the capital of India in 1773 by appointing Warren Hasting as the Governor General of India.

After the formation of Fort St. George in 1639, the rulers and military personnel of the British East India Company subdued the Portuguese, the Dutch, Danes and the French. Virtually French made Pondicherry as its capital city in India and it had failed then other territories to the British powers and British became virtually the rulers not only in South India but also in India too.¹⁵

The French were the last settlers on the coromandal coast and they could find it very difficult to make their settlement because the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British made their holdings on the coromandal coast.

The peaceful and prosperous reign of Hendry IV opened out a new prospect. On June 1, 1604 a company was established under the king's letters patent, granting it an exclusive trade for fifteen years. In 1616 it fitted out two ships under the command of De Nets, and only naval officer, but it did not bear any fruits. Encouraged by the result of this first effort, the company equipped another expedition of three ships in 1619 under the command of Beaulieu. This expedition reached the island of Sumatra. In 1642, Richelieu, the Finance Minister made some efforts of the voyage. The first French vessel equipped by the French India Company reached Madagascar in the summer of 1642.¹⁶

Louis XIV, the king of France, issued an edict which was to form the basic constitution of the company on August 27, 1664. The Capital of the Company was divided into 15,000 shares of 1000 lives each. The Company was granted the exclusive privilege of trade in the East for fifty years and was to be

managed by a general chamber of twenty one directors. It also received a perpetual grant of Madagascar and the neighbouring islands, on condition of promoting Christianity there. The king was to pay it a bounty of fifty lives on every ton of goods exported from the country.

In South India, the French made a series of efforts to establish its supremacy by means of wars and diplomacy. It made an attempt to establish its rule on St. Thome by means of wars. The French occupation of Santhome lasted a little over two years. It divided itself into two active sieges, separated by three months of passivity. A lot of confusion was confronted in Santhome by the French, the Dutch and the English. In 1669, the French obtained permission from the King of Golconda to establish a trading depot at Masulipatnam. From Masulipatnam only the French attacked the Santhome territory. The Dutch and the English were struggling against the French in all the directions. The place Santhome was the bone of contention. After a long struggle, Santhome became a bone of Contention.¹⁷

The settlement of the French in Pondicherry in 1674 is an important event in the History of India. After making a number of wars with other European settlers in India, the French finally made Pondicherry the capital and important place in India. Gova for the Portuguese, Fort. St. George for the British and Pondicherry became the headquarter of the French settlement in India. The early Tamil literature mentions two territorial divisions in the northern part of the Tamil country namely Aruvanadu and Aruvavatalainadu.¹⁸ This Aruvanadu covered the region between the Gadilam and Ponnaiyar in which were included the Pondicherry territory besides Marakkanam and Tindivanam in the South Arcot District. Pallava King Nrapatungavarman had mentioned about the territory Pondicherry.

After the fall of the Cholas, the Pandyas took the lead and Pondicherry territory became a part and parcel of its rule. The famous rulers, Sundara Panya, Kulasekara Pandya had established their rule in Karaikal also. During the reign of Pandyas the Muslim rulers in the north invaded the territory of Pondicherry. Then Muslims established their supremacy in South India and followed the policy of attacks and annexation.

The ruler of the Sangama dynasty of Vijayanagar Mallikarjuna Raya (1147 – 1465) and Virupeska (1465 – 1485) rulers extend their sovereignty over Pondicherry territory.

The Muslim army was however driven back and order was restored in the devastated region. After the fall of the Vijayanagar rule, Pondicherry became a bone of contention among the European settlers and the native rulers who made many attempts to defeat the French force in wars.¹⁹

Among the French settlers Francois Martin was considered an important personality in the matter of establishing Pondicherry. In 1665, he joined as an under merchant in the French East India Company. Appreciating his service, M. De La Faye, the Director of the French East India Company promoted him to the rank of merchant. At Surat he tried his best to improve the trading activities of the factory.

Francois Martin landed Pondicherry with sixty French men on 15th January 1674. Baron succeeded Lespondary as the Director of the Pondicherry Factory. On the death of Caron, Baron went to Surat to assume charge as the Director General of French Commerce in India. Then Francois Martin became the director of the Pondicherry factory of 5th May 1675.

Francois Martin was considered as the father of Pondicherry because he laid the foundation for its establishment. On July 17, news arrived at Pondicherry of a treaty signed between Sher Khan and Shivaji by which the former ceded all the territories under his jurisdiction. On the same day, two Maratha officers arrived at Pondicherry for administration of the French colony. In spite of Maratha depredations all around and the collection of forced levies from the inhabitants of Pondicherry, when the French ship 'La Vierge' called in at the Port in 1680, it was able to secure cargo worth Rs.50,000 consisting mostly of textile goods.²⁰

Francois Martin was appointed as the Director of the Company which might trade and he left Surat for Pondicherry on May 1, 1688. Then M. Pilavoine became the Director of the Surat factory. Francois Martin devoted himself to the task of consolidation as well as expanding the French settlements in India. He strove hard to improve the trading activities of the company even in the face of famine, pestilence and war. On July 15, 1688, his envoy Collande secured from the ruler of Tanjore the village of Kaveripatnam and the settlement was founded there in December. The European powers particularly the Dutch and the English wanted to destroy the existence of the French by means of wars. Both of them made conducts with the native powers to curb and curtail the position and status of the French who were in a rather safe, if not in a strong position.

Francois entertained the idea of allying with the Raja of Tanjore and even advocated to the home authorities to attack the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope and at Batavia. He dreamt of establishing the commercial and political supremacy of the French in India. In his letter to Delagny, Francois Martin said that the enemies, the English and the Dutch, were in their last stage of weakness and to attack and to Vanquish them, was almost a certainty.²¹

Francois Martin began to evince keen interest in improving the trade and in strengthening the defences of Pondicherry. But that time, Pondicherry had become an important city and Francois Martin had silver coins of half-panams, and double panams minted there in 1700. The amount 10,000 pagodas in gold were also minted by the Company in 1706. In appreciation of his services in India, Martin was granted the order of St. Lazarus and Mount Carmel.²²

The Nawab denoted Oz hukarai, Murungappakkam, Olandai, Pakkamudiyampet and Kavuvadikkuppam. Pondicherry was now a sizable establishment with 700 Europeans and 30,000 Indians of whom 2,000 were Christians. In the meanwhile, trade in Surat was under decline and Frenchmen were subjected to harassment by their creditors on land and the pirates at sea. Pondicherry at the same time grew to become a flourishing trading centre.²³ This prompted the issue of Edit Royal of February in 1701 which transferred the

Conseil Souverain from Surat to Pondicherry with Francois Martin as its president.²⁴

In 1703, Dawood Khan, the first Nawab of the Carnatic, granted the French a small village called kalapet, which was to supply timber from the forests surrounding it for construction of houses. Francois Martin constructed a great fort called Fort St. Louis following plan of the famous Vauban for the Tournai fort.²⁵ Father Tachard declared that the fort was going to be one day the stronghold of Christian religion and the foundation of the French empire in India. The opening ceremony of the fort on August 25, 1706 was the last public function attended by the first French Governor of Pondicherry, Francois Martin. He died at the age of 72 on December 31, 1706.²⁶

In 1752 Yanam and Masulipatnam, which the French had two years before seized, were definitely ceded by the Nizam, together with a large extent of territory. Two Governors-General of the French establishments in India, Dumas and Dupleix, contributed greatly from 1735 to 1754 to the prosperity of these possessions.²⁷ The town of Pondicherry, the Government of which was confided to the same officer in 1740, was equally indebted to him. It was under his Government that the French possessions and power in the East Indies attained their greatest extent.²⁸

After the establishment of Pondicherry in 1674, religion and social set up grew rapidly in Pondicherry. Different things of Christian faith found its settlement in Pondicherry.²⁹ The Charter of 1664 had bestowed the Royal French Indian Company perpetual concessions over Madagascar and the neighbouring islands on condition that it should promote the Catholic faith in these areas. Thus the company was inclined towards evangelical work right from its inception.³⁰

The Jesuits arrived in Pondicherry in 1675 and by 15th August 1692, they had established a church in Pondicherry with a centre attached to it where students from Bengal, Madras, Philippines, Surat and Ispahan were brought to learn Latin Philosophy and Theology.³¹ British and Dutch administration in South India paved the way for the development of Christianity in Pondicherry.³²

During the 18th Century Pondicherry followed the policy of wars in South India and it considered English as its potential enemy. In order to expand its territory in South India it made alliance with the native ruling families and attacked the English.³³ It conducted three Carnatic wars with the English and Dupleix became the Master of the Carnatic wars.³⁴

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