



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 8.4
IJAR 2023; 9(1): 12-15
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 09-10-2022
Accepted: 11-12-2022

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Social changes in 17th and 18th centuries of medieval Andhra Desa: A study

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Abstract

The Persians following the Shiah faith, were said to have descended from the Mohammad himself and the King, following the same religion, could not do them any harm, not that he ever wanted to do at the maximum, only a fine could be levied on a Persian man whatever his fault would have been. They belonged to different nations of Europe viz. Portugal, Denmark, Netherlands, France, and England. While the Portuguese had arrived on the land of Andhra only in the seventeenth century, they established themselves on the various ports of the country. Some of the important ports on the coastline of Andhra were Bimlipatnam, vishakapatnam, Kakinada, Jagganthpuram, Coinga, Ingeram, Yanam, Palakaollu, Madapollam, Narsapore, Motupalli, Machilipstnam, point Devi, Nizamapatnam or Petapuli, Cginna Ganjam, Cottapatnam, Ramaptnam. The European men led a scandalous life in India. There was no controlling authority over them to control their personal lives. The absence of family responsibilities also was a reason for the debauched life that they lived in India.

Keywords: Coromandel coast, tavernier, coinga, machilipstnam, dubashi

Introduction

Europeans

They came as merchants to the ports on the coasts of Andhra Desa. They belonged to different nations of Europe viz. Portugal, Denmark, Netherlands, France, and England. While the Portuguese had arrived on the land of Andhra only in the seventeenth century, they established themselves on the various ports of the country. Some of the important ports on the coastline of Andhra were Bimlipatnam, vishakapatnam, Kakinada, Jagganthpuram, Coinga, Ingeram, Yanam, Palakaollu, Madapollam, Narsapore, Motupalli, Machilipstnam, point Devi, Nizamapatnam or Petapuli, Cginna Ganjam, Cottapatnam, Ramaptnam^[1]. The Europeans had established factories at these ports besides the factory at the capital city of the Golconda Kingdom. At Machilipatnam, the different ethnic groups had separate locations viz. Frenchpetta, English Palem, Volanda Palem or the Hollander's place etc^[2]. Thomas Rogers of England was stationed at Golconda, chiefly for the purpose of watching the English interests at court^[3]. Similarly all the European merchant companies had their representatives at the capital city. The permission for the factories was taken from the King after giving him some valuable presents. One could not visit the King after without present and gain favours^[4]. The King often got angry when the presents did not reach him. Besides, the King the foreigners had to keep the Governors and other important officials happy with their presents.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify European settlements in Andhra
2. To identify European relation with local king
3. To identify relations between European communities in Andhra
4. To identify Europeans behaviour towards servants in Andhra
5. To identify relation between Europeans and Muslims in early stage

These European Companies had to employ a number of Telugu personnel to help them in their business. They did not follow the local language, custom, and the trading practices of the local people.

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The 'Dubashi' or the translator was the most important India in their employment. The other people employed were the writers, the Brahmin, cook, tailor, barber, etc. In the hinterlands also a number of Telugu were employed. Weavers, washers, dryers, painters, rice producers i.e. farmers, smiths for making of nails, rope markers and coir makers were given employment. In course of time, the younger white servants were also employed as writers to avoid employing Indians^[5]. They were also made to learn the local languages i.e. Telugu and Persian. The young officers were also shifted from place to place in order to "acquire a general knowledge of the Company's business". This must have been done to decrease the dependency on the local people.

The European men led a scandalous life in India. There was no controlling authority over them to control their personal lives. The absence of family responsibilities also was a reason for the debauched life that they lived in India. They kept Indian women as their mistress but did not have any binding responsibility towards them. They could drive them out of their houses at their whims and fancies. They had children from them, yet took very little care of them. Sometimes, the married men also kept concubines. They spent their money on drinks, women and gambled a lot. All the senior servants of the Co. lived a life of extravagancy and were imitated by the junior servant, who often ran into trouble owing to huge debts. The officers were ill paid and they resorted to borrowings from the local people. They could not pay back the amount due to their high standard of living. When the loaning party demanded the due money they embezzled the Companies money. "The maintenance of so many debauched and wicked persons as have been continued under the name of soldiers in the Fort brought a scandal to our nation and religion"^[6]. The English higher ups were very much worried about their men in India. They passed certain laws from time to time to control their nationals here. The higher ups maintained diaries wherein they noted down the behaviour of each and every man. They passed rules stating that all servants of the company, civil military, must Church every Sunday^[7].

The Europeans behaved cruelly towards their Indian servants. They often beat them up for small mistakes. It was observed that in earlier days, they behaved in the same way as a higher caste Hindu behaved towards the untouchables. "In this city (Machilipatnam) they (foreigners) are allowed to exercise justice themselves, to seize debtors and any others who give them offence, to bring these persons inside the lodge, maltreats them and in short, acts as masters"^[8]. As a result, rules had to be that in punishing a servant, his explanation should also be taken into account and all the disputes should be taken to the Company and settled in an impartial manner^[9]. The English at Machilipatnam inflicted corporal that he has been charged with committing a mistake. The authenticity of the offence did not matter^[10]. All the men were to stay inside their respective forts or the factories but the order was seldom obeyed.

The permission too many was given very sparingly in the Dutch Co. The rule was that if a man had served his full term with the Company, then permission may be granted but that too very sparingly. This precaution was mainly to see that they did not desert their wives once they found their salaries inadequate to sustain them^[11]. The Dutch kept their families in the factories for safety sake. The availability of European girls being very less, the men were forced to

marry any one that was at hand. They married 'Castez' or the girls born to Portuguese parents in India. John Field the English chief at Machilipatnam had married a 'Castez' wife^[12]. Later on the English law-makers disallowed the marriage of the Protestant English with the Catholic Portuguese.

However, some of them also wanted to go back home. "My desire is to retourne for my countrie, I am wearie of India..." This was a letter from one Matthew Duke at Machilipatnam to the Company Headquarters in London on September 7, 1622^[13]. In the other hand people like Francois de Raymond, a French commander of the army of Nizam II felt at home in Hyderabad. He lived in great style and luxury at Hyderabad and was interested in Indian culture. Under a fictitious name of Hadji Mustapha he published a French translation of the Siyar-ul-Matakhirin written by Ghulam Hussain Khan Tiba Tibai in 1789 A.D. He died at Hyderabad in 1798 A.D., and was buried here itself^[14].

The Europeans copied the lifestyles of the rich Indians and Persians. They kept a number of servants and rode out in palanquins, horses or chaises for travel that proved to be very costly. Some of them had 'roundells' or umbrellas carried over their heads by their servants. However, this privilege was given in Andhra, only to the persons of a very high rank.

Inspite of the order prohibiting them from venturing out with the umbrellas, the lower staff continued to do so^[15]. They also copied the daily routine of the locals to get adjusted to the climate of the region. Their day began with the sun-rise. While some to them just washed their heads with cold water, other had bathed either with cold or hot water daily. Some took bath only twice or thrice weekly. They also took their afternoon siesta as it become very hot in the afternoon. It was also a custom of the Dutch to wash their mouths after the dinner. In the evening and night they strolled in the gardens for some exercise. At about ten O' clock their day was over.

The Indians held the Europeans in very low terms because of their eating habits and uncleanliness. Venkatadhwari, a contemporary poet considered the British as filthy rats^[16]. The poet remarks that they had very low health habits and those them never had bath after their natural calls. Another contemporary writer while deriding the Europeans said that the French ate raw meat or uncooked meat and drank a lot of Toddy, an intoxicating drink^[17].

Relation between Various European Communities

There existed a lot of rivalry between the different European Companies doing trade with the Coromandel Coast. The Dutch described the English as unworthy of trust. Office orders were passed saying that no relation whatsoever should be maintained with the English^[18]. However, when the relations improved the Dutch, gave banquets in the honour of the English Governor when he paid them a visit at their factory. They never let an opportunity escape their hands in inciting the Indians against the other merchant companies. They were in constant fear of the Muslim officers and never disclosed their profits to them. They did not construct good houses though they had the means to build one. They also did not want to show the arrival of their Indian merchants as it would spark a jealousy in the 'Moore's' and they would impose higher duties on them^[19]. The relations with the French deteriorated so much that for

the sake of better bargains in trading facilities, they fought wars against each other. The French sided with Salabat Jung whereas the English sided with the English. Finally the French were defeated and sole hegemony of the British was established over region.

Changes

In addition to the mentioned social divisions, some new sub castes were also added to the prevalent castes, during the period under study. Some were new and developed as a result of the interaction with the foreigners. The new castes were the result of either conversion or due to the intermixing of the locals with the foreigners. They were also new additions to the social structure of Andhra because of migration from the Hindus from the north. These new castes have not found mention in the contemporary literature. The low caste Hindu converts some to Islam, though become Muslims yet as they continued to follow some of the old Hindu modes of life, they were not treated equally by the Muslims. Similarly, the physical relationship of the Indian women with European men led to a set of altogether new people. They were not accepted by either of their parents' society. They were rather looked down upon by both sides. The arrival of northerners and their settling down within the boundaries of Andhra Desa created a new set of castes in Hinduism. Some of these castes have been discussed below.

Dudekulas

A mixed class called Dudekulas occurred during this period. They were said to be converts from Hinduism, and, though they professed the Muhammadan religion, most of them spoke only Telugu ^[20]. They also followed both Muslims and Hindu customs ^[21]. They even dressed up like the Hindus and did not put on the trousers or lungi of the Mushammadans. Unlike the Mohammadans, the Dudekulas invited all their friends and relatives to a great feast when their daughter reached puberty. This was a tradition that the Hindus followed. The Muslims on the other hand kept it a secret ^[22]. Their form of salutation was different, while they bowed to the castes, to their own caste they did their old Telugu form of salutation which was 'Niku Mokkutamu'. They also adopted Hindu names. The names ended with the Hindu suffixes like 'appa' in men and in women the suffix of 'bibi' was replaced by 'amma'. As such the men were named Pullanna, Hussaingadu etc., and the females as Roshamma, Madamma etc ^[23]. They could not intermarry with other Musalmans and were looked down upon because they were musicians and cotton cleanser. They attended mosques like the Muslims but consulted the Brahmins on auspicious days like marriage ^[24] Though they accepted the authority of the Qazi's, they also worshipped at the Hindu shrines on important occasions.

Luso Indians

In the early period of time when only the Portuguese had come to Andhra, the children born of the Portuguese father and Indian mother were called by this name or by "Mustezas i.e. half bred's" ^[25]. Later on the name was applied to all the children born out of such unions. The father could be an Englishman, a Frenchman, a Dane or a Dutch but the mother was to be an Indian. These children were neither acceptable to the father nor to the mother. They were not brought up properly and spent the days and nights with the servants. No education was given to them and when they grew up they

were found to be not eligible for any job. They could not work hard as they were not used hard work. Their whole life was spent in drinking and loitering here and there. These were a contemptible lot. Some of them were employed as watchmen and warders in the times of troubles on the outskirts by the European factories.

The European also kept Indian "housekeepers" within their houses as European women were very few in India. The foreigners looked after these women well. They were treated more or less as wives and the servants treated her as the mistress of the house. Sometimes, the European men left much off their property to these Indian women and to their illegitimate children. The total amounted to more than the shares of the legitimate children i. e. children born of their legally wedded white wives. These are visible in the wills left by the European men ^[26]. This led to the formation of a separate poor Anglo-Indian clan that consisted of a European father and a European mother. The children born to them in different parts of India continued to stay here and became a permanent resident of the country. Such a class also existed in the Andhra Desa in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Converted Christians

The missionary activity of the foreigners was successful in converting the Hindus to Christianity. They got converted to the different sects of Christianity, like, Catholicism, Protestantism, and other. However, these people also could not give up all the traditional practices of their old religion and continued to follow many of the old practices.

Class Conflicts

During the period under study, the left and the right hand castes, or Idangai and Valangai, were absent from the Andhra Desa. However, there was a struggle by the Sudra community for a higher place in the social ladder and they never reconciled to their low position. They were always demanding certain privileges that were being enjoyed by the higher castes. Sometimes they were allowed and at other times they were disallowed. One finds stray references of class conflicts in the coastal region of the country and in the Nellore District. However, in the lower classes there was hostility that continued up to the 19th century. The rise in the social ladder had become a passion in the minds of the people of Andhra.

The French traveller, Tavernier, has written that there was hostile attitude between the military and the agricultural communities and between the labourers and the artisans. He has mentioned a quarrel among the castes in between 1673 and 1681 A.D. "The artificers including the gold smiths, and the carpenters had been insolent to the higher castes and tyrannical towards their inferiors. The higher castes conspired with husbandmen and labourers to degrade the artificers, and they prevailed on the Muhammadans to help them. Accordingly, the artificers were reduced to the lowest grade of society known as Halal-chors or unclean eaters. Henceforth, the artificers were not allowed to ride in palanquins at marriage and festivals, but only on horse-back. The poorest Hindu, excepting those of the proscribed caste, had a week's jollity at his marriage, going about in a palanquin, attended by guards, carrying swords and javelins, while others bore ensigns denoting the honour of their caste. But if any artificer or low caste man attempted the like, he was dragged back to his quarters by the hair of his head...."

[27].

However in the class of the Untouchables, a lot of ill feeling could be witnessed between the Madigas and the Malas as the former belonged to the left hand caste and the latter to the right hand caste. The fights were basically related to the use of use of certain privileges by either of the two castes. While the Malas resented the use of palanquins at their marriages by the Madigas, the latter continued to carry the bride and the bridegroom through the streets in them and used tinkling ornaments [28].

Even in the 19th century they were continuously fighting amongst themselves. At Kurnool, in 1886 A.D., a Madiga succeeded in obtaining a red cloth from the police Superintendent as a reward. He wore it on the head and rode on a horse in a procession. The Malas resented this and they tried to murder the Superintendent for giving the reward [29]. The upper caste was also not free from internal quarrels. The Brahmins objected to the entry of the Komatis into the Vaishya fold of the caste system. The struggles continued throughout the seventeenth and the eighteenth century. Even in the nineteenth century, though the Komatis have been included in the Vaishya caste, the Brahmins did not accept them as the third caste of the Hindu society. Disputes regarding their performance of the 'Subah', 'Asubah' i.e. auspicious ceremonies according to the Vedic form was raised by the Brahmins of Masulipatnam in 1817 A.D., and adjudicated upon [30]. They very adamantly wore the sacred thread and uttered Gayatri Mantras inspite of the opposition of the Brahmins [31].

The Muslim sect also, was not free from class conflicts. Though they were followers of the same religion, often differences cropped up, in between the different nationalities. The divergent races tried to gain an upper hand, as the region had become their place of inhabitation too. The Arabs, the Pathans and the Mughals, staying at the capital city of Hyderabad, were known as the 'Gharibs' [32].

In 1608 A.D., an unhappy incident place at Nabat Ghat. The 'Nabat Ghat' incident was a tragedy of errors in which, first the 'Gharibs' were ruthlessly massacred. They were shortly after avenged by a general massacre of the Deccanis. The Deccanis who were especially in the police and the military departments were the worst hit by this madness. They were massacred in large numbers. This incident was followed by a 'Firman' or Order issued by Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah for expulsion of the Mughal strangers and the 'Hirzakars' or the triflers. This led to the widespread revolt by the Deccanis against the Sultan. However, the revolt was ruthlessly suppressed. The hatred between the 'Afaqis' or the Persian nobility and the Deccan's increased [33]. Later on the under the Asaf Jahs the difference crept up between the Mulkis and the Non Mulkis i.e. the resident Muslims and the non-resident Muslims of Andhra Desa.

Conclusion

Social Consciousness and Social Immigration and Migration. While there was a rise in the consciousness of the lower classes regarding their social status and thus a horizontal mobility could be witnessed in the society. The period also witnessed a fall in the exalted position of the foremost caste i.e. the Bhramins. In the vertical mobility, one finds the coming in of a number of people into the region of Andhra. The region witnessed the arrival of a number of foreigners during the period under study. There was also an immigration of Indians from the different parts

of India. The main reason of these immigrations was the invitations offered by the Kings of Andhra Desa to them to come and make the place their residence. The region was also very prosperous and attracted the people of different nationalities. The people migrating from Andhra Desa, to different places was another new phenomena witnessed during this period. Some of them migrated to the southern parts; the others had gone overseas in search of livelihood.

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