

Chapter IX

ADVENT OF THE EUROPEANS IN INDIA

India had trade relations with the Europeans from time immemorial. With the arrival of Alexander in India, these relations became still more intimate. Indian goods, which were in great demand in the western countries began to flow in those countries through three main routes. But in the fifteenth century all these routes, because of the rise of the Turkish Empire, came under the control of Turks, who completely blocked them for others. As a result of this blockade the European merchants had to bear a heavy loss because if they bought these things (such as cotton, silken and woollen cloth, jewels, sugar, spices, etc.) from the Turks they had to pay several times the original price. Thus out of necessity they began to find out some alternative route which would lead them to India and at the same time it should be safe from the attacks of the Turks. This difficult task was accomplished by a Portuguese sailor, Vasco-de-Gama, on 27th May 1498, when passing along the western coast of Africa and crossing the Cape of Good Hope he reached the port of Calicut.

The discovery of this new route was an event of great importance in the history of India. All the European nations who played an important part in the history of India, came to this country through this route of Cape of Good Hope. Vasco-de-Gama established friendly relations with King Zamorin of Calicut and got from him the permission for his countrymen to trade with India. When Vasco-de-Gama returned to his country in 1499 with Indian goods and invaluable gifts, his countrymen were simply bewildered to find such a variety of things. Without any delay they sent Vasco-de-Gama to India, the second time in 1501, and established trade relations with India. Thus it were the Portuguese who made the first bid to India. But soon they were followed by some other European nations, like the Dutch, the English and the French; and so they could not enjoy the fruits of their labour single-handed.

SECTION 1

Rise and Fall of Portuguese and Dutch Powers in India

(A) The Portuguese in India

1. Rise of the Portuguese Power—The Portuguese were the first Europeans to trade with India because it were they who first of all discovered the new route of Cape of Good Hope to India. Soon they established their factories at Calicut, Cochin and Cannanore etc., on the west coast of India. Much of the Indian trade was in those days in the hands of the Arab merchants and so they could never reconcile themselves to the idea that their profit should now go to the Portuguese. They very cleverly instigated King Zamorin against the Portuguese who in great fury attacked their establishments. The native ruler was, however, defeated and the Portuguese greatly strengthened their position and established their small colonies on the west coast of India.

The establishment of Portuguese colonies in India necessitated the appointment of a viceroy. **Francisco De Almeida** (1505-1509) was appointed as the first Viceroy of the Portuguese possessions in India. During his tenure of office the Portuguese defeated the Arab traders and put an end to all their conspiracies and exploitations. His policy was to increase the Portuguese naval power so that they might become the masters of the Indian Ocean. In 1509, Almeida was however, killed by the Egyptians.

Albuquerque was the second Viceroy of the Portuguese in India during whose viceroyalty (1509-15) the Portuguese greatly increased their power. He was, undoubtedly, the ablest Portuguese Viceroy in India. In 1510, he conquered Goa from the Sultan of Bijapur and thus established the Portuguese colonial power in India. He once again defeated the Arab merchants and completely crushed their resistance once for all. In 1511, he captured Malacca in Far East and in 1515 he conquered Ormuz in the Persian Gulf and built a fort there. With the permission of the local Raja he got built another fort at Cochin. Albuquerque was also a good administrator. He appointed a large number of Portuguese officers to run the administration. While he persecuted the Muslims, he treated the Hindus liberally and sometimes gave them high posts. He also encouraged marriages of the Portuguese with Indian women. In 1515, he died and was buried at Goa. Thus passed away the real founder



Albuquerque

of the Portugese empire in India who like Clive was every inch a patriot.

The policy of conquests initiated by Albuquerque continued even after his death. By the end of the 16th century the Portugese established a vast empire which extended over hundreds of miles along the west coast of India and included the territories of Goa, Damam, Diu, Bombay, Saleste, Bessein and greater part of Ceylon. In Bengal, they established their settlements at Hooghly and Chittagong. The Portugese empire continued to flourish for about a century and then in the beginning of the 17th century it began to decline.