

Portuguese and Sri Lankan Muslims

M.Y. Zafarullah Khan¹

Sri Lankan Muslims were subject to much oppression and suppression under the Portuguese rule. The King Samorin of Calicut and his Navy under Kunchalees helped the Sinhalese kings to against the Portuguese. In 1518 Sinhalese and Muslims jointly attacked the Fort in Colombo and the Portuguese set fire to two mosques at Colombo. In 1552 King Buvenekabahu VII expelled the Muslims from his Kingdom. Muslims settled down in the Kingdom of Sitawaka.

In 1567 Clergy Council of Goa forbade the calling of Prophet Muhammad's name, recital of Holy Quran. They ordered the arson of places of worship and the handing over of premises and property to the Christian Churches. In 1584 the Army of Aponso Aranchius attacked Beruwela and Weligama. They looted the valuable jewellery of Muslims women and children by chopping their limbs. In 1585 the Thomo de Soosa attacked Galle, Matara and Devinuwara. He allowed his soldiers to loot the Matara as a gift. There was a considerable number of Muslim populations in these 3 areas. In the same year Manuel de Soosa plundered the coastline near Puttlam lagoon. In 1591 Muslims had to face severe loss in the battle between Kunchali Marrikkar's Army and Mendensa's Portuguese Army at Karathiev. In 1597 Viceroy Visigoira Ordered the Muslims to evacuate. In the following years 1613, 1622, 1623 and 1626 Muslims were given expulsion orders by Jerenimo de Azavedo. In 1626 the Portuguese Governor Constantine de Sa strictly implemented these Orders.

In 1597 the Kandyan Army attacked Portuguese Matara Disawani and the Portuguese tortured and killed the Leader of the Muslims and a Commander of the Kandian army Gopala Mudali. In 1614 under the patronage of Dom Pedro Betancor, the mosque located at Pannaithurai in Jaffna was set on fire and the church, of OUR LADY VICTORY was built. The Muslims joined the Hindus under the Yogi "Sikanthar" to fight against the army of Philip Olivera in 1621. They jointly faced several invasions of Jaffna by Constantine Bragansa in 1560 and Mandonza's attack on Kolumbuthurai in 1591. The Portuguese beheaded the Muslims who were seized by them. In 1646 a Portuguese Captain, Antonio de Amrod conducted genocide the Muslims in Matara and send women and children as prisoners to Colombo. In between 1521-1646 the Portuguese launched more than 40 attacks. Among them five attacks on Chillaw and Negambo, four upon Beruwala and Weligama. Under these atrocities the "Makthab", (traditional Muslim School System), all the mosques in the coast, their language, called "Arvi" traditional Arts and Crafts, sports, historical evidence. Technology, Unani medicine were Vanished. In brief, the Portuguese invasion destroyed the identity of the Muslims of Sri Lanka.

Key Words: Portuguese; Sri Lankan; Muslims; Traditional Arts

¹ Muslim Historical Study Circle, Sri Lanka.