कोकण इतिहास परिषद
श्रांत निवंथ संग्रह
(खंड ४)

स्री.के. ठाकूर महात्मागांधी, नातिन फानींकेश रोड़े संपादन जगलेल्या
कोकण इतिहास परिषद्याच्या हस्ते अनिबांधनात तारक
जगलेल्या निवंथ शोधनाच्या संग्रह

प्रमुख संपादक
डॉ. विजय अर्जुन कुलकर्णी
इतिहास शिक्षण,
संस्थान सचिव महासचिवालय,
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Elephanta Island also shows that the increase in the sea-level in the first sixth or seven centuries after Christ were perhaps responsible for the submergence of the wharf-cum-jetty.

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Multi-religious Heritages of Thane

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Thane city is the abode of multi-religious faiths. Strategically important Thane always remained the centre of attraction for foreigners as well as many indigenous dynasties. Thane was earlier known as Shri-sthanak. It has been situated on western banks of Thane Creek, surrounded by Puram hills in the East and Yeoor hills on the West. The Creek and hilly surroundings provided natural protection to the land. It also facilitated transport of ships thereby developing trade and commerce. Suitable geographical conditions, easy navigation and rich natural beauty enhanced the importance of the land. Continuous trading connections and rule of foreigners as well as indigenous rulers left traces of different religious monuments. For centuries, the harmonious spirit of Thane has been patronising all heritages which represent different religious faiths of the world.

Prosperity of Thane attracted many invaders. In 626 AD, Thane was plundered by Usman bin Asi Salti, the Governor of Bahrain and Oman. (1) In 660 AD Thane was sacked by Arabs. (2) According to Shilahara Copper-plate of 1018 AD, Thane was the chief town of Shilahara dynasty. [3] Two Shilahara Inscriptions of 1026 AD and 1094 AD mentioned that Shri-sthanak was a chief port [4]. In 1153 AD, leitzi mentions the city as a pretty town [5]. Thane city became well known port city in 13th century AD. In 1273, Ab-ul-Fida called Thane as the best city [6]. Popular historian Ibn Batuta in 1344, mentions Thane as chief port city from where ships of large burden went to Aden [7]. All references shows that Thane was an important city during ancient and medieval time.

From 9th to 15th century AD the city was ruled by Shilahara and Bimbi Hindu dynasties and Muslim rulers of Gujarat. From 16th to 18th century AD, it experienced the rule of Portuguese, Maratha and British. Due to presence of different religious communities as a ruler, as a traveller and as a subject Thane became the Centre of multi-religious monuments.
Thane city is the land of temples. Among them some temples are old temples. Shilakaya dynasty ruled Thane from 810 to 1260 AD. They were worshipper of Lord Shiva. Many temples of Lord Shiva were constructed during their period. Among them the Kopineshwar temple is most popular. It was destructed by Portuguese and later re-constructed by Sir sadashiv Ramji Mahadeo Bivalkar in about 1760. When Salsette had captured by Marathas. [8] It formerly enjoyed an yearly government allowances of Rs. 105 and was repaired in 1879 by the Hindu community, at the cost of Rs. 8000. [9] The principal deity of this temple is Shiva Linga which is of 5 feet diameter and 5 feet tall. This is the biggest Shiva-Linga in Maharashtra. [10] Within the holy enclosure of the Kopineshwar temple there are several small shrines dedicated to Brahma, Ganpati, Shiva, Dattatreya, etc. Opposite to the shrine of kalika devi, there is another shrine dedicated to Gayatri Devi in front of which there are two lamp posts. Kalika devi temple formerly enjoyed government allowance of Rs. 42 and Rs. 60 per annum. [11] A, the main entrance of the temple, there is Shiva's bullock or Nandi. Above which is constructed Nagarkhana drum chamber. By the side of the entrance to the main shrine are two lamp posts the Shalankha or the Pindi which are made out of white marble. The shrine dedicated to Shri Rama and Shri Hanuman has been renovated recently. It has been maintained by Kopineshwar Trust from 1952 till date. Different activities are organised as public activities such as Shri Ramjansotu, Shri Hanuman Jayaarti, Shankara Charya Jayanti, Savajani Ganesh Utsav, Shri Dhananji Jayanti, Tripuri Purnima Gita Jayanti, Durvijayanti Mahashiva ratri, Mahuradrabhashakti etc.[12] It established a Library in 1977. It is known as Gyan Kendra. Here there are 8378 books in Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, English from 19th years Gyan Kendra has been organising Sammelan on Religion and philosophy.[13]

Another old Hindu temple is Ghanjali temple. According to Rajayepta, this temple got financial grant of Rs. 4 during Peshwa period. Dutt temple near Chenandoli-Kollwadi was constructed in 1889.

The John Baptist church is the oldest church of Thane. It was constructed by Portuguese in 1663. It is situated in the north side of Thane. It was re-constructed twice. The building was originally dedicated to St. Antony of Padua by Franciscan friars about 1540. [13] When the original church of St. John the Baptist was destroyed, St. Anthony church was made the Parish church and dedicated to St. the Baptist. It is said that in order to build the church and convent of St. Anthony, Antonio do Porto pulled down 12 Pagodas which were round a great lake. [14] The Church burnt the date 1669, at a side door way of the south end of the has 1663 and the main entrance has 1725.

St. James church is located near jail talao and Thane post office. It is a protestant church popularly known as English Church. It was built in 1825 at the cost of Rs. 48,089. This ancient church is beautifully constructed in Gothic architectural style. The length is 90 feet, width is 60 feet and height from the top of the steeple is 70 feet. At the main entrance of the church there are 6 pillars measuring height of 15 feet which is surrounding a magnificent 350 square feet and 24 feet high porch made of Greek stone. The main centre of the church is adorned with wooden ceiling and it is 55 feet wide with a height of 24 feet.

There were British soldiers and officers in charge of prison inside Thane Fort. They had additional duty to safeguard the mercantile ships from sea pirates. The need for a protestant church arose for these British soldiers and their families. [15] It was constructed by Governor of Bombay, Mount Stuart Elphinstone with the help of Captain Tatean, Architect in the army. [16] During that time Rev. Reginald Heber came to Pune to consecrate the church. He travelled to Thane through dense forest of sahyadri mountain. He consecrated and named it as St. James church in the memory of James a disciple of Jesus Christ on 25th July 1825. [17] After independence most of the British soldier left for England and Australia thus the church membership reduced to a handful of 4-6 families. After 1962, Thane was industrialised and the parsonage of church compound was taken up by the Mulund cement company. In the church yard, there is an oldest cemetery. There are some old tombs inside it such as John Vaugan dated 1780, of Charles Driffield dated 1784 and of Stephen Babington dated 1822. [18] The church which was managed by the government until the dawn of independence is now under the administration of Bombay Diocesan Trust Association. The chief priest of the church is Rev. Vishwas P. Ingle, the secretary is Adv. Sunil Bhakre and the treasurer is Shri Sandesh Hivale.
Thane has an old Synagogue Worship place of Jews. It is known as Shaar Hashamaim-Gate of Heaven and it is an important centre of Jewish activities. Jews in Thane are called Bene-Israel, a historic community in India who live in harmony with other religious communities. Today 40% of Jewish Population in India is residing in and around Thane. The foundation stone of this Synagogue Which was led on 26th March 1878 and completed on 29th Dec. 1879 and consecrated on 30th Dec. 1879. The synagogue was renovated in 1999.[19]

Thane was a fort city having military head quarters and also the Maratha rulers ruled from this fort city. Most of the Jews held high position in military regime like Subedar, Major, Mukadam and Sudder Bahadur and so on. The Jews had contribution in constructing the famous Parsi Tunnel land also in laying the first railway track between Bombay and Thane in 1853.

Parsi Agiary of Thane was constructed by Cawji Rousmji Patell in 1780. The Parsi settlements of Thane and chaul in the north Konkan existed much before the coming of the Muslim invaders to Gujarat. Arab traveller Misar Bin Mukhtalah noted that in Salmur or Chaul there were Mussalmans, Christians, Jews and Fire worshippers and in the city there were mosques, Christian churches, Synagogues and fire temples.[20] Kaneshi inscription of 1009 and 1021 also indicate Parsi presence in Konkan. It may be one of the reason that due to invasion and rule of Muslim ruler in 14th century they migrated from Gujarat to Thane. Till the 17th century the population of Thane increased in Thane. Some of the Shilahara inscription mentioned about Parsi settlement in Thane. One grant was made in 1081 to Khosrow Mandili. Three grants were made in 1018, 1026 and in 1094 AD to Hanjam a possible corruption of Anjuman, a term used by Zoroastrians to mean society or Community. Three decades ago there only handful Zoroastrian families domiciled in the four century old Thane. The burden of keeping alive along with the regular performing of religious ceremonies which was managed by one Mobed Sahib. [21] Later Agiary was constructed by the efforts of Community members. At present Mr. Besania and some other trustees are managing the Agiary.

There are two Jain temples are in Thane at near Tembhi Naka. The new temple took about 20 years to complete and the construction started before First World War. The temple had two majestic elephant in marble at the entrance. It has an inner chamber. The entire wall of inner chamber depicts pictorial form. [22] The colourful ornamented walls look majestic. This temple is open for all. It is maintained by Shri Rishabh Ji Maharaj Jain Dharma and Jaiti Trust, Thane. The chief trustee is Mr. Namjali.

There are old settlements of Muslim in Mahagiri, Tembhi, Hazuri, Rabodi and Kalwa. There is an 350 years old mosque in Mahagiri that is known as Jama masjid.[23] It was repaired during the seventies of the last century by the widow of Jushab Manun of a coat of 10,000. It formally received an allowance of Rs.20.[24] In Rabodi there are two 300 years old masjids Juma Masjid and Nur Masjid.[25]

Multi-Religious Thane city is growing and expanding fast because all these communities are living peacefully. Harmonious spirit of Thane city is giving patronage to every religious community and religious monument. It can be said, "Thane is a mini India".

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