



The Portuguese in Malabar: A Social History of Luso Indians

By Charles Dias

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The 500 year old community of Portuguese descendants in Malabar, now called Kerala, is composed of an interesting group of people. This book is an attempt to go deep into the history of European interaction with Malabar, concentrating on the Portuguese period from the end of the fifteenth century to present times, exploring their commercial and religious interventions in Malabar and the resultant political polarization and social changes. The Portuguese found it necessary to create a social group faithful to them for the protection of their trade centres and in the bargain there occurred an inevitable creation of an ethnic social group of Portuguese descendants. The blockade of Constantinople by Ottoman Turks in 1453, practically prevented Europeans from trading with Asian countries. So, it became a necessity for Europeans to find a new sea-route to India. Several European powers tried for this, especially Spain and Portugal. Finally, Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese navigator reached Calicut in 1498. Vasco da Gama was followed by Pedro Alvares Cabral in 1500 and the creation of the so called Estado da India Portuguesa (Portuguese State of India) by the posting of Francisco de Almeida as the first Viceroy in 1505. The policy of Politica dos Casamentos (politics through marriages) introduced by Afonso de Albuquerque, the second Viceroy, by marrying Portuguese soldiers with Indian women and the resultant mixed race or mestices which eventually formed the Luso-Indian community in Malabar. The casados (married Portuguese men) and their role in Portuguese trade in Malabar forms an important part of this volume. The Dutch invasion of Cochin in 1663 and the mixing of Luso-Indians with the Dutch, English and other Europeans who came to Malabar in later years and the present structure of the Anglo-Indian community, their settlements, institutions, cultural influences, attachment with Catholic Church is discussed in detail in this volume, making it a valuable document for scholars as well as the lay readers.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Charles Dias has a PhD in history from the University of Calicut, and together with the late Stephen Padua, he established the Indo-Portuguese Cultural Institute in Kochi. In 2009, he was nominated to the Parliament of India to represent the Anglo-Indian community.

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