CHAPTER II

PORTUGUESE SOCIETY AND CULTURE AT THE CLOSE OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The interaction between the Portuguese and Malabar societies is a unique phenomenon as it was the first interaction between a Western European Society and an Eastern Society on a lasting basis. A study of this interaction necessitates the study of a short history of Portuguese society and culture without which we will not be able to find the underlying principles of interaction.

II. 1. The Formation of Independent Portugal

Large tracts of land of Portugal were still under the Mouros\(^1\) in the twelfth century. The Portuguese, being Catholics had a crusading spirit towards the moors. It was the spirit of the time in Christian countries. The Portuguese wanted to liberate the vast tracts of land under the Muslim domination. Affonso Henriques (c1106-85) of Portugal realised this dream project of the Portuguese. Accordingly, he defeated the Moors near Ourique in 1139. After this victory, he declared himself the King of Portugal. The monarchy established by Affonso Henriques marked the beginning of Portuguese independence.\(^2\) In 1147, Santarém and Lisbon were recaptured with the help of the French, German and English crusaders. In 1250, the Moors were driven out of Algarve, the last province under the occupation of the Moors. These conquests and raids against the Moors and their success were continued even outside Portugal. In 1340, the combined forces of Portugal and Spain won over the Moorish kingdoms of Granada and Morocco at the Salado River in Spain. Then, their attention turned towards Africa, and Cêuta was conquered in 1415. The Spanish Granada, which was the stronghold of the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula, was also captured in 1492.\(^3\)

---

1 Mouros is a term used by the Portuguese to signify the Muslims.
II. 2. Age of Discoveries

The Portuguese attempts to explore African coast were dominated by three factors. First, Portugal needed slaves for tilling the lands of Southern Portugal vacated by the Moors. Secondly the Portuguese had the greed for gold, which was said to be in abundance in Africa. And finally, the Portuguese had a craving for pepper and other spices for food, which was becoming a mania in Europe.⁴

Amidst the series of successes in the Iberian Peninsula and Africa, the Capture of Constantinople by the Turks was a terrible shock to the Christendom.⁵ It had its economic consequences for Europe. The profitable spice trade between the Orient and the Occident fell into the hands of the Turks who pocketed large amount of profits. The Christian West had to depend upon the Moorish or Turkish merchants heavily for the spices of the East, which were in high demand in Europe. Thus the Muslim middlemen had drained much wealth from Europe.

Against this backdrop, enmity to the Moors, Christening spirit of the Portuguese and the need for a new maritime trade route for trade in spices between the East and the West were the driving force behind the maritime activities of the Portuguese. Thus the series of expeditions and explorations became an affair of national interest.⁶

Pope Alexander VI had assigned to Spain all lands south and west of a North-South line drawn in Atlantic between Azores and the Cape Verde Islands in 1493. The Portuguese got the Eastern hemisphere for their further exploration.⁷ Through the Treaty of Tordesilhas of 1494 between Portugal and Spain, the Portuguese succeeded in getting the line of demarcation, given by the Pope moved 370 leagues to the West.⁸ Thus Brazil fell under the Portuguese sphere.⁹

---

⁵ ibid., p. 139. See also J. B. Trend, Portugal, London, 1957, p. 143.
Against this backdrop, the Portuguese organised the maritime expedition to India, the original source of the much-wanted spices for Europe. Vasco da Gama, a member of an ordinary noble family was entrusted with the task of leading a fleet to India. The motto of this voyage was ‘for Christians and spices’. The geographical knowledge, spread in Europe through various travellers like Marco Polo (1264-1324) had inspired the Christian world. The Europeans had blindly believed that many Asian countries were Christian and the only feasible thing was to bring them under the jurisdiction of the Pope. The legend of Prester John, a great Christian ruler of the East also had encouraged the Christian world to take up the voyage to the East.10

II. 3. Portuguese Society and Culture

The society that had been emerging in Portugal after its conquest and gradual annexation by Affonso Henriques was mainly an agrarian one. In the North of the River Duro which was densely populated, the land was owned by the king, nobles and the Church to one of which the people owed allegiance. The common peasants were not free. There were different forms of slavery and serfdom in those areas. At the same time, in the south there were better opportunities for the peasants. In the southern areas from where the Moors were driven out, much land was lying uncultivated. The virgin land was an attraction for these peasants who flocked to the south where feudal restrictions were not very severe. The settlers were encouraged by the grant of so many privileges. During Affonso Henriques large tracts of land were entrusted to the Military Orders for the sake of security and settlement.11

The emergence of King Dinis who was popularly known as the ‘farmer king’ gave an impetus for added agricultural activities. Farming was the main economic activity. They used to produce grain, wine, flax, hides and bee wax. They were engaged in rearing cattle and sheep also.12 To meet the challenges of the growing population, new tracts of land were opened for cultivation and these lands were

0 ibid., p. 277.
12 José Hermano Saraiva, Portugal: A Companion History, p. 18.
entrusted either to Military or Monastic orders or to the town councils or free settlers. Because of the demand for olive oil and wine from abroad, vineyards and olive groves were extended.\textsuperscript{13}

They cultivated vegetable plants, cereals, fruits and wine. Agricultural products were also exported. People engaged in rearing cattle and sheep and also in fishing.\textsuperscript{14} The kings always encouraged the people to cultivate land and produce more. Vineyards and Olive groves were given special attention.\textsuperscript{15} The people also worked in flourmills and water mills, which were owned by the nobility.\textsuperscript{16}

Many people earned their livelihood through fishing. It continued as one of the bases of the economy of Portugal during the fifteenth century. Fish was exported. Fishing continued to be a great occupation of the inhabitants of Viana do Castelo, Ponte de Lima and Vila do Conde where people depended on the exportation of fish.\textsuperscript{17} It was fishing that bred generations of seamen and crew for the later maritime explorations.

The main industries of this period were textile and leather. During this period there developed weaving for artistic as well as commercial purposes. Linen was cultivated in different parts of the country.\textsuperscript{18} The people also explored new iron mines. From the iron so obtained they made nails, horseshoes and other iron implements. In addition to iron, silver, lead and precious stones were also explored. Salt was either mined or panned. Besides, there was the ship-making industry.\textsuperscript{19} These ships were mainly used for fishing purpose. But later on armed ships and ships for international traffic were also constructed. For the ships, lateen sails, anchors, cables, ropes, wood, planks, iron and so on were used.\textsuperscript{20} During the fifteenth century, the soap making became very popular. It was extended to the whole of the country.

At the time of Prince Henrique, it was to be produced only with the license.\textsuperscript{21} During the fourteenth century there was an increase in the number of industries. One of the main reasons for this increase was the coming of artisans from other countries. Thus there developed metallic industry, making of arms, glass and so on.\textsuperscript{22}

There developed internal trade and external trade in Portugal. Internal trade was conducted in fairs and also through wandering merchants. In medieval Portuguese society there were fairs, which were held especially during feasts of the Church. The first ever-documented fair in Portugal was in the year 1229 held in Castelo Mendo thrice a year. During the successive periods the number of fairs increased and extended. It was an occasion for buying and selling commodities for day-to-day life. The kings used to issue orders in such a way to protect the fairs.\textsuperscript{23} The main commodities dealt with in these fairs were wine, wheat, barley, rye, nuts, chestnuts, pigeons, hens, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, cows, horses, mules, donkeys, linseed, iron and so on.\textsuperscript{24} Between 1250-1300 some thirty official markets were established. To encourage trade, the merchants visiting such official markets were exempted from paying taxes. Agricultural products like wine, olive oil and honey were taken to these markets. Foreign trade developed through the mouth of Duro, Mondego and Tagus. Commodities like oil, honey, wine, fruits, fish and cork were exported to France, Flanders, England, West Mediterranean and Baltic Countries. This gave an added impetus to the middle class traders and cultivators. When the volume of trade increased, an urban middle class also developed along with it. The Jews, who were there in abundance, participated in this fortune-seeking endeavour and acted as middlemen between the Christians and the Moors.\textsuperscript{25} By the end of the fifteenth century, Portugal was capable of exporting commodities she gained from her overseas possessions such as sugar, wood, vegetable colours, and spices from the coast of Africa. The main imports to Portugal included cereals, manufactured cloth, weapons for war, and metallic objects. By this time the Port of Lisbon was in a

\textsuperscript{23} ibid., vol. II, pp. 539-541.
\textsuperscript{24} J. B. Trend, op. cit., p. 86.
position to receive large commercial ships coming from different countries. The main areas from where imports were made were England, France, Flanders and Ireland. Through the trade with different countries of Western Europe, the Portuguese understood the worth of maritime trade and its relevance for country's economy. It was because of this that, even 'Maritime Exchange' was introduced in Portugal as one of the earliest insurance organization in Europe. Together with it towns also began to develop with a large number of traders and craftsmen. By the fourteenth century, the merchants of Porto and Lisbon became so influential that they were able to sign treaty with the Edward III, the king of England. Capital began to be accumulated in Portugal through trade and shipping. Along with the market oriented production of commercial crops, the food shortage occurred in Portugal. Anyway the trade was very prosperous during fourteenth century.

The society was divided into three estates as was common in Western Europe-the clergy, nobility and the commoners.

II. 3. 1. Portuguese Clergy

The Church was well established. Under each diocese, there were many parishes, which were run by the 'secular clergy'. The regular clergy was living in various monasteries and convents under different orders. On certain occasions, the members of the military orders as well as the third orders were considered as members of the clergy.

There were a lot of clergy in Portugal during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was a privileged estate. The church had a proper organisation and hierarchical structure. Pope was the Supreme Pontiff and head of the Catholic

26 ibid., pp. 286, 288.
Church. Though he resided outside the country, he had much control over the catholic kings of Europe as even kings were subject to the authority of Pope. The Civil Laws had nothing to do with the clergy and other ecclesiastical officers as they were subject to the Canon Law. This made their position more secure. On the other hand the society was subservient to the clergy because of their specific spiritual functions. Thus church was like a separate state within the State. There were times when Pope became more powerful than the king. For example, Pope succeeded in deposing king Sancho II in 1245. It shows how powerful were the Church and the clergy. The clergy was represented in the courts by bishops, abbots, priors and temporally by the masters of the military orders. The clergy could be judged only in an ecclesiastical court.

The clergy had a lot of economic benefits. The people made generous offerings to the clergy especially at the time of the administration of different Sacraments. They were also given offerings for the celebration of divine cult. People, in addition to the tithes, generously contributed to the construction of churches and chapels. Many left their material possessions with the church after their death. Thus Church became very rich. Almost all important buildings in Portugal were Church’s property. Many cathedrals and abbeys came into being. But at the same time the clergy was exempt from paying taxes to the state. Because of all these factors the clergy remained to be the most privileged estate in the society.

II. 3. 2. The Nobility

The second estate of Portuguese society comprised of the nobility. Their origin can be traced from various sources. Some of them became nobles because of the service that they rendered to the king; some others because of the high administrative offices they held; still a few others because of their more or less extensive territorial possessions and yet others because of the inheritance of the old

36 Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, op. cit., pp. 87, 88.
aristocratic blood. Like the clergy, it was also a privileged class. They were also exempt from the tributes to the king. Actually the distinguishing mark between the noble and ‘ignoble was in taxation. The nobles were exempt from taxation and at the same time there were a lot of privileges from the royal exchequer.

They had a lot of leisure time. Many of them were engaged in discoveries and in getting knowledge from various sources. They also used to assist the king by their counsel. The qualities that were demanded from the nobles of this period were devotion to chivalry and religion and crusade against the infidel. The fate of the nobility depended upon the king. Many nobles were surviving because of the regular income from the king. At his pleasure he distributed crown land to the nobles. At the same time king could impose restrictions on them. For example, they were forbidden from owning fortresses. So their independence and power depended on kings will.

The nobility used to serve the king as the military class. But in the fourteenth century, as there were no re-conquests the nobility had lost their role as the military class.

Among the nobility there were different ranks. The members of the royal curia, barons, the masters of the order of knighthood and certain abbots formed the first rank of nobility called ricos-homens. They had the right to put the title Dom along with their names. They were lesser in number. They had large tracts of land and a considerable amount of sovereignty over them. They had a lot of tenants who were protected by them. The second rank was of the lesser nobility known as infancões, who were without civil and military authority. They were many in number. They were known as fidalgos.

41 P. E. Russel, op. cit., p. 6
42 José Hermano Saraiva, Portugal: A Companion History, p. 20.
43 ibid., p. 24.
As we have already seen, due to the increase in trade, a new middle class had originated in Portugal. John of Avis established a new nobility of middle class origin, ignoring the old nobility. During the fifteenth century the new middle class men rose in social status. For example in the Senate of Lisbon, in between 1432-1451, there were barbers, goldsmiths, belt makers, carpenters, shear men or cloth workers, shoemakers, and weavers who were incorporated into the royalty. But in course of time, they also became like the old nobility. Various rulers created different offices to accommodate the nobility. John of Avis created the Office of King of Arms for the recording of all grants of title and privileges. Weak Afonso II created additional ranks of nobility such as marquis, viscount and baron. He bestowed upon them so many excessive privileges that the kingdom reached at the brim of impoverishment. But later on King John II succeeded in re-stabilising his power.

II. 3. 3. The Commoners

All those who were outside the clergy and nobility were considered as members of the third estate, the unprivileged class. Among the commoners there were different groups. Below the nobility stood the cavaleiros-vilãos who were the highest class of the free commoners. They had to maintain warhorses and arms of their own which were to be put at the service of the king whenever demanded. The tax obligations fell only lightly on them. Because of some special privileges, they were counted equal to the infanções, the lesser nobility of the second estate. Being warriors, they had very significant role in the state.

The rest among the commoners were unfree classes who were in some form of serfdom. They were attached to the estates of the kings, nobles and the clergy. They fell prey to serfdom through capture, debt or personal preference. The serfdom was connected with land. Therefore the land was normally sold with the serfs. Their emancipation was possible under certain conditions. In addition to them there was an intermediate unfree class comprising of juniors whose position is obscure. But it seems that they could not move freely. Another class among the commoners was that

46 Joaquin Veríssimo Serrão, História de Portugal (1415-1495), Lisboa, 1980, p. 252.
of Clients (*Malados*) who were freemen who had accepted shelter from a baron to whom he paid taxes and offered other services. He had to submit almost half of his possession to the baron or ecclesiastic in return to the protection he enjoyed from the lord.⁴⁹

### II. 4. Aspects of Society and Culture

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were periods of hectic transformation in Western Europe- a transition from medieval to modern world. It was a period of hectic change. A new society was slowly evolving receiving from the past history and cultural contacts. Two important mentalities of the society that evolved were hostility towards the Muslims and Jews and the enthusiasm for national enterprise of maritime activities.

#### II. 4.1. The Muslim Question

Even after the re-conquest of Portugal from the Moors, many Moors adopted Portugal as their country and stayed there. They were allowed to have Mosques and they could practise their religion. But to reduce communication between the Moors and Christians, the Moors were given separate areas for habitation. Such areas were called *Mourarias*. The entry of Moors in Christian houses and vice versa, and the participation in their feasts were prohibited. The Monarch as well as the Church took necessary measures to implement these restrictions. They were to have distinguishing dress. Many of them worked as shoemakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, masons and potters. They were expected to pay tribute to the king. But by the time of Dom Manuel, they were asked either to receive baptism or quit the country.⁵⁰

As we have already seen the antagonism towards the Muslims was very severe in Portugal. It might have been because of the subjugation of Portugal by the Moors for a long time. It was from the Moors that a good area of the country was liberated. Secondly, the crusading spirit was still alive in Europe. Many rulers, due to their attempts to get support from Rome were always ready to fight against the Muslims.

---

⁵⁰ Joel Serrão, ed., *Dicionário de História de Portugal*, vol. IV, pp. 352-353.
who were considered as the perpetual enemies of the Church. Thus knowingly or
unknowingly an anti-Islamic spirit was there in the blood of the Portuguese. Though
the Muslims were living peacefully in Portugal during the fifteenth century, whenever
there was an opportunity they were compulsorily converted to Christianity. 51

II. 4.2. The Jewish Question

Another crucial issue that developed during the closing decade of the fifteenth
century was the question of the Jews. Almost nothing is known about the origin of the
Jews in Portugal. But they were found settled in Lisbon, Santarém, Coimbra, Porto,
Guarda, Évora and Faro. By the thirteenth century they became very powerful
economically and politically. They were found serving as tax collectors, court
doctors, astrologers and intermediaries between the Christians and the Moors. During
the fourteenth century, especially during the reign of Dom Dinis we see the Chief
Rabbi, Dom Judas as the administrator of his treasury. In 1390, D. João I decided
that the Jews should have a distinguishing mark. He decided that they should have a
red star of six points or corners put on the chest in a visible manner. Those who
violated this were punished. 52 The Jews had spiritual life of their own centred around
their houses, Synagogues and cemeteries in their areas. It was a small world, which
was inaccessible to the Christians. Sometimes there used to have conflicts between
the Jews and the Christians. For instance, in Viano do Castelo, the Jews used to eat
much flesh and eggs during the Lenten season and the Holy Week. This used to create
tension between the Christians and the Jews. 53

They used to engage in all sorts of occupations. The Jews used to work as
goldsmiths, dyers, blacksmiths, tailors, butchers, merchants, and cobblers. But they
were less interested in working on land. But among them we could see farmers, one
who pressed fruits, contractors of fruits, and millers. 54

In Spain from the last decade of the fourteenth century onwards many Jews
were baptised. But many of them were not strictly practising Christianity. Against

51 Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, História de Portugal (1415-1495), pp. 254, 255.
52 ibid., p. 256. See also H. V. Livermore, A New History of Portugal, pp. 125, 126
53 Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, História de Portugal (1415-1495), p. 258.
54 ibid., p. 259.
such a background, in 1478, the Catholic monarchs of Spain obtained from the Pope the right to establish an Inquisition to destroy heresy. Its actual intention was to enquire into the activities of the new Jewish converts to Christianity and make them observe strictly the obligations of the Church. Slowly the rulers decided to expel all the Jews from Spain within four months from 31 March 1492.55

At the same time the Portuguese Jews were in a better position enjoying so many privileges in the royal courts. Therefore the attention of the Spanish Jews turned towards Portugal, the king of which was ready to accept them at the payment of a fixed amount in spite of the complaints from the Portuguese people. Thus about 60,000 Jews were admitted in Portugal.56 King Dom Manuel who had the intention of establishing matrimonial alliance with Spain followed the example of the Spanish monarchs who held that their daughters would not be sent to Portugal unless either he converted the whole Jews or expelled them from the country. Thus the life of the Jews became very miserable in Portugal and all scorned them.57 Even those Jews who were converted to Christianity also had to face discrimination in Portugal as ‘old Christians’ and ‘new Christians’.58

II. 4. 3. Idea of Mare Clausum

The two nations of the Iberian Peninsula- Spain and Portugal were holding the doctrine of Mare Clausum according to which the exploration of the seas of the world were the rights of these countries by virtue of various bulls issued by the Popes. No other countries of Europe had right over the seas for further exploration.59

II. 4. 4. Religious Sentiments

Portuguese people of this period were very religious. There were Cathedrals, Parish Churches and hermitages in rural as well as urban areas. Even the kings were very pious that they prayed and did works of Charity. The kings, clergy and the civil

56 ibid., pp. 126, 127.
58 Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, História de Portugal (1415-1495), pp. 262, 263.
59 ibid., p. 259. See also H.V. Livermore, A New History of Portugal, p. 40.
nobility used to recite the Liturgy of the Hours. From sunrise to sunset, there were spiritual exercises to be practised. The people used to keep the ancient traditions in the fulfilment of the daily worships, feasts, novenas, vows, visit of shrines, solemn celebration of feasts and so on.60

II. 4. 5. Culture of Building Fortresses and Churches

Even before the discovery of India, the Portuguese had started the building up of fortresses and Churches. They were constructed with a view to showing military presence of the Portuguese as well as Christian faith. Accordingly they had built both churches and fortresses in Morocco, in the Atlantic Islands and on the Coasts of Africa. The Churches and Chapels were built for the spiritual needs of the occupants.61

II. 4. 6. Education

In medieval Portugal, according to the Canons of the III Council of Lateran, there was a School Master (Mestre-escola) in every diocese who was in charge of the studies of the diocese. These schools had their origin in the seminaries, which were established to train the candidates to priesthood. In addition to the diocesan schools there were parochial schools also.62

This kind of education developed mainly in ecclesiastical subjects. Schools of Theology existed in Braga, Coimbra and Alcobaça even before the foundation of the University of Lisbon.63 King D. Afonso V is considered as the protector of studies. He used to give scholarships to students for carrying out studies in the University of Lisbon as well as in foreign universities in Italy and France. The students were mainly selected from the nobility. Children of some jurists and doctors were also selected. Many libraries took shape in convents and churches mainly for the use of the clergy and the educated. These libraries housed books pertaining to breviary.

60 Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, História de Portugal (1415-1495), pp. 322, 324, 326.
ecclesiastical music, theology, philosophy, and Sacred Scripture. Various convents and religious houses began to specialise in subjects like Grammar, Philosophy, and Theology. The kings used to encourage setting up a number of libraries in the country.64

The number of books written during this period was not very numerous. By the end of the fifteenth century, printing was started in Portugal. The first book was printed in Chaves in 1489. But as many books had a single copy only, many of them did not survive.65

II. 4. 7. Hospitals and Charitable Institutions (Misericórdia)

Many hospitals as well as religious houses were established under the initiatives of the crown in the fifteenth century. Big and modern hospitals with the assistance of the physicians and surgeons were established during the second half of the fifteenth century. The Physicians were given training and a Chief Physician whose certificate was essential to practise examined them. Fake physicians were caught and punished in the absence of proper license and certificates. There were also pharmacies for supplying medicines. 66

Misericórdia was a charitable institution in Portugal to assist those who are in need. It has its origin in various charitable institutions of the Christian world. Misericórdias were established in important places like Lisboa, Porto, and Évora. It was considered as part of Christian charity.67

II. 4. 8. Slavery

After the African expansion of 1439, many Negroes were taken captives from there to be sold or shared in Portugal. The Portuguese used to justify the slavery as part of the cruelty of the economic man and also as a phenomenon of all times.68

64 Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, História de Portugal (1415-1495), pp. 310-312, 320-322.
65 José Hermano Saraiva, História de Portugal, p. 156.
These captives were baptised and made part of the society. They participated in the familial life of the master. Some of them inherited the property of their masters and even married women of the land. The Church also helped them for the integration of the slaves into the society. They worked as agricultural labourers, and domestic servants.69

II. 4. 9. Food Habits

The staple food of the Portuguese people consisted of cereals, meat, fish and wine.70 They had only two principal meals- The Lunch and Dinner. Lunch was between 10-11 am. and the dinner was between 6-7 pm. Lunch was the main meal of the day. Among the kings, clergy and nobles there were three dishes in addition to soup and desert. Among the less privileged the dishes might be two or even one. For dinner there were more or less two dishes.71

The basic nutrition was meat. Meat of cow, pork, sheep, calf, rabbit and birds like hen, duck, goose, and pigeon, were obtained through rearing or hunting. They were also available in the market. Fish was part of the basic food of the ordinary people. At the same time because of religious prescriptions use of meat was forbidden in Lent. During Lent, the clergy and the nobles had to give up meat and resort to fish. There was fasting for almost 68 days in a year. During Lent and fasting meat, eggs, cheese, butter, fat and big fish were forbidden. The Church encouraged vegetables, fruits and small fish during the Lenten season.72

II. 4. 10. Art and Architecture

In the fifteenth century, the Gothic style, which came from abroad, was still in use in Portugal as was in other parts of Europe.73 At the end of the reign of D. João II, the gothic style gave way to a style, which could be called proto-Manueline.74
It was only during the reign of King Dom Manuel that an architectural style typical to the Portuguese originated. This new style was known as Manueline after the name of King Dom Manuel. It was a style of decoration rather than a style of architecture. This style was influenced by both foreign and native elements. The style accepted both old and new without criticism. Even the contradictory principles were accommodated. It was the reflection of indiscipline in the society. The spirit of discoveries was also expressed in this style. Several civil, religious and military buildings were constructed in this style in Portugal.75

The Moorish architectural influence upon Christian building was evident; it was because of the fact that Portugal was ruled over by the Moors for about 200 years in the North and 600 years in the South. Portuguese architecture adopted a modest scale and simple construction form. Limestones, white plaster and local granites were used for constructions. Domes were seldom built in Portugal. Inside the Church there appeared the images of saints made in human form.76

The Portuguese developed interest in painting too. We can see specimen of the practice of illumination in the manuscripts of the fourteenth century. The first mural painting appeared in the Cathedral of Braga around the year 1330-34. Later on the Portuguese were influenced by foreign elements like Italian paintings.77 Many paintings had religion as their subjects.78 As artists worked in studios with the help of assistants and a master painter, the paintings had a collective character. Therefore identification of the artist is rather impossible.79

Thus the Portuguese society of the fifteenth century was a unique Western society economically organised into three sectors of production such as agriculture, industries and trade and commerce. Portugal had a rather favourable economy

76 ibid., pp.152, 161, 163.
because of the export of commodities but its land was not so fertile. Therefore the Portuguese were compelled to turn their attention to the sea, which led to the maritime activities and culminated in the geographical discoveries especially the discovery of India. The Society was sharply divided into three estates; the former two consisting of the clergy and the nobility had a privileged position in the society whereas the members of the third estate were having a life submissive to the privileged estates. This means that there were social inequalities but the fate of the last estate was less miserable when compared to the untouchables of the countries like India. The predominant religion was Christianity whereas religions like Islam and Judaism were tolerated. But by the last decade of the fifteenth century, this religious toleration was given up because of the Royal policy. The Muslims and Jews who were living in the society peacefully, though in separated dwelling places, were asked either to quit the country or to get converted to Christianity. This spirit was inherent in the hearts of the Portuguese people.

Another attitude of the time was the doctrine of *Mare Clausum*, which advocated that by virtue of the Papal bulls, the Portuguese and the Spanish were in charge of the whole sea. Christ, through his Vicar has entrusted them the Eastern Seas over which no power in the world had authority. Thus the Portuguese had a Euro-centric attitude considering Europe as the centre of the world. The Kings and the people had a zealous religious outlook. They were very much interested in practising their religion through spiritual exercises and charitable activities like establishment of hospitals, houses of charity, schools, beautifully built and decorated Churches and fortresses. Though slavery was also there, they took it as part of their mission to convert the people and civilise the people. Under Christian Charity they protected the slaves. Thus the Portuguese Society, which was to encounter the Indian society of the sixteenth century, was an entirely different one when compared to the Indian society. The Portuguese society was a quite different from Indian society culturally, economically, religiously and in customs.