CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

The Portuguese commercial and political domination was largely on account of their naval superiority. The Portuguese rigged and equipped their Galleons, Naus, Fragatas etc. Keeping in mind the needs of the eastern voyage and warfare during the early days of their voyages, the Portuguese Captains were instructed to carry surplus naval spares to undertake necessary repairs during the voyage.

During the 15th and 16th centuries Portugal was the only European country where economic, technical and military factors favoured the conception of the round ship. This ship was designed to meet the technical needs of the long voyage on the high seas. The installation of the artillery onboard the Portuguese vessels was mostly in proportion to general tonnage of the ships, though there were variations sometimes.

The Indian coastal vessels like the Catur, Charrua, Parau, Patmarins etc., were used by the Portuguese as auxiliary vessels to maintain the supply line of the Portuguese maritime trade. They preferred the use of country crafts on account of hydrographical reasons specially where the navigation in the creeks was involved. The loading of the Lisbon-bound ships at Goa depended upon the operation of these local crafts which were sailing in convoys. The Captains were instructed to avoid delay at any port in order
to ensure timely arrival and loading of the Lisbon-bound ships at Goa.

The main objective of the policy of "controlled navigation" introduced by means of Cartaz and the Cafilas was to ensure firm support for their eastern naval enterprise. Debarring the native merchants from trading with certain items and the control over their naval artillery was meant to ensure the safety of the Portuguese maritime domination.

The Portuguese shipping policies in India underwent a change during the 17th and 18th centuries due to the appearance of other European powers in the Indian Ocean. They could maintain their supremacy as long as they could effectively equip their navy with adequate number of ships and manpower. The Captains sailing from Lisbon were instructed to pursue the navigation at Cochin and Goa depending upon the position of the Dutch ships. They were further instructed to avoid any open and direct confrontation with the Dutch forces. During the 17th century the Portuguese naval strength in Goa was so low that, it was just equivalent to 120, a crew of the Indiaship. On many occasions, the Governors were compelled to wait for the arrival of ships from Lisbon to undertake any defensive naval exercise. It was only during the late 18th century a provision was made for maintaining a standing navy in Goa.

Right from the inception of the Portuguese rule in Goa they emphasised the need of having well equipped naval installations at all strategic points guarding the river passes. The erection of
these installations was ordered taking into consideration the firing range of the cannons and the distance involved from the bar of Goa till the naval dockyard at Old Goa. The Portuguese had to defend their hard-won possessions with the help of forts and fortresses built at strategic points in Goa. Indigenous manpower was used for manning the defense of these naval installations.

The garrisoning of these naval installations was the direct concern of the State and the Revenue Council was entrusted with the task of equipping these fortresses. The number of fire pieces that were to be installed was determined by the Revenue Council depending upon the location and importance of the fort.

The Portuguese sought solution to the problem of the shortage of manpower by sending to India people of all kinds including the convicts. Profit motive was the main factor inspiring many to sail to India without taking into account the basic requirements of such a long and hazardous voyage. The missionary reports frequently pointed out various anomalies in the organisation of the eastern voyage. The Crown issued orders and regulations about the number of people sailing to India, but little or no notice was taken of these orders by the Captains of the ship. The number of people sailing to India was never in proportion to the availability of the food and medical provisions onboard. The ships no doubt had medical facilities but they were not effective in controlling the disease onboard. This was mainly because the medical supply was of general state and no medical examination of the people sailing to India was undertaken at Lisbon. Moreover,
the slaves and the convicts who were put on the ships were sometimes the carrier of infectious diseases and there is no specific reference to any order regarding their treatment. Another thing that is to be noted is that there was no Regimento given to any person who was incharge of preparing meals for sick. Though food was served under the medical advice, yet there were no specific instructions regarding the system of preparation, of meals, maintenance of the cooking area onboard and so on.

The authorities in Lisbon realized the importance of India-built ship for equipping their navy rather than depending upon those sailing from Lisbon. Accordingly instructions were given to their counterparts in Goa. The Portuguese preferred the use of teak for the hull. Teak was an exceptionally hard-wood that contributed to the longevity of Indian ships. The Kanara coast provided all necessary material for ship building, which was bought to Goa in the ships of the Northern and Southern Fleet. The Governors were authorised even to divert the funds from cabedal for meeting the cost of shipbuilding and repair at Goa dockyard. The financial constraints and the urgency to raise the required number of vessels brought the Portuguese in close contact with the local traders.

The Portuguese shipping in India was supported by the indigenous shipbuilding centers which they acquired by means of conquest. The naval dockyard at Old Goa was an important Portuguese naval establishment in the whole of Estado da India. At this dockyard large and small ships were built for high-sea
sailing and for inshore-navigation respectively. The administrative changes introduced by the authorities reflect the predominant role it played in the naval defense of the Portuguese in the East. Unlike the other Portuguese dockyards in India, this dockyard had a permanent recruit comprising of the foreign, indigenous and slave. Experts from this dockyard were sent even to Bassein and Daman. If any ship was to be purchased by the Portuguese either at Bassein or Daman, technical experts from Goa were summoned to make the inspection and the valuation of the ship.

The presence of the foreign artisans in the dockyard resulted in the adoption of certain techniques in the Portuguese shipbuilding. A case may be cited here that of laying the strakes for hull protection.

Very often variations in the tonnage and the dimensions of the ship were noticed. This was account of the non availability of the wood of sufficient size for putting up vital components of the ships. The English adopted during the 18th century designs and the techniques of the Portuguese shipbuilders.