Research Article





CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIEVAL MIRAJ AS A 'MEDICAL HUB': A STUDY OF MARATHA ARCHAEOLOGY

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Abstract:

The town of 'Miraj' is perceived as a 'Medical Hub'. After the arrival of Christian Medical Missionaries, modern medicines and medical science introduced to Miraj. The missionaries, with their great efforts and selfless contribution, developed Miraj into a Medical Hub. Their efforts and the development of Medieval Miraj are understood through the concept of 'Maratha Archaeology'. We have studied the problem by utilizing various sources, like, mainly the archaeological sources; written documents and the memories (oral sources). The study reveals that Christian Medical Missionaries played a significant role in the development of Medieval Miraj into Medical Hub. Besides, through these developments in the field of Medical science; overall, the science and scientific attitude also emerged and grew in Miraj. The self-less and dedicated Christian Medical Missionaries, through Miraj Medical Centre; geared up the process of cultural change in Miraj, from Medieval to modern.

KEYWORDS:

Christian Missionaries , 'Medical Hub' , Development of Medieval Miraj , Maratha Archaeology.

INTRODUCTION-

'Miraj', a small town in southern Maharashtra, is perceived as a 'Medical Hub'. Before the arrival of Christian missionaries, the medical practice in Miraj was of very limited nature. Only after the arrival of Christian Medical Missionaries, modern medicines and medical science were introduced in Miraj. The missionaries, with their great efforts and selfless contribution, developed Miraj into a Medical Hub.

In this paper, I would like to direct our attention to the contribution of Christian

missionaries in the development of Medieval Miraj as a 'Medical Hub'. This would be understood with the help of various sources, like, mainly the archaeological sources; written documents and the memories (oral sources).

Concept-Maratha Archaeology: Medieval archaeology is a less known area of historical research. As we are aware, historical archaeology deals with the interpretation of material remains in the light of written documents. The Medieval archaeology is one of its branch; dealing with the Medieval period. It is a study "based on an analysis, synthesis and interpretation of the material relics left by the human activity of the period and comparing the results of this study with the literary and the traditional aspects of the culture so that a better understanding of the period could develop" (Mehta, 1979).

With the similar approach, recently, I have introduced a new concept of 'Maratha' Archaeology'³. It deals with that period of Medieval Maharashtra during which Maratha Empire (1600-1818) manifested itself through various artistic creations, socioeconomical and political institutions and religious-cultural structures and processes (Kulkarni, 2015).⁴ These developments are to be studied through taking into account the influences the Marathas received from the predecessors and the introduction of the new ideas in Maharashtra. Most importantly, in order to arrive at better understanding of Maratha History, all kinds of sources like literary, archaeological and oral; would be utilized. This new concept was successfully tested in a small historical town of Miraj.

Though, conventionally, the arrival of Christians belongs to the Modern period; it should be noted, till 1947, most of the princely states in India remained Medieval in culture. In that medieval context, the modern ideas and institutions; here, Christian missionaries worked out their efforts. Thus, within the Medieval Maratha context of Miraj, we would try to understand this case with the help of various kinds of sources.

STUDYAREA: MIRAJ

Miraj (160 45"N & 740 35' E) is a taluka place in district Sangli, Maharashtra. It is located in the transitional regions, i.e., western-fertile agricultural land and eastern-baron land. Due to its transitional trading location (Modak,1928)5 on the border of Maharashtra and Karnataka and subsequent determinant factor of 'control of the trade'; it shows a continuous history since the times of Kalyani Chalukya-Shilahara-Yadava i.e. from 11-12th century AD up to Modern period. In the late 19th century, the Christian Missionaries arrived in Miraj.

Here, with the help of all kind of sources, we would try to understand the case in two major parts, viz. Part I Sources: mainly archaeological Monuments, Part II Subject Matter: It is further divided in three sections: a. Miraj: Before the arrival of Christian Missionaries, b. Dr. William Wanless, c. Miraj: Post-Dr. Wanless

PARTISOURCES

To understand the problem, both, primary and secondary sources (published as well as unpublished) were taken into considerations. At the same time, interviews with Staff of Miraj Medical Centre, Reverends, and doctors provided valuable information. In light of those, the archaeological monuments were visited, documented and studied. As these are, for the first time, being documented, we would take a brief note of these monuments. Following is the brief details of these monuments:

All the monuments (except monuments no. 9 and no. 10) located on the north-western boundary of Miraj. These monuments can be termed as 'Wanless Hospital

Complex'. The complex comprised of following monuments:

- No. 1: Hospital-1 (1894) (Plate-1): The building is located at the south-east corner of the campus. It comprised of OPD room, connected with rooms for admitted patients. The OPD or the reception room is a small square room, brick-walled and topped by clay tiles. Then, it has a place for consultancy and initial diagnosis. This entre section is rectangular, 20 feet long x 15 feet wide x 12 feet tall. The connected building for admitted patients is 100 feet long x 12 feet wide x 10 feet tall.
- No. 2: Hospital-2 (1906) (Plate-2): It is a rectangular building, facing west and running west to east. It is 50 feet long x 10 feet wide x 12 feet tall. On the front there is a reception room, used from diagnosis. It is joined with a long rectangular extension, having rooms for patients.
- No. 3: Washington Home (1912) (Plate-9): It was constructed as hostel for nurses. It is west facing two storied building, reminds us of Vada style. It is 70 feet long x 60 feet wide x 30 feet tall. Through narrow path, we approach a central space, open to sky. The rooms on both the floors are arranged around this open space. There are total 4 rooms (10 feet long x 10 feet wide x 12 feet tall). All the rooms have a passage in front of them which is outlined with wooden pillars with stone pedestal. On these pillars, the passage of first floor rests. The toilet and bathroom sections are provided at the center of eastern side. The stair-case for the first floor is at the center of the central space.
- No. 4: Hospital-3 (1913) (Plate-3): This magnificent structure is located, close to the Hospital Building-1, at the south-western corner of the campus. It is south-facing rectangular building. It is 140 feet long x 100 feet wide x 40 feet tall. The plan comprised of three buildings and a porch building. The three buildings, rectangular, running north-south, placed in parallel three rows. All these buildings function as one unit hence its entrance is single which lies in the central building, to the south. These buildings are two storied, hence connected to each other with bridge and stair-cases. At the front of these buildings, we have a wide and huge entrance porch-building. The entire structure is made with dressed stones, placed systematically. It has ceiling made of iron-beams and topped by clay tiles.
- No. 5: Maternity Home (1913) (Plate-4): It is located close to the Hospital building-3, to its west. It is west-facing, two storied rectangular building. It is 60 feet long x 40 feet wide x 32 feet tall.
- No. 6: Boiler Room (1913) (Plate-5): The building is a south-facing, two storied huge rectangular structure. Originally, the ground floor maintained open; however, later, a wall was added to that. The entire structure is in dressed stone. It is capped by wooden frame, filled with clay tiles.
- No. 7 Anatomy Building (1923) (Plate-8): Here are two identical buildings, located opposite to the main hospital. One of them is a two-storied rectangular building, running north-south. It is 98 long x 38 feet wide x 32 feet tall. It has entrance from both the north and south side. The entrance, on the width side, is through small porch. On the length side, i.e. east, we have a row of double-pairs (4 windows) of the windows
- No. 8 Ghorpade Bungalow (1930) (Plate-6): The building was constructed for regular treatment of Ghorpade family, the ruling family of Ichalkaranji. It is two storied, west facing, rectangular building. It is 46 feet long x 32 feet wide x 28 feet tall. The front i.e. western side has rooms with passage in front of them. The passage is outlined with four wide arches, joined to each other.

Ex-Complex Monuments

No. 9: Babalibai Chawl (1920) (Plate-7): It is located opposite Christian church, in Mangalvar Peth, area. The building comprised of four quarters with a frontal structure, leaving a large central space in between them. The quarters are of rectangular shape, whereas the frontal structure is in pentagon. The building is located on the corner of the road; hence, its orientation is north-west to south-east.

No. 10: Wanless Chest Hospital (1931) (Plate-10): It is located in the area called Wanlessvadi, on Miraj-Sangli road. It is a huge area which was having various buildings, viz. office-building, x-ray building, laboratory building, dispensaries and general wards, doctor's and staff residence etc. The hospital is now closed down. Major buildings are destroyed and the area is being used by another modern hospital. Remaining buildings are in the progress of their extinction.

Part II Subject Matter

Thus, with the study of various kinds of sources stated above, now, we can reconstruct the history of the contribution of Christian Missionaries to the development of Medieval Miraj into Medical Hub. As follows:

a. Miraj: Before the arrival of Christian Missionaries: We find earliest reference of Gangadhar Govind (son of Govind Hari) alias Balasaheb Patvardhan (1782-1809), the ruler of Miraj, had interest in collecting rare herbs of medicinal value and he used to prepare medicines from those. It is informed that, in 1795, one 'Salvador', a Portuguese doctor was in the service of Patvardhans. He was expert in surgery and used to help wounded Maratha soldiers ⁶. Then, in 1864, Ganpatrao Gangadhar alias Tatyasaheb (1861-74), laid the foundation of Government Hospital in Miraj. It is informed that there were some families of doctors who used to treat patients with Ayurvedic medicine (Patil, 2015). ⁷ However; those were the Vaidus and Fakirs who were considered as 'doctors' by common people.

b. Dr. William Wanless (November, 1865-March, 1933)

Dr. William Wanless played a major role in both, emergence of modern medicines and Christianity in Miraj. The proactive encouragement and support of Gangadharrao Ganpatrao alias Balasaheb III (1874-1939) was of great importance. Besides, the dry and conducive climate of Miraj and its location, both as railway junction and border city between Maharashtra and Karnataka, played their significant part.

Dr. William James Wanless was born in Canada (1865). The 'Western India Mission of the Presbyterian Church (former American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions)' (USA) sent Dr. Wanless with wife Mary to India, in November 1889. At the time, it is informed that, in India, there was only one doctor for 3 Lakh people! Dr. Wanless was appointed as the medical missionary in Sangli mission. He started his work with a makeshift hospital in the area of Ram Mandir in Sangli. Till that time, the patients were miss-treated by local Vaidus or fakirs in Durgah. Dr. Wanless, with his medical box on carriage, used to wander in Sangli and Miraj on his bicycle. With his exact diagnosis, proper treatment and humble disposition, within a short period, he received faith of people. He was called as 'Doctor who pinches needle'. However, he was troubled by Vaidus and fakirs; they also broke his bicycle. Undeterred, Dr. Wanless continued in his mission.

At that time, Gangadharrao Ganpatrao alias Balasaheb III was troubled by gastro. Local medicines could not cure him. Hence, he called Dr. Wanless by whose treatment he recovered from his sickness. Then, both, the king and the doctor became close friends of each other. Their friendship gave boost to the development of Miraj into a 'Medical Hub'. He gave Dr. Wanless an old house in Miraj and requested him to start his practice. Thus, Dr. Wanless started his hospital in the area of Mangalvar Peth, that time, on the northern border of Miraj (1891). This was the beginning of 'Wanless Hospital'. His wife Mary Wanless helped him as a compounder and nurse. As day-by-day the number of patients increased, hence, a need was felt to assign large area for the hospital. Hence, Patvardhans gave an area outside the northern border of Miraj which also connected to Sangli, by road. The area was covered with nagfani (type of cactus). Both Dr. Wanless and State machinery cleared up the area for the hospital. He started with setting up a ward for children (1893). Thus founded the 'Miraj Medical Centre or Wanless Hospital or Mission Hospital' in Miraj, on 4 July, 1894.

Up to 1907, Dr. Wanless constructed various buildings in the same year. In the beginning, there was a small hut. It was informed that Dr. Wanless performed first surgery in the bathroom of this hut. Then, he constructed a small house, connected with rooms for patient. That was mainly for children. That is Hospital-1 (Plate 1) (1893). As patients increased, at the same time medical science was developing, he constructed another ward, can be called as Hospital-2 (Plate 2) (1906). Then, he constructed a huge building, called here as Hospital-3 (Plate 3) (1913) Close to it, he constructed 'Maternity Home' (Plate 4). Then, he constructed a 'Boiler Room' (Plate 5), close to it. Then, he constructed more rooms for patients. Some rich patients used to visit Dr. Wanless. Their treatment, mostly of TB, required prolonged period to heal. Hence, those patients constructed building in the same area, like the rulers of Ichalkaranji constructed a bungalow, called as 'Ghorpade Bungalow' (Plate 6) (1930).

Then there was need of residence for the hospital staff. There was a court-dancer in Miraj state. She was recovered from severe sickness by the hospital. Hence, being grateful, she donated her residential place for the purpose ⁸. Thus, the staff quarters of hospital was formed in that place. It is known as 'Babalibai Chawl' (Plate 7). (1920).

In 1898, Miraj was troubled by plague-epidemic. Hence, the ruler appointed Dr. Wanless as a Sanitary Inspector. The prophylactic serum and evacuation of homes were the major methods to curb the epidemic. Dr. Wanless established Plague hospital and segregation camp beyond the northern boundary of Miraj. He did commendable work during the epidemic.

Like Miraj, Dr. Wanless, for the treatment of poor, also established missions/hospitals in villages, like Kodoli, Ashta, Nipani, Islampur etc. The graduates of Miraj Medical School sent to take responsibility of these outstation hospitals, like, Dr. Gorde to Ashta (1910), Dr. Jadhav to Nipani (1921), Dr. Salve to Kodoli and Vita (1923).

Earlier there was only Dr. Wanless in the area. He was helped by his wife Mrs. Mary Wanless in his task. Besides, people like Nanasaheb Kamble, Bhikaji Pavar, Shamrao Ranbhise, helped him in his task, as compounders. However, soon, the compounders became knowledgeable in the diagnosis. As his working-area becoming wider and wider, Dr. Wanless felt need of assistant doctors. Initially, in 1897, he choose four students and gave them informal training. In 1900, 10 students were given a three years course. Thus, in 1916, he laid foundation of 'Miraj Medical School'. It was the only Christian Medical School for men in India. Then, Dr. Gohen started obstetrical, gynecology, maternity services in Wanless hospital. Then, Paul Chovey built Anatomy department (Plate 8) (1923).

For the constant supply of nurses, Dr. Wanless founded 'Nursing College' for providing training to nurses (1897). Actually, immediately after the foundation of hospital in 1894, due to the need, in 1895, the training for nurses was already begun. Mrs.

Mary Wanless and Miss. Elizabeth Foster were the first trainers. That time, there were no textbooks and the medium of instruction was Marathi. In 1908, first probationary period started besides a special uniform was selected. For the stay, a hostel was built for the nurses, known as 'Washington Home' (Plate 9) (1912). Originally it was only for 12 nurses plus one class room. Then, it was enlarged. In 1915, Miss Patterson prepared a text book in Marathi. Then, in 1920, it received affiliation to 'Missionary Nursing Association of Marathi Area' and then, in 1927, received recognition by 'Bombay Presidency Nursing Association'. From this year, males were also received admission in nursing school (Daftardar, 1969) ⁹.

Meanwhile the Miraj Medical School received recognition for 'Licentiate Diploma of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Bombay' in 1917 with first batch of graduates in 1919. Around 1930, specialized branches were also opened in the school, like ENT. It received recognition for MBBS in 1940. During the tenure of Dr. Othineel Devadatt, women received admission in the college.

The Miraj Medical Mission was also aimed to treat leper. Hence, in 1901, it founded 'Richardson Leprosy Hospital', beyond the western borders of Miraj, on Sangli-Miraj road. A residential area for these lepers was also built, close to the hospital (1902). Then it was added with chapel (1908) and windmill for the well (1914). The patients were treated by the hospital with the help from 'Mission to Lepers' of London' and 'Indian Auxiliary Mission to Lepers'. Besides regular treatment, they were taught various skills to stand on their own feet. It is informed that in 1948-49, first dhotar (lower garment for men) was made by the lepers by using handloom (Shirgaokar,1996)¹⁰. They were also provided with an agricultural land, located behind Baisinger Memorial Library. Then to segregate healthy children from their parents, a land was donated by Patvardhans in 1919. Here a building was constructed as their home. Although, Dr. Wanless was the first superintendent of the hospital, Dr. R. C. Richardson took the entire task on his shoulder up to his retirement in 1939. Hence, the name of the hospital was to commemorate his memory.

In 1926-27, a young sister of Dr. Wanless died with tuberculosis. Before that, Dr. Wanless was considering to establish to open a separate hospital for the patients suffering for tuberculosis. He knew that the climate of Miraj was dry hence quite conducive for such patients. The death of his sister made his decision firm. Hence, in 1931, he laid the foundation of 'TB sanatorium' on Miraj-Sangli Road, to the west of Miraj. The land for the hospital belonged to British government, hence, with constant efforts Dr. Wanless succeeded to acquire the land for the hospital (1927). Mrs. Sonubai Banubarkar was the first patient of the hospital (1931). Afterwards, the hospital was called as 'Wanless Chest Hospital' (Plate 10). The surrounding area was mostly populated by patients, their relatives, staff, and doctors. This area is known as 'Wanlessvadi'.

During his stay in Miraj, Dr. Wanless has successfully treated above 1 million patients. He made 12,000 successful eye-surgeries. To appreciate his work, Dr. Wanless was honored by the government with a title of 'Kaiser-e-Hind' (1910). Besides, he was honored as a 'knight Bachelor' by king of England (1927).

He passed away on 3 March 1933 in California. He was highly inspired and supported by his wife, Merry. She faced same troubles while forming the Wanless hospital. She was the first nurse and compounder of hospital. She also did commendable work during series of epidemics. Unfortunately, she lost her life while on duty working

during epidemic (1936). Her tomb is located in the Christian cemetery.

c. Miraj: Post-Dr. Wanless (1933-1950)

Similar to Dr. Wanless, Dr. Charles E. Vail (Tenure: 1910-36) was among the best doctors of Wanless Hospital. When he arrived in Miraj in 1910, he took the whole responsibility of teaching in Medical school. He was the first doctor who introduced radium therapy for cancer (1930). In 1930, he presented 104 mgm of radium to the hospital (Daftardar, 1969). And then, on 29 August, 1930, the first radium treatment was given for carcinoma of the eyelid. For his commendable work, he was honored by the government with the title of 'Kaiser-e-Hind'. To commemorate his work on cancer 'The Whale Memorial Cancer Institute' was established in the campus of Wanless Hospital. His tomb is located in Christian cemetery.

Dr. R. H. H. Gohen (Tenure: 1939-44), the founder of Mission Hospital of Vengurla, was invited to Miraj. He succeeded in bringing Wanless hospital out of various critical problems. During his tenure, the constitution was rewritten and thus 'Mission Hospital' became 'Miraj Medical Centre'. Besides, Miraj Medical Centre celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1944. The celebration came up with funds and thus land was purchased to build a Mental Hospital.

Dr. Othaneel Devdatt was the student of Dr. Wanless and Dr. Vail. He was incharge of Wanless Hospital. He has done commendable research on 'Tropical Diseases'. He improved pathological laboratory of the hospital. During his tenure, the medical college opened for women to learn. Dr. D. P. Gorde, another famous doctor, introduced method of 'Caratoplasty' for the eye-diseases (1936). He was the mayor of Miraj for some time. Dr. Cecil was one the great doctors produced by Wanless hospital. He is credited with having performed more than two lakh of operation. One day he performed a successful operation of the wives of Sheikh from Dubai. From that time, Arabs started arriving in Miraj for treatment¹³.

Though generally the Mission started with the goal of conversion through service, Dr. Wanless and other doctors of the mission never did that by any force. Instead, Dr. Wanless was of opinion that Christianity must be a change in the heart. It must come from within. That is why, the Mission, through their work, received love, affection, support and respect from the people of Miraj. The self-less work of those medical missionaries provided a guideline for medical profession based on one hand, welcome of modern advances in the field and on the other, self-less service with equity. The mission, throughout its career, treated not only the kings and nobles, but mostly poor people also including untouchables, lepers etc. It inspired rulers like Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur. In his state, the Chhatrapati passed the law to abolish untouchability in his state. In his proclamation, he stated the examples of the self-less work by Dr. Wanless and Dr. Vail and their maintenance of equality in the profession (Sutar, 1996).

CONCLUSION

- 1. The major role in the development of Medical-Miraj was played by Dr. William Wanless. He introduced modern concepts and ideas of modern medicines into Miraj. He created well-equipped infrastructure to strengthen his mission of medical service. It can be judged by observing monuments created for the cause.
- 2. After Dr. Wanless, his mission was carried forward by other doctors, foreigners as well

as local, trained by Miraj Medical Centre. The support of contemporary rulers like the Patvardhans was significant in this development.

- 3. The medical centers introduced a cultural change in Miraj. With the introduction of modern medicines and sciences, the scientific approach developed in Miraj. Through modern sciences, modern ideas and institution also introduced to Miraj. On the other hand, the equity maintained by these missionaries in the treatment to all, across the castes and gender, became an ideal and role model for social equality and justice.
- 4. The buildings of Miraj Medical Centre introduced new construction techniques in Miraj, like, use of systematic dressed stone, use of iron brackets in ceiling, wide arches to accommodate more space, use of alternative course of black and white stones, use of dual windows etc.
- 5. Along with medical occupation, secondary and tertiary occupations grew in Miraj, like private hospitals, medical shops, new technologies in medical sciences; as well as, guest houses, hotels, transport services etc.

Thus, by using various kinds of sources at our disposal, we could reconstruct the role of Christian Medical Missionaries into the development of Medieval Miraj into Medical Hub. Not only that, through these developments in the field of Medical science; overall, the science and scientific attitude also emerged and grew in Miraj. Thus the self-less and dedicated Christian Medical Missionaries, through Miraj Medical Centre; geared up the process of cultural change in Miraj, from Medieval to modern.

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Plates

1. Hospital-1







3. Hospital-3



4. Maternity Home



5. Boiler Room



7. Babalibai Chawl





8. Anatomy Building



9. Washington Home



10. Wanless Chest Hospital

