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Vasco Da Gama landed in 1498 at Panthalayini, not Kappad

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In 1498 Vasco da Gama landed at Kappad or set foot at Kappad, which has been teaching, studying and documented over the years. Along with this fact it is recorded in many history books. It also says that the landing place of Vasco da Gama is still a debate. Therefore, it is the duty of the historians and history researches to clarify the matter.

In the older times Kappad was called as " Kappakadavu". Today Kappad is in Chemanchery Panchayath of Koyilandy Taluk in Kozhikode. There is a pillar at Kappad beach with five feet height . It has inscribed on the following words "Vasco da Gama landed here Kappakadavu in the year 1498". The pillar is under the control of Archaeology Department. But they have no historical evidence to clarify this. The pillar at Kappad implies that Vasco Da Gama landed on the shore of Kappakadavu or Kappad. There is no historical evidence to believe Vasco da Gama landed at Kappad in 1498.

The Portuguese ships anchored about eight kilometres west of Kappad in the Arabian Sea. Only two men with Vasco da Gama came to Kappad with the help of local fisherman. Only with this information some local people made the story and made the pillar with wrong information.

Those historical writings on the pillar at Kappad does not match with the real facts. Vasco da Gama's journey to India in 1498 was correctly recorded and the details were kept at Opportho Public Library at Lisbon in Portugal.

The Portuguese records says that Vasco da Gama and his men started their journey from Lisbon by four ships named St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, Berio, and one store ship. The journey started on the morning of 8th July 1497. These four ships in the expedition carried one hundred and seventy people consisting of officers, workers and a few convicted prisoners to work in the most difficult and dangerous situations. Pedro de Alemquir was the Chief Pilot[1] .

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After finished the preparations of the voyage, Vasco da Gama and his men went to a Chapel named " Our Lady of Bethlehem", situated on the bank of the river Tagus near Belum port. The group spend the full night on 7th July 1497 in the Chapel with prayers. Next day morning on Saturday 8th July 1497 Gama and his men boarded in the ships. Then they started their journey to Calicut, India. On the way they passed through Cape of Good hope on 22nd November 1497. After one week the ships were at Angra de Savo Braz, their store ship caught fire and was completely ruined. They transferred all the valuable belongings from the store ship to the other ships. Then the remaining three ships reached at Milindi in Kenya [ii]. On 24th April 1498 Gama and his men started their journey from Milindi.

On Friday 18th May they saw Ezhimala in Kannur. After ten months journey they entered to the sea near Kerala, India. They sailed along the beautiful cost of Kerala and anchored their ships west of Kappad on 20th May 1498 in the outer sea near Kozhikode. On that day the local fishermen saw the peculiar types of ships anchored in the sea. They became curious and moved their local made boats to the ships and were surprised to the people of different size, colour, dress and hear the different language they spoke [iii].

Vasco da Gama and his ships came to Kozhikode sea not with the prior permission or consent from the King Samoothiri. So they did not land on the shore as they feared an attack from Samoothiri's strong army or the sea pirates. Gama had twenty slaves in his ships. Joao Nunus was one among them. He knew both Arabic and Hebrew languages. So Gama sent him to study the situation on the land. He was the first Portuguese person who landed on the shore. He visited some of the houses of Arabs and collected the information about the place and returned to the ship. Then Gama sent one of his men, Nicholas Goelho as a messenger to Samoothiri's Palace. At that time King Samoothiri was at Ponnani [iv].

Nicholas met the king and handed over the letter of the Portugal King to the Calicut King. The letter contained a request to the Calicut King Samoothiri to grant permission for

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trade and make arrangements for a long term trade relation. The Zamorin read the letter and gave an affirmative reply.

The King sent one of his navigators to show them the sea route to land the ships. The messenger gave Samoothiri's letter to Gama to move his ships to Panthalayini Kollam before the monsoon season starts and informed that he is ready to meet him at Kozhikode incase he come there. On 28th May 01498 Gamas three ship moved and anchored at Panthalayini Kollam Harbour which was about ten kilometres north of Kappad [5].

On 28th May 1498 Samoothiri's Army Commander and two hundred Nair soldiers reached at Panthalayini Harbour to receive Gama and his men and to accompany them to King Samoothiri's Palace [6].

Gama diascussed with his brother Paulo Da Gama and others in the ship. Then he told them " I am going to meet the King, in case I encounter any danger, you should immediately pull the anchor and leave for Portugal and to convey the good news having discovered the sea route from Portugal to India. Gama then dressed for the special occasion and got ready to land on the shore accompanies by music and gun shorts from the ship as to make the occasion [7].

Same was is the first landing of Vasco Da Gama at Calicut. The King Samoothiri's army commander and the Nair army received them in respect. Gama got in a decorated palanquin and carried to the destination accompanied by the band music, flowers and lit lamps. On the way the local people welcomed them with refreshments. People gathered both sides of the road to watch the ceremonial welcome. Women and children from the thatched houses on the side of the road opened the doors and windows and watched with astonishment, the white soldiers walking on the road [8].

On the way they reached in a temple with a copper flag post. The temple priest sprinkled the holy water to purify the Portuguese soldiers and gave them the holy water to drink as "Prasadam". The Calicut army commander prayed by falling on the ground to perform "Sastanga Pranamam" Gama and his men did the same. Seeing the diety with four arms and big teeth, a frightful sight, one of the Portuguese said "This cant be a god, it might be a devil" when Gama heard this he laughed and got out of the temple. Then Gama and his group reached at the palace and passed through the three gateways. They reached at the fourth gate. At the entrance of the fourth gate the king Samoothiri's representatives received Gama warmly with a hug and holding

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his right hand and led him near to the King. Vasco Da Gama and Samoothiri met each other. Gama handed over the letter from the Portuguese king to Samoothiri. Samoothiri read the Portuguese letter by the help of an Arab trader who knows the language [9].

Vasco Da Gama and the king Samoothiri discussed about the spice trade and the king agreed. Gama had succeeded his mission and he and his group became ready to return to Panthalayinion 31st May 1498. On 2nd June 1498, Gama and his men returned back to Panthalayini and boarded to their ships [10].

These were happened in 1498 at Calicut. This is the real fact about Gama's arrival. After many years of the arrival of Vasco Da Gama, somebody made a statue at Kappad and written on that "Vasco Da Gama landed here Kappakkadavu in the year 1498". These words are not matching with the real facts. Also these wrong information included in the school, college syllabus and in the Kerala Public Service Commission exam. There is no historical evidence or records to prove Vasco Da Gama landed Kappad or Kappakkadavu in 1498. The Portuguese records named "Roteiro" Kept at Oporto Public Library, Lisbon in Portugal its clear that Vasco Da Gama landed at Panthalayini Kollam near Koyilandi in 1498.

Therefore the piller at Kappad must remove from there. Also it should be corrected in the school, college syllabus and in the Public service commission exam. This is the responsibility of the officials and historian.

Endnotes: –

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