

# THE APOSTLE OF CEYLON



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THE APOSTLE OF



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ch./#657

# THE APOSTLE OF CEYLON

FR. JOSEPH VAZ

(AN DRATORIAN PRIEST)

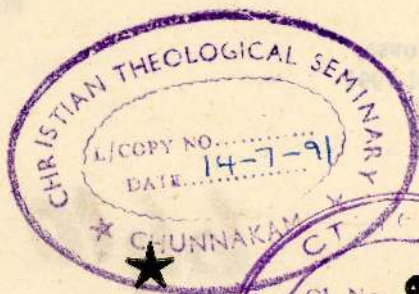
1651 - 1711

BY

ARCHBISHOP L. M. ZALESKI

DELEGATE APOSTOLIC OF THE EAST INDIES.

(PRINTED IN CALCUTTA IN 1897)

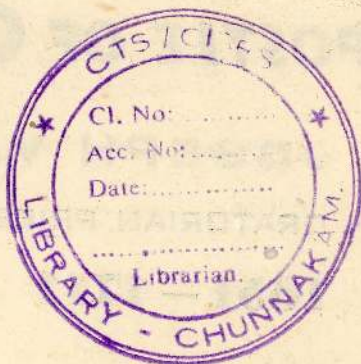


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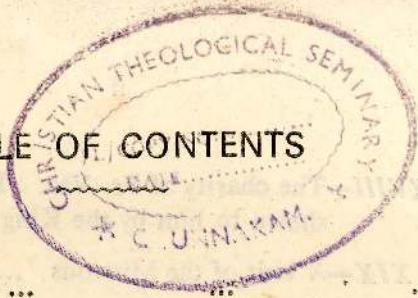
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## INTRODUCTION

THIS short account of the Life and Labours of the illustrious "Apostle of Ceylon" was not destined for the public, and only 300 copies of it were printed. It was intended as an appendix to Report which\* I made to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, on September 26th, 1894, and which his Eminence the Cardinal Prefect expressed a wish to have in print, in order to distribute it among the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation, the Bishops of India, and the Prelates or Superiors of orders who take a special interest in our Indian Missions.

Father Joseph Vaz, for whom there was in Ceylon, even as late as the beginning of this century, a veneration almost equal to that held in India towards St. Francis Xavier, has since unfortunately been almost entirely forgotten. In Europe, and even in India, few people still record his name, and in Ceylon, the theatre of his apostolic labours, his name is still mentioned by the old people, but the rising generation hardly know what they owe to him.

And yet his name ought to be known. Especially now, since His Holiness Pope Leo XIII is giving such a strong impulse to the formation of an indigenous clergy throughout India, the life of Father Vaz should be well-known by all the priests brought up in this country as their model; for it shows what an Indian priest can do, when well formed and inspired by a true apostolic zeal.

We have had Saints in India, but until now we have not yet had any beatified Indian Saint. The question of the Beatification of Father Joseph Vaz was raised, a few years after his death, by Dom Francis de Vasconcellos, S. J., Bishop of Cochin. A few years later, a diocesan process was instituted in Goa, and was

\* This refers to the French edition, of which this present work is a literal translation expressly made for the *Indo-European Correspondence*—Ed. I. E. G.

sent to Rome. But for the want of some essential formalities, which had been omitted, Pope Benedict XIV cancelled it, and gave orders to institute it again. Unfortunately the crisis which befell all the Catholic Missions in India, in the latter half of last century, supervened, and the process was never resumed.

Since then, the Sacred Congregation of the propaganda has repeatedly encouraged the Bishops in Ceylon to try and discover the place where Father Joseph Vaz was buried. Let us hope, therefore, with the grace of God, that our wishes may some day be fulfilled.

The Beatification of an Indian priest would no doubt give a real impulse to our Missions in India, and would prove a great stimulus for the all-important work of the creation of an indigenous clergy, without which the missions of this vast Peninsula cannot develop themselves. The number of the missionaries sent out from Europe scarcely suffices for the spiritual wants of our present congregations; nay in some parts it already proves insufficient; and there is, besides, the duty of preaching the Gospel to the Natives.

In conformity with the decree of Pope Urban VIII, I declare that I do not hereby prejudge in any way the question of Father Vaz's sanctity; and I submit my decision entirely to the judgment of Holy Church, as to the nature of the marvellous facts that will be related in this memoir.

This account of Father Vaz's Life is an abstract from the work of Fr. Sebastian de Rego, a priest of the Goa Oratory. That Father Sebastian was born at Neura, in the province of the Islands of Goa, in 1699, that is to say some twelve years before Father Vaz's death, and like him he traced his descent to the Caste of the Brahmins.

Father de Rego was received, when already a priest, into the Congregation of the Goa Oratorians, on January 20th, 1730. It is not known how long he remained one of their Body, nor for what reasons he left it in order to become a Theatine. But he



remained on good terms with the Oratorian Fathers, and was invited by them, in 1745, to preach in their Church of Sta Cruz dos Milagres in Goa; a sermon which was afterwards printed in Lisbon.

I believe his *Life of Father Vaz* was one of the first books he wrote. It is in Portuguese; but the style is somewhat heavy. It is, anyhow, a good authority: for it was written by a person who was in a position to ascertain what he wrote; and it was published 34 years only after the death of Father Vaz, when there were still many persons alive, who had known him and who could testify to the veracity of the narrated facts. The book is, moreover confirmed by the *Approbatum* of the Superior of the Goa Oratory and of the Patriarchal Curia of Lisbon.

The work of Father de Rego was published for the first time in Lisbon, in 1747, and reprinted in Margao (Goa) in 1867. But both editions have become excessively rare. It is the only *Life of Father Vaz* in existence. Whilst condensing it, we endeavoured to preserve all the facts, leaving out only those panegyric developments, which are often superadded to facts by the authors of the XVIIIth Century.

*Kandy, (Ceylon,) Octave of All Saints 1895.*

**LADISLAS MICHAEL,**  
Archbishop of Thebes,  
*Delegate Apostolic of the East Indies.*

... and was ...

... I believe the life of ...

... the word ...

... of all ...

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## CHAPTER I

### BIRTH OF FR. JOSEPH VAZ HIS INFANCY

**J**OSEPH VAZ was born on April 21st, 1651, in Sancoale, a village of the Province of Salsette, not far from Goa, on the territory which remained under the Crown of Portugal after the downfall of the Portuguese Empire in India.

His parents, Christopher Vaz and Maria de Miranda were both Concani Indians, belonging by descent to the Caste of Brahmins; but in faith they belonged to an old Catholic stock, were in competent circumstances, and well-known in the country for their piety and good deeds.

Christopher Vaz had received a superior education to that generally imparted at that time to Indians in his rank of life, and he enjoyed great consideration among his countrymen for his superior talent and virtues.

People say that, before the birth of his son Joseph God had in a dream revealed to him the glorious destiny of his child. This accounts for the following inscription, which was found in a diary, where he used to enter the chief events counted with his family life:

“ On the 21st April 1651, a son was born to me, who was baptized on the octave of his birth and they gave him the name of Joseph. In course of time, he will become a great man. ”

The child was born in the parish of Baulim, in the paternal house of his mother; which is in accordance even nowadays with the custom of the higher Indian classes. He was baptized in the parochial Church, by the Rev. Fr. Hyacinthe Perera, S. J.

We possess but few details about his childhood; we only know that he gave already signs of superior intellect and piety.

Whilst his companions went to play, he loved to retire to some secluded spot where he spent long hours in prayer.

It is a usual thing for Indians to sleep on mats spread on the ground, and so did Joseph; but during the night, when his brothers chanced to awake, they often observed him kneeling on his mat and praying with utmost fervour. Every day he made it a point to hear Mass, and when the priest had to carry the Holy Viaticum to some sick people, the child never failed to accompany the Blessed Sacrament.

One of his special devotions was also to accompany funerals; and he used often, of an evening, to go about and ask those he knew to say some prayer for the faithful departed. His charity made him also bountiful towards the poor, to whom, without the knowledge of his parents, he sometimes distributed his own dinner.

This is all that has reached us about Joseph Vaz's infancy and childhood.

It is no wonder, therefore, that an old man of Sancoale, called Antony Cardoso, often repeated when he saw the little Joseph:—"O, Sancoale, thou little knowest what a treasure is now thine; but the day shall come when it will be seen how fully God has kept the promise He made to his parents." It is no wonder, either, that he was the delight of all, and the people of the village had named him: "the holy child."

Joseph learned Portuguese in the parochial school of Sancoale, his mother's tongue being the Concani. As he evinced remarkable dispositions for study, his parents hoped to make him a priest, and sent him to study Latin in Baulim School, from which he, later on, went to study Rhetoric in the University of Goa, then a very flourishing institution, manned by clever Jesuit professors.

Let us note, by the way, that in going to school, or home again, the little Joseph used to recite his Rosary.

Having terminated his course of Rhetoric, young Joseph Vaz was promoted to the Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, where, during four years he was to study Philosophy and Theology. He was, during that time, a boarder in the parochial house attached to the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary.

This is a small Church, and it sinks into insignificance by the side of the magnificent other shrines of Goa; but it is rich in the traditions that connect it with St. Francis Xavier. For, it was in that Church that he brought the children, gathered from the streets by the sound of a bell; and even nowadays the narrow and lowly pulpit is shown there, from which he preached to the Christians, as well as the altar on which he used to say Mass.

Those simple whitewashed walls have thus in themselves something that fills the heart with emotion; and it was probably in that Sanctuary that young Joseph Vaz conceived that apostolic spirit which characterized him through life, and made him a great missionary; for he bore great affection to the sanctuary of that little Church, and often spent whole nights prostrate on its altar steps.

## CHAPTER II

### HIS ORDINATION HIS VOCATION TO CEYLON THE PADROADO

**A**FTER having brilliantly ended his studies, Joseph Vaz received the Order of Priesthood at the hands of Mgr. Antonio Brandao, who entrusted him with the ministry of preaching. In this the young priest displayed such talent that the Viceroy would have him for his Confessor. This period of his active life lasted five years.

It was at that time that the thought first came to him of going to Ceylon, in order to confirm in the Faith the Christians of that island, who were cruelly persecuted by the Dutch heretics. This is how it was suggested to him.

A canon of the Goa Cathedral, on his way back from China, whither he had been sent by His Grace the Archbishop to visit the Mission of Macao, which depended on the Metropolitan Church, was compelled to put in for some time at Colombo, during the repairs which the ship that brought him had to undergo, and he was thus an ocular witness of the sad straits to which the Catholics of Ceylon were reduced. What he related of it made a deep impression on the mind of Father Vaz.

For, the first care of the Dutch, after taking possession of Colombo and Jaffna, was to turn out all the Catholic priests; and an old Jesuit missionary, whom his great age and infirmities had prevented from following his companions, was publicly beheaded (1658) under pretext that he had not denounced a plot, which he had known only under the secret of confession.

The Dutch acted thus of a set purpose. All the Catholic Churches they came across were sacked and desecrated. On November 16th, 1656, having found a statue of St. Thomas the

Apostle, they began by cutting off its nose; then, turning it into a missile, they stuck it up with nails, and fired it from one of their mortars into the town of Colombow hich they were besieging. As soon as their domination was a fact, they started up a persecution *en regle*. Orders were given to all Catholics to send their children to the Protestant schools; they were under the severest penalties compelled to attend service every Sunday in the Protestant places of worship; and an official proclamation, dated September 16th, 1658, decreed the penalty of death against any one who should conceal or even receive into his house a Catholic priest.\*

At the epoch of our narrative, owing to the length of the persecution, the Catholics of Ceylon had been deprived of priests for many years; and this accounts for the sad decay of those Missions, which under Portuguese rule were so fruitful and so promising.

Catholic worship was abolished, and the present native generation had either fallen back into paganism or had become practically Protestants. A small cluster only of descendants of Portuguese, mixed blood for the most part, and a certain number of Catholic Sinhalese, after paying compulsory attendance on Sunday at the Protestant service, sought secretly some retired abode, where they recited the Rosary together or other Catholic devotions, regardless of the terrible consequences decreed by the Dutch penal code against them, if they were found out.

Many Catholics moreover had gone into exile and sought refuge under the sway of the King of Kandy, who still possessed a part, almost the half, of the whole island and who let them free to practise their religion. But after being deprived of priests for so long, they had sunk into depravity lower than the pagans themselves.

\* These facts, which might be taxed with exaggeration if they were written by a Catholic pen, are quoted from a Protestant author: Sir James Fmerson Lennet, (1847), Governor of Ceylon, in his "Christianity in Ceylon."

Catholicity was therefore well-nigh extinct in Ceylon when the Goanese canon was forced to land in Colombo, and he had probably to use concealment to avoid being thrown into jail by the Dutch authorities. The recital of what he had witnessed moved the heart of Father Vaz irresistibly, and inspired him with the desire of hastening to the rescue of that abandoned part of the Lord's vineyard.

He let some priests in Goa know of his design, for he wished to have some companions; but they all deemed the thing impossible; for the Dutch were keeping a strict watch along the coast, and were particularly anxious that no Catholic priest should find access to the island. Nothing daunted, he was persevering in his holy resolution, when the Archbishop of Goa appointed him Vicar Forane and Superior of the Mission of Canara.

The circumstances, in which that Mission was, were deplorable. When the Portuguese troops were forced to abandon their last fortresses on the Canara Coast the Archbishops of Goa also withdrew their priests from that part of their archdiocese. They probably had no choice for it, but the consequence for Religion in Canara, at the time we speak of, had been disastrous.

There were only three churches left in the land, and the largest one, in Mangalore, was but a large shed covered with thatch. Those churches, says Sebastian de Rego, were like houses without a master, for there was no priest residing in the country. The faithful were therefore left without Sacraments; and it sometimes happened that a priest from Goa, whilst paying a visit to that coast, had to bless the marriages of the parents at the same time that he blessed the marriage of their children.

The Holy See could not look with indifference on this abandonment of an ancient *chretiente*. Rome therefore sent missionaries thither, and appointed Bishop Thomas de Castro, an Indian of Brahmin descent, born in Goa, but brought up from his infancy in Rome, Vicar-Apostolic of Canara.



The Archbishop of Goa protested energetically against that step of the Holy See. He contended that Canara, being a part of his archdiocese, came under the Padroado of the Crown of Portugal. He even denied the authenticity of the Pontifical Brief, and said it had been extorted from Rome surreptitiously. He in consequence declared Bishop Thomas de Castro an intruder, sent priests from Goa to Canara, commanded them not to recognize the Vicar-Apostolic as such, and to prevent his missionaries from exercising the sacred ministry or administering those regions. He finally hurled against them the ecclesiastical censures in his power.

Thomas de Castro, on the other hand, relying on the jurisdiction imparted to him by the Pontifical Brief, declare null the authority of the Goa priests, and threatened to excommunicate them, if they persisted in exercising it.

The consequences of that quarrel were lamentable; all fell into disorder; the faithful no longer knew who was their legitimate Pastor, nor to which priests they ought to address themselves for receiving the Sacraments.

Bishop Thomas de Castro tried indeed to come to an understanding with the Archbishop, and sent to Goa a copy of his Brief; but when the document reached, Archbishop Antony Brandao was no more.

Such was the state of affairs when Father Joseph Vaz was appointed Vicar Forane and Superior of the Canara Mission in behalf of the Goa jurisdiction.

## CHAPTER III

### AT MANGALORE

FATHER SEBASTIAN DE REGO does not deal explicitly enough with this episode in the Life of Father Vaz. A partisan of the Padroado, he endeavours before all to clear the Goanese authorities from blame. Fortunately we possess a Report sent by Father Vaz himself to the Administrator of the diocese, which reflects sufficient light on the manner he dealt with the perplexing circumstances. That document will be given a little further on.

After the death of Bishop Brandao, the Administrator of the diocese received the copies of the Pontifical Brief, sent by Bishop Thomas de Castro; but he would take no decision until the appointment of another Archbishop. Meanwhile he stuck to the existing *status quo*, and sent Father Vaz his official nomination.

Father Vaz, in his desire of going to Ceylon, hesitated before accepting another difficult post. He accepted it, however on the advice of his confessor. Moreover, he hoped that he could more easily, in the harbours of Canara frequently visited by Dutch vessels, get full information on the situation of Christianity in Ceylon and on the means to start thither.

He left Goa on foot, in March 1681, and trudged to Mangalore, in company with his young nephew Joseph Carvalho and a few servants. As he went on, he exercised his zeal, and no Christian family that lived along the road was neglected by his solicitude. He even went out of his way to go and meet them.

His charity was boundless, and he had soon distributed to the poor all the money he carried, together with what his nephew and the servants had brought. But the Christians all along moved by his generous example, brought him also abundant

alms; so that he was never in need of the necessary subsistence for his small escort, or of help for the poor he met.

On reaching Mangalore, Father Vaz went to the Vicar-Apostolic, exposed to him the state of uncertainty in which the Christians he had met with along the road were, showed him the great evil arising from thence, and the scandal given to the Church by that jurisdiction quarrel. He represented to him the necessity of sifting the point clearly, and of making out which of them was invested with legitimate authority: whether himself as representing the Goa Ordinary, or Bishop Thomas de Castro. He therefore asked to see the latter's powers.

This straightfowardness made a favourable impression on Bishop de Castro, who readily assented to the proposal of Father Vaz, and showed him the Brief's original copy. After taking due cognizance of it, Father Vaz requested the Vicar-Apostolic for the necessary powers to fulfil his sacred ministry.

On September 14th, 1681, Father Vaz sent a long Report, from Mangalore, to the Administrator of the Archdiocese of Goa, in which he depicts to him the sad condition of Christians placed between two parties that wrangle together for jurisdiction. It is all written with great prudence, not to sour the temper of the Goa churchman, and yet clearly enough to show him that his position is at best doubtful. These are the terms in which he recounts his intercourse with the Vicar-Apostolic:

“The manner of administration which we have adopted gave and is still giving much scandal to the faithful and even to the pagans; for many among them say that the Catholic Church is not One; that we, the priests from Goa and the missionaries under the Bishop, are not sons and servants of the same mother the Church; that our laws, doctrine and sacraments are not the same with those of the missionaries, but they jar together; that what one party does, the other undoes; and on that account our holy Religion is disparaged, so that none are willing to be converted.”

“In order to remedy the evil, as much as lay in my power, and that it be not said of me: *noluit intelligere ut bene ageret*, I went myself to His Lordship the Bishop, who showed me his powers and the original of the Brief, in which this land of Canara and this town of Mangalore are mentioned. He showed me also a letter from our Vicar-General (God protect him) in which it is said he has received a copy of the Brief, has submitted it to your Reverence and, expects a prompt solution of this jurisdiction difficulty.”

“Having seen all these, I began to entertain doubts: and, though it might have sufficed, for my peace of conscience, to hold that your Reverence had sent me here as his Vicar, and to follow the example of my predecessors and of the neighbouring Vicars; yet the better to secure the graces and fruits of the Sacraments, and for the good of the peace, I requested His Lordship to delegate me conditionally in case the jurisdiction here is really in his hands. In that way, after giving an account to your Reverence of what I have done, I am able to wait for your decision; whereas the Bishop will suspend the effects of his excommunication meanwhile.”

“My proposals approved itself to His Lordship, who granted my request. I now refer the whole business to your Reverence, being ever ready to obey your orders.”

“At the same time, to proceed in this with due certainty, I begin by asking your pardon, if I have acted otherwise than I ought. Next I entreat your Reverence to state clearly whether the Christians living in the whole kingdom of Canara depend on our jurisdiction or only those situated in certain parts of the kingdom: in the latter case, which are those parts?”

“Finally, I would ask your Reverence to declare to me the grounds on which you would rely to contest that the whole kingdom or certain parts of it are included within the Bishop's jurisdiction, whilst they are mentioned in his Brief?”—

When this letter reached Goa, the new Archbishop Dom Manuel de Souza de Menezes had taken possession of his See.

He was very much annoyed at Father Vaz's having thus implicitly recognized the jurisdiction of the Vicar-Apostolic, and disapproved of his action openly. He would probably have cancelled his appointment, had it not been for something that casually turned up.

A Jesuit Father of the Mysore Mission happened to pass through Goa, and longly entertained the Archbishop about the virtue of Father Vaz. He told him that, on his journey, he had put up at his place in Babelor; and once, whilst Father Vaz was praying, he had seen him raised from the ground in an ecstasy and wrapped up in shining light.

The Archbishop, therefore, confirmed Father Vaz in his office as Vicar Forane of Canara; but he signified to him that he must on no account recognize the jurisdiction of the Vicar-Apostolic, or permit his missionaries to administer any Sacraments, until the case has been judged on the appeal made to Rome.

Thereupon, a life of real tribulation began for Father Vaz. Many a time he wished to leave that unfortunate Mission; but the Archbishop insisted on his remaining, and at the same time sent him the strictest orders that he should treat Bishop de Castro as an intruder.

Thomas de Castro, on the contrary, could not but wish that Father Vaz should remain in Mangalore; for, if he went, the Archbishop would not fail to send another Vicar, who would wage an open war; and, as he had not cancelled the powers he had given him from the beginning, this allowed Father Vaz to discharge his ministry with a safe conscience. He gave him, nevertheless, much to endure; for, as Vicar-Apostolic, he was much vexed in spirit at the indefinite prolongation of such an abnormal state of things.

Father Vaz bore up all these trials with patience. All his endeavours were to maintain the peace, and he exhorted Bishop Thomas de Castro, for the sake of that peace, so necessary for growing Missions, to have patience and wait for Rome's decision.

That situation lasted three years, until 1684, when Archbishop Dom Manuel de Souza de Menezes and Bishop Thomas de Castro died nearly at the same time.

During those three years, Father Vaz never lost sight of his plan of going to Ceylon, although the obstacles that lay in his way, great already when seen from Goa, appeared now insurmountable when viewed from nearer. He often had opportunities in Mangalore to hear about the sufferings of the Ceylon Christians; and in his anxiety to succour them, he sometimes begged of his companions, Father Nicholas Gamboa, to sell him as a slave to the Dutch merchants, who were trafficking between Ceylon and Canara, in the hope of thus penetrating into that long-distressed island.

His life in Mangalore was most active. Up before dawn, he had his meditation and said his holy office. Then he gathered the children around himself, taught them catechism, and trained the grown up ones to read and to write, a duty which he performed with utmost patience.

When the people had assembled in the Church, he heard confessions, celebrated Holy Mass, and delivered a short sermon which went to the hearts of the Christians and strengthened them in the Faith; for, as we have already said, Father Vaz was an eloquent preacher. In the afternoon, he visited the sick, instructing some in the Christian Doctrine and preparing others for death.

The poor and the forlorn were the chief objects of his predilection. He took care of them and carried them food himself. He showed special anxiety for the poor slaves; for some of them were Christians that had been sold to pagan masters.

Fr. Vaz converted a good number of pagans, and built several churches. Among those conversions was that of a rich Indian nobleman, who had been born a Christian, but for reasons of worldly interest and out of vanity had apostatised. He lived as a pagan, and occupied a high post at the Court of the Rajah of Mangalore.

Father Vaz groped about for means to bring back that wandering sheep to the fold; but the perverted man had threatened him with death if he durst approach him or any of his servants.

The dwelling of the apostate was in a totally pagan region. Father Vaz repaired thither, found that the master of the house was not at home, and sat down before his door, awaiting his return. Chafed at finding the missionary in his place, after all the threats he had uttered, the Indian roughly asked him what he wanted. Father Vaz replied that he was journeying that way and felt very tired. He, therefore, begged hospitality; for it would look unseemly for a priest to go and apply to pagans, in a place where a Christian was living.

The apostate getting furious began to blaspheme, and insulted him, saying he was not a Christian and it was not his practice to give shelter to Catholic priest. He drove him from his premises, and shouted to him that, if he made bold to step in again, he would feel something worse than the bodily fatigue he was complaining of.

Father Vaz sat down before the gate and began to pray. The news spread forth at once that the man had been a Christian, but had abjured his Faith; and the very pagans were shocked by the brutal manners he had exhibited towards Father Vaz, for whom everybody entertained much veneration.

The apostate was exasperated by this, and finding Father Vaz still praying before his residence he flew at him and loaded him with insults. The Father bore with them most humbly, and when the Indian's temper had relented, he told him meekly that,

in thus seeking him, he had nothing else in view than to save his soul, and put him again in the way of salvation from which he had swerved.

For three whole days, Father Vaz did not leave his part at the door of the apostate, enduring all affronts together with the pangs of hunger and the heat of the sun. Every time he saw the prodigal, he besought him with tears to think of the salvation of his soul. His charity won him at last. The Indian threw himself at his feet, made a good confession, turned over a new leaf, and led henceforward a most exemplary life.

After the death of both the Archbishop and the Vicar-Apostolic, Father Vaz, in response to the inner voice which constantly called him to Ceylon, asked the Administrator of the Goa Archdiocese for permission to leave the Canara Mission, and obtained it without difficulty,

Before leaving Mangalore, he went to the Administrator of the Vicariate-Apostolic, fell on his knees, protested that never had he had any intention to be wanting in respect to Bishop Thomas de Castro or to his missionaries, and added that, if unwittingly he had given them any displeasure, he humbly begged pardon, and public absolution in case he had incurred any ecclesiastical censures. The two priests embraced each other with tear-moistened eyes, and Father Vaz left.



## CHAPTER IV

### HIS RETURN TO GOA FOUNDATION OF THE ORATORY HIS DEPARTURE FOR CEYLON

HAVING returned to Goa, Father Vaz gave an account to the Administrator of the Archdiocese of the manner in which he had discharged his office of Vicar Forane and Superior of the Mission of Canara.

It is plain that the Administrator found fault with his behaviour towards the Vicar-Apostolic, and was particularly offended at his not having stood up for the rights of the Goa jurisdiction, though the latter had ceased *de facto* in consequence of the Pontifical Brief. For, he gave him no appointment in Goa, nor any parish-work to fulfil, although Father Vaz was generally considered one of the worthiest priests of the Archdiocese.

Father Vaz availed himself of the leisure thus forced on him to devote himself to missionary labours, in preparation to the carrying out of his fond dream: the apostleship in Ceylon. For this he associated himself with two Portuguese Religious: Father Emmanuel das Entradas, and Father George das Saldas, who had come, from the Varatojo Convent, to preach missions in the parish-churches of Goa.

Those two priests were happy to welcome him; for, in their ignorance of the language of the country they had hitherto been unable to work except among the higher class, which alone understood Portuguese. Henceforth they could even evangelize villages, where Father Vaz became their interpreter and translated their sermons into Concani.

One day, Father Vaz was giving a mission in St. Mathew's Church, at Malar, in the Divar island, a short way off Goa

A woman named Marianne Fernandez, who had been long suffering from a fever that seemed incurable, struck with all the good she heard people say of Father Vaz, made an effort to drag herself as far as the church, in order to go to confession to him. She told him of her sufferings, though she spoke with much faith and resignation to the will of God. Father Vaz listened to her, consoled her, exhorted her to put her confidence in God, and ended by saying she could now depart in peace, for her fever would no longer trouble her. Marianne left the confessional perfectly cured, and related to many persons the grace with which she had been favoured.

At that time, Father Vaz withdrew himself more and more from all intercourse with the world. He even went but seldom to see his own mother, for whom he had a very tender affection, and thought of becoming a religious.

He had the means at hand; for there was then at Goa a nascent Order of indigenous priests, for whom the late Archbishop Dom Manuel de Souza de Menezes, had framed rules on the pattern of the Oratorians of S. Philip Neri. Their Superior just then was Fr. Pascal de Costa-Jeremias, whose paternal uncle, Alfonso da Costa, had suffered martyrdom at Concolim together with Blessed Rudolf Acquaviva.\*

\* Alfonso da Costa was a young Brahmin child, who was much attached to Blessed Alfonso Pacheco and followed him everywhere. Here is the account of his martyrdom, as related by Fr. Suan, s. J., in his life of Bl. R. Acquaviva:

“The other child was named Alfonso. He had seen his Master and Father in the Faith, Fr. Pacheco, fall under the blows of the executioners, and without dismay he awaited the same. They wanted by all means to get possession of Fr. Pacheco's Breviary which the child kept clutched with both hands. But deaf to all their threats Alfonso clung to his treasure, and struggled, though a child, against the strength of men-at-arms. Put out by his resistance, the cruel men cut off both his hands, and to disable him from flight they severed the muscles of his legs. They left him thus in torture till next day, when some one, finding him still alive, despatched him.”

Fr. Daniel Bartoli, s. J., relates in the following terms the martyrdom of the four Indian companions of Bl. Rudolf Acquaviva:

Fr. Vaz humbly solicited his admission into the Order and was received on September 25th, 1685. He was then 34 years of age. A short time afterwards, at the suggestion of Fr. Pascal da Costa-Jeremias, he was elected Superior.

His first care was to organise the Order on a more solid basis than it had been hitherto; for it had been until now a mere association of secular priests living in common. He, therefore, obtained that they should be affiliated to the Oratorian Order in Europe, which Fr. Bartholomew de Quental had 'ust been introducing into Lisbon.

Thus Father Vaz became the real Founder of the Oratorian Order in India, which rendered great services to the Church, particularly in Ceylon, where it maintained itself as late as half way down the present century.

Though he had become Superior of the Goa Oratory, he remitted nothing of his missionary labours. He started the practice of gathering the poor of the town every day, at the gate of the Convent which he occupied with his Community. He

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Four Indians of high Brahmin caste, companion-martyrs of Bl. Rudolf, deserve a special mention. Two of them had been brought up in the house of the Fathers.

The name of one of them was Dominic. It was he that went with the Portuguese troops, when these, as we have said above, were sent to punish the rebels of Concolim. He took Fr. Pierre Berno to all the temples and pagodas of idols, which he knew very well, having been born in the place, and they were all burned down, thanks to his indications. Wherefore, the inhabitants of the country, and most of all his own family, entertained a deadly hatred against him; so much so that his own uncle claimed the right to kill him. He pierced him with a lance through the heart and stretched him dead at his feet.

The other Indian child was called Alfonso. When he saw Father Alfonso Pacheco, who had been his Master in the Faith, fall, he stood firm, motionless, ready for whatever fate the executioners would deal him. It seems that the latter wanted only to possess themselves of Fr. Pacheco's Breviary, which the child was keeping tight with both hands. But he resisted their demands, and yielded not even to force, defending himself as much as a child could against powerful men. They at last, with refined cruelty, cut off both his hands, and to prevent him from fleeing, they severed the muscles of his legs. They left him there suffering and helpless on the ground, till the next morning, when they found him still alive and dealt him the stroke of death.

distributed alms to them personally, and spent a whole hour in teaching them their prayers and catechism. This was his favourite occupation; and many years later, amidst his laborious apostolate in Ceylon, he still remembered his poor people in Goa, enquired in his letters whether the work of catechizing them was kept up, and recommended himself to their prayers.

He often preached in the village, and the people flocked from all sides to hear him. He led at the same time a very penitent life. And yet these hardships could not lay to rest his ardent zeal. The sight of Ceylon was ever before his eyes, with her distressed Christians, deprived of all spiritual succour, among whom Catholicism was on the eve of disappearing, and so many souls were perishing.

Many a time was he seen, in the Church, of S. Cruz dos Milagres, shedding tears and praying to God to come to the rescue of that unfortunate Mission, offering himself unreservedly to be devoted to that difficult apostolate. At last, putting aside every human consideration, and giving no further thought to the insuperable difficulties which he was going to encounter, he placed himself under God's keeping, and determined to set out.

As it was of utmost importance to keep the object of his enterprise an absolute secret, he told the Fathers of his Com-

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The two other children, Paul Acosta and Francis Rodriguez, were Indians likewise and were of great help to the Fathers in the Salsette *chretientes*, where by labour and example they contribute to defend and propagate our holy Faith. Both were most desirous of shedding their blood and yielding up their life in behalf of God and of the Faith. Paul Acosta was even constantly reading of the combats and of the glorious deaths of martyrs and was shedding tears through his desires of dying a martyr likewise.

Francis Rodriguez, still quite a youth, exposed himself so readily to the greatest perils in order to propagate the Faith, and did so with such desire of earning the glory of martyrdom, that he felt the promise of it in his heart. He was so sure of it that, when scolded by the Fathers for some small fault, he replied: "Bear with me, I shall be a martyr, and shall thus expiate at once all my shortcomings towards God, by giving Him my blood in atonement of my sins." (*Missione al Gran Mogol*. Rome, imp. Salvioni 1714.)

munity that he was going to Canara, and further on, if it was God's will, and he made over his Superiorship back again to Fr. Pascal da Costa-Jeremias. With his consent and blessing, and, with the blessing of the Archbishop of Goa, who were the only two that knew the goal of his perilous career, he set out, during March 1686, taking only, for his luggage his Breviary and the requisites for saying Mass. He had with him only an Oratorian Father, a Brother, and a young boy named John who attended him at the altar.

In the Canara, Father Vaz was greatly consoled at seeing the increase in the number of Christians since he had been there, many people from Goa having come to Mangalore, and having settled there in the town or the neighbourhood. For nine months he remained in his former Mission, he and his companion helping the resident priests in the holy ministry and it was only on January 3rd, 1687, that he resumed his way down the Malabar Coast.

They were travelling on foot, subsisting on the alms which the Christians gave them as they passed. But at Tellicherry, his two Oratorian companions, the Father and the Brother, put forth some specious plea for remaining behind. At bottom, they were scared by the nearer approach to the dangers which they were going to confront. John, the young boy, remained alone with Father Vaz, who says of him that he was a child of remarkable piety, whom he did not think to have ever deliberately committed a single venial sin. Both continued their course begging their daily bread as they went.

At Cochin, Father Vaz could not discharge any priestly function; for the Dutch were occupying the town. He had even to remain hidden until the departure of the small vessel that was to convey him to Quilon.

The vessel was captained by a Musalman, who was trafficking along the Coast. On landing at Quilon, he found that Father Vaz had not money enough to pay for his passage and that of his

child-companion; he, therefore, loaded them with insults and possessed himself of the portable altar for Mass, which was the only luggage they had. Fortunately, the Administrator of the diocese of Cochin was in Quilon at the time, and he hastened to extricate Father Vaz and his companion from all trouble by paying the Moslem.

From Quilon, our travellers passed into Travancore, where Fr. Vaz sojourned for some time, in a Jesuit College, to learn Tamil, which was the language spoken in the north of Ceylon. The Fathers received him most cordially; and, knowing all the circumstances in which countries under the Dutch were, they gave him precious information on the precautions he had to take against being recognized, and on the means of getting into Ceylon.

Father Vaz could, therefore, no longer travel in his ecclesiastical garb; for the Dutch would have arrested him forthwith. The Rector supplied him with a dress such as the poorest natives and the slaves wore; and in that accoutrement, walking always barefoot, Father Vaz and John reached Tuticorin, the Indian port nearest to Ceylon towards the end of March 1687. It had taken them three months to reach there from Travancore and one year had elapsed since they had left Goa.

## CHAPTER V

### TUTICORIN, MANNAR, JAFFNA

**T**HE Jesuit Missioner in charge of Tuticorin had been the school-mate of Father Vaz at the Goa University. They were happy to find themselves together again, after so many years. Yet Father Vaz had to keep his disguise of itinerant menial, for fear of betraying himself. The Dutch occupied a Fort at Tuticorin from whence they kept a most strict watch on all intending passengers to Ceylon.

Easter came, however, and Father Vaz could not bear to let such a great Feast pass without offering the Divine Sacrifice. He was even heedless enough to say Mass in a Church and to administer the Sacraments to a number of Christians. The Dutch commander in the Fort was instantly apprised of it, and he suspected the design of the disguised priest to sail secretly to Ceylon. He therefore issued the most strict orders for all the craft-masters along the coast, forbidding them to take on board any passenger for Ceylon that should not be provided with a pass from his own hand.

This was a great disappointment for Father Vaz, who was thus balked at the very moment when he thought himself more than ever sure of success. He thought his enterprise jeopardised or at least put off; when, lo! three days later the Dutch officer died suddenly, and his successor, on being asked a pass by Father Vaz himself, failed to make out a Catholic priest under the garb of a poor workman. He therefore gave him the pass without making much ado.

Fr. Vaz put to sea in a small sailing smack, with John his young servant, and was fortunate enough to find on board a Catholic Portuguese of good position to whom he could reveal himself. That man, full of zeal and faith, promised him that, once in Jaffna, he would take him to one of his friends, in whose house he would run no risk of being apprehended by the Dutch.

A little while after they had left Tuticorin, a dreadful storm burst upon them, which kept them at sea for twenty days, and it was only by dint of exertions and cruel sufferings that they contrived to land on the island of Mannar. There the injuries sustained by the vessel, and the exhaustion of the crew, compelled them to break their journey.

One can hardly realise nowadays what our travellers had to endure on board their tiny skiff. The journey from Tuticorin to Jaffna took as a rule only three days, or four at most. To guard against eventualities, they had taken victuals for one week; but now they had been tossed on the wave for twenty days, a prey to dire famine.

Father Vaz suffered most. On departing from Goa, he had vowed to make his long journey, begging his daily bread as he went. He had therefore declined the offer of provisions made to him by the Jesuit Father in Tuticorin, intending to beg his daily pittance from the passengers and the crew. Seeing him quite destitute, they willingly gave him a share; but, after the eleventh day they had no longer anything to give him, so that Fr. Vaz spent nine whole days without a morsel of food, without even a drop of water, wherewith to quench his burning thirst.

He was carried to the shore at Mannar in a state of starvation, unable to stand on his feet, so that there was no question for him to continue his voyage to Jaffna. To complete his mischance, the Portuguese gentleman on whose help he depended most had to leave Mannar immediately, so that Father Vaz was left unbefriended, without a shelter and without resources.

With the help of his faithful John, who was more robust, and who had borne up more easily with privation, to which he was inured from childhood, Father Vaz regained some of his strength, by means of rice begged from the villagers. They availed themselves of the first opportunity of sailing, and, at last, landed in Jaffna without further hindrance.

Father Vaz had reached his goal: he was in Ceylon,



## CHAPTER VI

### HIS ILLNESS

### HIS APOSTOLIC LABOURS IN JAFFNA

AS Father Vaz knew no one in Jaffna, he wandered about the whole day in quest of shelter for the night but was refused one everywhere. At last a woman, more charitably inclined, permitted him to lie down in her *mandu*. This is a structure barely consisting of a roof placed on pillars. It was built opposite her house on the other side of the street. Such buildings are also called *satram* and are raised by Indians, along trunk roads, or in the vicinity of temples, to accommodate travellers or pilgrims. It is in their eyes an act of charity, when it is not prompted by more vanity.

In that shed, which was pervious to every wind and did not screen him from the night's dampness, Father Vaz had to remain for days. But soon the excess of misery, and the starvation he had endured in his long voyage, coupled with the unwholesomeness of the food he received by begging from door to door, began to tell on his frame and he was seized with a very acute dysentery.

This disease is considered very contagious by the Indians. Therefore the pagans of the neighbourhood reproached the woman for having sheltered that stranger in her *mandu*; and, as Father Vaz was unable to walk, they took him on bamboos to a forest near the city, where they abandoned him. To complete his destitution, the faithful John who was taking care of him and fed him with rice which he begged for him in the villages, lay prostrate with the same malady. There they were both, in a desperate plight, nailed by sickness to the wet soil, scarcely able to move their exhausted limbs, exposed by day to the rays of the sun, which are scorching in that country, and to the moist and cold night air, really forlorn of all; for nobody could hear their cries as nobody ever passed that way. Father Vaz thought their last hour had come, and they both prepared themselves for death.

But God, who is ever nearest when all human hope has failed, came to the rescue of his good servant. A poor woman lost her way whilst gathering firewood in the forest, and came upon the spot they were at, when they seemed on the point of breathing their last. Moved with compassion, she ran home, and brought them some *Kanji* (a preparation of fermented rice,) such as the natives use.

This Good Samaritan came daily to take care of them and brought them some *Kanji*. They thus regained their strength, and were soon sufficiently strong to find their way back to Jaffna.

Father Vaz resolved then to find some Catholic family as soon as possible. But this was no easy task for the Catholics generally hid the fact of their being Catholics, for fear of drawing upon their heads the cruel persecution of the Protestants, who were lords of the land. He had, moreover, to use great caution to escape the vigilance of the detectives, who were numerous, in the pay of the Dutch Commander of the Fort.

Father Vaz had, therefore, to keep his profession of itinerant mendicant; all he dared to do was to wear a rosary around his neck, in order to strike the eyes of the passers-by.

Seeing that the wretchedly clad beggar was a Catholic, the Protestants and many pagans, too, made him a butt for their insults. They spurned him, pushed him away, and sometimes beat him. But he kept offering those trials to God, whilst watching the behaviour of the people at whose door he begged his daily pittance, to find any sign of there being a Catholic among them.

He noticed particularly a house where he was always benevolently received, and as the owner of it was ever charitable towards him, he felt sure that the man was a Catholic. One day, therefore, as they were alone, he questioned him about the state of Catholicism in Jaffna, and asked him whether he would be glad to see a priest, to confess and to receive Holy Communion. The Indian melted into tears, saying he was unworthy of receiving such a great grace.

From that day, Father Vaz stayed a longer time at that house, talking to that good Indian, who began to surmise there was more in his visitor than his tattered rags revealed. He spoke of it to one of his Catholic friends, a rich man, who was well treated by the Dutch, and this one guessed at once there was a priest under that disguise.

Without losing one moment, he went to Fr. Vaz, and entreated him, if he was a priest, to make himself known to him. "For, the unfortunate Catholics, beset by the Dutch persecution, were in need of the spiritual consolations and of the Sacraments, of which they had been deprived so many years. His way of acting, said he, showed he was a priest, but in his house he would find a refuge, where he would baffle all the Dutch perquisitions, and have nothing to fear." Fr. Vaz no longer delayed to let out the truth; and, in proof of his priesthood, he exhibited the letters of the Archbishop of Goa.

Then began in earnest the apostolate of Father Vaz in Ceylon, one year and a half since he had left Goa, and about twelve years since the day he had heard the account of the Goanese Canon, when, at the exposure of the sad state of the Christians in Ceylon, he had felt the first call from God to that glorious apostolate.

The Indian to whom he had entrusted himself kept him hidden by day in his house; and at night the Catholics of Jaffna met together there secretly. Great was their joy and gratitude, when they could once more hear Holy Mass and receive the Sacraments. However, they did not think Father Vaz could safely remain in Jaffna. He was too much within the grasp of the Dutch there. They held counsel, and decided that he should take his residence in a village of the neighbourhood called Sillalai. The inhabitants of that place were so resolute and steadfast in the Faith, that the Dutch feared they would revolt if their little chapel was taken from them and turned into a Protestant "temple," as had been done elsewhere: they had consequently let them alone. It was thus that village that became the headquarters of Fr. Vaz's Mission and from there he went round to visit Jaffna or the surrounding villages.

Although exposed to the daily danger of falling into the hands of the Dutch, Father Vaz displayed a ceaseless activity. Wherever he went, the Christians hid him in their dwellings, so that Father de Rego remarks the parts were interverted in this case: it was no longer the Shepherd guarding the sheep, but rather the sheep guarding the Shepherd, which remark, however, may be qualified to the extent that, if the sheep were guarding his personal safety, he on the other hand was zealously guarding their souls.

His apostolate turned out very fruitful. Not only did he strengthen Catholics in the Faith, but he also converted a number of Protestants and pagans. Catholics ceased to hide their faith, and began openly to profess it; their houses rang again with the strains of pious canticles, which they sang while at work.

The Dutch officers could not make out the reason of that change: how it was the Catholics, who had tamely submitted to their penal laws, and durst no longer call themselves by that name, began afresh to show a bold front.

Henry van Rhee, *Commissaire-General* and military commander of Jaffna, imputed the "mischief" to the Jesuits of Manapad, whom he believed to have been able to visit Ceylon secretly. He charged therefore his police to keep a wakeful eye on the houses of the Christians to lay hold of those supposed Jesuits; but Father Vaz found means to evade all his pursuits.

Father Andrew Freire, Provincial of the Jesuits in Malabar, wrote accordingly to the Viceroy of Goa, Dom Manuel d'Almeida: "Father Joseph Vaz, a brahmin, who was sent from Goa to take charge of the Christians of Jaffna discharges his duty with such devotion that all consider him a Saint. He concerns himself not only with the Indians, but also with the Europeans. Although the heretics search every nook to find him, they can never come upon him, for like Proteus he balks them under a variety of disguises."

## CHAPTER VII

### PERSECUTION, MARTYRDOM OF DON PEDRO

NEVERTHELESS Henry van Rhee gave orders to his bloodhounds to do their utmost and ferret out the Catholic priest.

On Christmas 1690\* the Christians of Jaffna had assembled in three different houses, where altars were ready for Father Vaz to say Mass for them in succession. Whilst awaiting his arrival the faithful were saying the Rosary together.

Father Vaz had not yet left his hiding-place, when van Rhee's soldiers surrounded those houses, broke down the altars, profaned all the sacred pictures, and carried away as prisoners, all the Catholics present, men, women and children, to the number of 300. Hadt he soldiers, inrush taken place half an hour later, Father Vaz could hardly have escaped.

The next morning all the prisoners were brought before Henry van Rhee. He dismissed the women and children, took a fine from most of the men, and retained only eight of them, from among the richest and the most influential.

One of them was named Dou Pedro. He was a young man of the Vellala caste, which is the highest in Ceylon, as there are no Brahmins in the island. He was rich, and his family held a leading position among the natives of Jaffna.

In his adolescence, through ambition, and with the hope of obtaining a high post from the Dutch Government, he had abjured Catholicism and become a Protestant. But a few years later, another influential Catholic, Emmanuel de Silva, brought his fault home to him. Penetrated with horror for his sin of apostasy, he abjured Protestantism did severe penances, and placed himself under Father Vaz's direction from the day that

\* It was actually in 1689 (Editor).

the Father made himself known to the Jaffna Catholics. He became even one of his best penitents.

Van Rhee did not mince matters. He put his eight prisoners no other alternative but becoming Protestants or being put to death at once; but none of them showed any sign of yielding. Then, in his grudge against Don Pedro for his having returned to the Catholic Faith, the Dutch commander ordered him to be scourged with rods till he declared himself Protestant again, failing which, he was to die under the blows.

Don Pedro bore that torture heroically, until he lost consciousness. Then van Rhee, seeing his whole body a sore, ordered him to be thrown, with his seven companions, into a dungeon, where he soon expired exhorting the others to persevere in the Faith. They all did so. Consequently Emmanel de Sylva and the other Confessors of the Faith were condemned to hard labour for life, and to the confiscation of their goods. They all belonged to the leading families among the Tamil population of Jaffna.

They were sequestered in a fortress, which van Rhee was enlarging. With heavy chains on their feet they were made to carry up the stones that were required for the masonry. Their painful martyrdom did not last long: they soon perished from excess of misery, but none of them entertained the thought of freeing himself from pain by apostasy.

For some time more, Father Joseph Vaz remained in the vicinity of Jaffna, and the jungle was his hiding place; but he could no longer freely minister to the Christian community, which the persecution had scattered, and over which the Dutch police was keeping a stricter watch than before. His usefulness being thus hampered, Fr. Vaz resolved to quit for some time the neighbourhood of Jaffna, where he had no longer any fear that the Catholics would show weakness, and to visit other parts of the island, where the faithful were completely abandoned. He left, therefore, in company with his faithful John, and with some Christians, and after going through the large virgin forests of Vanni they arrived at Puttalam.

The church built of yore by the Portuguese in that town was still standing, the Christian community was mustering one thousand souls, who had pretty well kept their Faith and were in a position to declare themselves openly Catholic. For the town of Puttalam was the only place on the Western Coast of Ceylon that had not surrendered to the Dutch, but had kept its independence. It was practically the sea outlet of the Kingdom of Kandy. As a set off against this, the Christians of the country, particularly those who dwelt on Dutch territory were in a lamentable spiritual destitution. Many had declared themselves Protestants, others feigned apostasy; others led a life of vice more degraded than the natives themselves.

Father Vas remained a whole year in Puttalam, visiting the villages, preaching, working without relaxation, so that the Faith was soon flourishing again in Puttalam, as it had been in Jaffna.

Being now fully acquainted with the political status of Ceylon, Father Vaz perceived that the point from whence he could radiate for his apostolate over the whole island most advantageously was Kandy. It was then the capital of an independent Kingdom comprising nearly one-half of the island, and its situation is quite central. He resolved, therefore, to make it the centre of his own mission.\*

\* The last priest that resided in Kandy had been Fr. Vergonse, a Portuguese Jesuit, who died at his post, towards the year 1662, some thirty years before the arrival of Fr. Joseph Vaz. Captain Knox who knew him during his long captivity speaks of him in the following terms:—

“ This civil reception, upon their first coming up into the city, put these merchantmen in hopes that the King would give them their liberty. There was at that time an old Portuguese Father, *Padre Vergonse* by name, living in the city. With him they discoursed concerning the probability of their liberty, and that the favours the King had shown them seemed to be good signs of it. But he told them the plain truth, that it was not customary there to release *white men*. For saying which, they railed at him, calling him *Popish dog* and *Jesuitical rogue*, supposing he spoke as he wished that it might be. But afterwards, to their grief, they found it to be true as he told them.”

Father Vergonse, says Knox, was a Genoese: “ There happened that two priests fell into the hands of the King, on whom he conferred great honours; for having laid aside their habits, they were kept about his person and were the greatest favourites at court.”

But there were obstacles in the way. Without being precisely hostile to Catholicism, the Kings of Kandy was very jealous of their independence and had absolutely shut their Kingdom against foreigners. No one could enter it without having their leave, and even those that had it were treated like prisoners, being interned in Kandy and forbidden to go out of it. No exception was made, not even for Dutch ambassadors.

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“The King one day sent for Vergonse, and asked him if it would not be better for him to lay aside his old coat and cap, and to do as the two other priests had done, and receive honours from him. He replied the King that he boasted more in that old habit and in the name of Jesus, than in all the honour that he could do him, and so refused the King's honours. The King valued the Father for this saying. He had a pretty library about him, and died in his bed of old age: whereas the two other priests in the King's service died miserably, one of a cancer, and the other was slain.”

“The old priest had about thirty or forty books, which the King, they say, siezed on after his death and keeps.”

Knox wonders how it could pass that Fr. Vergonse “would go to the temples, and eat with the Weavers (Bonzes) and other ordinary people of the sacrifices offord to the idols: but with this apology for himself that he eat it as common meat, and as God's creature, and that it was never the worse for their superstition that had passed over it.”

But Knox is mistaken on that point: First, many of the missioners who succeeded Fr. Vergonse in Ceylon considered it useful and necessary for their apostolate to keep on good terms with the Bonzes, who lives as a rule in the Bonzerie contiguous to the Temple, so that the phrase going to the Temple often means going to the Bonzerie. Even nowadays missioners in countries about Tibet, when Travelling, ask hospitality in a *lamaserie*, for want of any other place to put up in.

Next: about the victuals, Buddhists offer no sacrifice to their idols. All the food conveyed to the temple is simply meant to feed the Bonzes who by their rule are forbidden to cook and depend for their meals on the eatables sent them by their benefactors.

The state of that *chretiente* was therefore very sad. Two priests had apostatised; Father Vergonse, prostrate by age, could not give them the necessary spiritual care; and his accounts for the following sketch given of it by Knox who sojourned in Kandy between the death of Fr. Vergonse and the coming of Father Joseph Vaz:

“If any enquire into the religious exercise and worship practised among the Christians here, I am sorry I must say it, I can give but a slender account. For they have no churches, no priests, and so no meeting together on the



Father Vaz was even exposed to still more evident danger. For the King of Kandy were ever apprehending that the Portuguese might one day come back to Ceylon and resume their former conquests. Now every one would know that he came from Goa and was a Portuguese subject. He might, therefore, be mistake for a spy, and this meant death by the the band of the executioner. But none of these considerations could withhold Fr. Fr. Vaz from going.

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Lord's Day for Divine Worship; but each one reads or prays at his own house, as he is disposed. They sanctify the day chiefly by refraining from work and meeting together at drinking-houses."

"They continue the practice of baptism; and there being no priests, they baptize their children themselves with water, and use the words: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; and give them Christian names. They have their friends about them at such a time, and make a small feast according to their ability: and some teach their children to say their prayers, and to read, and some do not."

"Indeed their Religion is but negative, that is, they are not heathen they do not comply with the idolatry here practised; and they profess themselves Christians in a general manner, which appears by their names, and by their Beads and Crosses that some of them wear about their necks."

"Nor indeed can I wholly clear them from compliance with the Religion of the country. For some of them, when they are sick, do use the ceremonies which the heathen do in the like case, as in making idols of clay, and setting them up in their houses, and offering rice to them, and having Weavers to dance before them. But they are ashamed to be known to do this; and I have known none to do it, but such as are Indian-born."

"Yet, I never knew any of them that do inwardly, in heart and conscience incline to the ways of the heathen, but perfectly abhor them; nor have there been any I ever heard of that came to the Temples upon any religious account, but only would stand-by and look-on."

"The King allowed them to build a church; which they did, and the Portuguese assembled there; but they made no better than a bawdy house of it; for which cause the King commanded to pull it down."

Such was the state of that *chretiente*, which, during the 30 years that elapsed between the death of Father Vergonse and the coming of Father Joseph Vaz, remained entirely destitute of priests.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FATHER VAZ IN KANDY HIS IMPRISONMENT

FATHER VAZ set out from Puttalam in August 1692, accompanied by Antony Sotto, a Portuguese merchant, who dealt with the Court of Kandy and felt confident of obtaining for him leave to reside for some time in the Capital.

After marching for eight days, they reached Vavodda where Sotto owned a house, and from whence he sent one of his cousins to Kandy to obtain the necessary leave from the King. Unfortunately he was not aware that during his absence, that cousin of his had been hood-winked by the heretics, and had apostatised.

There lived at that time in Kandy a French Huguenot, by the name of M. de Lanerolle, sent to Ceylon by a French trading Company, to promote their interests at the Court of the Kandyan King. This prince had not agreed to his proposals, and had kept him as a prisoner. Lanerolle finally losing hope of returning to France, had acquiesced in his fate, accepted an employ in the Court of Kandy, and acquired some influence which he used to harm Catholicism as much as he possibly could. He blushed not to join hands with Pagans in order to injure Catholicism.\*

Antony Sotto's cousin, instead of handing over the petition he carried into the King's own hands, took it to M. de Lanerolle, who at once repaired to the Court, and denounced Antony Sotto to his Sovereign as guilty of intrigues with the Portuguese. He aimed at bringing them back to Ceylon, and he even kept, secreted, in his house at Vavodda, a Goanese spy whom he wanted to smuggle into Kandy under the garb of a missionary priest.

\* His posterity is still extant in Ceylon; one of them is a Protestant minister.

The King at once sent soldiers to Vavodda. Father Vaz, Antony Sotto, and John were arrested and brought to Kandy. They were thrown into a prison, where they were so strictly watched that for five days they could get no proper food, and had to content themselves with a handful of common millet called *kuracan* which their keepers gave them out of commiseration.

A few days later, the King came himself to see them. That prince was Vimala Dharma-Suriya II, a man of superior talent, and of broader views than were as a rule the Indian princes of his time. He aimed at reviving Buddhism, which had greatly fallen into decay in Ceylon; not that he much esteemed such an absurd creed, but because he wanted his people to have some religion anyhow. He was besides in no way hostile to the Catholics, who enjoyed some liberty of conscience under his rule.\*

\* Captain Robert Knox, who was interned in Kandy in the same way that Father Vaz was but under the predecessor of Vimala-Dharma-Suriya, from 1659 to 1679, and had left the country some thirteen years before Father Vaz's arrival, says in his book on Ceylon, which was published in London, in 1687:

"Both King and people do generally like the Christian Religion; and respect and honour the Christians as Christians; and do believe there is a greater God than any they adore. And in all probability they would be very easily drawn to the Christian or any other Religion."

Then in another passage: "The Christian Religion the King does not in the least persecute or dislike; but rather, as it seems to me esteems and honours it. The value also that he has for the Christian Religion will appear from the respect he gives the professors of it, as will be seen afterwards. The people love a man that makes conscience of his ways, which makes them respect Christians more than any others, because they think they are just and will not lie."

This testimony of a contemporary and a serious writer like Knox is very precious. For it removes the difficulty, which might otherwise be left, to understand the protection and the honours awarded to Father Vaz, and the words uttered to defend him from his calumniators, by the two Kandyan Kings who showed most zeal for the revival of Buddhism, which was well-nigh extinguished in Ceylon, and who with the help of the Protestant Dutch Government succeeded in reviving it.

It was no unusual occurrence at that time for a Christian to be promoted to the high post of *dissave*. Knox says: "When the King advances any to be *dissava* he shows them great testimonies of his love and favour, especially to those that are Christians, in whose service he imposeth greater confidence than in his own people; concluding that they will make more conscience of their ways, and be more faithful in their office."

J V—3

The King spoke for a long time with Father Vaz and Antony Sotto, and went away quite convinced that Lanerolle's denunciation was groundless. He released Antony Sotto, and caused Father Vaz to be shifted to a more commodious room, and to be provided with everything he wanted at the royal expense, but he kept him in jail, nevertheless.

There were at that time a certain number of Catholics in Kandy. One of them Antony de Horta was even holding a very high position, being a *dissave*, viz.: one of the first dignities of the Kingdom. Yet none of them dared intercede with the King in behalf of the prisoner-priest, nor even ask to see him.

Things went on thus for a few months; but that time was not entirely lost for Father Vaz; for he studied the Sinhalese, which is the language of Kandy and of the South of Ceylon, and he taught his faithful John Latin, for he intended to have him ordained a priest.

Little by little, the rigour with which he was kept was relaxed, and he was permitted to walk freely within the jail premises. He wished then to find out whether it was as a priest that he was kept in durance vile, or because of some still lurking suspicion that he might be a spy sent a-reconnoitring by the Portuguese.

With the help of John, he set up a small bower with branches of palm-trees in a corner of the yard. Under it he built a small altar, put his crucifix on it, and came daily to sing the Blessed Virgin's Litany at this extempore-chapel. Seeing he was not interfered with, he said Mass there during Christmas night, 1692, and he came afterwards to offer the Holy Sacrifice in the same place every day.

Yet several months passed without affording any mitigation in Father Vaz's lot, until it happened that a Catholic, whose trade it was to embroider rich vestments for the Kandyan nobility,

was admitted to Court to present the King with a silk garment of exquisite workmanship. The King, charmed with it, asked what might be the price of it. But the Christian artisan asked nothing else for it than permission to go and see Father Vaz, in order to make his confession to him. Struck with that disinterestedness, and pleased with his attachment to his religion, the Prince not only granted him his request, but permitted also all his other Catholic subjects to go to Father Vaz whenever they pleased.

A most active life then began for the prisoner-priest. For forty years, no priest had been seen in Kandy; it was, therefore, with alacrity that the Christians availed themselves of the permission granted by their Monarch. Every day, they went to the jail to hear Holy Mass, and the rest of the time was spent by Father Vaz, in preaching, teaching the catechism, confessing, baptizing children, or blessing conjugal unions. At last, after two years of confinement, he was released; but with the strict proviso that he should not go out of the city of Kandy. Orders were given in strict terms to the soldiers of the garrison and the boatmen of the river to arrest him, if he attempted to pass.

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## CHAPTER IX

### APOSTOLATE IN KANDY LANEROLLE'S INTRIGUES

**A**FTER coming out of prison, Father Joseph Vaz, with the help of some Catholics, built a church in Kandy.

It is true Kandy had formerly possessed a church built by St. Francis Xavier, but all traces of it had disappeared. St. Francis Xavier had been the first Missioner that reached as far as Kandy, and he was the first to offer Holy Mass in that place.

Father Vaz gave his church the name of Our Lady of the Conversion of Pagans, and began immediately to organise the Christians of the city. He brought them together every day in the church, to teach them the principles of our Faith, and visited at home those that were hindered by age or infirmity from coming to him.

The work in Kandy being insufficient to satiate his zeal, he went out of town, more than once, despite the King's prohibition, to minister to the Christians in the villages, and the popular legend is that God made him invisible for the sentries at the gate or the boatmen along the river's bank, when he was passing close to them.

Fr. Vaz himself alludes to the fact, in a letter that he wrote towards that time to the Archbishop of Goa. "The King," he says, "has not yet permitted me to cross the river, to carry spiritual help to the Christians scattered in the villages; but placing my duty to the King of Kings above all, and trusting in His powerful protection, I have already eight times crossed the river, to carry the Sacraments to the sick and dying. Those who were to watch me knew full well that I did not contemplate a

flight, and the keepers of the gate, as well as the boatmen, took no notice of me and let me go.”\*

In a short time, the true church began to expand in Kandy. Not only were the Catholics strengthened in the Faith, but many pagans were converted, and among them some officers of the King's palace.

M. de Lanerolle made use of the influential post he had near the King, to poison that prince's mind by every means in his power, against Father Vaz. But, seeing all his efforts were fruitless, he resolved to arouse the Bonzes against the priest. King Vimala-Dharma-Suriya II, on the contrary, as I have said above, was a prince of a superior mind; he sincerely venerated

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- \* Captain Knox says: “The Kingdom of *Conde Uda* (Kandy) is strongly fortified by nature. For, which way soever you enter into it, you must ascend vast and high mountains, and descend little or nothing. The ways are many, but very narrow, so that but one can go abreast. The hills are covered with wood, and great rocks, so that it is scarcely possible to get up anywhere but only in the paths, in all which there are gates made of thorns, the one at the bottom, the other at the top of the hills, and two or three men always set to watch, who are to examine all that come and go, and see what they carry, that letters may not be conveyed, nor prisoners or other slaves run away”.

“There are constant watches set in convenient places in all parts of the country and thorn-gates: but in time of danger, besides the ordinary watches, in all towns, and in all places and in every cross road, exceeding thick, that 't is not possible for any to pass unobserved”

“But especially in all roads and passages from the city where the King now inhabits, are very strict watches set: which will suffer none to pass not having a passport; which is the print of a seal in clay. It is given at the Court to them that have license to go through the watches. The seals are different according to the profession of the party”

These words of a contemporary writer are evident proof that, when Father Vaz went out of town to carry the Sacraments to the Christians outside and the city watchmen or boatmen, who had received orders not to let any one cross the river without the permit of the King, took no notice of him and let him go, it was not out of condescension, or through neglect of their duty, but because they were prevented from seeing him, by the action of Divine Providence. This is the more shown because every infraction by them of the King's orders was punished with death, and before enduring the capital punishment they were put to frightful tortures.

Father Vaz, and entertained as much admiration of his virtue and abnegation, as he did of contempt for the ignorance and laziness of the Bonzes.

Twice did M. de Lanerolle seek an audience from the King, in company with the leaders of the Bonzes, to terrify him with the dangers that were impending over his Kingdom, unless he used energetic means to check the advance of the Catholic faith. Father Vaz, he said, was beyond doubt a Portuguese spy. He gathered the Christians into his church and endeavoured to bring over the Buddhists, in order to create a powerful party for himself. As soon as he would feel strong enough, he would head a rebellion. Lanerolle, therefore, entreated his Sovereign to act before it was too late, to order the Catholic Church in Kandy to be pulled down, and to banish the priest from his States.

The King sternly replied that he had caused Father Vaz to be very closely watched, and had been convinced that he was no spy, but had ventured upon such perilous voyages merely for the sake of helping his co-religionists spiritually. He thought it, therefore, unworthy both of a king and of an honest man to persecute a poor stranger who had sought refuge in his capital.

Rebuked this time, M. de Lanerolle did not lose courage. He returned to the palace, a few days later, with the chief Bonzes of the place. He represented to the King that the strength of the political power was grounded upon the religious conformity of the people with their Sovereign. He quoted as a proof that under the Portuguese, the Kings of Kandy lost their throne, because they had become Catholic and the people rebelled against them. Something similar would happen, when Father Vaz had converted all his people. The King therefore should not tolerate it: no foreign religion should be preached in his own State, nor any law but his own: the more so, that the objectionable religion here was that of the Portuguese, the greatest enemies of the Kandyan Kings.



The King curtly set down that rabid Huguenot by remarking that he hated the Portuguese, but nevertheless valued their Religion, which was anyhow much better than the Protestant one.

The Bonzes then stepped in with their complaints. The Catholic Church in Kandy was much more frequented than the Temples of Buddha. Those temples would soon be deserted, unless the King put a stop to the preaching of Father Vaz; for now the very servants of the palace, whose official duty it was to provide flowers for the worship of Buddha, refused to do so, under the plea that they had become Catholics.

Vimala-Dharma replied to the Bonzes that they ought to do the same that Father Vaz did, to work, preach, instruct the people as he did, to teach them their religion as he taught them his. If they did, the Temples would no longer be deserted, and people would flock to them as they now flock to the Catholic Church.

Snubbed in that manner by the King, who openly favoured Father Vaz, Lanerolle joined hands with some Buddhist notables, who were powerful enough to act by themselves. They threatened Father Vaz, and began to excite the mob against Christians. These were set upon, when going to church, and they were belaboured with blows, or their rosaries were torn from their necks.

The persecution grew serious, and caused Father Vaz much anxiety. The king, it is true, had resisted M. de Lanerolle and his compeers' arrogance; but would he show the same bold front in the presence of a popular rising in Kandy? And a popular rising was evidently the aim of the enemies of Catholicism.

Things had thus become most critical, when God, by working a signal prodigy, came to the rescue of His impugned Church, and so secured her *prestige* that she could henceforth develop herself in peace.

## CHAPTER X

### THE MIRACULOUS RAIN

**T**HE rainy season in Kandy begins usually in the second half of May; but in the year in which the facts just related occurred, the due time had long passed, and there was no appearance of rain. The drought was therefore severely felt in the whole kingdom of Kandy.

It was a frightful scourge, for the staple food of the inhabitants of Kandy is rice; but rice is an aquatic plant, which cannot grow but when the fields are completely covered with water during the rainy season. Rain failing, all the reservoirs would be dried up. Famine, therefore, was the fate impending over the whole country; famine with its ordinary retinue, pestilence and rebellion.

The King was in despair, for the Dutch were hanging on his frontiers, watching for the first good opportunity to annex his kingdom to their possessions. He consequently ordered the Bonzes to offer public sacrifices and implore the help of Buddha. Flowers were daily deposited in offering at the feet of Buddha, and the temple walls echoed with the sounds of sacred flutes; but rain still tarried. Tamil magicians were then called upon to sacrifice to the devil, but obtained no result.

Vimala-Dharma-Suriya now at his wit's end, sent for some of his Christian servants, and ordered them to repair to Father Vaz: "He preaches that his God is the only true One," he said, "Well let him pray to Him to save all these people, who without rain must starve."

Father Vaz replied that, in compliance with the King's orders, he was going to pray to God. If it pleased God, and it would conduce to His greater glory, an abundant rain would refresh the land; for He is the Master of all natural elements, which He has created and which stand at His beck.

Saying this, Father Vaz came out of his dwelling, had an altar put up on the principal square of the town, and on the altar a Crucifix. He knelt down in prayer, and the people gathered from all sides around him. Whilst he prayed, the sky grew overcast with clouds, and such abundant rain poured down that in a few hours all the reservoirs constructed for irrigation were filled to the brim.

Father Vaz had continued motionless in prayer all the while, and the people remarked with astonishment that, amid such a deluge, the spot where he knelt and the altar in front of him had remained perfectly dry.

This prodigy produced an immense impression. A great number of pagans begged the favour of Baptism, and all the apostates, who had unfortunately been many, did penance and obtained to be reconciled to the Church.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE VISIT OF THE MISSIONS ARRIVAL OF FRESH MISSIONERS

UNTIL now, as I have said above, Father Vaz had not been able to go out of Kandy, to convey the ministrations of Religion to the Christians in the neighbouring villages, except in secret, and at his own peril; but, after the striking miracle which we have told in the foregoing chapter, he obtained the King's leave to go whithersoever he listed. Without any loss of time, he availed himself of that leave to pay a visit to Colombo.

This fine *chretiente*, so flourishing under the Portuguese, was now a complete wreck. The churches had been transformed into Protestant temples, all ministers of religion banished, all Catholic Schools closed, and a good portion of the Catholic population had been driven by violence to embrace Protestantism and to send their children to Protestant schools.

The neophytes, deprived of priests for so long, had relapsed into paganism, and the small number of those that stuck fast to the Catholic Faith, had to practise their religion on the sly; for prayer in common was a crime which the Protestants visited with severe penalties. Such was the state of Christianity when Father Vaz entered Colombo.

The Christians at once flocked to him. They congregated at night, in out-of-the way houses, where the Father said Mass, administered the Sacraments, and exhorted this long-trying flock to persevere in their Faith. They plucked up courage from his words, and as he remained in Colombo for some time, not only the Indians but also the Catholic Europeans, some of whom had remained after the departure of the Portuguese troops, had all recourse to him. They brought him the apostates, who haunted by remorse, came to be taken back into the bosom of the Church. He even converted several Dutch Protestants, who made their recantation of Calvinism in his hands.

Under such circumstances, the presence of a Catholic priest in town could not long remain a secret, and the Governor issued strict orders to the commander of the militia to have the most active search made for him. Had that commander instantly acted upon the orders thus given to him, Father Vaz would certainly have been arrested; but that officer delayed, and when he began to make his perquisitions Father Vaz had already left in order to visit Negombo.

In like manner he went through the provinces of Sabaragamuva, Mantotte, Batticaloa, Trincomalie, Jaffna which was the first stage of his apostolate, and at last Puttalam; he had gone the round of the whole island.

On this missionary circuit, we unfortunately possess nothing but a few details recorded by Fr. Joseph Menezes in his letter, written on July 31st, 1698, to the Superior of the Oratorians in Goa.

“As the kind of life Father Vaz lives is in reality more superhuman than natural, the people of the country credit him with many miracles. Even the Pagans and the Moslems relate things of him that seem most extraordinary. I was not able to verify the exact truth of all these narratives; but the incident of the elephant happened in my own mission, and I examined the reality of the fact, which was attested to me under oath by an ocular witness.”

“The Father was walking, a little ahead of his companions, on the road leading from Maripo to Vellevalim. He had a small book in his hand (said the witness—probably his Breviary.) Suddenly a wild elephant emerged from the wood, and at the sight of him, the whole company took to flight. The animal advanced till a few steps from Father Vaz then paused, and took another direction, whereas Father Vaz was totally unaware of the danger to which he had been exposed. \* ”

\* Wild elephants are naturally timid, but become very ferocious when they are solitary. It is rare for anybody to escape death if he comes across a solitary elephant in the jungle.

“ At Pulliacullao, Father Vaz was preaching the Gospel to the Pagans. One of them, already advanced in age, and having yet no child, begged of him to pray to God that he might have a son. Father Vaz instructed him, baptized him, and a short time afterwards the new convert rejoiced in a male offspring. ”

“ At Puttalam, a poor woman was dying, having been brought to bed of a child which had lain three days dead in her womb. Father Vaz administered to her the Holy Viaticum and the Extreme Unction. Then moved by the desolation of the whole family, he repaired to the chapel and began to pray. There he remained kneeling, until messengers came to tell him that the mother had safely got rid of her stillborn progeny, and all danger for her was past. Father Vaz then only rose from his knees and returned thanks to God. ”

“ At Benacuddipu, the Father insisted with a woman, called, Anna-Pulle, that she should return to her husband; but she refused obstinately. God chastised her there and then, for she fell so ill of a horrid tumour that grew upon her head that she was gasping her last. Father Vaz, who passed again that way, was called to Anna-Pulle, blessed her, and she was instantly cured. The thing is certain, and I heard it from the woman herself. ”

“ If all these facts came to pass in my Mission alone, I leave it for your Reverence to judge what may have happened in the others. ”

“ After several long months of itinerant apostolate, Father Vaz returned to Colombo, where a great source of joy was in store for him. For, the Bishop of Cochin, Fr. Pedro Pacheco, in whose diocese the isle of Ceylon was situated, being apprised, by the Provincial of the Jesuits in Manapad, of the progress of Fr. Vaz's apostolate, sent him two auxiliaries. Both were also belonging to the Goa Oratorians. One was Fr. Joseph de Menezes; the other, Fr. Joseph Carvalho, the nephew of Fr. Vaz, who had been already his companion in his first journey to Canara. ” (See page 8)

A few months later, the same prelate also sent Fr. Peter Farrao to Father Vaz. He at the same time appointed Father Vaz his Vicar-General in Ceylon and delegated him with full powers. Father Vaz was thus made most happy by the arrival of these co-labourers; after realising his youthful dream of evangelizing Ceylon, he now found himself able to organise his Mission on a regular footing.

The companions sent to him by the Bishop were men of great natural abilities, full of zeal and of eminent virtue; they were all Indians and of Brahminical descent. Accordingly, Father Vaz made the following arrangements: To Father Peter Farrao, he assigned the *chretientes* in the North of the Island, with Jaffna for his residence. Father Joseph de Menezes was stationed at Puttalam, with the charge of visiting Colombo, Negombo, and the other Dutch possessions in the South of the Island. To Fr. Joseph Carvalho was entrusted the care of the Church in Kandy. Father Vaz himself was in this manner set free, in order to travel from one post to another, directing the work of the missionaries and their catechists, and encouraging them all amid the hardships of their apostolic life.

As a good Superior, he was most attentive to supply the wants of the missionaries under him. Thus, in regard to habitation, he never cared to have any for himself, and sought his rest in the chapel; but after the arrival of his three companions, he had a proper house built for them at an easy reach from the chapel, in which they could rest themselves from the fatigues of their apostolate. He too, had a cell set apart for himself in it, but such a narrow one that it scarcely afforded room enough to spread the mat on which he slept.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE PLAGUE

**F**IVE years had elapsed since Father Vaz had begun his work in Kandy, and he was now held in veneration, not only by the Christians, but by the Pagans as well, who admired his virtues, particularly his great charity towards all sufferers. That charity was soon to manifest itself in a conspicuous manner.

Towards the middle of the year 1697, small-pox began to rage in Ceylon and created great havoc. The Indians are in great dread of that disease, and the panic is further heightened by their superstition, for they imagine that the devil takes possession of those that the malady overtakes.

As soon, therefore, as some members in a family showed signs of the contagion, they were thrown into some desert hut, where starvation as a rule completed the dismal work. Sometimes the sufferer was cast into the jungle, where he was devoured by jackals or leopards. The dead were not buried, but were flung away into desert ravines. The plague was spreading with frightful rapidity. The King had quitted Kandy; the well-to-do people had retired into the country; the common herd took to the woods or slept in the open, under booths made of foliage. By degrees, the houses of the city became abandoned, and afforded shelter only to the poor plague-stricken that had been left to their doom. Heaps of corpses were lying in the streets, where they became the prey of dogs and crows.

In that extremity, Father Vaz, and his nephew, Fr. Joseph Carvalho, were night and day attending the sick, Pagans as well as Christians. They prepared food and carried it to them. Running from house to house, they dispensed remedies, dressed the sufferers' sores, and rendered them the most menial services.



They even sought those that lay forlorn in the jungle and built them sheds of foliage. To the Christians they carried the last Sacraments, to the Pagans they unfolded the consoling truths of our Faith. They tried to convert and indeed converted many of them in the approaches of death. They likewise baptized a good number of moribund children.

As the pestilence was gaining ground, Father Vaz and his companion were soon unable to reach the sick individually, their number being excessive. They therefore, made choice of four abandoned houses, in the neighbourhood of the church, and converted them into plague-hospitals. With the help of the abundant alms sent to them by the Christians of Colombo, they were able to provide for all the necessities of their inmates.

The two Fathers said their Mass at dawn, and then proceeded to give refecton to their sick people. Whatever time they did not spend in their extempore-hospital, they devoted it to giving burial to the dead. There were days when they numbered from ten to twelve burials.

When practicable, they buried Christians with some religious display, a thing that impressed Pagans very much. But often they could not procure any other mode of conveyance, and they carried the corpses on their own shoulders. After rendering the last obsequies to the Christians, they also consigned the Pagans to the grave, and yet, amid such great hardships, they had still to cook both their own food and that of their poor inmates; for they were alone, the faithful John having been sent by Father Vaz to Goa, with letters for His Grace the Archbishop and for the Superior of the Oratorian Order.

The charity and self-denial of the Catholic missioners excited the admiration of the Pagans themselves. King Vimala-Dharma-Suriya spoke of it often, in the place where he had sought a refuge, and all the natives testified of their respect towards them.

The pestilence subsided only at the end of one year. When it had disappeared, the inhabitants of Kandy repaired once more to the houses they had forsaken, and the king returned with them. That prince had resolved to offer Father Vaz a substantial reward in money, and he was very much astonished when he was told by the Catholics in his Court that Father Vaz would never accept it. More than once he publicly declared that, but for Father Vaz's devotedness, there would not have remained a single soul alive in Kandy.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ANOTHER VISIT PAID TO THE MISSIONS

AS soon as the pestilence had ceased and matters had resumed their usual course, Father Vaz determined to pay another visit to the Missions in the South.

A fact had just taken place there, which had impressed the Pagan population very much and had in a manner prepared them to welcome the teaching of the Catholic doctrine more readily.

In the village of Kandagama, in that portion of the Sabaragamuva Province which belonged to the Kingdom of Kandy, the Catholics were in possession of a chapel dedicated to St. Antony of Padua, in which they congregated to hear Mass when a priest visited that station, and to say the Rosary together or pray with their Catechist on Sundays when they had no priest. The Dissava of Sabaragamuva, a sort of Governor of the province, who was still a pagan, having decided to build store-houses for the king on the site where the chapel stood, sent orders to the Christians that they should take away their sacred pictures and pull down their little sanctuary. The Christians were very much aggrieved at it; and, in the hope of succeeding in obtaining a recall of the Dissava's edict, they showed no hurry to obey it. He sent them another summons couched in much severer terms, but he was removed from his functions almost immediately after.

The Christians could not help remarking that it was a punishment sent by God to him for having meditated mischief against St. Antony's Chapel. This taunt wounded the pagan's pride, and he swore he would have his revenge.

By dint of intrigues at Court, and money bribes distributed among the first dignitaries of the king, he contrived to have himself reinstated as Governor. His first care was to proceep

personally to Kandagama and to instal himself in the Chapel, where he sat for the hearing of some case. He had then his dinner brought thither, and whilst he was eating it within the sanctuary, his own people were conveying up all the materials necessary for the building of the store-houses.

The Christians in great desolation took away the sacred pictures to avoid their being desecrated by the pagans; but that very night the Dissava was struck with such a violent fit of palsy that he could not turn on his couch without the help of his servants.

He sought his cure by all the means which his power and wealth placed at his disposal; he called to his bedside the most renowned doctors, but everything proved in vain. At last, in his despair of regaining his health, he confessed that his frightful disease was a chastisement from above, for all the harm he had intended inflicting on the Christians and for his having laid violent hands on a sanctuary consecrated to God.

He therefore called to himself the leading members of the Christian community and publicly confessed his guilt. He promised not to persecute them any longer. He permitted them to take back their sacred pictures to the church, and he conjured them to supplicate to God for his cure and to distribute alms in his name; for he had heard, he said, that God will more readily forgive those that bestow alms on the poor. He supplied them in consequence with tapers to be burned before the altar and with sufficient money to give rice to all the poor for three days.

The Christians assembled in prayer in the chapel and whilst they were praying for the poor wretch, the Dissava found himself completely restored, feeling as hale and strong as he had felt before his illness.

In thankfulness to God, he caused the chapel dedicated to St Antony to be replaced by a beautiful church, at his own expense; but as is often the case in such circumstances, the unfortunate man remained a pagan. Worldly considerations held him back.

It was therefore with a light heart that Father Vaz set on his way to those places where the name of the Lord had been so clearly manifested. He left Fr. Joseph Carvalho at Kandy, and, after a long, tiresome journey on foot, he reached Colombo.

He did not however stop long in that city, where his presence was not necessary, for Fr. de Menezes's labours were blessed with great success. In spite of the vigilance of the Dutch Protestants, he had not only taken care of his Christians but he had also in a short time converted more than 3,000 heretics and pagans.

Father Vaz went, therefore, to Gurubevelle a large village to the East of Colombo, and in the short space of thirteen days he baptised more than a thousand Sinhalese Buddhists. He would have continued that successful apostolate, but the Dutch Governor of Colombo was informed of his presence, and sent soldiers to arrest him.

The Dutch soldiers pounced upon Gurubevelle, when they were least expected, and surrounded the house where Father Vaz then was. No means was left to hide or flee, and all seemed lost; but God came to the rescue of his devoted servant in an extraordinary manner. The soldiers entered the house, searched every nook for Father Vaz, but although he kept among the Catholics for all the time, they went away without seeing him.

When they had left, Father Vaz came to the conclusion that he could remain no longer at Gurubevelle. He therefore went up along the Kelani River, and took his station at Sitavacca, a large village of the Kingdom of Kandy, near the confines of the Dutch possessions.

His first care was to make a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to a small sanctuary, for having miraculously escaped from the hands of the soldiers that had been sent to catch him; he next devoted himself entirely to the work of holy Ministry.

He had already converted a good number of pagans, when the news came to him that Fr. Carvalho was exiled from Kandy and the church had been demolished.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PERSECUTION IN KANDY

**T**HIS is how matters had come to pass. The absence of Father Vaz from Kandy had emboldened his adversaries to carry out the plan they had long been hatching for the destruction of the Catholic Church.

We do not know whether M. de Lanerolle was in the plot; for we do not find any more mention of his name from that epoch, and he may have been dead. But a powerful and rich Sinhalese Buddhist put himself at the head of the anti-Catholic movement.

His house was not far from the Church, and in close vicinity to the four houses which Fr. Vaz had transformed into an extempore hospital, during the pestilence of 1697, and which he had probably subsequently bought; for they served as a hospital permanently.

This Sinhalese grandee pretended that the neighbourhood of the hospital was injurious to the health of his family. He summoned Father Carvalho to shift his quarters elsewhere and to demolish those houses. Father Carvalho replied that he was not their actual owner and could not in that way dispose of the property. The Sinhalese thereupon gave orders to his servants to expel all the sick people forcibly. They demolished the houses, and their master took possession of the ground.

After such a deed of open violence, the compeers began to dread the retributive justice of the King. They therefore, decided on taking the bull by the horns. A number of leading men of their party, accompanied by all the Bonzes who were present in Kandy, repaired to the palace. At their head stood the chief who had caused the hospital to be pulled down. They requested the King to take drastic measures to prevent the progress of

Catholicism, and above all to forbid Father Vaz ever to set foot again in Kandy. They urged their claim at first with reasons of policy; but seeing these could not make an impression on the mind of the King, they threatened him with an open revolt.

The King took fright. But yet, he yielded to only one part of their proposals. He consented to decree the exile of Father Carvalho; but he sent word to him that he would suffer no harm, and that he was at liberty to take away whatever he possessed.

In spite of the royal promise, the conspirators handled the Father very roughly, and he had every trouble in saving the necessaries for Mass. He took refuge in a country-house belonging to Antony de Horta, a few miles distant from Kandy, on the other side of the Mahaveli-Ganga.

Twenty-five days after his departure, the pagans demolished the church, and the same Sinhalese lord superintended the operation. But the wretch was soon to undergo the penalty of his misdeeds. He was struck with a dreadful malady; his legs became entirely useless and looked like those of a corpse. A horrid ulcer formed on his tongue and his whole body was afflicted with abscesses. The tortures in fact which he suffered were such that all the inhabitants of Kandy, pagans as well as Christians, looked upon his dismal fate as a just punishment from God.

## CHAPTER XV

### FATHER VAZ RETURNS TO KANDY HE REBUILDS THE CHURCH

**T**HIS was the state of affairs when the news was brought to Sitavacca, where Father Vaz then was. On hearing it he melted into tears, dropped on his knees and remained a long time in prayer. For was not this the ruin of his work? And he could foresee the direst consequences that would accrue from it, not only for the missions in the Kingdom of Kandy, but also for those on Dutch ground; for it was evident that the missionaries, not finding a single spot where they could deem it safe to rest, would ultimately be compelled to abandon the island of Ceylon to its fate.

It was with these gloomy apprehensions that Father Vaz left Sitavacca, and set out on his way to Kandy, about the middle of Lent 1699. But it was only when he came to the dwelling of Antony de Horta that he heard all the details of the disaster for until then he did not know of the Church having been demolished.

Father Vaz wanted to proceed straight to Kandy, but the boatmen on the Mahaveli-Ganga positively refused to carry him over, having received the strictest orders not to ferry the Catholic priest. Moreover Antony de Horta was of opinion that nothing ought to be done in a hurry. He would go himself to Kandy, find out what could be done, and ascertain what the King would say when he heard that Father Vaz had re-entered his Kingdom. He therefore went up to the capital, and left the two Fathers at his country-house.

As no news came, and it was now evident that the King must have heard of Father Vaz's return, and yet took no measure against him; as it was true besides that the decree of banishment did not mention his name but had been hurled only against Father Carvalho, the two missionaries came to the conclusion that the



hesitation of Father Vaz in going back to Kandy might be misinterpreted at the Court. It would look like a tacit confession that the priests were guilty of the offences imputed to them. It thus seemed to them necessary that Father Vaz should lose no more time before repairing to Kandy.

After a fervent prayer, Father Vaz bent his steps towards the Capital. The boatmen, notwithstanding their orders, made no objection when he asked them to take him over, and on reaching Kandy he sought lodging in de Horta's house.

He learned from him that the King was still very favourably disposed, and among the grandees of his Court there was a powerful party which openly disapproved of Father Carvalho's exile and of the demolition of the Kandy church. The time was therefore propitious for action. Father Vaz assembled the Christians and told them to offer prayers whilst he was deliberating with Antony de Horta.

Whilst they were taking counsel together, an unexpected visitor knocked at the door. It was the King's own physician, a pagan of great influence. Before any word was spoken to him, he saluted Father Vaz and offered his services to settle matters with the King. Father Vaz did not know the man, nor did he remember having ever seen him; but he accepted his offers most thankfully, and that very evening the Doctor came back with good news. Not only did the King consent that Father Vaz should remain in Kandy, but he wanted also Father Carvalho to return, and wished that steps be taken at once to construct a new Catholic Church. He at the same time informed Father Vaz that he was at liberty to preach his religion throughout the whole Kingdom, and thus granted more liberty to the Church in one day than Father Vaz had been able to obtain during the whole time of his stay in Kandy.

The fatiguing journeys from one Mission to another, and the perplexities he had just now undergone, shattered the health of Father Vaz, who lay prostrate with a very malignant fever. The

King, thereupon, sent his own Doctor to take care of him, and was continually asking for news about his illness.

Scarcely was he convelescent, when he busied himself actively with the re-building of the Church. Antony de Horta gave him a piece of ground in the Bogambra suburb, and supplied him also with a great part of the necessary expenses. The Christians worked with such zeal that within five months the Church was ready. It was not very large, but sufficiently so as to accommodate all the faithful that were in Kandy and in the neighbouring villages.

Fr. Vaz solemnly blessed it on the Feast of the Nativity of the B. V. M., September 8th, 1699, and celebrated Mass amidst a great concourse of people. He next constructed a house for the missioners' residence, and another hospital.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE YOUNG SINHALESE CONVERT

THE Church having being thus rebuilt, and the authorisation of the King granted for preaching, an era of liberty seemed about to dawn for the Mission of Kandy, but a fresh storm soon burst out against it.

In the first year of his apostolate in Kandy, Father Vaz had converted a young Sinhalese, the scion of a rich and powerful family, whose father, Gobbada-Balla-Nilame held a high position at the King's Court.

The young man was pious and very virtuous, but as his conversion took place only a short time after Father Vaz had come out of the jail, and as the Mission was still on a very precarious footing, he thought it more prudent to keep the conversion a secret; for he dreaded the resentment of the family, who were influential enough to destroy his work. But he carefully instructed him, developed his soul to virtue, and bore him a great affection.

Anyhow, this state of things could not long be continued; for, the lad being a page at Court was bound to accompany the prince when offering sacrifices in the temple; and it was not always possible to devise a plausible excuse, for the principal temple, Dalada-Maligava, was one of the annexes of the royal palace. Father Vaz, therefore, advised his young convert to withdraw from the Court and live in the country.

But there, in the *far-niente* of an idle life, remote from the priest, and amid pagans of dissolute manners he lost his innocence, and totally gave up praying. Finally, one fine day, Father Vaz was told they had married him to a young pagan girl and he had since then led quite a pagan life.

For years, the pervert plunged into vice; but still Father Vaz continued praying for the wanderer; and when the other missionaries mentioned the name of the renegade with grief, he quietly replied that the young man was not doomed to perish, but on the contrary that he would yet become a fit instrument in the hand of God to propagate the Catholic faith far and wide. That prophecy soon met with fulfilment.

One night when the young man stretched on his mat vainly tried to sleep, the remembrances of his youth, of Father Vaz, and of his pious instructions recurred to his mind. Struck with horror at the villainy of his apostacy, he was tormented with remorse; and, as soon as the day dawned, taking a Christian of the neighborhood to accompany him on the road, he set out immediately for Kandy.

Father Vaz was then absent; but the prodigal found Fr. Peter Saldanha at home. Not daring to tell him the whole truth, he merely begged to be admitted among the catechumens. But Father Saldanha finding on examination that he knew the Christian Faith thoroughly, and edified by the great piety he showed, wanted to prepare him for baptism without delay. Then the young man fell at his feet, and declared who he was. He made a good confession of his whole life, and resolved to expiate his crime by working generously for the glory of God.

Returning to the village he had come from, he prepared his wife and four children for baptism, together with forty more people whom he brought over to the Faith. So that, Father Saldanha went over to his place, blessed his marriage, and baptized all those converts.

The news of such a notable conversion created a great odium in pagan circles, as there was the fear, not altogether groundless, that such an example would be followed by many others, and the convert himself would enlist the influence given him by his social status into service, to help the Fathers to spread Catholicism.

They therefore once more resorted to calumny, to induce their monarch to banish Father Vaz and all the other missionaries

for ever. For this, they sought to arouse the religious prejudices of the Prince, and accused Father Saldanha of having baptized the young nobleman and all his companions with the blood of a cow. This made it evident that Father Vaz and the missionaries were in the practice of secretly killing a great number of cows.

To realise the effect of such an accusation, one must be told that the Hindus consider the cow the most sacred thing in the world. In several Native States, the laws consider the killing of a cow a crime equal to the murder of three Brahmins near the sacred river Ganges.

The calumny made a hit at first. The King was beside himself with indignation. He cast into jail six persons whom Fr. Saldanha had baptized, and ordered their goods to be confiscated.

Father Vaz was very much aggrieved by it. Fearing a renewal of the persecution, he betook himself to prayer, beseeching the Lord to ward off this new danger from His Church.

Fortunately, as I have said above, there were then two parties at the royal Court of Kandy: the one clinging to the old paganism and therefore very much incensed against Father Vaz; the other more enlightened or indifferent, and consequently more favourably disposed towards him.

The latter persuaded the King that the Catholic missionaries had been slandered: that they never used cow's blood to baptize their converts, but simply pure water, mixed with a little balm and oil. The prince undeceived freed his six prisoners and restored them their goods. Those good people made it their first duty to go to the Church and return thanks to God.

I believe this was the last spell of persecution that the Christians of Kandy had to go through in Father Vaz's lifetime. The pagans, repeatedly convicted of falsehood, no longer tried to circumvent the King, and Father Vaz was henceforth able to work in peace in the whole Kingdom.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ARRIVAL OF MORE MISSIONERS ORGANISATION OF THE MISSION FR. VAZ'S DAILY ROUTINE

TOWARDS that time, the Superior of the Oratorians sent six more missionaries to Ceylon. These were Fr. Peter Saldanha, who was mentioned in the foregoing chapter; Fr. Joseph of Jesus-Mary; Fr. James Gonzalves, whose name is still in veneration in Ceylon, for his virtues, his deep science, and his indefatigable zeal; Fr. Emmanuel de Miranda; Fr. Ignatius d'Almeida; and Fr. Basil Baretto. With the help of these new auxiliaries, Father Vaz was able to organise his mission seriously, and it became daily more important.

For, the Church was taking great developments in all the provinces, and the Oratorian Fathers, all belonging to the Brahmin caste, were working with untiring energy. Fr. Emmanuel de Miranda, who was put in charge of Colombo, the most dangerous and most exposed station, organised his Catholics so well that they used no more concealment, and began openly to protest against the penal enactments of the Dutch.

Father Vaz was superintending the work of them all, and paid them frequent visits, stirring up their courage, taking note of all their requirements, cherished and venerated by all.

We unfortunately possess no well-sustained account of that period of his life; but some scattered fragments enable us to form an idea of what it was: a life in the highest degree penitent and laborious.

His daily routine at Kandy was very much alike to what it had been in Mangalore and Goa. He got up at 3 a. m. took the discipline, and began his meditation which lasted till sunrise,

when he was drawn from his intercourse with God by the chattering of children mustering for school, with whom he began his day's work by teaching.

After school, he said matins, confessed people who asked for him, said Mass, and recited the Litany of the Saints together with the congregation, whom he next addressed in a short sermon or catechism. Going out of Church, he distributed alms to the poor and received all the Christians that came to him on business.

At noon, he dined with the Fathers, if any were in Kandy, his food, in Indian fashion, consisting of rice mainly. After dinner, he went back to the church, and dragging himself on his knees from the door to the altar, he remained prostrate in prayer on the altar steps.

At 2 p. m., he went to the school again to teach the children, and spent the rest of the day in visiting the sick or Christian families at home. In the evening, the Christians assembled in the Church, and Father Vaz joined them to recite the Rosary together.

If he had another Father with him, they conformed to the rules of their Order, by having a short time of recreation together after supper, when they talked spirituality, or about mission business. At ten, he retired, but it was to go to the Church, where he often spent the whole night; so that he was often found asleep on his knees, leaning against a wall, or prostrate on the altar steps.

His piety was remarkable. Oftentimes, when, according to rule, they were reciting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin together, he fell into a sort of ecstasy; and though answering *Ora pro nobis* with the rest, he seemed like one ravished beyond the realm of the senses. At other times, in the recitation of the Rosary, he repeated the words *Ave Maria, Ave Maria* with enthusiasm, as though he felt an irresistible joy in uttering the sweet name of Mary.

He had the gift of walking continually in the presence of God, so that his day was like an uninterrupted prayer. Whilst traversing the virgin forests of Ceylon, he was often so much absorbed in meditation, or in the recitation of his Breviary, that he failed to perceive the presence of wild animals, at the aspect of which his companions had fled in terror. We shall have to speak further on of those wonderful encounters.

If he had a priest with him, he never celebrated Mass without previously going to Confession, and during the Holy Sacrifice, he used to shed abundant tears. Sometimes wrapped in ecstasy he stood motionless at the altar, so that occasionally his Mass lasted two hours; and the child who served it, thinking he was asleep, pulled him by his chasuble behind. That same boy, a young Portuguese, called Paschal, and born in Kandy, deposed on oath, after Fr. Vaz's death, that he had seen him once raised in the air whilst celebrating Holy Mass.

The greatest devotion of Fr. Vaz, after that towards the Blessed Virgin, was towards St. Joseph, the Patron of Ceylon, and towards St. Francis of Assisi. He had been a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, and Fr. Peter Ferrao, who was often with him, said that Father Vaz sought constantly to imitate the examples of the Seraphic Patriarch.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE CHARITY OF FR. VAZ THE RESPECT SHOWN TO HIM BY THE KING

THE zeal of Fr. Vaz for the salvation of souls was not less than his piety. He boldly faced all dangers when there was some chance of converting a pagan or of bringing back to the fold some Christian that had strayed from it. In the latter case, he gave himself no rest, until he had brought the erring soul to penance and rekindled in it some little of that ardent fire of the love of God, with which his own heart was consumed.

In order to save a soul, it often happened that, sick as he was, he got up from his couch, to trudge through hills and forests or wade through overflowed rice fields, and more than once, starting unwell, he returned to Kandy in full health and vigour. The Bonzes sometimes waylaid him, and threatened him with death if he continued calling the pagans as well as the Christians to his Church and to scour the villages in quest of the former to convert. But Fr. Vaz replied to them that, as it was his paternal duty to receive the Christians in the Church, so also he was bound not to spurn away the pagans, when they were desirous of Baptism. His apostolate having no *raison d'être* but the greater glory to God, he could not fail in it without a betrayal of his duty.

His charity towards the poor was exhaustless, and he cherished a particular love for them. Was he told of some instance of human misery, he at once ran to give some help; and he was sometimes seen to beg from door to door for alms to be given to his poor.

He had established the practice of giving daily a portion of rice to a great number of poor, before the Church in Kandy. On Sundays and Feast-days, he took care that they should have

better fare. But one day, there were repairs going on in his Church in Kandy, and Father Vaz had found that he had only one gold piece called *pagoda* in his possession and nothing else. He had to spend it, that very evening, to pay his workmen, and if he kept it for that purpose he could not give anything to several poor people who were besieging his door. In his embarrassment, he asked Fr. Ignatius Almeida what he was to do; and the latter, guessing aright what were the feelings of his own Superior, answered without hesitation that the poor should go first and God would provide for the pay of the workmen. And so it came to pass; for, scarcely had Father Vaz doled out his last penny to the poor, when an offering was brought to him, from a rich Christian of twelve gold pagodas.

The favourite occupation of Father Vaz was the care of the sick. He felt prompted to it, partly by compassion for their sufferings, but also because being brought face to face with death they were more induced to turn themselves towards God. We have already spoken of his heroism during the plague. When it had ceased, Fr. Vaz continued to visit the sick people in their homes, or to receive patients in his hospital adjoining the Church. There he converted numbers of poor pagan sufferers, and baptized a great many infants at the point of death.

The virtues of Father Vaz, especially his charity towards his neighbours excited the admiration of the pagans and they held him in great veneration. For paganism fails to understand disinterested charity; but yet, it admires it.

This was the chief cause of the respect paid by King Vimala-Dharma-Suriya II to Father Vaz. To that pagan prince the Catholic priest was an enigma, which he approached only with supernatural awe.

The King in those countries is held as a kind of deity, and remains invisible for all, except his own familiar servants. Even when granting an audience to the chief dignitaries of his kingdom, he remains seated on his throne, screened from them by a silken

veil before which they remain prostrate. Great therefore was the astonishment of all, when the King came forward, took Father Vaz along to his own private apartments, and remained a long time closeted with him *tete-a-tete*.

Similarly, when Father Joseph Carvalho died, the King stopped his *cortege* before the Church, and sent one of his *grandees* with his condolence to Fr. Vaz, telling him of his wish that several Fathers of equal worth with the defunct should be sent for from Goa to replace him in Kandy. He also gave leave to bury him in the Church, and later on extended the same favour to all the Oratorian Fathers, although the laws of the land enjoined that even the remains of Kings should be carried away from the city. Such instances of royal benevolence made, of course, a great impression on the people, and paved the way for Fr. Vaz's apostolate.

King Kandasala, the son and successor of Vimala-Dharma, followed the paternal examples. One day, when he was passing in State before the Church in Kandy, Father Vaz came to salute him. The King stopped, received him with great cordiality, and would not resume his walk until Father Vaz was in-doors again.

One can perceive the hand of God in these good dispositions of the two Kings of Kandy who reigned in succession at that time. Without this help, the great Christian Community now existing in Ceylon could never have been created. And yet, those two princes were precisely the same that worked most for the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon, and revived it indeed. For it was at the request of King Kandasala that the Dutch brought bonzes from Arakan to Ceylon, to restore the Buddhist hierarchy which was getting extinguished.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A VISIT OF THE MISSIONS

FR. VAZ began every one of his actions with prayer. When he had to leave Kandy to go and visit some mission, he said Mass at daybreak, then recited the Office of the Dead, for he had great devotion for the souls in Purgatory. He then remained long prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament, offering to God his troubles, sufferings and labours, for the happy success of his apostolate. Before going out of the church, he read aloud, in the Gospel according to St. Mark, the words: *Euntes in mundum universum.....* When passing before the large Crucifix, which stood on the square before the church, he again knelt down for a short prayer, and then took his course; always carrying his Mass apparatus himself.

The large and commodious roads which now cross the island of Ceylon in every direction were not yet in existence. At the time of our narrative, one had to thread mountain-paths almost impassable, to trudge through forest, to scramble over inundated rice-fields on narrow and slippery dikes, scarcely broad enough to lay one's foot upon. There are still enough of such paths extant, for one to form an idea of the hardships travellers were exposed to in the lifetime of Fr. Vaz.

The Kings of Kandy cared not for the improvement of the roads, on the contrary, they would have made them still more impervious if possible, thus to prevent foreign armies from over-running the land.

In spite of the difficulties of the roads, and of his delicate health, Fr. Vaz always walked so fast that his companions could hardly come up to him, for he loved to be alone, wrapped in meditation, amid the virgin forests. And the Oratorian Fathers sent to him from Goa were the worthy auxiliaries of his toil.

Full of courage and zeal, those Indian priests were abashed by no difficulty. Ever ready to go whithersoever he sent them, they never forsook him in the midst of so many dangers. His example inspired them, and they revered him as their father. He, on his part, though so strict to himself, always sought to make the labour of his subordinates less painful, he took note of all their wants, and always strove to provide for their comfort as much as he could.

They were a cohort of true missionaries, sent by God to the rescue of His Church in Ceylon; for they all led a life of prayer, very penitent and laborious. But it was chiefly in their Superior, Father Vaz, that the grace of God often showed itself in an extraordinary manner. One day, he was to set out with Fr Almeida on an apostolic peregrination; but Fr. Almeida fell ill, so that there was no thinking of a journey for him. This grieved Fr. Vaz very much, for he expected a good harvest of souls from the intended expedition. He remained a long time kneeling before the Crucifix, then rising and taking in his hand the book of the Gospels, he read aloud that passage of St Mark which he was wont to read before starting on his way; *Euntes in mundum universum.....* and coming to the words: *Super aegros manus imponent et bene habbeunt*, he laid both hands on the head of Fr. Almeida, who felt himself instantly cured.

Another time, Fr. Vaz was traversing the virgin forests of Vanny, accompanied by some Fathers and an escort of Christians, when they perceived that the provision of rice was falling short, the servants having taken an inadequate supply. For two or three days the company subsisted on *kanji*, prepared with a small quantity of rice; for they were far away from inhabited land and they had to eke out their victuals by frugality. But Fr. Vaz perceiving that his little caravan, with that insufficient food, were losing their strength to trudge their way through jungles, ordered to cook the whole of the remaining rice for one substantial meal, adding that God would come forward as their caterer for the morrow.

They were then encamped in the middle of the forest, about two days' journey from the nearest village. Night coming on, the company prepared themselves to take their rest, by kindling large fires to keep the beasts of prey away. But Fr. Vaz had stepped aside and was saying his evening prayer. Suddenly they hear voices in the forest, and a group of Sinhalese comes in sight. It was a rich pagan travelling, surrounded by his servants.

He drew near the missionary party, and when he heard that Fr. Vaz, of whom he had heard so much was with them and they were reduced to dire want he offered them his own provisions for the journey.

The Fathers at first refused, by a scruple of delicacy; but the traveller insisted, adding that he was not in a hurry, and he would return home to re-victual himself. Then Fr. Vaz came forward, and ordered his companions to welcome that alms, as it had been sent by God.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

**T**HE forests they had to cross were haunted by ferocious beasts; bears, leopards, and elephants disport themselves in those virgin jungles.

One day, Fr. Vaz, with a few followers, was trending a narrow path in the hills about Kandy. which at that time of the year were covered with vegetation. He was walking ahead and saying his Breviary. All of a sudden they perceived a large bear, which was making straight for Fr. Vaz. They shouted to him; but, wrapped up in prayer, he heard nothing. They then took to flight or hid themselves behind some large trunks of trees, anxiously watching the fate of the Father, who, humanly speaking, could not escape death. Great was their joy and astonishment when they saw the terrible quadruped pass quite close to Father Vaz without taking any notice of him and disappear within the dense jungle. The danger being now over, they came up to Fr. Vaz, and told him of the fright they had been in; but he had not even seen the animal.

Another time, they found a wild elephant facing them on the track they followed. The path was so narrow and the bush so dense that they could not escape the encounter; nor was flight possible, for the animal was furious and had perceived their approach. They all thought themselves done for; but Fr. Vaz gently upbraided them for their want of confidence in God. He summoned them to proceed without fear and walked himself in front. The elephant stood still like one hypnotized, and the Father had almost to brush against him, the passage being so narrow. Then he turned round to his companions, who still lagged behind, and told them to come on. They scrambled up in terror alongside of the enormous beast, being unable to control their nerves, and when all had passed the elephant continued his stroll quietly.

Elephants as a rule live in herds amid the forests and hills of Ceylon. Every herd consists of one family. They are not dangerous in groups, for they are very timid by nature; the slightest noise affrights them, and they seek concealment within the copses or in the most inaccessible ravines.

But sometimes a lonely animal is found; whether he belonged to a herd that has been destroyed by huntsmen, or he had been himself taken and had escaped from captivity before being tamed. Unable to find his mates, and excluded by other herds, which as I have said consist of one family group, such an elephant is condemned to a solitary life and becomes as usual extremely ferocious. Those solitary animals kill or destroy whatever comes in their way. Woe to the man that meets with one of them! A miracle alone can save him from death at his tusks.\*

Father Vaz was once returning with his companions from Narangodde to Kandy. The forest they were traversing was infested by one of those solitary elephants, who had made himself a terror in the land. Great was the havoc he made, and many the men he slew. The small caravan had scarcely entered the wood, when they heard the redoubtable beast coming straight upon them, tearing off the branches of the larger trees and

\* To realise the import of the following episode it will be of use to remind the reader of the description made by Captain Knox of the roads that existed at that time in the Kingdom of Kandy. We therefore repeat it from page 36.

"The ways are many, but very narrow, so that but one can go abreast. The hills are covered with wood and great rocks, so that it is scarcely possible to get up any where, but only in the paths."

Such paths still exist to-day, and I went along some of them. The wood is so dense on either side that one cannot penetrate it unless one first cuts one's way through the brambles with an axe, or with one of those large pruning hooks fixed on sticks for such a purpose, which is a tedious and exhausting labour.

I also wended my way along ancient paths in the hollows, which are still called by the Natives: "the royal roads of Kandy," and which were probably cut along the cultivated grounds. They are dug deeper than a man's height; and, in their present dilapidated state, they resemble the bed of a dried up torrent and are so narrow that two men could not walk them abreast.



rooting up the smaller ones. The servants fired their muskets, but the rogue pachyderm was not frightened thereby; he kept on advancing and his presence was already felt, a few paces only off, being the screen raised by verdure.

Fr. Vaz then lighted a blessed candle, took it in his hand, and walked straight to the spot from whence the noise was heard. He had advanced but a few steps, when the animal alighted on the path. The priest went straight to him; the elephant stopped, knelt down and bent his huge head forward. Father Vaz then addressed him, summoned him to retire from the district, and never to do harm to any man again. The animal complied, entered the wood and was seen no more.

It is therefore no wonder that Father Vaz is still held nowadays, by the Christians in Ceylon, as a powerful protector against ferocious beasts. They say that whoever invokes his name, when in danger from them, is sure to pass without suffering any harm.

A man once came to me for a pair of beads. He was setting out on a journey, intending to go to Puttalam and thence to Mannar. I asked him whether he was not afraid to venture alone, on foot, in those woods, which are infested by bears: Oh! no, he answered, we have Fr. Vaz to protect us.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

**F**ATHER VAZ, being now well provided with missionaries at his disposal, parcelled out the whole island among them, allotting to every one his own field of action.

He was himself always on the move, attended by one or two Missionaries and a few devoted Christians. Every year he would visit all the missions of the island, not only the leading centres, but also the villages in which there were some Christians living. He did not shrink from a long and tiresome journey to wait upon even one single Christian dwelling among heathens, to enable him to confess, to hear Mass, and receive Holy Communion.

On entering a village, he would convene all the Christians around him, and, after reciting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, he taught those good people, and prepared them to partake of the sacrament worthily.

But Catholic apostolate in Dutch dominions was getting more and more difficult. The Protestant Government, chafing at the progress of the Church, exerted themselves so much the more to check the development of the Missions, so that persecution grew day after day more ruthless and searching.

As it was in the Dutch possessions that the Catholic flock had increased the most, so they were watched there so strictly, and a spying system was so well organised, that, only under the cover of the night, were they able to assemble in some deserted spot to pray together and hear Mass.

Therefore things had been so settled that, whenever Fr. Vaz was expected, the faithful, on receiving notice, gathered together in some out-of-the-way house, which had been selected beforehand. The priest then would instruct them, confess them till three in the morning, celebrate Holy Mass, and before daybreak

would make off for another locality. If some circumstances, or the greater number of the Christians, obliged him to spend several days in the same village, the caution was taken of meeting together in a different house each night.

In this manner, with the help of God, he contrived to elude the vigilance of the Protestants, I say, with the help of God ; for, at times, without a special help of Providence, he could not have balked their pursuit. One day, when he was in Colombo, a renegade son of Catholic parents informed the Dutch authorities as to the house which had been chosen for Catholics to meet and hear Holy Mass. The Governor, thereupon, sent very stringent orders to capture the Father. Wherefore, at the very moment he was preparing to say Mass, a detachment of Dutch soldiers made irruption in the place. The Catholics screened themselves by flight. Father Vaz, encumbered by his Mass apparatus, passed through the middle of the soldiers without their seeming to notice him.

The invaders overran the whole house, feeling sure of their prey this time ; but they found nothing, not even the slightest indication of there having been a meeting of the faithful in the place. In one room, however, they came upon a woman-form, at whose sight they were struck with stupor. She asked them what they had come for, and whom they were in search of ; and the soldiers terrified skedaddled. When they were standing outside, feeling ashamed for having run away from a woman, and perhaps persuaded that Father Vaz was hiding there, they re-entered the same room in force and saw nobody living there. Only, at the very spot where the woman-form had spoken to them, they now found a statue of the Blessed Virgin. Filled with awe, they went away without touching it.

The news spread at once throughout the city that the Blessed Virgin had appeared in the very house where the Protestants had disturbed the Catholics at their devotions ; and crowds repaired to the spot to contemplate the same statue. The Dutch were not able to conceal their ill-humour ; and the Governor sentenced the ill-fated informer to be struck with rods on the public square.

This fact was attested under oath by Manuel de Sylva de Souza, who became afterwards the Commander of the Portuguese Fort of St. Stephen, in the island of Juva, in the Goa Province. He was at the time in Colombo, went himself to see the blessed image, and beheld the punishment inflicted on the renegade.

Another time, Father Vaz had left Colombo in a boat, and was sailing up the Kelani River to visit a Christian Community. They hoped to pass unperceived within the range of a small Dutch fort which was not far off from the bank. But their hopes vanished when they saw the officer in command taking a walk along the bank with a few other people. In their terror, the men at the oars stopped and were thinking of beating a retreat; when, lo! there came on such a tropical shower that the boat went up safely, hidden from the foe by the thickness of the spray.

In the province of Sabarogamuva, Fr. Vaz had converted many pagans, and among them several slaves belonging to a rich Sinhalese proprietor. That man was so incensed at it that he resolved on killing the Father. He therefore went to him and rushed at him with knife in hand. Father Vaz, seeing there was no escape, was commending his soul to God, when some men just fell in who disarmed the would-be murderer.

It will be easily understood what impression such events made on the minds of the Christians and how they felt confirmed thereby in their Faith and in the veneration they entertained for him.

Some Dutch Protestants themselves, in spite of their hatred of Catholicism could not without admiration behold the virtues of Father Vaz, and the abnegation with which he faced so many perils to save the souls of his brethren.

Nay more, Father Vaz having once come secretly to Colombo, some people went to the Governor to insist that he should arrest the priest. But he set them down by saying that, if they had any business with him concerning the interests of the Dutch Company in the island, he was ready to listen to them; but if they had nothing else to tell him than what they had actually said, he had no time to continue the audience, and so he sent them to their homes.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE SAME SUBJECT CONCLUDED

**A** report of the apostolate of Fr. Vaz had reached as far as Rome. Pope Clement XI was watching with interest the revival of the Church in Ceylon, and its development.

It was at that time that the Legate of the Holy See, Mgr. Maillard de Tournon, Patriarch of Antioch, landed in India. The Pope had given him special instructions, to bring himself into communication with Fr. Vaz, and try to support him in his apostolate.

Mgr. de Tournon wrote several times to Fr. Vaz and sent him a Crucifix enriched with indulgences. He made him the proposal of separating Ceylon from the diocese of Cochin, and appointing him bishop of the Island; but Fr. Vaz declined the dignity. Then the Legate requested him to point out to him which of the Fathers he deemed the most worthy to become a bishop. But Fr. Vaz replied that he did not consider it seasonable just then to erect the island of Ceylon into a diocese; for, under the circumstances in which those missions were standing, a bishop could only expect to meet with still greater difficulties than the missionaries had done in their holy ministry. On the strength of that information, Mgr. de Tournon gave up the idea of converting Ceylon into an independent diocese.

Fr. Vaz was now 55 years of age; he had been already 17 years toiling in Ceylon; he felt exhausted with fatigue, and his constitution was worn out. Nevertheless he continued working with the same energy, and he did not cease visiting the Christians, even in the furthestmost regions of Ceylon.

One day, as he was travelling along with his companions from Kandy to Puttalam, they came upon a fording place of the

Mayarosna-Aru (Maguru-Oya?) River, and found the latter so much swollen with the rains, that it seemed impossible to wade it through.

Many more travellers, who had arrived before the Missionaries, stood waiting on the bank. They had built themselves huts with branches, to spend there a few days, until the water would subside to its normal level, and allow them to cross. Among these travellers were some heathens and Musalmans.

Fr. Vaz, on reaching this ex-tempore encampment, asked them what they were waiting for. They answered that the water had risen to such a height, and the torrent flowed so rapidly, that it made the ford impassable. They had repeatedly tried it, but every time the stream would carry them off. Therefore they preferred waiting a few days, than running the risk of their lives.

Fr. Vaz entered the river, and, after measuring the depth of the water with a stick, he went on as far as the middle, without having water higher than his knees. He then bade his companions to follow him; which they did at once, and a few heathens did likewise. In the middle of the stream, stood Fr. Vaz, holding the stick in his hand; and he did not himself go on shore until his companions and the accompanying heathens had first secured their footing

On seeing this, both the heathens and the Mohamedans who had remained behind, wished likewise to cross the river; but they had scarcely taken a few steps when they were shoulder-deep in the flood, and had to fall back in haste.

At Puttalam, Fr. Vaz took with him Fr. James Gonzalves and Fr. Michael de Mello, to visit the Christians of Vanni, Kottiyar and Batticaloa. But scarcely were they one day on the road when Fr. Vaz found himself dangerously ill. He could no longer move, and they had to go fourteen miles before they could find a place where some little comfort could be afforded him. It would therefore seem more reasonable for them to retrace their

steps to Puttalam, where they would find their own lodgings, a Doctor, and finally a church where they could give him a Christian burial, as he seemed to fare so badly.

But Fr. Vaz felt within himself an inspiration to go forward, in spite of all. He told Fr. Gonzalves of the inner voice he heard, and added that he placed himself in his hands, and would do whatsoever he ordered. Fr. Gonzalves held counsel with Fr. de Mello, and they said the missionary tour would yield less fruit if they went without him. They should therefore put all their confidence in God, and proceed onwards, as it was for His own glory they were toiling.

The patient was deposited on a small cart drawn by one bullock, and the march was continued. Soon Father Vaz felt himself much better; and, in the course of a few days, he regained his strength so thoroughly that he was able easily to continue the journey on foot. This happened in 1906.

In the same year, Fr. Vaz visited Mantotte. Called to the bedside of a dying woman, he found her at the last extremity; but, whilst he was hearing her confession, she felt herself completely cured, and was strong enough, the very next morning, to make a pilgrimage on foot, in thanksgiving, to a pretty distant chapel, where she heard Holy Mass and received Holy Communion.

In the same town of Mantotte, there was a Christian woman, who had lived in sin for years and finally was possessed by the devil. Exorcisms were resorted to. One day the exorcist ordered her to make the Sign of the Cross, and it is the practice of the Christians in Ceylon to preface the sign of the Cross with the words: *Per Signum Crucis ab inimicis nostris libera nos, Deus noster*. Therefore pressed by the exorcism the devil exclaimed by the mouth of the woman: *Ab inimicis nostris, patribus missionariis, libera nos Deus noster!* and he surrendered his prey.

King Vimala Suriya II, the protector of Father Vaz, died in 1707. His son Narendra-Singha, also called Kundasala, succeeded him, and was likewise well-disposed towards the missionaries.

An uncle of his contended with him for the throne, and as he was backed by a party, a civil war broke out in 1709. There was bloodshed in the streets of Kandy; and the city was given over to pillage. At a certain moment, Fr. Vaz was afraid they would come and plunder his church and his house: he called the poor in, distributed to them whatever he possessed, then threw the gates open, and remained in prayer with Fathers Gonzalves and Miranda. The pillagers durst not enter the church; and, when all danger had passed, a good Catholic furnished the presbytery much better than it had been before.

At that period, the state of Catholicism in Ceylon was far different from what it was when Father Vaz had landed. The greater part of those Catholics that had been compelled by the Dutch to apostatize, or had done so by reason of interest, had been again received into the Church, after doing exemplary penance. Thirty thousand pagans had been converted, Faith had taken such deep roots into the hearts of the Faithful, and the Church was so well organised, that the Catholics felt themselves powerful enough to face openly penal laws which the Dutch Government was multiplying, and to oppose a stout resistance to their persecuting civil masters.

Father Carvalho was dead; but eight other Indian Oratorians were the co-labourers of Fr. Vaz, all filled with his zeal and apostolical spirit; and among them were some eminent men, as for instance Fr. James Gonzalves.





## CHAPTER XXIII

### LAST ILLNESS

**I**N January 1710, Fr. Joseph Vaz, who for some time had been labouring under some fever, which subsided only for awhile to recur again with renewed strength, had a fit of it, more violent than usual.

He was then at Kottiyar, a mission eight days' journey from Kandy. There was in Kottiyar neither physician nor proper lodging available, therefore, as soon as he felt a little better, he resolved to leave for Kandy. They placed him in wagon, and brought him back to the Capital.

In Kandy, owing to the careful attendance lavished upon him, the fever ceased and he began to regain strength; yet not entirely, for his legs remained partly paralysed. So many fatigues and hardships had at length told on his constitution.

Nevertheless Fr. Vaz did not cease working. As he could no longer go on distant excursions, he was daily seen about Kandy, dragging himself along painfully with the help of a stick. He called on the sick; or, gathering the children, he taught them catechism. When his sufferings did not allow him even that occupation, he would spend the whole time in prayer.

He had called Fr. James Gonzalves to Kandy, and entrusted the mission to his care. One day, as that Father had gone on a tour to visit some remote districts, people came for Fr. Vaz to carry the last Sacraments to two sick people, who were living in two separate villages, each of them about a full day's walk from Kandy. As there was no other priest in town, Fr. Vaz resolved to go. They brought to him one of those primitive carts, drawn by a small bullock, such as are used in Ceylon.

The first trip went off quietly: Fr. Vaz administered the Sacraments to the dying and did not feel too much fatigued. But

with the second one, it happened otherwise. Fr. Vaz was sitting in the vehicle, and the guides were leading the bullock through a narrow path, which wended round the skirts of a mountain. By some accident the cart was upset, and Fr. Vaz fell from a considerable height to the bottom of a depression.

When he was picked up, he had swooned. At first, his guides thought him dead; and they found it hard to bring him round. He was taken home to Kandy, where he languished for a long time; and only about Easter (which that year fell in April) he got a little better.

This, however, was nothing but a temporary amelioration. A few days after Easter, he was seized with a very violent fever. He had a tremendous headache, and as he was getting worse, his legs became completely paralysed. His jaws grew stiff to such an extent that he remained for days with his mouth wide open, and his sight frightened the bystanders.

He was enduring severe pains in his whole body; and at last, a large abscess formed in his right ear. His martyrdom was terrible, chiefly at the time when this abscess was being dressed. His whole frame then shook, and tears were dropping from his eyes.

But the man of God resignedly put up with all those sufferings: when his pains were increasing, he would call upon the holy Name of Jesus, and offer his sufferings to his crucified Saviour. He could not speak, for any motion of his lips inflicted him gnawing pains in the abscess; nevertheless, every day he caused himself to be brought to the church, and delivered touching speeches to the people and chiefly to the children.

Owing to the physicians' skill the fever left him; his sufferings abated; but in disappearing, the abscess in his head left a large open wound, which was to prove incurable. His strength was visibly failing, and he knew that death was at hand.

On the 10th August, he wrote about his state to the Superior of the Oratorians of Goa, and he entreated him, besides the Masses and prayers which were prescribed by the rule for the departed members of their Order, to cause some more Masses to be said for the repose of his soul, and some alms also to be distributed to the poor for his intention. To which he added that this letter would be the last one he would write to his Superior.

Four months more passed away. Although his sufferings diminished, and he looked as if he were somewhat mending, Fr. Joseph Vaz did not cease to speak of death, and to prepare for his last moments. He was not able to celebrate Holy Mass, for his palsied legs did not allow him to stand at the altar; but he made up for it by receiving Holy Communion almost everyday.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE LAST DAYS OF HIS LIFE

**T**OWARDS the end of December 1710, Father Vaz entered on a ten days' retreat; but the pain in his wound so much increased that on the sixth day he swooned away. Father Gonzalves, his confessor, then enjoined him to discontinue his retreat.

On January 7th, feeling himself getting weaker, he resigned his office of Vicar-General of the Bishop of Cochin and of Superior of the Oratorians in Ceylon into the hands of Father Joseph Menezes; and, as this one was then in Puttalam, he sent him the following letter which he could only dictate, being now unable to write:—

*“ Reverend Fr. Joseph Menezes, my Spiritual Father,*

“ May the love of God and your neighbour continually dwell and ever increase in your heart, as well as in the hearts of the Fathers, your companions, and of all the Faithful!

“ May God, Who became Man for our redemption, grant to your Reverence, to Father Peter Ferrao and to all my brothers, a happy feast of Christmas, of New Year's Day, and of holy Epiphany. May He bestow on you the abundance of His grace, to be used by you in His service and for the good of souls.

“ I am better just now; the pain I felt in my ear has ceased, but the wound remains still open. I have not been able to regain my strength, and probably shall not recover it any longer; for I feel weaker and weaker. On that account, I can no longer say Mass; I scarcely come out of the Church, and this is a warning to me that my death is drawing near. May God send it in His infinite goodness.

“God grants me a great grace by thus warning me of the approach of death, and giving me so much time to prepare myself for it; for, I shall have a great account to render Him, and this frightens me now more than ever. I wish, therefore, to lay aside all other avocations and dismiss all other thoughts, to prepare myself for death.

“I beg, therefore, Reverend Father, you will take upon yourself the burden and office of Vicar-General as well as of Superior. You will appoint the Fathers to the several stations, and change them according to need, in order that, as much as possible, no part of the Mission be long left without a priest. If those charges appear to you heavy, accept them all the same, out of obedience to our Bishop and our Rev. Fr. Superior. You may next ask them to let you off, but I cannot do so; for the Bishop has chosen you to be my successor, and such is also the will of our Rev. Father Superior.

“Do not consider the fact that I am still living. I can no longer offer Holy Mass, nor hear confessions; then what kind of a life is mine? Do me the favour, therefore, to let me know that you accept, in order that I may spend the few remaining days which God will allow me of life in the practice of obedience and in the occupations which the shortness of the time presses on me.

“Your unworthy servant in Jesus Christ,

“JOSEPH VAZ”

Eight days later, having received no reply, for the communications with Puttalam were difficult and slow, Fr. Vaz wrote a second letter to Fr. Joseph Menezes :—

*Reverend Father, my Spiritual Father,*

“Let the love of God and neighbour ever fill your soul.

“Feeling my strength ebb away day by day, I believe the time is come when my soul must quit this perishable

body. Let your Reverence, in taking charge as Superior and Director of the Mission, arrange every thing in the way which before God will seem to you the best.

“As for me, I pray you to kindly order me to pray to God that He may give you and all our Fathers the necessary fortitude and health, that your labours may yield abundant fruit.

“I shall pray, as long as I shall have the strength; but I am good for nothing else. Strength fails me to busy myself with the Mission. I am unable to read, and it is only with great effort and many a pause that I can manage to get through my Breviary. If I listen to a reading, I cannot collect my attention to it; and I am prevented from speaking by the pain which I feel on the right side of my head, in the wound left by the abscess. Pray I beg of you, that God grant me a holy life, a holy death, and a happy eternity.

“Let every one of you, in addition to what is prescribed by the rules of our Order, say three Masses and recite one Holy Office, either alone or in community. I ask for nothing more; for I know the charity of my brothers; but let them offer these three days of prayer for my intention.

“May God have your Reverence in His holy keeping.  
Your unworthy servant, brother, and obedient subject.

“JOSEPH VAZ”

*Kandy, January 15th, 1711.*



## CHAPTER XXV

### THE DEATH OF FATHER VAZ

**F**ROM the beginning of January, Father Vaz had lived in complete retirement: all absorbed in prayer, he prepared himself to die.

The day after his last letter to Fr. Menezes, viz., January 16th, 1711, was to be the last of his life. He confessed in the morning, and told Fr. Gonzalves that this would be his last confession. Three times repeatedly he requested him to have the holy oil ready.

He took a light collation, and having been told that some christians had come from Colombo to see him, he called them in, distributed some rosaries to them, addressed them in a few consoling words, and begged them to pray for him when they should hear of his death.

Fr. Ignatius Almeida was not then in Kandy; for he had been since four months visiting distant missions. But one day he felt an inner voice calling him back to Kandy, and unable to resist it, he started on his return journey. After several days' forced march, he reached a village not far from Kandy, and being exhausted, he resolved to rest there for that night; but the same inner voice continued to urge him on.

He rose, therefore, crossed the river, and arrived at Kandy a few hours only before Father Vaz's death. When he entered his room, he asked him how he felt himself. Fr. Vaz replied that he was sinking fast and would not last much longer.

At the usual hour, Fr. Vaz got himself carried to the Church, where, with two Fathers and the congregation, he recited the rosary. He would not touch anything at supper; and, after the examination of conscience, he was taken back to his room.

He was scarcely one moment there when he called the Fathers in a loud voice, and entreated them to give him Extreme

Unction, as he felt his last hour had come. Thinking that the danger was not yet so imminent, and supposing his weakness was due to his having taken no food since morning, the Fathers brought him some bouillon quite warm. As it was Friday, he would not partake of it; then in obedience to his confessor, he tried to swallow a little of it, but could not. He, therefore, begged of them not to delay Extreme Unction any longer.

He confessed to Fr. James Gonzalves, and received the last rites, praying aloud himself, and holding in his hands the crucifix sent him by Mgr. de Tournon.

He next called the boys who had served his Mass, and talked some time with them, exhorting them to persevere in the fear and love of God. Fathers Gonzalves and Almeida drawing near to his couch, and asking him for a memento, he replied in Sinhalese: "Remember it is always most difficult at the point of death to do what you have neglected doing in your lifetime."

A paroxysm of fever then supervened; but, as the Fathers were pressing around him, he told them to take some rest, and only when the paroxysm would subside, to place the blessed candle in his hand, as that would be the signal of death. He then went on praying aloud and asking the by-standers to recommend his soul to God.

Taking the lighted taper in his hand, he formulated an Act of Faith, protesting he would die in the Catholic Faith, in which he had lived a dutiful son of Holy Church. This he repeated several times, and then asked that the prayers for the agonizing should be recited, during which he himself responded: *Gra pro me.*

Finally, he wished that no one should talk to him, as he would spend the few remaining moments alone with God. The paroxysm of fever had passed; the Fathers remembering his request, presented the blessed candle, which he received from their hands, and uttering the sweet name of Jesus he placidly expired towards the hour of midnight.

Fathers Gonzalves and Almeida knelt down near his death-bed and intoned the *Subvenite Sancti Dei.*



## CHAPTER XXVI

### HIS FUNERAL TESTIMONIES TO HIS WORTH

**T**HE news of Father Vaz's death spread at once throughout the city; and although it was night, a great number of christians flocked to the church. In the morning, Fr. Gonzalves informed the King who testified his deep sorrow, and at once enjoined on all the christians in the palace to attend the funeral.

The body was clad in priestly vestments, and was laid in state in the middle of the church, on a platform decorated as well as circumstances could afford, and surrounded with lighted tapers. The people flocked thither in crowds, not only from Kandy and the surrounding villages, but also from places distant some three or four days' journey from the town. Moved by a feeling similar to that experienced by Fr. Almeida, they had set out for Kandy, without much knowing the reason why.

The obsequies lasted three days; and only on Monday, January 19th, after a funeral oration pronounced by Fr. Gonzalves, was the body deposited in a wooden coffin lined inside with silk. It was buried, in front of the High Altar, in the church of O. L. of the Conversion of Pagans built by Father Vaz in Kandy, in the Bogambra suburb.

Father Vaz died in the 60th year of his age, his apostolate in Ceylon having lasted 24 years. He was of middle size, of handsome features, and his demeanour was dignified and sympathetic.

There is a portrait of him in the cloister adjoining the presbytery of the Colombo Cathedral. But it is a wretched painting, very old and half-blotted out. I have my doubts whether the features ascribed to him were really his; for this was drawn many years after his death, when peace had been restored to the

Church. There is also preserved in the same place his mantle of blue cotton, such as was worn by the Oratorian Fathers in Ceylon.

Immediately after Fr. Vaz's death, Fr. James Gonzalves wrote to the new Superior, Fr. Joseph de Menezes, who was still in Puttalam:

“Shortly after writing to your Reverence the letter where he said his death was drawing near, or rather he was going to enter eternal life; *viz.*, the very next day, January 16th. after the arrival of Fr. Almeida, who has joined us this very evening, whilst we were with him reciting the prayers prescribed by our Rule and taking the discipline, our Very Reverend Father was seized with a violent paroxysm of fever, and told us that, as soon as it ceased, death would follow immediately. He begged of us to begin the prayers for the agonizing and to place in his hands the blessed taper lighted; then conversing with God and uttering words which edified us all, with the bliss of eternal felicity on his face, at midnight, he surrendered his soul into the hands of his Creator.”

Fr. Bartholomew of Quental, Superior of the Lisbon Oratory, whilst writing to the religious of his Order in Goa, used to present to them Fr. Vaz as a model to imitate; and the Fathers of the Oratory in Venice, when the news of Father Vaz's death reached Europe, wrote thus to the Superior in Goa.

“*Very Reverend Father in Christ,*—The marvellous account of Father Vaz, Missionary-Priest of our Order, which we have received from Fr. Antonio, a Reformed Franciscan Friar, compels us to apply to you. We, therefore, entreat your kindness, Very Reverend Father, that you will inform us of whatever the same Father, or eventually others, may have done for the Glory of God, whether in converting souls, and working miracles, or bearing sufferings and hardships for the love of Christ, so that, not having been worthy of witnessing them with our own eyes, we may by hearing them related return due glory to God. The same sense of

duty which prompts us to make that request to you, will also incline you favourably towards it, making you excuse our boldness and comply with our desire. May God have you in His holy keeping. As for us, we shall ever be thankful to you for so great a favour.

Of your most Reverend Paternity,  
The most devoted servants in Christ,  
Patres Congr. Orat. Venet

*Venice, Aug<sup>21</sup>st, 1715*

The reply to this letter would be a most interesting document to consult. Unfortunately, it could not be found. His Eminence, Cardinal Capeceletro, at my request, caused a search to be made in the Archives of the Oratory in Venice; but, although these Archives are in a good state of preservation, the desired document could not be traced. This is accounted for, by the difficulties of communications at that time between India and Europe, and by the dangers and mischances which lay in wait against all the correspondences, which were entrusted to the ships plying round the Cape to and fro.

John II, King of Portugal, writing about the Mission of Ceylon, on April 11th, 1726, spoke of Fr. Vaz as a "Great servant of God, the Founder of that truly apostolic Mission."

The question of Fr. Vaz's Beatification was raised for the first time by Dom. Francis de Vasconcellos, S. J., Bishop of Cochin, in whose diocese was Ceylon; the process was begun in Goa, about the year 1737, and a great number of miracles were registered, all ascribed to the intercession of Fr. Vaz, after his death. But as some essential formalities had been overlooked, Pope Benedict XIV cancelled the proceedings and gave order to begin them afresh. Unfortunately, the harrassing troubles, brought upon the missions

by the Pombal *regime*, prevented the resumption of the case, which has remained dropped since then.

The papers in connection with the "Cause," which were cancelled by the Pope, must still be found in the Archives of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Other documents relating to Fr. Vaz might probably be supplied by the Archives of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, by the Reports of Cardinal Maillard de Tournon's Legation to India, and by the reports relative to India for the years that preceded that Legation.

Something might also possibly be found in the Archives of the Society of Jesus, for the Rev. Father Provincial of Malabar, residing in Manapad, was the usual channel of communications between Father and his ecclesiastical Superiors and generally between Ceylon and the Goa Oratory.

In Goa, nothing could be found in the Archives of the Archbishopric. Whatever there might have been in that city owes its loss probably to the confusion which accompanied and followed the tenure of power of Pombal; but perhaps something might yet be found in the public Archives in Lisbon.



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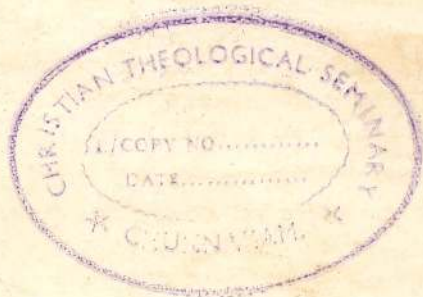
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