H. Mohammed Iqbal Baloch

8/-23/4/50.

Confronted by numerous urgent problems demanding immediate and undivided attention that arose in the wake of partition, Pakistan has so far paid little or no heed to several other issues which though comparatively less important have nevertheless to be tackled soon. One such problem relates to the future of Gwadur, a territory in the possession of the Arab Sultan of Muscat and Oman situated on the Mekran Coast in South Baluchistan. Both from the point of view of its geographical position and historical and cultural back ground, Gwadur is an integral and inseparable part of the State of Mekran.

" Gate of Wind "

The word Gwadur is a combination of two Baluchi words "Guad" and "Dar" meaning the 'Gate of Wind'. Situated between the Mekran Ports of Pasni and Jiwani, the territory has no defined boundaries. The question of its boundries had been a bone of contention between the Ruler of Kalat State and the Sultan of Muskat long before the partition of the Indian sub-continent. But inspite of apparent efforts to find a solution, the question remained unsolved. Roughly the boundries extend in the north to an area of about 8 to 10 miles and ends near a place called Phuleri. Having a total popoation of approximately 14,000, Gwadur comprises a sea town of that name, two other minor ports and number of small villages scattered over an area called Nagore.

" Example of Fine Workmanship "

The southern part of Gwadur is a T- shaped strip of land about five miles long and half to one mile wide projecting from the main coast in the north into the Arabian Sea and ending in the south with a six to seven hundred feet high reef called " Koh-Batail ". The reef which is about nine miles in length and half to one mile in width is responsible for the - formation of the coast and west bays. The top of the reef contains a catchment area with an ancient masonary dam supposed to have been constructed by the Portugese. The dam is a fine example of ancient engineering and workmanship. The huge blocks of stone used in its construction are nicely carved in rectangular shape with dovetail arrangements to hold them firmly. There is no evidence of cement or some other material having been used in its construction.

" Natural Sea-port "

The twon of Gwadur with a total population of about 8,000, is a natural sea port situated on the east bank of the east bay on a sandy but hard soil dotted by tall date-palm trees which present a picturesque sight. Most of the buldings are made of mud only. Wells dug in the narrowest belt of the projected strip provide the only source of water supply to the town, which has a temprate climate and is considered one of the healthiest spots among the coastal towns of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Muskat and Oman. The indigenus produce is fish, which is famous both for its quality and variety and constitutes the main occupation of its habitants. After being salted and dried, the fish is exported mostly to Colombo and partly to Hong Kong.

" Fishing Villages "

The other minor ports of Gwadur territory are small fishing villages called Sur and Pishukan having a population of about 1500 and 2500 respectively.

While the former is situated on the mouth of the east bay about 15 miles from the town of Gwadur territory, the latter is in the west bay at a distance of 25 miles by land. The rest of the area called Nagore consists of small scattered villages.

" Historical Background "

Gwadur was always a part of Mekran. About a century ago the then ruler of Mekran allotted one of the Arab Sheikhs to take refuge in the town because he was a holy man Syed, who are held in great esteem by Muslims. Since then it has remained in possession of the Sultans of Muskat and Oman, who until recently were paying a nominal royalty to the Ruler of Mekran. In the later years the Arabs are said to have extended their hold by gradual encroachments occupying some of the adjoining territory which was lying waste and unprotected.

" CULTURAL UNITY "

The bulk of the population of Gwadur is of pure Baluch origin and belong to the same stock as those living in the hinterland of Mekran. They speak Baluchi language and call themselves Baluchi. Their customs and habits as well as their mode of living are the same as those of the people of Baluchistan. There are no natural barriers restricting intercourse between Gwadur and Mekran. The economic and social life of the former is inseparably linked with that of the latter. The people of Gwadur own land and other property on the other side of the border and have closest relationship with the people of Mekran.

" ADMINISTRATION "

The system of administration in Gwadur is of the worst and the most antiquated type. There is hardly any orgnisation for maintenance of law and order. A Wali or Governor appointed by the Sultan rules the place with iron hand and exercises absolute civil and criminal powers. He is assisted in the performance of his duties by a Quazi and about 30 Bedouins called "Askaris" or policemen. Disputes between individuals are settled orally and in the arbitrary manner by the Wali who often passes sentences of flogging and confinement to dungeon.

" BRITISH AGENCY "

There is a British Agency in Gwadur staffed by an Agent working directly under the British Consul at Muskat. His main functions are to report events in Gwadur and the adjoining areas and also to look after the interests of the British Subjects in that place. He also tries civil and criminal cases involving British subjects residing there.

" GENERAL BACKWARDNESS "

Gwadur lacks all modern amenities such as sanitation and medical aid. Educational facilities are completely non-existant. About a year or so ago, a primary school housed in a single room mud building was opened and is most inadequate to meet the local requirements.

" SOURCE OF REVENUES "

The only source of revenue of Gwadur is the custom duty charged on goods imported via sea or land. In pre-war years the revenue from the customs was roughly Rs.30,000/- but it has now arisen upto Rs.5 lakhs. This abnormal increase is attributable not to any increase in the rates of duty but to the fact that duty is charged on the market value of the imported goods. The absence of any regulated and controlled market has led to terrible amount of black marketing and smuggling. In 1947 the cost of one bag of broken rice soared upto Rs.200/- while coarse cloth, which was very much in demand in Kalat, Persian Mekran and parts of Baluchistan was sold at Rs.4/- per yard.

" SMUGGLING "

Since the outbreak of the last world war all essential commoeities were supplied on quota basis by the Government of India to the various Arab Ports in the Persian Gulf. Due to scarcity of foodstuffs and other essential articles in the adjoining country in Persian Gulf most of the imported commodities imported for local consumption were smuggled into other countries yeilding huge profits to the smugglers. Following the partition of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, however the quota system was discontinued though the import of the Indian cotton piece goods continued as before. There was an acute shortage of food in Persian Gulf ports. Tempted by the desire to reap high profits, merchants of Gwadur, whih has always served as a distributing centre for smuggled goods, offered tempting prices for these articlem to traders in Mekran. Consequently large quantities of foodgrains supplied by the Pakistan Government to Mekran started pouring into Gwadur. Similarly rice from Karachi continued to be smuggled in large quantities in fishing boats.

" LOSS OF CUSTOMS REVENUE "

This illegal trade is not confined to foodgrains only but also extends to a number of other commodities. Articles, such as cloth, sugar, gold, matches and cigarettes imported into Gwadur and charged at a lower rate of duty are smuggled into Pakistan territory via Mekran as well as Karachi, thus depriving the Pakistan Government of a considerable amount of its customs revenue. In view of unrestricted intercourse between Gwadur and the bordering areas both by sea and land and in the absence of any check on the boundries, it is practically impossible to put an end to this illegal trade.

In vie of the facts mentioned above and in consideration of the vital strategic position occupied by Gwadur, the Government of Pakistan would be well advised to give its closest attention to this problem and take immediate steps to restore Gwadur to Mekran to which it rightfully belongs.

Yours faithfully,

(Haji Mohammed Iqbal Baloch)