

In Search Of Armagaon (Dugarajupatnam)

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Abstract: Armagaon was part of erstwhile madras presidency. Recent times Dugarajupatnam came in the news for the proposed future smart city of India located in the SPSR Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh of southern east coast of India on Eastern Ghats. This paper discussed the location and significance of Armagaon port from Colonial period. It's working paper and part of my Ph.D thesis.

Keywords: Armagaon, Dugarajupatnam, Port and Harbor.

I. DURGARAJAPATNAM PORT: EVIDENCES IN HISTORY

Dugarajupatnam referred as Armugam, Armagaon, Armaghon, Monapalem, Manapalem, Duggarazupatnam, Durgarajupatnam in literature. Based on primary and secondary sources Durgarajupatnam's latitude is 13⁰59' N and longitude 80⁰12' E, situated at the distance of 40km to the east of Gudur. It is a coastal village on the west of the Buckingham canal and was one of the natural ports in the country. The English is said to have first landed at this port. Some relics to the old construction such as the light house can still be seen there. It is one of the sea side resorts in the Nellore district. It is mentioned in M.Francis's Imperial Gazetteer of India as it is said to be named after one Arumuga Mudaliyar, by whose assistance one of the earliest English settlements on the Coromandel coast, consisting of a factory defended by twelve pieces of cannon, was established in 1625. "A light house is maintained at Monapalem which gives a flash for every 20 seconds visible 14 miles (22.53Km) away, and warns vessels off the Armugaon shoal, 6 miles from shore. The shoal is about 10 miles long and the shallowest patch on it has 1 ¾ th fathoms of water, and lies from 3 ½ to 5 ½ miles east by north of the light house. The still water inside the shoal is called "Blackwood's harbour", after Sir Henry Blackwood, once admiral in this coast, who had it chartered, and suggested that it would make a practicable harbour. Seven miles north of Armagaon light house is Dugarajupatnam, a small village of 2,388 inhabitants on the BUCKINGHAM CANAL. Being at the mouth of the entrance to the sea from the backwater in

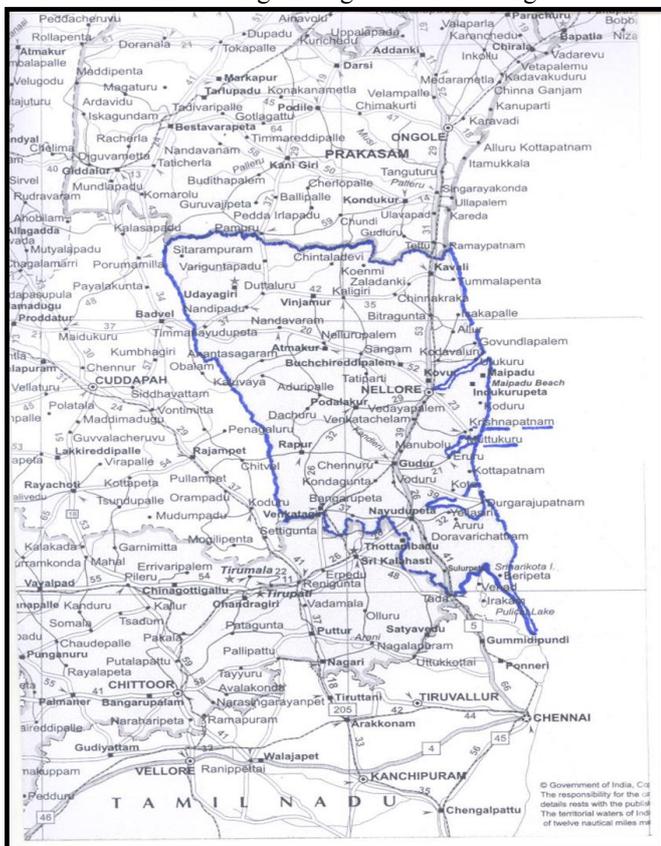
front of which Armagaon stands, it was apparently the port of Armagon, and the two places are often spoken of as identical. Near by are the remains of an old fort built by the East India Company.

This port also mentioned in John Bosewell's District manuals as Armeghon. It is also referred in Robert Sewells's compiled lists of the Antiquarian Remains in the Presidency of Madras as "Duggarajapatnam. 23 miles east- south- east of Gudur, 9 miles south of the embouchure of the Suvarnamukhi river on the sea. This small seaport was one of the earliest English possessions on the eastern coast. It was obtained for them from the then Raja of Ventkatagiri in 1625 A.D., by the karanam of the village, whose name Armugam, the new settlers gave in gratitude to their factory. In 1641 A.D, the factory was removed to madras, then called Chennakuppam, where a new factory had been established two years previously on the land granted by the Raja of Kalahasti, under permission of his sovereign, the expatriated King of Vijayanagara, resident at Chandragiri.

"More significant than the founding of Armagon in 1625 was the English discovery of an excellent site for a natural harbour near Armagon. During the early 19th Century, Vice Admiral Henry Blackwood chartered an underwater shoal (sand bank or sand bar) about six miles from Armagon and called it the Armagon Shoal. The shoal is about 10 miles long, north to south, with still (calm) waters within the shoal, about nine fathoms deep, "a practicable harbour," as Blackwood adjudged. It was later called the Blackwood Harbour. Another narrow but detached shoal about 2.5 miles long, with a depth of 10-11 m, lies close to the northern tip of the Armagon

Shoal. Blackwood recorded even the reversal of coastal monsoonal currents within the shoal. Shoals in coastal waters, like coral reefs, attract rich biodiversity and fisheries. Prior to the construction of the breakwaters for the Madras Harbour, it was much debated whether to develop the Blackwood Harbour itself, in lieu of where the Madras Harbour was established. About seven miles south of Armagon is the deserted coastal village, Monapalem, where a lighthouse was constructed in 1853, beaming once in 20 seconds and visible upto 14 miles away. It was renovated several times but, between 1928 and 1938, it was totally closed consequent to a malarial epidemic that, strangely, killed one lighthouse keeper after another”.

Durgarajapatnam mostly mentioned in British records as a port with some significance for very little period. Sinnappah Arasaratnam who has good knowledge on Dutch East India Company records mentioned it as “principal port and about the fifteen miles of south of Krishnapatnam is the port of Arumugam, also situated on a river, and a port of some significance in the seventeenth century. There was good anchorage for ships near the entrance to the river and large European vessels used to call there regularly in the early seventeenth century. The English had an early settlement there and both English and Dutch vessels called there to load piece goods. It was an important place for the export of textiles which were made in neighboring hinterland village”



Source: the Department of Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, India. 2010

Figure 1: Location of Dugarajapatnam

Primary and secondary sources reveals that this port had potential of a good shoal, harbor and place for export of textiles. Streysham Master also referred Armagon port.

Some inferences have drawn from the sources about the decline of Dugarajapatnam port that the British East India company wanted its own strong place as a port on Coromandel coast. They have tried their luck in other ports but could not gain control. Finally chose Dugarajapatnam port as their post. But this dint flourish due to unfavorable ‘situation’ of the port. Finally they had constructed a new port called Madras port. This gave shattering impact on many native ports in that period, Armagon is one such port.

PORT

Popular definition: “A port is a physical location on a coast containing one or more harbors where ships can dock and transfer people or cargo to or from land. Port locations are selected to optimize access to land and navigable water, for commercial demand, and for shelter from wind and waves. Ports with deeper water are rarer, but can handle larger ships. Since ports throughout history handled every kind of traffic, support and storage facilities vary widely, may extend for miles, and dominate the local economy. Some ports have an important military role”. As rightly pointed out by G.G. Weigned a port is the place of contact where goods and people as well as cultures are transferred between land and maritime space. It is a knot where ocean and inland transport lines meet and intervene.

HARBOUR

A harbour is the sheltered area of deep water. Some degree of shelter, natural or artificial, is essential for port development. Good harbours do not attract ports if the coasts on which that lie are not important in terms of the land-and-sea-exchanges of their region.

II. FINDINGS

- ✓ Armagon identified as modern Dugarajapatnam port located in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh.
- ✓ Regional history of Armagon revealed that it can be good harbor or shoal complex.

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