

# **Executive summary of the UGC Approved Minor Research Project**

**Entitled: The Trade And Interplay Of European Power  
Politics A Case Study Of South Kanara**

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The Indian sub- continent is a mosaic of regional diversities. These variations are so vibrant and the forms in which they find expression are frequently so emphatic that they tend to threaten the very integrity of the larger political entities of which they are a part. The pre- modern politics is occasionally expanded to virtually sub- continental dimensions, which, could not have escaped these centrifugal tensions.

Notwithstanding these facts, proponents of the model of centralised medieval empire, the pre-modern Indian state must have had fewer pretensions to regulating the lives of its subject than does the state today. It was perhaps content with harmonizing the more obvious differences between itself and the region in order to prevent the emergence of political polarities. The region, conversely, while recognizing the overarching supremacy of the empire, probably retained fairly strong local traditions along with its own version of major historical developments. Many of these versions have come to be articulated through commonly accepted notions about the nature of local events and issues. These often constitute an integral part of regional histories in modern times. Whether based upon historical facts or upon legends and traditions, the presence and popular acceptance of these ideas in region often nurture a historiography which restricts the categories of questions that are likely to arise.

## **Scope of the Study:**

The purpose of this work is to present in detail the Trade and Interplay of European Power politics. A case Study of South Kanara covering a period of about three centuries. For the purpose of study, the entire South Kanara including Kasaragod and Udupi Districts have been taken as the

canvas. The South Kanara region which has evolved a distinct culture of its own is situated on the western coast of India. It is a long narrow strip of territory stretching from North to South; it is a mixture of midland and plains which spreads from the Western Ghats to Arabian Sea (known locally as *Pashchima Samudra* which means western sea). The land is commonly referred to as *Alvakheda* (land of Alupas) and also as *Tulunadu* in historical times.

The reason for taking 1500 A.D. as the starting point is primarily on account of the availability of ample source materials then onwards. From the close of the 15<sup>th</sup> century South Kanara enters the later medieval period of her history under the Vijayanagara Empire. There are also copious Portuguese records. The records show a qualitative change in their nature from this period. The study closes with the end of the political influence of Tippu Sultan and the rise of the British East India Company into political prominence in this region. Although the time frame is defined on the basis of the political identities, this study seeks to assess the structure of administration as a result of political changes and analyse role played by different chieftains in the context of the development of European power politics. Besides, it deals with different aspects of agrarian economy such as topography, land structure, types of crops, and production as they have contributed significantly to the expansion of internal as well as external trade. Different forms of tenure practices, emerging trend of commercialisation in agriculture and its impact on society have been discussed critically

Despite the importance of South Kanara during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the absence of sustained recorded studies vis-a vis socio political history is surprising. Notwithstanding this, it is an area particularly rich in contemporary source materials. A researcher has to utilize the rich inscriptions of the Vijayanagra, Keladi rulers and local Chieftains issued from time to time. Information can also be obtained from the accounts of European travelers. Despite its fragmentary nature, this information can be of sufficient value when placed in the context of comments and observations in latter sources. The considerable time gap, apart from observation in these

later works on the climatic, physiographical and agricultural peculiarities of South Kanara continues to be of relevance to historians.

Although local traditions and regional perception of history have significantly influenced the historiography of South Kanara, it can hardly be forgotten that South Kanara during 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was an integral part of a larger polity. The Vijayanagara Empire spanning virtually the entire sub continent had significant bearing on the separate regions that constituted it.

The nature and functioning of Vijayanagara system has, in the recent past, been subjected to close scrutiny, considerable efforts having been directed towards understanding its politico – administrative structure, and its economic base. As a political structure, the Vijayanagara and the Keladi Kingdom are normally viewed as one that sustained itself by appropriating a substantial part of agrarian activity. Much of government activities pertain to the assessment and collection of land revenue and its subsequent distribution with in the various sections of the ruling class. It was the efficient functioning of this system under close imperial supervision which ensured the integrity of the Vijayanagara Empire. The loosening of central control and the emergence of powerful regional entities on account of various factors contributed to its ultimate fragmentation.

Agriculture was not the only economic activity in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in South Kanara. Cities, Ports and towns scattered all over South Kanara Coast as well as in the interior, emerged important centers of commercial activity. These towns and harbors encouraged the growth of internal and external trading activity. It is apparent, however, that the range of commercial transactions was immense, not only in geographical extent but also in terms of the large sums of money involved.

Apart from the indigenous, business class, the European trading companies in India had begun to assume greater significance by the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Through these trading companies the economy of South Kanara established a crucial connection with Europe. The increased demand in Europe for Indian commodities, such as pepper made possible the integration of South Kanara with outside world. Textiles acted as an incentive for greater production, creating new jobs in South Kanara. It was nevertheless, long before the English came to dominate the Indian economy.

It is true that the history of South Kanara can not be described merely in terms of local chieftains, regional chieftains, and Vijayanagara imperial system thriving upon economic activity. Hence, the present study makes an examination of trade and European political process in South Kanara during the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

The project has been divided into 6 chapters in the first chapter an attempt has been made to evaluate the contribution of the few existing works on South Kanara and to point out the inadequate nature of the treatment of the subject the present work tried to provide a fuller and historically meaningful study of the theme an examination of the nature and significance of different sources also forms a part of this chapter

Chapter second the topography of south Kanara region, traces the significances of the language, geography, and topography as factors contributing to its distinct identity according to the traditional notion, 'parashurama kshetra' is known for the fertility of the soil, abundant rainfall and wealth, the region under the study as a variety of flora and fauna. It has mountains, valleys, rivers, forts. South Kanara has Arabian sea as its Western boundary. It is almost straight but in some places it is broken with rivers rivlets, small streams, etc. the western ghats are situated on the eastern side of the region. The rivers of South Kanara run from the east to the west with the heavy rainfall of south west monsoon and broken nature of the country, the rivers and streams are innumerable. These rivers are extensively used for bringing products to the coastal ports and towns. The backwaters and salt water lagoons provide great facilities for traffic. Therefore the rivers on the one hand facilitated transport and communication on the other provided fertile land for agricultural production. The importance of various ruling families in South Kanara against the background of the overall history of the region and administrative divisions that were formed during different periods also has been sketched briefly.

The third chapter examines the pattern of agriculture in South Kanara has been an agrarian economy, agriculture and industrial based production thrived as the two major pillars of the economy this region. It is evident that

geography as well as topography of the region greatly contributed towards agricultural activities of this region. Agriculture produced the raw materials required for trade as well as industries of this region. Geographical factors favoured the cultivation of food items and commercial crops such as paddy ,coconut, sugar-cane, cashewnut, arecanut , pepper and wide variety of vegetables and fruits. Agriculture expansion was responsible for the development of the economy of this region. It resulted in advancement of agriculture and industrial production. It also responsible for the growth of irrigation, trade and commerce, trade routes and trading centres in the economic prosperity of South Kanara during period under study.

The fourth chapter examines the revenue administration, land revenue systems reveal the shrinking agrarian features of the region it refers to the condition under which various classes organisation in the land tenure system . In South Kanara theoretically the king was the owner of all lands in practice,the religious organizations,people from different castes and class owned the cultivated lands along with the kings own Land.Later this land was known as Atalanta Bhoomi. It is interesting to note that all types of land tenure systems were clearly distinguished and demarcated the prevalence of different types of land tenure in South Kanara may be ascribed to the social and religious beliefs among the people the absence of Money economy , the availability of unlimited arable lands, the custom of paying various services by individuals to the state in the form of land grants and revenue administration and huge supply of laborers who mainly relied on agricultural works. It resulted in advancement of agricultural crops and industrial production. It also gave importance to growth of trade and commerce, trade routes emergence of towns and forts in the economic prosperity of South Kanara during the period under study.

The fifth chapter deals with Trade and European Power Politics in South Kanara. Since South Kanara has been the chief producer of valuable agricultural products like pepper,rice,sugar etc ,a large number of Europeans took active interest in trade and commerce and also enjoying maximum benefits by imposing hegemony over the trading centers of the region. After the Fifteenth century, Europeans like the Portuguese,Dutch and the English

arrived in South Kanara and they tried to establish their factories and ports like Mangalore Basrur, Barkoor, Gangolli Manjeshwar Kumbale Kasaragod and Bekal the European elements considerably influenced the economy, trade and commerce of South Kanara. The Portuguese made a treaty with the native rulers and tried to obtain supply of necessary provisions to their factories in different parts of India and Europe. During this interaction there were military encounters political wars and negotiations. This led to proliferation of trade in items like rice pepper, ginger, iron, salt peter, cardamom, etc the Dutch and the English attempted to compete with the Portuguese. The Dutch established their factories in Mangalore, Basrur and Bekal. The English also appointed their agents in Mangalore to procure necessary supplies of rice to their settlements in Telicherry and Bombay.

The chapter sixth deals with forts in coastal South Kanara. After the Portuguese arrival in the Malabar and South Kanara, the Portuguese were more worried about their survival and to protect their trade and commerce, military and political interest. The Portuguese realized that if any preventive steps were not undertaken they would have faced the challenge from the Marathas, Vijayanagara, Adilshahis of Bijapur in Mangalore Ullal queen Abbakka Devi in Malabar Zamorin queen of Gersoppa and Barkur chiefs and so on. That is why, they decided to build forts in the western coastal land. At the same time they also decided to appoint a resident viceroy to look after their interest in the Eastern coast. The great rivalry was given by Dutch and English in the west coast of South Kanara. In this regard, they initiated the work in 1505 by building a fort at Anjediv, though it was destroyed in very next year. They made one more attempt to build another fort in this island and succeeded in their efforts. They succeeded in building three more forts in South Kanara where Mangalore, Honnavar, Basrur and these forts served their trade and commerce interest and political and military purpose till 1650's, the time when it was taken by Shivappa Nayaka of Ikkeri. After from these another fort was built at Ganogolli between 1630 and 1633.

The study on **the Trade And Interplay Of European Power Politics A Case Study Of South Kanara**, fills up a gap in the historiography of South Kanara, a region located on the western coast of South India which has

retained fairly strong regional traditions along with its own version of major historical developments many of these versions have come to the articulated through commonly accepted notion about the nature of local events and issues. The study has been taken up in the larger perspective of the power politics and economic history of later medieval India. In these study a huge array of primary and secondary sources have been extensively used. Epigraphical, excavation reports ,literary sources, administrative reports, foreign accounts, foreign travelers observation, folk lore, Kadatha, pad-dana, and a wide variety of published works in English, Portuguese, Kannada have been used in the completion of this study.

Agriculture and agrarian based production, industrial goods thrived as the two pillars of economy of this region. According to the traditional notion, Parashurama kshetra is known for the fertility of the soil, abundant rain fall and wealth. The region under study has a variety of flora and fauna it has mountains valleys, rivers, ports and forts. South Kanara has covered Arabian sea as its western boundary it is almost straight but in some places it is broken by rivers, rivulets, small streams and tributaries ,etc these rivers influenced the agrarian system of the region provided water resources for extensive cultivation and served as highways for transportation of agricultural products from the coast to the foot hills of the ghats, it also helps communication from the coast to the foot hills of the ghats. These rivers were also extensively used for bringing products to the coastal ports and towns and also responsible for the emergence of forts in the river valleys and sea shore. The backwaters and salt water lagoons provided great facility for traffic. Therefore the rivers on the one hand facilitated transport and on the other hand it provided fertile land for agricultural production. The mouths of these rivers were suited for ports were sea- faring activities were in full swing

The agrarian character of the region suggest that the economic life of the people of south kanara round the income derived from agriculture production and industrial products. Consequently agriculturists formed an important section of the south kanara society, it is evident that geography as well as topography of the region greatly contributed towards agricultural activities of the region, agriculture produces the raw materials required for trade as well as industries of the region. Geographical factors favored the cultivation of food products and commercial crops such as Paddy, Coconut, Sugarcane, Cashewnut , Arecanut, Pepper, Cardamom, Sandalwood and wide variety of vegetables and fruits. Increased cultivation led to the expansion of trade and commerce in the south kanara. However the agricultural activities were left at the mercy of nature the fertility of soil the

fortunes of the monsoons and the river flowing directions were determining factors in the agricultural activities.

The flourishing agrarian economy and surplus of production in the primary sector created favorable condition for the development of industries and industrial production and trading activities. Trade was carried out in both in agricultural and industrial products this included domestic trade and foreign trade between various regions in the country as well as in the countries like Persia, Portugal, England, France, and others this eventually led to urbanization in the coastal region and the emergence of commercial economy.

Agriculture was not only economic activity in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to 18<sup>th</sup> century in South Kanara, towns, ports, forts, and cities scattered all over South Kanara coast as well as in the interior emerged important centers of commercial activity. These towns and ports encouraged the growth of domestic trade and foreign trading activity. It is efferent, however that the range of commercial transaction was immense not only in geographical extent but also in terms of large sums of money transaction involved.

Apart from the indigenous business class, the European trading companies in India began to assume greater significance by the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D through these trading companies the economy of south kanara established crucial connection with Europe. The increased demand in Europe for Indian items such as pepper, cardamom, and sandalwood made possible the integration of south kanara with outside world. Textiles acted as an intensive for greater production, creating new jobs in south kanara it was never the less, long before the English came to dominate the Indian economy.

Regarding the topographical and environmental study, south kanara inscription have immense value. Distinct topographical features of the region are Hadav(barren lands), niru hariyuva oni(water flowing lame), kiri gadde(paddy field situated near tank), uppina gaara(salty region), kudru(an island formed by river), bila gadde(uncultivable land), kaadu(forest), gajani(land formed by residing the river or sea). The post vijayanagara inscriptions mentions the natural calamities such as gudde jarida nashta(the damage caused by land slides, hole harida nashta(damage caused by over flow of the river), uppu neeru ukkida nashta( damage by the overflow of the salty water) etc thus indicating the changes in the course of the rivers flowing in south kanara region measures taken by rulers and prominent persons to preserve the environmental purity are revealed in a few inscriptions of the periods of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Since south kanara has been the chief producer of agricultural products like rice, Pepper, sugar, cashewnut, cardamom, and sandalwood etc. a large number of European took active interest in enjoying maximum benefits imposing hegemony over the trading centers of the region after the 15<sup>th</sup> century Europeans like the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and the English arrived in the South Kanara and they tried to establish their factories in ports like Mangalore, Basrur, Barkoor, Manjeshwar, Ullal, Kasaragod, kumbala, Bekal, Nileshwar and Gangolly. The European powers considerably influenced the agriculture, trade, industries and commerce of South Kanara. The Portuguese signed the treaties with the native rulers and tried to obtain supply of necessary provisions for their factories in different parts of India and abroad. During this interactions there were military encounters and political treaties this led to proliferation of trade items like rice, pepper, ginger, cardamom, cashew nut, iron, salt peter, etc. the Dutch and English attempted to compete with the Portuguese. The Dutch established their factories at Mangalore and Basrur th French established their factories in Nileshwar the English also appointed their agents in Mangalore to procure necessary supplies of rice to their settlements in Telicherry and Bombay.

The strong presence of Europeans also reveals development of trade and interplay of European power politics initially the Portuguese were dominant and were able to enjoy exclusive monopoly over South Kanara on pepper trade. They had perfected their gripping influence by developing intimate relations with various indigenous rulers and trading communities. Gradually other Europeans showed an intense trading interest in the region which led to an open rivalry among themselves. The main source of contention is to assert control over south kanara pepper and rice trade. In order to accomplish this task inevitably they had to develop healthy contact with the native rulers. In this regard they were forced to sign a series of treaties with major and minor powers of the south kanara. These treaties had provisions relating to their political and commercial relations. When the Portuguese were able to impose their terms and conditions on the weaker rulers of the region. The stronger rulers of the region opposed and they immediately turned against the Portuguese. Politically these local powers succeeded for a while to assert themselves as they realized that the Portuguese main thrust was to collect rice, pepper, and other valuable spices products from the region which commanded high demands in the foreign markets. The local powers sometimes went even to the extent of bargaining with the Portuguese for higher price. Portuguese also started river trade or

hinterland trade in this region. However the arrival of the Dutch and English traders and French traders in addition to the Portuguese intensified the bargaining strategy of indigenous rulers of the period.

The Revenue administration systems reveal the shrinking agrarian features of the region. It refers to the conditions under which various classes and organization held land. In South Kanara, theoretically though the king was the owner of all lands, in practice, the religious organizations, people from different castes and class owned and cultivated lands along with the king's own land. The latter's own land was known as *Armaneya Bhumi* or *Bhandara Sthal*. It is interesting to note that all types of land tenure systems were clearly distinguished and demarcated. Administrative convenience facilitated many integrating forces which were knitting region into a closer unit. Local society and polity were subject to a variety of stresses and the administrative system responded by transgressing the formal administrative divisions and subsystems of the earlier governmental system further, the maintenance of an effective revenue machinery contributed immensely to the stability and the integrity of the region. The rulers who ruled directly or indirectly realized the importance of encouraging trade and agriculture because of both trade and agriculture activities brought considerable revenue to the state exchequer.

It is crystal clear that during the period under study, the agricultural production was mainly under the grip of market agencies and at the same time the over fears market barons exerted deeper influence on the farm lands more than the internal forces. Trade and its related activities during these were not static while analyzing the volumes of trade or prices of the commodities one can observe the upward trend. Whatever the changes recorded during this period were very fast and vigorous. At the same time

the fast growing agricultural marketing brought the south kanara within the orbit of old market. Trade relations also carried the exchange of cultural things. The external trade impact on the local traders, made such an impact that, it even changed the conservative local traders and made them to adopt some of the European trade patterns.

After their arrival in the Malabar and western coast, the Portuguese were more worried about their survival and to protect their commercial military and political interest. The Portuguese realized that, if any preventive steps were not undertaken they would have face the challenge from the Maratha rulers like Shivaji and Shambaji, Mangalore-Ullala queen Abakka Devi, Malabar ruler Zamorin of Calicut, Gerusoppa and Barkur chiefs and so and that is why, they decided to build ports in the south kanara coast, at the same time they also decided to appoint a resident viceroy to look after their interest in the eastern coast . In this regard, they initiated the work in 1505 by building a Fort at Anjediv. Though it was destroyed in the very next year, in 1682 they made one more attempt to erect another port in this island and succeeded in their efforts. In 1568-69 they succeeded in building three more forts at mangalore, Honnavar and Basrur and these forts served their commercial and military purpose till 1650, the time when it was taken by Shivappa Nayaka of Ikkeri. Apart from these another fortress was built at Gangolli between 1630 and 1633.

Thus it is clear that, the Portuguese and other rulers by constructing Forts at Mangalore, Honnavar, Basrur, Gangolli, Bekal, Kasaragod, Hosadurga, kumble and such other places in coastal South Kanara tried to protect their military, trade and commercial interests for nearly 200 years. In their efforts, though succeeded initially, later they bowed out to the powerful local rulers like Rani Abbakka of ullal and Nayakas of Ikkeri. And still later with the arrival of the Dutch, French and British. But British were forced to make their way to the British power in South Kanara.