CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

From early times the trade and commerce has occupied a prominent place among those economic activities of men which have had comprehensive influence on the history of mankind. Right from the Indus Valley Civilization trade was one of the great up builders of the economic well being of our country. Trading with distant countries was a usual feature of Indian economic life. The advancement of trade and commerce always depends upon certain conditions like the geographical setting, the nature and volume of merchandise, the enterprising trading community, the location of ports, transport, the attitude of state and the availability of hinterland to correspond to all those necessaries required for good going of commerce in the country.

India has always attracted traders from various countries of the world for the specificity of our commodities and the hospitality
that Indian rulers extended to foreign merchants. During the period of seventeenth century Coromandel Coast, of which Nizampatnam and Nellore were integral parts, assumed importance because of the major trading activity; it gained importance because of two reasons (a) It exported large volume of goods to various countries of the world, (b) It was bestowed with large hinterland to supplement its demand. Coromandel coast varied from time to time during 17th century.

The activity of trade and commerce in the coastal Andhra region has long history, it can be traced back to Satavahanas and in later times pallavas and cholas. The important ports at that time were such as Kanchi, Kaveripatnam and Masulipatnam.

It was under the Kakatiya rulers that the development of the ports of Motupalli, Machilipatnam, Krishnapatnam and Hamsaladeevi as centres of trade and commerce gained importance. Subsequently the Muslim invasions and the fall of Warangal in the early fourteenth
century marked the decline of seaborne trade in Andhra. However, after the reestablishment of regional chieftains like Reddy rulers who renovated the port of Motupalli and gave concessions to the merchants to develop the trading activities in the region. The number of ports which grew in Andhra were Ganjam, Kalingapatnam, Bimlipatnam, Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Coringa, Ingeram, Madapollam, Narasapur, Machilipatnam, Nizampatnam and Aramagaon. All these played an important role in maritime history of Coastal Andhra region in the seventeenth century. It is because of their economic significance that the Qutb Shahis, the Mughals, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English and the French struggled to acquire the position of these ports to gain political and economic power.

Andhra was the important region where most of the trading activities were carried out during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Travellers determined coastline from point calimere of eastern coast to a sharp northward drift to the port of Ganjam. It extended from Godavari region to the tip of the peninsula. The Coromandel coast was divided into north and south during seventeenth century by political demarcations and localization of
export trade which was determined by the variety of textiles found on both the ports such as coarser goods of the northern Coromandel and finer varieties in the southern Coromandel.

The areas from Nizampatnam to Nellore, which are more popularly referred as Petapolee and Aramagoan in records of seventeenth century formed the nucleus of these commercial activities. Eventhough, the entire coast line in Andhra established its identity in the commercial world in the 17th century, but it was Nizampatnam where the Dutch established their trading settlement in 1606. Similarly it was in 1628 that English constructed their first fortified settlement in Aramagaon i.e., Nellore region.

The period 1600 AD has greater importance not only of the efforts of Qutb Shahi sultans to promote trade and commerce but more so because of the presence of Europeans was also registered around that time. Similarly the terminal point of 1687 also assumes significance because the end of the Qutb Shahi rule and also the establishment of Mughal rule in this region, besides the growth of
territorial forces which incorporated medieval economy into the colonial economy also coincides with this period.

For our understanding, we have studied this subject under four aspects apart from the introduction and conclusion. These four aspects centre round (a) The Andhra Coast; Nizampatnam to Nellore and surrounding areas, (b) European trading companies and their operations. A struggle for expansion and dominance (c) Merchants and Merchandise in Coastal Andhra (A Study of Commercial Transactions (d) Qutb Shahi state and trade in Coastal Andhra.

The first chapter deals with the geographical settings of the area, the nature of the ports, the items exchanged, the organization trade and the hinterland. The second chapter examines the presence of European trading companies in the region, the response of hinterland to European commerce. This also tries to measure the impact of European commerce. The third chapter deals with the merchants and their communities, their relations with the local rulers and the European companies and the items exported and imported through these ports. The fourth chapter deals with the attitude of
Qutb Shahi state towards the commerce in the region. It also deals with the efforts carried out to promote and patronize trade of various goods in this area. Besides it also points out the hurdles which at times demotivated merchants.

The present study is based on primary and secondary literature, we have used the published records of the European Companies and the reports of travellers in full. Though the foreign records available after 1650s (the English records available since 1670 and the Dutch records available since 1657) have also been consulted. Apart from these records the travellers reports were given us full details about the economic history of the Andhras in the seventeenth century. District, Imperial and provincial Gazetteers, Manuals and the merchandise's collection of village records have also been used for this work. The important records available at Tamilnadu Archives, Madras and the state Archives, Hyderabad like dispatches from England, dispatches to England, letters received by the East India Company from it's servants, dairy and consultation books and Masulipatnam consultations etc. have been also used in this study.
The articles from the important journals like Indian Economic and Social History Review, Islamic Culture, Journal of Indian History, Journal of Andhra Historical research society, Modern Asian Studies, Journal of Asian Studies and the proceedings of Andhra Pradesh history Congress and Indian History Congress proved of great help in reconstruction of various arguments.

The study does not claim to have set out to say the last word on the subject but has tried to provide fresh details by exploring various sources and developed scope for reconstruction of the economic history of the region.