CHAPTER I

PORTUGUESE POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACTS

The Portuguese were the first to come to Kanara as early as 1496 A.D. By means of wars, treaties and diplomacy they succeeded in establishing several trading centres along the Kanara coast. Their subsequent progress in Kanara, which was due to their naval supremacy, their superior method of warfare, the indifference of the Vijayanagara emperors towards them and disunity among the chiefs in Kanara, created new political and commercial problems in the region. In the course of years, the Portuguese influence and prestige declined considerably on account of their inhuman actions, rivalry with the Dutch and the English, the consolidation of the Keladi kingdom in Kanara and the Maratha activities in the area.
The Portuguese activities in Kanara have been elaborately discussed by Scholars like Heras, Moraes G.M. Alvares, Menezes W. and Shastry B.S. in their respective works. Here we are concerned with the policies of the Portuguese in Kanara and their impact on existing political setup.

The chief concern of the Portuguese was to safeguard their commercial interests in this region. As trading nation, they entered Kanara primarily to secure pepper. Their involvement in local politics, building of forts and signing of treaties with other chiefs were motivated primarily by trade interest. Throughout their career, their commercial interests were the decisive factors which influenced their policy towards the region.

Prior to 1547 A.D. the Portuguese received tributes from several forts in Kanara stretching from Chittakula to Kumbale. As a result of their treaty with Vijayanagara in 1547 A.D. the whole export and import business in Kanara came into their hands. Further, their trade was protected from the competition of the other traders especially the Moors. In short the treaty not only legalised their trade in Kanara, but also made them bold enough to safeguard their interests with the sword. Their trade interests were further protected by another favourable treaty, in 1548 A.D. with the
queen of Bhāṭakala. This treaty further ensured their security and the promotion of trade interests in that region. Thus on the eve of the period under study the Portuguese had cast the web of trade in Kanara in such a way that no chief could escape from it. By leaps and bounds, their trade increased in the coastal Kanara. Thus they became a force to be reckoned with and their favour was sought by the local rulers. The decline of the Portuguese trade in Goa after the battle of Rakkasa-Tangadi in no way undermined their influence in Kanara.

On the other hand, it made them bolder to consolidate their efforts to have a firm hold in the region. They even built forts at Mangalore in 1568 A.D. and at Honnavar in 1569 A.D. and at Basrūru in 1569-70 A.D. They concluded a treaty with the Tōlahas of Surāla in 1570 A.D., as a result of which they got pepper of that land at a lower price. They forced the queen of Gerasoppe to sell them 500 Khandies of pepper at a lower rate. They also insisted on the merchants of Basrūru to sell the pepper at a lower price. Thus they also monopolised the trade of pepper in the west coast.

In the last decade of the sixteenth century the Portuguese were so powerful on the west coast that neither the Moors nor the Indians were allowed to course the sea waters without the Portuguese passports. They built factories at Honnavar, Basrūru and Mangalore.
In 1564-85 A.D. Sanguicer Nayaka (Sangameśvara, a local chief of Honnāvara) seized the fort of Sanguier and caused damage to the Portuguese trade by giving shelter to the pirates; the Portuguese, concluded a treaty with the Sultan of Bijapur and conducted a military campaign against that chief so successfully that the Nayaka was forced to accept the peace terms dictated by them. All these actions helped them to retain the strong hold in Kanara, especially on trade.

The incidents that took place in Kanara in the last decade of the sixteenth century alarmed the Portuguese and made them feel that their trade monopoly would be lost. These incidents were the activities of Kunjalis in Mangalore and the expansion and consolidation of the Keladi kingdom in Kanara under Venkaṭappa I. In 1599 A.D. Kunjale III sought the help of the Banga chief and the queen of Ullāla against the Portuguese. Realising that their trade interest in Mangalore would be adversely affected as a result of this, the Portuguese viceroy sent Andre Furtado to Mangalore with the intention of dissuading both from asserting Kunjalis. Of course they overcame this peril. To prevent any fresh danger Philip II, the king of Portugal and Spain, instructed the Viceroy of Goa that for trading purpose new forts should be built, that the existing forts should be repaired; and that these should be furnished with sufficient ammunition.
The expansionist policy of Venkatappa in Kanara caused uneasiness to the Portuguese who had their forts along the coast. The viceroy was instructed by the king of Portugal and Spain to countermine Venkatappa's design. The subsequent events show that apart from their failure in their attempts to counteract the activities of Venkatappa, the Portuguese had also to witness helplessly the seizure of the forts of Honnavaar and Bhatkala by him. The whole pepper trade of Gerasoppe region where they had monopoly, had now to be carried on under the supervision of the Keladi authority. In order to improve their trade the Portuguese tried to be friendly with the latter by promising him all kinds of help against the threat of invasion of the Adilshahi of Bijapur.

This policy, however did not work. Venkatappa was in a stronger position. He was bent upon controlling the Portuguese. He raised the price of pepper and this affected the Portuguese trade adversely. The king of Portugal advised the viceroy of Goa to approach the Vijayanagara emperor to persuade his vassal of Keladi to be more lenient towards the Portuguese. The viceroy was also advised that if these efforts failed, he would instigate Ibrahim Adilshah II of Bijapur to attack the Keladi kingdom. At the same time the viceroy was instructed to pursue these designs in secret. But the viceroy was disappointed on both the
counts. A clash indeed took place between the Adilshahi of Bijapur and the Keladi Nāyaka, but contrary to the hopes and expectation of the Portuguese, the battle ended soon in a treaty.⁰²¹ They then tried to set up the smaller chiefs against Keladi Nāyaka. But even this did not work. Venkaṭappa's hold which continued to be strong as far as Kāsargōd, increased their uneasiness. Their activities were completely controlled by Venkaṭappa. Yet in order not to jeopardise their trade interest, they tried to be friendly outwardly at least and avoided supporting the smaller chiefs openly.⁰²² Venkaṭappa, however, launched upon such vigorous campaign that the Portuguese were compelled to involve themselves in the contest. This resulted in dislocation of trade and loss of their prestige.⁰²³ In order to get out of this conflict, they decided to enact another drama in which they offered to act as mediators, between the Banga rāja and Keladi Venkaṭappa who were at fight with each other. They decided to hand over Banga's fort to Venkaṭappa and work for truce between him and Venkaṭappa. Under the pretext of neutrality, the Portuguese tried to get maximum concession from both parties.⁰²⁴

When the next ruler Virabhadra was facing difficulty in the early days of his rule, the Portuguese tried to exploit the situation to their advantage. They secretly decided to help the rebellious chief and secured the port of
Cambolim from the municipality of Basrūru and made it for their own profit.  

At this juncture Virappa usurped the throne of Keladi. The Portuguese aligned with him to promote their trade interest. In 1631 A.D. they concluded a treaty with him through which they tried to get additional privileges. But they did not succeed. Virappa died in the meantime. Then Virabhadra became the unquestioned ruler of Keladi once again. He insisted on the Portuguese to purchase pepper at the old rate. Realising that their game would not work at all, they showed conciliatory method and concluded a fresh treaty with him through which they secured certain privileges. But at the same time he did not give them a free hand.

At this juncture a new development was taking place with the stepping of the English at Bhatkala. The Portuguese obviously felt that the latter would be their rivals and they naturally tried to compromise with the Keladi Nayakas in order to safeguard their own interest. For instance, they decided to purchase pepper at the rate proposed by the Keladi rulers which they had earlier refused. Finally they succeeded in persuading Virabhadra to pull out the English from Bhatkala and drove them out from Karwar in 1752 A.D. Yet, their influence was steadily dwindling because of the increasing activities of the Dutch and other
Europeans on the coast. This made them further count the good will of the Keladi rulers and agree to the terms of the latter.

During the succeeding years also, the Portuguese interests were adversely affected because of the Dutch activities. But somehow they tried to earn the friendship of the Keladi rulers. In 1671 A.D. they secured the permission from Somaëkharanäyaka to build factories at Honnävara, Basṟuru, and other places on certain conditions and also obtain free access to ports.

During the rest of the period under study, the Portuguese trade interests were hampered by the activities of the Marathas, the Arabs and the English. Amidst this, they tried to retain their trade influence by concluding the treaties with the Keladi Nāyakas in 1678 A.D., 1705 A.D. and 1714 A.D. These indicate that throughout the period of our study they tried to their level best to consolidate their position in Kanara and hold the monopoly of trade in that area. In order to achieve this, they followed all types of policies, such as trying to oppose the local rulers, trying to put one against another, and helping one or the other chiefs to suit their interest. They also tried to compromise with the Keladi Nāyaka whenever it helped them. Thus it can be said that their commercial policy was one of opportunism.
In order to achieve monopoly on sea trade, the Portuguese claimed that their king was the lord of the seas and therefore no ship could sail without their passports. Though they tried to enforce their self-made rule, taking advantage of the political disunity in the region, they could not enforce this when Keladi ships often traded with the Arabs without the Portuguese permission.

The attitude of the Portuguese towards the chiefs of Kanara was also guided by their desire to spread Christianity in that region. Thus the commercial and religious ambitions led the Portuguese to utilise "whatever political hold they had in Kanara to the service of Christianity by protecting Christians and missionaries in that region. Upto 1674 A.D. they used every opportunity to spread Christianity in Kanara. Filled with the religious zeal and inspired by the advice of the king of Portugal, they spread Christianity in Anjédiv island by resorting the conversion of these natives in 1501 A.D. Later in 1505 A.D. Francisco-de Almida, the viceroy of Portuguese in India, destroyed Hindu temples there. In the early stages they had a strange notion that the inhabitants of India (particularly the Hindus) were a sort of primitive Christians."
When they got rid of this notion they took measures to destroy the temples whenever they had an upper hand over the natives. The assault on the famous temple of Kundesvar (in Kundapur) in 1583 A.D. the intention of the viceroy to populate Goan Christians at Gangolli and the destruction of Śiva temple in 1631 A.D. easily explains their intention.

In Kanara as builders of forts, the Portuguese built churches also along with forts and placed a vicar and several assistants. Missionary activities led to the foundation of Church in different parts of Kanara such as Mangalore, Basharūru and Honnāvara. Though the Keladi Nayakas followed religious toleration and gave them facilities to spread and preach Christian doctrine, they opposed the forced conversion. This can be known from the inclusion of a clause in a treaty in 1631 A.D. by which the Portuguese conceded the freedom of religion to the inhabitants of Gangolli. Veerappa's promises to intervene in case of any injustice, Śivappa's refusal to handover the whole of the Peninsula Gangolli to the Portuguese on the ground of existence of a sacred temple and the insertion of a clause in a treaty of 1671 A.D. in which it was laid down that there shall be no forced conversion nor shall there be killing cows and Brahmanas indicate that steps taken by the Keladi chiefs to check the spread of Christianity in Kanara.
From the latter half of the seventeenth century till the end of the period under study, i.e. 1763 A.D., the Portuguese tried their best to safeguard the interest of the missionaries and the Christians in Kanara through concluding treaties with the Keladi and Svādi rulers. For instance, by a treaty with Keladi Basavappa in 1678 A.D. (sām. Chennammāji) the priest and the factors of Mangalore got the privileges of settling disputes among the Christians. Further, the Portuguese got permission to build Churches at Mirjan, Chandāvar, Honnavar, Bhatkala (North Kanara) and Kalyānpur (South Kanara). Similar privileges were obtained for the Christians in the Svādi principality.

To conclude, the Portuguese activities in Kanara, they checked to a great extent of the Adilshaḥi incursions. A good number of forts came to be constructed for the defence of the strategic places and there was a marked change in the method of warfare where naval fleet and guns came to be used more and more. Sea-trade received considerable impetus. Side by side, Christianity also started taking roots.

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REFERENCES AND NOTES


2. Shastry B.S. The Portuguese in Kanara p.311.


5. Heras, Op.Cit. p.188.

6. Ibid. p.70-72.


10. Ibid. p.299.

11. Ibid. p.104.


19. Shastry B.S. *Keladiya Arasaru Hägu Portugeesjaru*, p.11


26. These privileges were that the trade was protected. Secondly, they were allowed to cut and take timber from the lands of Keladi. Thirdly, all the pepper of Gerasoppe and other places belonging to Ikkéri rulers should be sold freely without any obstruction. Shastry B.S. *Keladiya Arasaru Hägu Portugeesjaru*, p.54-56.


36. Ibid. pp.120-123.
40. Shastry B.S. Ibid. p.10,12,52.
42. Shastry B.S. The Portuguese in Kanara, p.313.
43. Shastry B.S. Ibid. p.313.
46. Ibid.
49. Ibid. p.175, Indica (1973, No.10) p.38.
51. Shastry B.S. Keladiya Arasaru Hāgu Portugeejaru,p.84.

55. Shastry B.S. *Keladiya Arasaru Hāgu Portugeejaru,* pp.11,76.
