CHAPTER - VIII

CONCLUSION

The present study has examined the different aspects of British colonial working in the region of Uttara Kannada and the various responses that they evoked from 1862 to 1947. The main areas of administration such as land revenue, judiciary, police, forest policy, economic and social policies have been investigated. The main motives of the colonial government here were the same as those in the rest of British India, that is, to serve their own interests in India as well as in Britain. The colonial working, its policies and programmes had tremendous impact on the region, its polity, economy, society, and culture. This thesis has also dealt with the transformation that had taken place in Uttara Kannada due to the colonial intervention, and the reactions of the people of the region in the political, social and economic spheres. The reactions varied from the constitutional methods to violent outbreaks, from primary resistance to secondary resistance, and from individual oppositions to mass outbreaks. The inhabitants of the region opposed the evils of colonialism such as the exploitative revenue systems, forest rules, salt tax, and organised the swadeshi and boycott movements, non-cooperation movement, civil disobedience and no-tax campaign, and finally Quit India movement. The Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee of the Indian National Congress played a dominant role in these movements.

The distinct geographical location of the region of Uttara Kannada influenced its history and culture. The location of the district on the Western coast, its coastal plains, the hinterland below the Western ghats, the area above the ghats, and the thick forests have rendered unique characteristics to the region. From the ancient times, various political powers, both local and regional ruled over the area. The arrival of the British as rulers in
1799-1800 had marked a turning point in its history. The foundation of the British rule was laid in the early half of the 19th century. Soon after the conquest of the region from Tipu Sultan, the English East India Company Government annexed it with the Madras Presidency. It formed the northern division of the Province of Kanara and Sonda. The British introduced major changes in crucial areas like revenue, judiciary, police, trade, forestry and administrative apparatus. The district was transferred to the Bombay Presidency in the year 1862. The remaining period of colonial rule of about a century really proved catastrophic for the region and its inhabitants.

The existing historical writings on Uttara Kannada do not provide a detailed and comprehensive portrayal of the working of British colonialism. We have used the original sources from the Maharashtra State Archives, Karnataka State Archives and the Tamil Nadu State Archives. The major categories include the records of the Revenue Department, Forest Department, Judicial Department, Public Works Department, Home Department, Marine Department, and the Abkari Department and Annual Administrative Reports of the Bombay Government. Therefore, the thesis is based on the data gathered from original sources relating to the colonial administration. Besides, corroboratory sources like the karapatragalu, Kannada and English newspapers, and information gathered through interviews of freedom fighters and their close relatives are used here. Further the secondary sources available on the subject are consulted. The methodology followed is both empirical and analytical in nature. This study has basically followed the challenge and response paradigm in evaluating the colonial rule, its working and impact on the region, and the responses of the ruled.
The British had to create a structure of administration or the apparatus of rule to manage the Kanara territory and population and consolidate their rule. The priority here was to serve the British interests. However, on certain occasions, depending upon the local circumstances as well as their necessities, the native institutions and practices were profitably used by them. For example, the system of private property that existed in the region was used to introduce the ryotwari system of land revenue administration. Also some of the earlier village officials and zamindars were incorporated in the colonial bureaucracy. The British created their own system of governance, pillars of administration and the “furniture of empire” were ingeniously put in place by creating an extensive hierarchy of administrative officials, judicial and police officers, civil service and official establishments, legal system – civil and criminal, revenue system, trade policy, forest department and administration, and notably the maintenance of records. They also studied the local people, their history and culture along with the survey of lands and forests through the compilation of gazetteers, survey and settlement manual, and forest manual. This was extremely essential not only to control the ruled, but also to reconstruct their history from the colonial point of view. In fact producing knowledge about the colony led to colonial subjectification.¹ The colonial interpretation of history distorted the Indian past, and tried to enslave the ruled. The colonial works on Kanara, and the British official records of the region are no exceptions to this general imperial intellectual orientation. Thus the colonial intervention resulted in several hardships to the people in political, economic and social spheres. The British introduced fewer socio-economic reforms to alleviate the distresses of the people whom they ruled. Their rule was remarkably known for its contradictions in all the spheres – political, economic and socio-cultural. All these led to the inevitable result of anti-British feelings, and finally the national movement.
By the mid-19th century, the British had firmly established themselves in Uttara Kannada, and the imprints of their rule could be felt by the subjects in almost all areas of governance. However, they always experimented, and the domination and its trajectories were ever expanding.

The revenue administration was aimed at maximisation of revenue to the government. As elsewhere in India, the bulk of state revenue was from land or agriculture. The land revenue system introduced in the region was Ryotwari in character. This was done by Sir Thomas Munro, the first Collector of the Province and the Madras Government in the beginning of the 19th century taking into consideration the age-old practice of owning hereditary private property or the Mulawarg system of landholding prevalent in the region. In this system, the ryot or the landholder had the patta or the title deed, and he had to pay the land revenue share of the Government directly, and there was no intermediary between them. Though theoretically this is very appealing, in reality, many ryots were not just ryots or cultivators by themselves, but were in fact landlords or zamindars. This was due to the large areas of land that many of them had owned, and which could not be cultivated and managed themselves by hiring agricultural labourers. Obviously, many of the ryots had to lease out their lands for cultivation to the tenants under the various systems of tenancy prevalent in the region like mulageni, chalageni, nigadi and palu. There were ryots belonging to different categories, rich class, middle class and poor. Further the ryots and the tenants had to borrow the services of agricultural labourers.

The Collector of the district was the revenue head and occupied a prime position in revenue matters. The land revenue settlement of the government was revised every 20 to
30 years period, and during the 19th and 20th centuries, we have noticed four such revisions. They include the original settlement (1862 to 1890), revision of settlement (1890 to 1900), first revision of settlement (1915 to 1917) and second revision of settlement (1942). In each of these settlements, the revenue share of the government was enhanced and it had increased the burden of the ryots and the tenants. In the original settlement, the share of the government was to the tune of 49.60 percent of the gross produce of the district. The government had created a land survey department, and it had begun land survey in 1862 and was completed in 1890. The survey was done phase by phase and it helped the government to fix the revenue assessment on land. The revenue imposed on the ryots without consulting them had resulted in the impoverishment of the ryots and the under tenants. In fact the Vaikunta Bapuji case of 1875 bears testimony to the autocratic behaviour of the colonial authorities in the area of land revenue administration. Many of the ryots failed to meet the revenue demands of the government and fell in arrears. Their lands were confiscated and auctioned out to the highest bidder. There were many instances of coercion, and confiscation of movable properties of the ryots to recover the revenue arrears. The ryots had petitioned to the government indicating their problems in the year 1890, however, the latter did not pay any heed to it. Thus the land revenue administration resulted in great hardships to the ryots and tenants of the region. As the government demanded more and more, the landholders preferred the temporary chalageni tenure and transferred their burden on to the tenants. On the whole, there was impoverishment of the ryots and agriculture. The fertility and productivity of land deteriorated. To escape from the problem of losing the land, the poor ryots and tenants either mortgaged their land, crop or movable property, or borrowed loan from the moneylenders. Ultimately, they failed to return the loan and to meet the demands of the ryots and also the government, and had to give up the land. This resulted in large scale transfer of land from the poor ryots or tenants
to the richer ryots or tenants. The general problem of rural indebtedness was experienced by Uttara Kannada also.

Apart from the land revenue, the state also collected various types of taxes such as *abkari*, ferry tolls, stamp duties, sea custom duties, education cess, tax on forest products, municipality tax, etc. All these had resulted in the drain of the inhabitants of the region.

The British had introduced the judicial system to deal with the civil and criminal cases, and to maintain law and order. The Civil Procedure Code (1859), the Indian Penal Procedure Code (1860), the Criminal Procedure Code (1861) were implemented. The gradation of courts like district court, sessions court, district town magistrates court, etc. were introduced. The Cattle Trespassing Act, the Abkari Act, the Bombay Land Revenue Code of 1879, the District Municipality Act, the Indian Forest Acts, etc. had several provisions to be followed by the inhabitants. Whenever they were violated, such cases were dealt according to the provisions of these acts. For example, the case of James London relating to the violation of the forest regulation and the punishment given to him reflected the contradicting and complex nature of the British judicial system in the region. The editors of the newspapers were closely monitored by the authorities, and publication of news items unfavourable to the government was dealt under the criminal law. For example, the case of Pandurang Krishna Shanbhag reflects the nature of press censorship that was practiced in the region.

The police system worked to maintain law and order in the region. There was a hierarchy created here. The Superintendent of Police, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Inspectors and Constables formed the core of the police force. It was divided into
stipendiary and village police. The Collector was also the Magistrate and dealt with cases. The police used coercive measures on the suspected culprits, and also culprits and prisoners to extract the truth from them. They also tortured the ryots who were in arrears to the government, the family members of the freedom fighters and those who had unknowingly violated the forest regulations. Both the judicial and police officials were harsh towards the natives. The condition of the prison was precarious. The higher posts were mostly reserved to the Europeans.

The British had realised the usefulness of the thickly forested Uttara Kannada district. As in the rest of India, both north and south, in this region also their primary intention was to draw maximum revenue and profit from the forests by extracting their major and minor products. The British government had introduced the Indian Forest Acts of 1865, 1878 and 1927 in India to dominate over the forest resources. Apart from these, in Kanara they had also introduced the Kanara Forest Permit Rules (1864), the Kanara Protected Forest Rules (1890) and the Kanara Forest Privilege Rules (1924) to establish monopoly over the forest resources. The Assistant Conservator of Forests was appointed in 1864, and the Forest Settlement Officer was appointed in 1879, and the forest settlement (survey) was conducted between 1888 and 1907. The forests were surveyed, mapped and classified. As a result of the forest acts and their provisions, the earlier traditional privileges were converted into concessions, and the inhabitants, particularly the peasants, artisans and the poor villagers suffered. It had affected the traditional kumri cultivators as well. They tried to ban kumri cultivation by arguing that it destroyed the forests and ecology. For example, it was banned in Supa peta in 1887. There were instances of the kumri agitation organised in 1895 and again in 1908. The forest department provided useful and durable qualities of timber to the British to be used on commercial scale for the
railways and construction of ships in India, and also for export to Britain to meet their demands. It is said that the forest department always showed surplus, and obviously the colonial authorities concentrated on this branch of administration. Due to their developed technologies, they could fell and transport large quantities of wood from the forests of the Western Ghats in Kanara, and this led to denudation of the forests in the region. The earlier mixed rain forests were converted into commercial teak plantations. Not only the major forest products, but also the minor forest products like lac, shigekai, honey, myrabolan, etc. were also collected and exported. The traditional artisans found it extremely difficult to get the raw materials for their crafts, and as a result they dwindled and their living suffered. The peasants and villagers could not cut wood without licence. Even the collection of firewood, dried and green leaves and grazing of their cattle became extremely difficult. The ryots organised the hullubanni satyagraha in the year 1930. The government levied tax on the betta land which was traditionally used by the cultivators as auxiliary land for getting manure, wood, etc. required for cultivation. However, the colonial government always claimed that it introduced scientific forestry and the forest management system in India. In reaction to these forest policies, the inhabitants reacted sharply and opposed the government. Subsequently, the colonial forest policies were vehemently criticised and questioned by the nationalists, historians and ecologists. The well-known ecologists and historians like Madhav Gadgil, Ramachandra Guha, Ranjan Chakrabarty and others have rightly criticised the British for exploiting the Indian forest resources, and serving the commercial needs of British India and Britain. Gadgil and Guha have described the British colonialism as an ecological watershed in the environmental history of India.2

The economic and social policies pursued by the colonial government were aimed at serving their needs in India and the Home Government. The policies in the areas of
agriculture, industry, trade, taxes, duties, etc. were favourable to them. They did not introduce ameliorative measures to assist Indian peasants and artisans. Both agriculture and traditional industry, the two basic pillars of pre-British Indian economy collapsed during their regime. There was no attempt made to develop modern industries with a view to develop India. For example, saw mills were set up at Dandeli and Kiravatti to serve their commercial interests. Even the port of Karwar was not developed. The transport and communication networks were set up to serve their needs. The natives took initiative through agricultural associations in providing loans, seeds, agricultural implements and fertilisers to the peasants.

In the social field, there was discrimination done to the inhabitants in terms of jobs even if they had the qualifications. The educational efforts of the government and investments were not considerable. However, the education imparted was secular and there was no gender and caste bias. Though the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 was passed, it did not have much impact on the society.

The administrative, economic and social policies of the British government had tremendous impact on the political, economic and social profile of the region of Uttara Kannada. The region saw the ruin of agriculture and artisanal activities. There was emergence of commercial plantation in the forests of the region. The agrarian relations underwent changes due to the land revenue system, high incidence of taxes, impoverishment of the ryots, revenue arrears, land or crop mortgaging, etc. It resulted in the emergence of the moneylenders, either the zamindar like ryots or businessmen or merchant moneylenders. Their emergence was predominant in the region and they exploited the poor and uneducated ryots, tenants and villagers. They generally belonged to
the higher social classes like the Gouda Saraswats, Nadors, etc. They were hands in glove with the British revenue officers and exploited the disadvantaged positions of the poor ryots, and were in a way collaborating with the colonial authorities. The new class of forest contractors emerged, and assisted the British in cutting and transporting timber and other forest products to their places of export, particularly the port towns. The lives of the poor ryots and agricultural labourers were miserable.

The administrative changes and their impact explained above have affected the politics of the region. The attitude of the government, curtailment of the civil rights like freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, etc. and the harsh punishments to those who questioned the government were really suppressive in nature. At the same time, positive influences of the English education, legal system, representative institutions, and political ideas that filtered down to this area through newspapers published inside Karnataka and elsewhere, particularly Bombay, and the influence of the political leaders from outside the district played a positive role in the emergence of political consciousness in the region. When we observe the reactions to the colonial government, two phases are noticed. Firstly, the anti-British movements were not organised and were not influenced by any developed political or nationalist ideology. Whereas in the second phase, such movements were informed by the nationalist ideology, and were more organised. The first opposition was against the revision of land revenue assessment that erupted in 1872 in Karwar taluk and in some parts of Sirsi and Yellapur taluks. They sent petitions to the government pleading not to implement the Bombay Survey Act I of 1865 in the region. However, the government turned deaf ear towards the same and finally it was decided against the ryots. In the year 1887, thousands of ryots of the region formed the Vana-Dukha Niwarana Sabha and sent memorial to the government.
to relax the forest regulations to enable them to obtain the facilities of grass land, dry crop
land, and betta land. However, the government was unkind to them and banned the Sabha.
In these movements, we see no political ideology, and nationalist sentiments were absent.
They were the results of the economic sufferings of the people of the region. In the words
of Eric Stokes and Sumit Sarkar, they could be considered as primary resistance
movements. In the beginning of the 20th century, the region was influenced by the
nationalist movement carried out by the Indian National Congress. In 1906, the region
witnessed swadeshi and boycott movements due to the influence of B.G.Tilak’s campaign.
In this campaign, even the women of the region participated. In the 1920s, the region was
much influenced by the political struggle carried out by M.K. Gandhi. In 1920, the Kanada
Jilla Parishat was organised in Karwar, and it was decided to support the non-cooperation
movement led by M.K.Gandhi. The region actively participated in the non-cooperation
movement. The next phase was that of the civil disobedience movement, in which the salt
satyagraha, forest satyagraha and no-tax campaign were organised, and the participants
including women faced severe suppression and atrocities of the policemen. The ideology
of swadeshi and boycott were followed rigorously. The Quit India movement was
organised by the local youths and was successful in destroying government properties,
symbols of authority, etc. However, we have come across instance of influential people
like zamindars collaborating with the British even as late as 1945 also. The nadors and
havik brahmins provided leadership in these nationalist movements. The participation of
women was indeed remarkable. The major factor behind these movements of the early
decades of the 20th century was patriotism or the nationalist ideology. Therefore,
borrowing the categorisation done by Eric Stokes and Sumit Sarkar, they may be
considered as secondary resistance movements. Thus, the experience of colonial Uttara
Kannada was not much different from the rest of British India. The region saw
underdevelopment, and the people experienced contradictions and sufferings. The region of Uttara Kannada became free with the rest of British India on 15\textsuperscript{th} August 1947.


4. Ibid.