INTRODUCTION

The study aims at examining the British colonial administration and its impact upon the rural peasantry. It is an attempt to understand the reaction of the peasantry against the feudalistic agrarian relations and colonial oppression in South Canara. Substantial changes in the agrarian relations were brought by the British land settlement in South Canara District. The support given to the land holding class by the British government had adversely affected the economic interests of the peasantry. Thus an attempt is made to study the land revenue system and land revenue administration that existed during the pre-colonial and the colonial period. It is intended to analyse, how the peasantry of the area were impoverished by the British land revenue policies.

One of the major objectives of the study are to understand the
emergence of peasant organizations and the peasant movements in South Canara District. It would throw light on the impact of the movement in the political, social and economic fields. One of the important objectives of the study is to compare the militant and radical movements of Kasaragod taluk of South Canara District with other parts of South Canara. The impact of the peasant movement upon the national movement in the region would also be analysed. It also aims to understand the tenancy legislations in the area. Another object of the study is to understand the legislative measures undertaken by the Governments in South Canara District (Karnataka Government) and Kasaragod District (Kerala Government) regarding their agrarian problems(1).

For the purpose of the study an interdisciplinary approach is adopted, that means an approach of combining various disciplines such as history, economics, sociology and political science. It definitely requires a historical treatment to bring out the salient features of the agrarian structure and various peasant struggles in the district. Various data’s connected with the study are collected involving diverse methods and numerous sources.

The primary sources of the present study is based are the proceedings and reports of the government, official correspondences, the manual of administration, the U.S.S. files of the government,

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1. *After the formation of the linguistic states, the South Canara or the Dakshina Kannada District became the part of the Karnataka Satta and the present Kasaragod District became a part of the Kerala state.*
fortnightly reports, the various acts and orders of the government, which are available in the Tamilnadu Archives, Chennai. The Karnataka State Archives, Bangalore, the Divisional Archives, Mysore and the Regional Archives, Calicut also provide primary sources of the study. The national newspapers especially Mathrubhumi provides the valuable informations of the region during nationalistic struggles. Aruna, a Kannada weekly (1956-1976) published from Mangalore also provide informations regarding the agitations of the peasantry in the South Canara District.

The Madras Presidency produced many District Manuals, among them South Canara was presented in two volumes, first by J. Sturrock\(^1\) (1894) and the second by H. A. Stuart\(^2\) (1895). The first was a product of the labour and experience of an ICS officer and the second was a statistical supplement compiled by H. A. Stuart who was also ICS, using the data of the Census of 1891. These administrative records are the earliest contributions to the historiography of South Canara. As they are official, they generally illustrate the colonial interests.

Most of the native writers concerned with understanding of the pre-colonial history of the region. Among them M. Ganapati Rao Aygal\(^3\) made a pioneer, through his Kannada work, Ancient History of South

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Canara District, published in 1923. He gave importance to political history. B. A. Saletor\(^1\) occupies a prominent place in the historical writing of South Canara. He glorified the dynasty especially the history of the Alupas over Tulunadu. Though certain narrow Tulu, nationalism had influenced his writings, it is the first critical history of the region by making use of the sources available.

The two Gazetteers of South Canara District published in 1938\(^2\) and 1973\(^3\) also contains information related with this study.

K. V. Ramesh\(^4\) had written a valuable book on history of South Canara through the study of inscriptions. It contain the history from earliest times up to the fall of the Vijayanagara empire. It is an important source for the social, economic and religious condition of the period. P. Gururaja Bhatt\(^5\) had published books which deals largely with the ancient and medieval history of Tulunadu.

K. K. N. Kurup\(^6\), had studied the agrarian struggles in Kerala and Kasaragod District. The Kayyur ryot (Kasaragod taluk of South Canara District) is a useful work throwing light on the agrarian problems of Kasaragod. These studies furnish valuable information about the history

3. Gazetteer of India, Karnataka State, South Kanara District, (Bangalore, 1973).
4. K. V. Ramesh, A History of South Kanara, (Karnataka University, Dharwar, 1970).
of the peasant organisation of the Kasaragod taluk. K. G Vasanta Madhava\(^1\) has published books on the political and religious aspects of South Canara.

The unpublished research work of T. N. Ramakrishnan\(^2\) on Reforms and Agricultural Development of Kasaragod District, the dissertation\(^3\) for MPhil by H. B. Dhanalakshmi on Socio Economic Life in South Kanara, the dissertation\(^4\) of Catharine. A. T on Administrative career of Sir Munro in Madras Presidency are some of the sources for the study.

N. Shyam Bhat\(^5\) has made studies of South Canara during the period of 1799 to 1860. His studies contain the brief history of South Canara, the agrarian relation and early peasant uprisings. This book is one of the important source materials for this study.

C. B. Damle's\(^6\) studies on Land Reforms and Changing Agrarian Relation in Dakshina Kannada District also provide important information about the land legislations of South Canara. Perspective on Dakshina Kannada and Kodagu\(^7\) contain the history and society

1. K. G. Vasantha Madhava, Trends In Karnataka Historical Research, (With reference to coastal Karnataka, (University of Calicut, 1996), Religions In Coastal Karnataka, 1500, 1763, (New Delhi, 1985).
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also the agriculture and trade of the district. K. S. Shivanna has studied the agrarian system of Karnataka from 1736 to 1761, contain the features of medieval agrarian economy, land tenure system, and land revenue assessment.

The present study is divided in to six chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic and categorises the movements of the rich peasants and the poor peasants. It makes a brief survey of the history of South Canara before the advent of the British. In order to make systematic analysis of the long history of South Canara, it is divided in to four phases, the Alupas, the Vijayanagara, the Keladi and the Mysore rulers respectively. A brief survey of the advent and decline of the Portuguese power in South Canara, the history of the three important Chieftains, namely the Raja of Vittal, the Raja of Kumbala and the Raja of Nileshwar are also included in this. More over, it mentions the situation, boundaries, the name of the district the geographical features of the district and a brief note on Buchanan's journey in South Canara.

The second chapter examines the land tenure system and the land revenue assessment existed in South Canara during the pre-colonial period. To achieve a measure of manageability, it is divided in to four divisions, as the Alupas, the Vijayanagara, the Keladi and the Mysore rulers respectively. It attempts to study the land tenure system, land revenue assessment during the British period, the nature of the ryotwari

system, the settlement and resettlement in South Canara. It tries to find out the causes for the impoverishment of the peasantry and also the early resistance movements by the Raja of Vittal, Kumbala and Nileshwar against the British supremacy.

The third chapter deals with the impact of the impoverishment of the peasantry and how the economic grievances created tensions in the rural agrarian life. A brief account of the exploitation and the atrocities of the peasantry by the landlords moneylenders and the government are also mentioned.

The fourth chapter gives a brief account of the early peasant uprisings known as the Koot rebellions of 1810-11 and 1830-31 against the exaction of the land revenue and also the rebellion of Kallayana Swami. It examines the origin of the peasant organisation, the mobilization of the peasantry and various movements developed in South Canara against landlordism and colonialism. It also examines the organisation and development of the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party in the area. It also examines the repressive measures under taken by the government against the peasant struggles and the Communists.

The fifth chapter discusses the tenancy legislation introduced in South Canara District by the Madras Government up to 1956. In 1956 linguistic states came in to existence and South Canara was divided into two districts, one the South Canara District or the Dakshina Kannada District as a part of the Karnataka State and Kasaragod District as a
part of Kerala State. So this chapter attempts to find out the legislative measures introduced in Kerala and also in Karnataka and its impact on the region of former South Canara.

The 6th chapter is the concluding chapter which examines the nature of the peasant movements in the South Canara District. It attempts to make a comparative study of the militant and radical movements in Kasaragod Taluk with other parts of the South Canara District.

The study of the peasant movements of South Canara in particular and Karnataka in general has not received adequate attention from the historians. Its study is a recent phenomenon. Hence, this is an attempt to examine the role of peasantry in the South Canara District on social, economic and political transformation and their endeavors to resist oppression, injustice and colonialism.

The present study traces the historical problems involved in land tenurial system and agitation made by the tenants during the colonial period and there after. It also attempts a comparison of tenancy and land reforms implemented in Karnataka and Kerala. Through some studies were made to highlight the peasant agitations of South Canara no detailed research work has been undertaken to familiarise how the tenancy movement and later peasant movement of South Canara District put pressure on governments to introduce reforms. These aspects are studied in depth based on primary sources.