**CONCLUSION**

The English East India Company which appeared on the coast as traders had become the true sovereign authority of Malabar by the beginning of the nineteenth century. During the course of a century and a quarter since 1683 the company had to play a variety of roles--trader, mediator in indigenous political conflicts, moneylender, arms dealer, and aggressor--and finally becoming the political masters. The English merchant capitalism, with its unique ability to profit by good fortune and favourable circumstances, established its sway over the coast overthrowing the rival European companies with similar mercantile and colonial interests. It was the Portuguese who first established direct trade relations with Malabar beginning with the arrival of Vasco Da Gama at Calicut in 1498. The chartered companies of the England (1600) and the Netherlands (1602) were able to expel the Portuguese from Malabar, thanks to their corporate structure and the active support from their respective home governments.

The conflicts among the Dutch, the French and the English companies were severe during the course of the later half of the seventeenth century. The native powers were anxious to collaborate with any of these alien powers for strengthening themselves against their native and other alien rivals. The English company was able to win the confidence of the Kolathiri by which they established strong settlements or factories at commercially and militarily vantage points like Tellicherry by the end of the seventeenth century.
During the initial decades of the eighteenth century the company had to face serious challenges from some chieftains like the Kurungoth Nayar. Such offensives were crushed by military action with the support of the Kolathiri. Various treaties concluded between the two at this stage were aimed at projecting the latter as the legitimate political authority in Kolathunadu and at the same time for safeguarding the trade monopoly of the former. However every attempt of centralization, by the \textit{de jure} and \textit{de facto} rulers in Kolathunadu, further weakened their grip over the lesser rajas and provided further space for the English machinations and consequent erosion in their authority. Attacks from the Nayaks of Ikkeri during the third decade of the eighteenth century forced the company to adopt aggressive and authoritarian policies against the indigenous political agents. By this time the company had made substantial improvements in their military and commercial positions. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, the English company had either marginalised or ousted the rival European companies and the lesser rajas of Kolathunadu, and stood almost without competition in commercial pursuits. The Mysorean rule had destroyed the traditional feudal system of governance and established a Mughal model administrative apparatus. The English company with its superior military strength and with the support of the native rajas ousted the Mysorean power from Malabar. The native rajas were forced to accept the suzerainty of the English company. Pazhassi raja was the only indigenous political agent who stood up to them but the company unequivocally declared their sovereign rights over the Malabar region and it was a clear triumph of the efficient English merchant capitalism over the decadent system of indigenous politics. In short the English East India Company, with its unique \textit{modus operandi} of making use of a mixture of chances,
capacity and diplomacy, succeeded in accentuating colonial supremacy in Kolathunadu, along with ensuring the collapse of the native political structure.

It is pertinent to analyse the socio-political and economic scenario which helped the establishment and extension of colonial rule in Malabar. The indigenous political structure in Kolathunadu had some inherent weaknesses which ultimately led to its disintegration and fall.

- Nayars enjoyed a powerful, precise and cohesive position in socio-economic and political structures, in the relative absence of Brahmin settlements, which favoured the growth of a decentralized state system more acute than the rest of Malabar in Kolathunadu. The native bureaucratic and military systems were almost under the control of the Nayars. The feudal system with the conservative social order where Nayars controlled the land relations was immune to innovations in the existing socio-political structure. In short the decentralized power structure and the Nayar dominated feudal order and the perpetual threats of invasion from south as well as north presented Kolathunadu with an abstract form of statehood.

- The system of land revenue was unknown to the inhabitants of Malabar, prior to the invasion of Hyder Ali. The king had no control over the production, distribution and fixation of prices of the spices. Customs duties over spice trade and import duties levied upon the trade of horses were the principal sources of income of the ruler. Even these limited revenues were not exclusive to the Kolathiri but were shared among a number of lesser rajas and petty chieftains.
Though Malabar in general and Kolathunadu in particular were in a position to sustain brisk commercial activities with the world market for more than 2000 years, its economic and social organizations were little affected by the current of changes in respective fields in the outside world. The feudal characteristics and caste based occupational distributions were powerful enough to restrict the emergence of a native mercantile bourgeoisie even under the favourable circumstances of profitable commercial contacts with the alien countries. The ‘rulers’ of the realm had no practical control over mercantile activities and the Muslim traders with a few exceptions of some Hindu chettis from the neighbouring regions controlled the trade on spices and horses. These traders, identified as the indigenous mercantile bourgeoisie, had not been subjected to any sort of obligations with the indigenous feudal order. This class organised their trade and commerce in close association with the English factors and during the Mysorean struggles they took asylum in Tellicherry. The Muslim merchants were not ready to betray the English even by the favourable invitation extended to them from Tipu. After the overthrow of the Mysorean power, the same class served as mediators in indigenous politics in favour of the company.

The role played by this class in strengthening the intrusion of colonial rule in Kolathunadu demands further investigation and study.

The native political agents were under the threat of a perpetual colonial ‘debt trap’ vis-à-vis the military and financial assistance they sought from the English company during times of internal conflicts and external aggressions. On the other hand the company
had to maintain strong military establishments for protecting their trade settlements on the coast. These troops were detailed against heavy payments, when employed in local conflicts. The unsettled state of affairs and lack of independent and solid material bases forced the local rulers to frequently approach the company for financial and military assistance. In course of time, the local powers became more and more indebted to the company for exorbitant arrears and were forced to grant territorial concessions and trade monopoly in favour of the latter.

- The debt-trap can also be visible at local level under the initiatives of the private merchants of the company and the native merchant groups. The merchants advanced money to the primary producers, during the festive seasons of Malabar, on the condition of selling pepper exclusively to them at a contracted price obviously lower than the market rates.

- The Mysorean interregnum destroyed the conservative Nayar dominated feudal edifice which till then have upheld the native political structure and the vacuum thus created was meticulously filled by the private mercantile interests of the English East India Company. The company as the sovereigns of Malabar retained the remnants of old feudal structure as a buffer in political and revenue administration. The new revenue system and its rigorous mode of collection further expanded the extent of the debt trap that had already spread its tentacles in Anglo-Kolathunadu relations.
It would be very appropriate to analyse the role played by the concepts of collaborations and conflicts in accentuating political sovereignty of the alien merchant capitalism in Kolathunadu. The indigenous political agents had often collaborated with the agents of European merchant capitalism for improving their position in native political cluster against rival claimants. Through their collaboration they were not only able to improve trade prospects and economic power but also to procure modern techniques of firearms. The politics of collaboration had relevance in Kolathunadu history because of the existence of a good number of lesser rajas and chieftains in the peculiar socio-economic and political structure with a feudal bearing. The competition for alien collaborators helped the English company to become a formidable force, particularly, with the establishment of the Tellicherry factory. The Northern Regent helped the company actively in quietening the resistance of Kurungoth Nayar against the company. This is the first instance of the political collaboration in Kolathunadu between the native de facto and the English company for reciprocal interests of empowerment. The company bypassed the native feudal hierarchy and established direct relations with the lesser rajas and chieftains, making the conflict between the company and the de jure sovereign inevitable.

The English company stabilised and consolidated their authority by acting as political brokers and guarantors of internal security. They supported the centralisation processes initiated by some of the rulers elsewhere, like Marthanda Varma in Travancore and Raja Rama Varma (Sakthan Thampuran) in Cochin. But the efforts of Udaya Varman, the Prince Regent of Kolathunadu, in this direction were futile and often his
relation with the company seems to have been blowing hot and cold on a number of occasions. He came to have the bitter realisation that all the efforts taken to improve his internal position through the promotion of intercourse with the European powers boomeranged. The imperial factors always exerted pressure on the indigenous political agents to be more and more dependent on them for economic and military aids. There was much room for manoeuvring since, quite a good number of clients and claimants were available in native politics. The *de facto* sovereign in Kolathunadu was always under pressure from the imperial factor as well as his vassal chieftains. It often forced him to adopt a policy of vacillation which ultimately resulted in the consolidation of the British colonialism in his ancestral territory.

In short, the disintegration of native political structure in Kolathunadu and the colonial takeover were the outcome of two major components- colonial and indigenous politics- and its collaborations and conflicts. The English company represented the merchant and later the industrial capitalism of Europe and its explicit stages of evolution. During every stage it worked hard to monopolise the sources as well as the market for its merchandise. Their strategies were not of the apostles of virtue but of profit. However the indigenous politics collaborated with the colonial forces for parochial ends out of selfish motives. Seldom did they raise the banner of protests with possible exceptions like the Kurungoth Nayar, Pazhassi Raja or Kurichiyas. But the colonial foe was too formidable for the small rebels like them. Such outbreaks provided a convenient excuse for the colonial power to tighten their grip over the native territories. Usually, the imposition of colonial rule would come into operation, in response to an act of violent defiance by the local
powers. But in Kolathunadu neither the de facto nor their vassals could champion this cause effectively. The Mysorean invasions articulated and accelerated the process of the decline of the indigenous politics in favour of the colonial adventures that had already become empire builders in India by the later half of the eighteenth century.