

UGC - SAP {DRS-II}
National Seminar
On
**Culture, Commerce and Empire:
Exploring the Coromandel Coast**

8th -9th February 2017
(Convention-cum-Cultural Centre, Pondicherry University)



Department of History
School of Social Sciences & International Studies
Pondicherry University
Puducherry – 605 014

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Chief Patron:** Prof. Anisa Basheer Khan, Vice-Chancellor, Pondicherry University
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- Convener:** Dr. K. Venugopal Reddy, Associate Professor and Head, Department of History

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

Pondicherry University, a Central University, established by an Act of Parliament in October 1985, is an outstanding institution of research and teaching. The Choice Based Credit System was first introduced in this University and has become a model for other institutions.

Pondicherry University is ranked 13th among Indian Universities by NIRF. Teaching and Research are its primary functions as in other Central Universities. It is an affiliating University with a jurisdiction spread over the Union Territory of Puducherry, Lakshwadeep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The University's objectives are to disseminate and advance knowledge by offering teaching and research facilities, to make provisions for studies in French and integrated courses in Humanities and the Sciences, and to promote inter-disciplinary studies and research. The University's motto is 'Vers la lumière' meaning 'towards the light'. In addition, it has also affiliated colleges located in Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe, Yanam and the Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Pondicherry University is located at Kalapet, 10 km from the town of Puducherry. Frequent buses on the East Coast Road connect the city and campus to Chennai. Puducherry is also accessible by rail from Chennai. The main campus of the University has an area of 800 acres adjoining the scenic Bay of Bengal. The University also has campuses at Karaikal and Port Blair which currently offer P.G and Doctoral programmes. The University has entered into MoUs with a good number of reputed International Institutions in India and abroad for collaboration and faculty development. In addition, the University Placement Cell has MoU with reputed firms. For more details on Pondicherry University, please visit the website: www.pondiuni.edu.in

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The Department of History was established in December 1987 with following main objectives:

- To provide facilities for study and research in social, economic and cultural history of India
- To highlight the intellectual tradition and cultural heritage of India
- To explore the history of countries other than India
- To undertake the study of historiography and the philosophy of history.
- To provide knowledge of the theory and practice of historical writing

The programmes of study offered in the Department are M.A. History, M.A. History (5 Year Integrated) and Ph.D.

THE THEME OF THE SEMINAR

The onset of modern age intersected with the emergence of colonial empires in the non-European world. Therefore, the expansion of modern culture contributing to the explosion of commerce which in turn culminated in the rise of empires in the non-European world are closely interconnected. The commercial and trading activities of the European powers close to the first half of the eighteenth century had not brought about a significant impact on social and cultural realms of the non-European societies. The cultural transaction between the European and non-European worlds was non-intrusive and not very contagious. However, with the coming of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of Capitalism, the European countries witnessed unparalleled growth in their economies and in the realms of culture. Following this, there was an intense drive for acquisition of colonies. The non-European world, powerless to prevent the onset of this rapacious process, began to experience a decisive and irreversible transformation. The advancement of the European nations and disintegration of the non-European countries was thus simultaneous and parallel process.

Cultural transformation was concomitant with the intensified expansion of commerce. The emergence of new libertarian culture accelerated the endeavours to explore new frontiers of the world and seek new avenues for expansion of trade and commerce. The culture changes assisted commercial expansion and the commercial contingencies contributed to the construction of empires in the non-European world.

Indian Ocean trading network massively expanded after 1500 A.D. The network of long-distance commerce and creation of network of communications climaxed ultimately in founding empires in India and elsewhere. The exchange of commerce eventually led to the control of the territories and colonization. Commerce was thus connected to the colonization and vice versa.

How the initial commercial and cultural transaction had taken place in the early stages in India was alluded by a foreign traveller, who extols the ingenuity of Indians. Pyrard de Laval (1619), exudes: *I have never seen men of wit so fine and polished as are these Indians: they have nothing barbarous or savage about them as we are apt to suppose. They are unwilling indeed to adopt the manners and customs of the Portuguese; yet they readily learn their manufactures and workmanship, being all very curious and desirous of learning. In fact the Portuguese take and learn more from them than they from the Portuguese; and they that come fresh to Goa are very simpletons till they have acquired the airs and graces*

of the Indies. The European trading companies seeking to establish their trading contacts with the Eastern world initially traversed along the coastal regions establishing their trading posts and in the process nurturing their territorial ambitions on account of the politically volatile environments in India. European commerce and its expansion with the East were essentially hinged on the policy of conquest and control. It was the lucrative trade and commerce and the unlimited opportunities for exploitation of the natural resources of the non-European world, which finally set off the colonization process. W.H. Carey (1882) writes thus: *At the commencement of the Company's commercial operations in India, the trade was not extensive; but small as the Company's power to trade was, limited as their means were, the profits were nevertheless large. It was not uncommon to make 100 per cent, of profit on their capital and in some cases it even exceeded that percentage.* It is axiomatic that it was the prospect of unlimited profits that lured the British trading company to India. Despite of initial hiccups, the Britishers were firm on pursuing their trade and commerce with India.

The lust for fortune more than their appetite for territories tied the British firmly to Indian trade till the mid-eighteenth century. The commercial and trading company was finally transformed into a Colonial Power. ***Ports turned into Fortresses. Merchants found themselves reincarnated as Messiahs of India,*** a development, which had been described by Adam Smith as a *“strange absurdity”*: that is, ***a Company-State and a merchant-empire,*** and which was further ‘pilloried’ by Edmund Burke as *“a state in the disguise of a merchant”*. (Philip J, Stern, 2011)The seminal theme for the seminar is the great expansion in interaction between the world’s distinct terrains, cultures and peoples and the change that was caused by contact with the foreigners and their armies, commodities and ideas. Aspects particularly the trajectory of trade and commerce, the emergence of new markets, the transformations in the production process in the areas of agriculture and industry, the demise of old cities and emergence of new ones, the process of de-industrialization and its attendant social and economic outcomes, the growth of the capitalist enterprises, the emergence of new social classes, viz., capitalist class, working class would also be covered.

It would focus on the trajectory of Coromandel Coast from early modern era to the end of the colonial rule in India. It primarily seeks to focus on the interconnections between culture, commerce and empire building process in the Coromandel Coast.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR

- *The phenomenon of Colonialism unleashed the consequences, which were disastrous for the colonized people. The foundation of British colonial rule in India was a protracted and painful process. In the process of its establishment, it devised varied instruments and endeavoured to alter or disorganize the Indian economy, distort the society and disorient the patterns of development. Precisely, the National Seminar seeks to interrogate this excruciating process, explore the narrative of colonial trauma, and the strategies employed by the colonial powers in building their empires.*
- *The Seminar aims at providing comprehensive understanding of the transformations in the economy and society of colonial south India. It covers the introduction of diverse policies under the British rule. It also discusses the transformation that was effected in*

the urban space of British India. It focuses on the endeavours to reconstruct India and also on the emergence of modern industry and the rise of new social classes in colonial India.

- *The Seminar also attempts to bring focus on the spread of Western science, the condition and contribution of science in the colonial process and the nature of scientific progress in a colony with special reference to India. It seeks to critically survey the role played by the East India Company in the diffusion of science and technology in India, and also the introduction and the degree of support extended to Western medicine in India with particular emphasis on the Coromandel region.*
- *The seminar chiefly focuses on the interrogation of the cultural and commercial transactions between the Western colonial powers and India, the foundation and the role of Colonialism in India's social, political and economic evolution. It aims to reassess the adequacy of the interpretive strategies or the historiography hitherto followed in the study of nature of the Colonial State.*
- *It also endeavours to articulate on the necessity to look for new sources i.e., non archival sources to construct or reconstruct the history of Colonial State and its accountability in the transformation of social, political and economic aspects of colonial India especially the Coromandel region. It also seeks to address the emergence of new perspectives on history and historiography of Colonial State.*

THE BROAD SUB- THEMES OF THE SEMINAR ARE:

- State and Society in pre-colonial India
- Trade and Commerce (17th -20th Century).
- Empire building: Wars and Technology: Ship Building Technology (17th -20th Century)
- Early Cultural Transaction and Travelers' Accounts
- Debate on Indian Economic Transformation in 19th Century
- Rise and growth of New Market Networks
- Advent of New Technologies: Printing Technology
- Indian Renaissance and Making of Modern India
- Influx of New Cultural Practices: Western Food Culture and New Recreational Avenues
- Emergence of New Public Spaces: Museum, Zoo, Botanical Gardens, Herbarium
- Rise of New Architecture: Insignia of Colonial Rule
- Science, Technology and Empire: Growth of Scientific and Technological Research Centres and Laboratories
- Colonial rule and its multifarious impact on Coromandel Coast

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS/PAPERS:

Abstract of papers on the topics relevant to the themes are invited from those who want to present papers at the Seminar. The abstract should be of 200-250 words (in MS Word format) and the length of the paper should not exceed 8000 words. As we plan to edit and publish the proceedings of the Seminar, the delegates are requested to send their complete papers well in advance.

SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACT/PAPER:

The abstract and the final paper may be sent as an attachment to Seminar Convener **Dr. K. Venugopal Reddy, Associate Professor and Head, Department of History** or over email to drk_venugopalreddy@yahoo.com, or kvgreddy.his@pondiuni.edu.in

The last date for receiving the Abstract is 15 December, 2016

The last date for receiving the full paper is 15 January, 2017

VENUE:

Convention-Cum-Cultural Centre
Pondicherry University
Puducherry

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE SEMINAR:

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