Chapter 4
Trading activities in ports of Honnavar and Basrur

The economy of Canara was dominated purely by agricultural production. This is because agriculture was the main occupation of the people of this region. Even the geographical factors also supported the cultivation of certain food crops and cash crops like rice, sugarcane, spices, coconut, areca nut, and pepper. Climate and weather also favoured the production of these crops. Sources especially Portuguese and English records suggest that the people of this region were devoted mainly to agricultural activities. Despite this, there was also the production of non-agrarian commodities like craft goods (Rao 2014: 38). Rao rightly points out that the trade flourished due to the exchange of commodities that produced in one region and unavailable in another region. Hence the availability of surplus produce which got exchanged with different goods of other region either agrarian or non-agrarian led to the emergence of trade.

Coastal Karnataka region produced the finest quality of pepper and rice due to its geographical location with particular temperature and humidity and quality of soil which provided an apt climatic condition for their cultivation. Spices cultivated in such specific habitat created a huge demand for it in the neighbouring and overseas markets. Sixteen century Asian trade in general always associated with luxury commodities which involved pepper, exotic spices, silk and rich textile whereas real staple commodities like rice, wheat, and sugarcane received less weight though represented an enormous volume of business. The pepper and spices, associated with the luxurious foodstuffs, also involved merchants of great families. That is why trade which involved ‘splendid commodities’ carried on in particular routes termed as ‘glamorous routes’. That means movement of high-value commodities were carried on in particular setups which involved great ports and ships along with high profile families of great merchants.

Trade in the ports of Honnavar and Basrur were under the control of ‘Settis’ or ‘Settkaras’ who not just looked after the local trade but also foreign trade. Inscriptional evidence has suggested that these Settis were organized or represented by sixteen Settikaras who looked after various articles and commodities of trade in that region. Trade contracts usually made
between guilds and representative of ‘Keri’ (street) called as ‘Settikaras’. Hence trading activities in the town of Honnavar and Basruru controlled and regulated by the guilds of Settikaras (S.I.I., Vol. VII, No. 196, 197, and 206). They dealt in varieties of tasks related to local as well as foreign trade. They directly managed commodities of export and imports, their procurement, and distribution. In the port town of Basrur, rice trade was exclusively under control of Settis. Even the Muslims traders had a strong hold in the trade related to agrarian products in the ports of Honnavar and Mirjan and other important neighbouring ports (Edward 1886: 187). They owned maximum numbers of ships and shared with other traders for their transportation of good for inland and overseas trade. It is obvious that they might have charged other traders for giving space for their cargos in the ship. Some merchants owning two or more ships always travelled in their ship to look for some entrepreneurial ventures. Whereas smaller merchants, those who did not own a ship usually freighted space for their goods. Hindu-Muslim partnership did not appear in any of the references, but Muslims too employed low caste Hindus in their ship as a sailor or for other menial tasks. Mostly they tried to confine their business in their own community. Amongst the foreign traders, Arabs and Chinese were the chief foreign traders who visited the ports for the trade in agricultural supplies.

By the Sixteenth Century, full dimensions of trade got changed. Chinese stopped visiting these ports, and Portuguese tried to establish their control by preventing Arab traders to visit these ports for trading purposes (Kamath 1980: 164). Hence these ports became tussle ground for the trading control by European traders. Dutch and English soon became the competitors in this region to Portuguese. Arabs got again an opportunity to push into the trading nexus and gained the old hold of their position again in the coastal zone. For conducting maritime trade, several indigenous royal ships came into the water. We do not get any information relating to French ships coming to these ports during this period, but their presence cannot be rejected fully (Kamath 1980: 165). They might have tried to establish their contacts in the region. It is possible that French ships might have entered in the Basrur port. It is also evidenced by the fact that one of the windows of the Basrur, Raut Keri has Embedded French insignia in it. It may be possible that this would be taken from French ships coming to Basrur port. Such a huge piece of metal could not be exchanged for the commodities. It can also be assumed that the shipwreck might have taken place close to Basrur port or nearby and later it resulted into stealing of certain parts of the ship. Sometimes ship used to get repaired some of its wear and
tear in the seaport itself. Such repair works can also indicate towards the collection of such parts to locals. In all the cases it is confirmed that French ship had come to the Basrur port.

Fig: Window of a house in ‘Raut Keri’ having French Insignia

Fig: Old French Insignia used in the Window which might be taken from the French Ships coming to Basrur port
With the advent of Portuguese, a new chapter began in the history of Indian trade. The new method of trade was an entirely new concept to the indigenous traders. Portuguese trade design was purely directed towards monopolizing the trade in rice, pepper, and other spices. This policy of monopoly over certain commodities disturbed the overall trading scenario in Canara region. Indigenous traders totally disliked the idea of monopoly by foreign traders. They rejected the Portuguese trade design which they tried to impose on them. The indigenous merchants took several deliberate attempts to protest against the rising power of the Portuguese by preventing the supply of rice and pepper to them. Instead of Portuguese traders, they started supporting Malabaris traders by supplying rice and pepper to them. Oppressive methods adopted by Portuguese created a huge divide between themselves and locals. They destroyed the ships of Malabari merchants who came to Mangalore for trading purposes. Even the Settis of Basrur lost most of their trading business due to Portuguese menace. Hence retaliation was obvious from the native rulers and traders fronts. Rulers, instead of collaborating, stopped the supply of commodities to them especially the queen of Gersoppa, participated actively in stopping the supply of pepper to the Portuguese. Similarly, Settis of Basrur too diverted the supply of rice from Portuguese to the Malabaris traders (Heras 1927: 63, 188, 298). In the early Seventeenth Century Portuguese merchants faced strong challenges from the both the fronts: European rivals as well as local rulers. Portuguese were even not able to stop the Arabs to trade in the coastal town. Hence Portuguese lost their control in the larger part of coastal Karnataka, and their hold shrank till Goa. By that time Factory fortress system became a method of scrutiny to monopolize trade of agrarian products. Construction of forts and establishment of factories by the European in the coastal town became a common phenomenon, and later these became the main centre of their trade and commerce. An important part of the trade was a collection of customs duties which were collected with the help of customs houses. Taxes and duties were levied not only on the imported goods but also on agrarian produce like rice and areca nut which were brought from the ghat regions. (Madhava 1991: 200).

4.1 Articles of exchange
Pepper being the noted commercial crop, the crops like rice, coconut, arecanut, sugarcane were the chief agricultural produce. It is important to note that sandalwood, teak and myrobalan from this area were accounted as of high value. Barbosa (Edward 1886: 189), a
Portuguese official in India mentions in his account about the wood myrobalan of a very good quality which was in great demand by the Moors from Arabia who paid a considerably high price for it. Apart from pepper and rice, other commodities also like saltpetre, iron and cloth were exported from the interior parts to the coast and that, copper, tin, coral, vermilion, mercury, silk and other articles of rarity imported from China, Ormuz and Portugal (Bombay Gazetteer 1904: 58).

Pepper and sugar were demanded by the Portuguese merchants who had their controlling seat in Goa. That is why these goods were exported from the ports of Bhatkal and Honnavar to Goa in the early Sixteenth Century (Pires 1990: 61). Payment for pepper was made in cash for which Portuguese made a contract with local merchants of Bhatkala and Honnavar. Usually, they made the payment six months in advance to ensure the confirmed delivery. Whereas, coconuts, sugarcanes, and other spices were demanded by the Muslims merchants from Ormuz, Persia and Yemen. These Muslims merchants were expert in controlling the trade in these agrarian products by coordinating with local traders. They owned large ships which were manned by local Hindus called ‘Mukkaris’ and ‘Kharvis’ (Barbosa 1921: 166, 185, 215, 303). Through their ships, they exported the goods mainly from the ports of Honnavar and Mangalore to the Persian Gulf countries.

We can bifurcate the commodities into agrarian and non-agrarian which were vigorously used for trading purposes. The economy of this region was solely based on the agrarian produce. It is important to mention that the trade that existed in this region was due to the exchange of agrarian surplus. The agrarian product was possible because of Sahyadri ranges which had provided unfailing rainfalls. Malnad plains and its river structure too supported the agrarian system of this region.
Basrur had a rich history of trans-oceanic trade with the Western and Middle East countries. Its trade links were not limited only to the Greco-Roman world but also with the Far East countries. In all the trading exercises, commodities involved were mainly agrarian products.
Different varieties of rice and sugarcane, pepper, coconut and ginger along with the superior quality of arecanut were traded with these countries. Like Basur, Honnavar was also known for its trade in agrarian product mainly rice, pepper, sugarcane and betel nuts. Its hinterlands also supplied certain cash crops like timber, sandalwood, and coconut.

Amongst all the agrarian products first and foremost crop for the trade was rice, which was supported by excellent geographical and climatic conditions which facilitated the cultivation of the rice of several varieties (Sturrock I: 192). Several travellers also provided the information relating to the cultivation of rice in this region. Some also explained the superior and inferior varieties of it by saying “white rice was consumed by the rich and red or black by the poor class” (Madhava 1991: 137). About rice cultivation, Paes writes “the south from Bhatkal was very fertile, and the region between Bhatkal and “Zambur” were well cultivated with plenty of rice (Sewell 1962: 230).” The Same region also has a mention by other travellers as an area for cultivating rice in large quantity and sold it to the foreign traders (Mundy 1907: 99). Whole coastal zone of Karnataka was famous for the cultivation of different varieties of rice. Some of the contemporary sources mentioned about distinct varieties of rice which had high demand in the foreign markets (Hamilton 1930: 159-60). Even the original sources mention about the same stretch that yielded different varieties of rice (E.C. Vol. III, Sb. No. 18, MAR 1923, No. 101). The agrarian losses are also mentioned in the inscriptions. It is mentioned as ‘nashtas’ which means the Keladi rulers addressed destruction in overcoming the mounting issue. Inscriptions of Basrur indicate that rice grants were made to the religious institutions by the Keladi rulers (E.C, VIII TI No. 82, 83, 92).
Fig: soil near sea is suitable for the rice cultivation
Most of the rice produced were exported to Arabia and rest were sent to neighbouring places like Goa, Malabar and Bombay. Buchanan also reported about the export of rice to Muscat and also gave a list of important items of export. Next, to rice, betel nut and pepper were vital (Buchanan 2011: 243). Other significant commercial crops were Sandalwood, turmeric and cinnamon. Sandalwood was directly sent to Bombay, and both turmeric and cinnamon were supplied to Surat and Kutch and also to foreign market like Muscat. Items of import were mostly kerosene oil, coconut oil, paper, cotton clothes, coir, and horses. Metals like iron and copper were also imported due to their specific quality. Most of these articles were imported from the neighbouring port cities like Bombay, Goa, and Malabar. Amongst foreign country, Arabia was the main supplier of the horses. Arabia was also the main foreign market for the rice too. Hence any change in their demand also affected the export.
The king of spices which hold its position with salt in almost all the dining tables of the world is actually native to southern India. It has a long history that can be traced back to Eight century A.D. that rules the spice trade of India and Far Eastern countries both regarding value and volumes. Tax on it was mentioned in an inscription of early Eighth Century A.D. (S.I.I. VI, No. 284) and regarded it as one of the essential commodity, though the popularity of the spice attained its optimum level at the end of the fifteenth century. Whole Sahyadri range and both of its sides were used for the cultivation of the pepper. The coastal region provided an excellent condition for its cultivation especially region between Bhatkal and Goa became famous for the production of pepper. The travel account of Marco Polo is depicted in the picture of pepper cultivation in South India.

Fig: Le livre des merveilles de Marco Polo-pepper : A 14th Century painting depicting Harvesting of Pepper in southern India (Source: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52000858n/f173.highres)

Pepper produced in the coastal range was larger than any part of the Indian subcontinent, and it had great demand in the overseas market due to its excellent quality (Barbosa 1921: 215).
Portuguese records also revealed that region between Shimoga and South Canara produced abundant pepper towards the end of the sixteenth century (Heras 1927: 427). State intervention in the local trade was inevitable as long as it was associated with cash crops. State also owned big godowns for the storage purposes. Mirjan fort also registered several pepper wells which were constructed by the rulers to collect the pepper from the producer for its further export. Sometimes they did the hoarding only to control the trade in their region.

Other agrarian products which were used for the commercial purposes were sugarcane, ginger and cashew nuts. There were two verities of sugarcane namely ‘Bily’ and ‘Cari’ (white and black sugarcane). Several innovations were introduced for the cultivation of these crops which brought significant income to the state (Hamilton 1930: 160). Their cultivation was encouraged and expanded to both the sides of the Sahyadri (Buchanan 2011: 232, 233, 234).

Amongst import, horses being the main article was imported mainly from the Persia and Arabia to the western ports of India especially Bhatkal which were demanded by the Indian rulers for use in their armies. Several inscriptions also refer to the horses of the finest breed.
which were brought from the Middle East countries. Tanjavur inscription of Cola Kulottunga I also supported the fact that the ruler had an excellent quality of horses in their possession and compared them with the wave of the sea (Hultzsch 1892: lines 39, 42). As Indian horses bred in India were of very poor quality, it is sure that they were imported one and because Persian horses were considered best in the entire trading zone, so there is no doubt that horses were brought from there only. Foreign travellers too highlighted the fact that India rulers depended on Persia and Arabia for the supply of horses. Practically every sea-going vessels to India used to carry quite a large number of horses from Persian Gulf ports and Aden. Venetian traveller, Marco Polo and Shihabuddin Abdullah, a court historian of Ilkhanid refer to importing of horses in the 1320s by the Pandyan kings of Madurai (Digby 1982: 125-159). Marco Polo mentioned in his account about horses which were imported from the west by the Pandyan kings would “fetch ….500 saggi of gold worth more than 100 marks of silver and a vast number are sold there every year” (Yule 1903: 340). Shihabuddin revealed the price of each horse was exceptionally high and usually fixed at 220 dinars of red gold (Chakravarti 1991:171). The scale of horse trade in sixteen century can also be calculated by following fact that “rulers of Vijayanagara were very powerful king and kept up constantly forty thousand horsemen (Varthema 1863: 126).” The exact figure of horse trade during early sixteen century was also given by a Portuguese horse trader Nuniz that “the king every year buys thirteen thousand horses of Ormuz and country breeds of which he chooses the best for his stables, and he gives the rest to his captains (Branfoot 2005: 257).” To encourage commerce in Vijayanagar Empire, King allowed free imports for the horses brought from the Persian and Arab world. Moreover, other articles like precious gems, pearls, and sandalwood were also received in good demand in the imperial capital. To achieve this King Krishnadevaraya realized the importance of good harbour for trade. They controlled scores of ports in Canara coast for trading purposes. Abdul Razzaq in his visit to Vijayanagara noted a total number of horses.

4.2 Mechanism for mobilization and marketing of surplus
The gradual expansion of coastal trade in the early fifteenth to sixteenth century was made possible through strong exchange nexus and agricultural settlements along with regional politico-economic systems that had formed due to agricultural growth and availability of a surplus. Preconditions of urban growth and the overseas trade are not only dependent on its
development of commodity production but also its exchange and channelization via various commercial network and linkages that carry equal importance. Regular marketing facilities ensure proper distribution of commodities. The exchange between producers and consumers carried through this commercial mechanism gave rise to a wider commerce.

4.2.1 Markets

Western Karnataka and its vast coastline supported by various arterial routes and several navigable rivers provided a very wide market for the commercial activities. Market not only flourished due to its long coastline but also largely facilitated due to its long continuum of maritime activities and overseas trade network since Harappan times. The emergence of market centres and commercial network linking different epicentres of production and sub-regions coincided with the rise of European powers and proliferation of overseas trade from these port cities. These naturally well-protected ports and their geography provided crucial inter-regional links that also supported their growth and encouraged spurt of settlements. Vasanth Madhava has listed some of the important sea trade centres – Mirjan, Honnavar, Basrur, Barakuru, Bhatkala, Mangalore, and Kumbala. These sea trade centres were mostly under control of Muslims who actively channelized the movement of goods from these centres to the foreign countries. Some of the prominent internal trade centres like Kasargod, Karkala, Mudabidre, Chandavar, Sagar usually dealt with agricultural products and their movement were generally localized (Madhava 1991: 141). These coastal cities are not just connected with the local trade centres but they had prominent trade centres in the Arab world. Basra, Mecca, Baghdad, Aden and Oman were some important trade centres in the Arab world. Even Arabs had several trading centres in the coastal Karnataka. Other than spices, they had a keen interest in some of the non-regular items of commerce like salt, wood swords and Indian medicines. Arabs had good faith in the Indian medicines and astrology. According to them, Indians had advance knowledge of these science (Madhava 1999: 37). Ports on the Western Indian coasts were involved not just with the local coastal trade but also had a lively exchange of commodities with the Gulf countries as well.

“a considerable market, being the place to which the Indian merchants and those of the islands bring their commodities; while the traders of Iraq, Yemen and Fars import all sorts of furs and purple clothes, flax, cotton, hemp, mash, wheat, barley, millet, rye ...; those from
India import great quantities of spices and the inhabitants of islands live by what they gain in their capacity as brokers for both parties.” (Tudela 1959: 98-99)

At the beginning of 16th century, the main centres of trade were Bhatkal, Sadashivgad and Honnavar. Bhatkal being the main centre for both exports and imports and hence bulk items like pepper and rice were supplied to other parts of India through this port. Dimensions of trade kept on shifting quantity wise and also region wise. For example, initially iron was sent from Bhatkal to another part of India, but later a large quantity of iron was sent mainly to Malabar Coast and Ormuz. Similarly, marketing of rice of different varieties was taken by different port too as per their production. It was Bhatkal port from where rice was sent to other parts of India, but very soon Honnavar and Mirjan took the supply market. Rice and cheap rice were sent to the Malabar ports. First rice was sold to the local markets called ‘santhes’ or ‘jathres’. ‘Jathres’ was periodic fairs. Most of the exchanges possibly used to take place at these fairs (Murthy 1991: 104-107). Mirjan too participated in the rice trade especially cheap rice which was produced in abundance in the river banks of Muziris.

4.2.2 Coins and Monetary

Period of our study falls into Vijayanagar Empire time which roughly ranges from 1336 A.D. to 1646 A.D. Even the entire Western Karnataka region has direct or indirect control of Vijayanagara rulers either in the form of governorship or overlordship. Hence monetary system prevailing in this area must be having similar currency system. As Vijayanagara Empire was famous for its wealth, it is evident that their grandeur ought to reflect in their coinage. Abdul Razak, a traveller who visited the Vijayanagara Empire, have written about the richness of the kingdom by saying that Gold, Silver, and Diamonds were sold in the market like consumable goods (Rapson 1897: 3). That is why large quantities of coins issued by Vijayanagar rulers were either pure gold or silver. Lots of Gold and silver coins belonging to this period have been found reflecting the mechanism of trade and exchange were predominately gold. On the basis of their currency system, this period can be safely dubbed as a truly golden period. A Huge wealth of Vijayanagara, as well as ever-increasing trade and commerce, encouraged rulers to bring out more and more gold coin.
Before Vijayanagara, Coastal Karnataka was under Alupa’s sway who were the feudatory of Western Chalukyas. Hence coins issues by them provide the earliest information of coins used in day to day transactions. Coinage produced from different mints were named after the place of minting as well. For example Barkur Gadyanas, Bhatkal Gadyanas. The existence of mint at Barakuru and Mangaluru is available in the inscription of 1205 A.D where grant of 50 Barakanura gadyana and 50 Mangalura gadyana along with some land granted to Durga Devi of Bidure for the worship of God (S.I.I., Vol VII, No. 233). These Gadyanas were actually gold coins with an approximate weight of 3.4 grams that estimated to be 52 grains (Rao, Dec. 24, 2012). These are also called as ‘Hon’ which in English known as Pagodas. These coins were circular in shape. The exact date of use of ‘Gadyana’ or any other currency in Western Karnataka is not available before 10th Century A.D., but it is only during the 10th century, and later these coins started being used. Reference of Gadyana in an inscription found in Bijuru of Coondapur taluk in 10th century A.D. which revealed a fine of 50 Gadyana imposed on a person who violated the norms. This reference was the first reference of Gadyana in any available inscription. Next reference of the same appeared in Barakuru epigraph of 1140 A.D. in South Canara (S.I.I., Vol. VII, No. 381). Coin referred here as Pandya Gadyanas which was gifted by a Shivananda yogi during Bhujabala Kavi Alupendra for the arga puja of Markandesvaradeva. Hence earliest coins originated in this region was definitely of Alupas. These coins bear the Alupa emblem of two fishes standing erect under the canopy together with chauri and water pot or lamp-like image. The reverse of the coin having either Nandinagari or Kannada letters reading name Sri Pandya Dhananjaya. It is entirely possible as pointed out by Gururaj Bhatt that coins are not of the Pandyas. Name Pandya ascribed in it might be named after Alupa ruler Pandya Dhananjay who may have ruled between 10th to 11th Century A.D. An epigraph of this ruler found in Beluru of the Coondapur taluk. There is ambiguity behind the adoption of fish in the Alupas coins as the twin fish symbol was also the royal symbol of Pandyas dynasty. There is a possibility that Alupas might have adopted fish as their famous mark in the late 10th Century A.D. This is reflected in one of the Alupas record dated 967 A.D. found in Enuru, Karkala taluk in South Canara. It refers to “Mina-lanchana” (S.I.I., Vol. VII, No. 253).

14 [http://nvpcollections.blogspot.in/2012/12/vijayanagara-coins.html](http://nvpcollections.blogspot.in/2012/12/vijayanagara-coins.html)
Another view also makes us think that possibly Chalukyas were defeated by the Pandyas in the battle of Manglapura (Mangalore). Hence, Alupas being feudatories of Chalukyas may perhaps have accepted the subordinate position under the Pandyas and adopted their state symbol too. Even the chances of matrimonial alliances between Pandyas and Alupas cannot be totally ignored. Such incidents add to the existing pious culture and tradition. Sometimes it also influences existing symbols and signs of the royal flag and coins. However, still, we cannot say anything about it with enough surety as there is a general derivation of the symbolic sacredness. For example, Fish has a special significance which is usually associated with good luck and good omen. Even Conch and water pots were considered sacred and pious, and that is why even today these things are part of the rituals and ceremonies.

Many common factors were found in all the coins. One side the coin usually carried images of god and goddesses whereas another side of the coins bears writing (A. V. Murthy 1975: 41). These coins were not just the means of exchange in the trading exercise but also the indicator of socio-political conditions of the time. Images found in the coins can easily suggest the current scenario of the time. Even the quality of the coins also reflects the economic condition of the time. The language used in the coins were mostly Kannada and Devanagari.
Bilingual coins also give an indication of mix culture and other language influences that also helps in tracing the history of the period.

Weight and fractions of the coins were divided as ‘Hana’, ½ Hana and ¼ Hana that weight approximately around 400, 200, and 100 milligrams respectively (Bhat 1975: 208). These Hanas were like Gadyanas having similar designs but sometimes varied due to a decrease in sizes. In some, it only carries single fish and reverses few letters in depicting the name of the ruler. It was Varaha which facilitated the foreign trade in this region. The weight of Varaha was standard for any gold coins used during that period. Hence it played a vital role in making smooth transactions in the international markets. There were several varieties of these gold coins like: - ‘Varaha-Gadyana’, ‘Dodda-Varaha-Gadyana’, ‘Kodanda-Gadyana’, ‘Kathari-Ankusha- Gadyana’. Dodda Varaha Gadyana differed in size and value with the Varaha Gadyana. Dodda Varaha was just double in size, weighing approximately 119.7 grains (Bhat 1975: 209). Though as per the sources these coins were issued by Tuluva king Krishnadevaraya (1509-1529 A.D.) but some of the records of Tulunadu have proved that these coins were in use even before the reign of King Krishnadevaraya.

One of the non-dated records of Talkod of about 11th and 12th centuries A.D found in Honnavar which also talks about the 20 Gadyanas paid to God Vishnu for the ‘agra’ (first offerings of naivedya). An inscription dated 1482 found in Basruru in South Canara referred to the personal loan of 82 ‘dadda varaha’ granted to the Kartas of Tirumaladeva (S.I.I., Vol. IX, Part II, No. 471). Another epigraphical record of Kathari Sluva Imadi Narasingarayadated dated 1499 mentioned that an amount of 44 dodda varaha gifted to the Narasimhadeva by the Governor of Barakuru (S.I.I., Vol. IX, Part II, No.364).

Hence several records have proved that these coins were in use during the Krishnadevaraya period and even before his reign. About the coin ‘Kati Gadyana’ exact relationship with the other coins is not fixed. That is why we have different values associated with the Kati with other coins in a different region. An inscription of Basrurur also provided the relative value of the kati with other coins. It says 59 kati make 23 nija-varaha and 6 hana (S.I.I., Vol. IX, Part II, No. 555).

Silver coins were very rare in this period, though they had similar weight and size as Gadyana. These coins have similar images as the gold coins. These coins were also called as ‘Tara’. An
epigraphical record also found in Bhatkal dated 1538 A.D. refers to the 30 Gadyanas of Silver. Abdur Razak too mentioned about this coin. According to him, these coins were equivalent to 1/6th of the fanam.

Different sources provide different measuring methods and variation of the coin to assess the value. An accurate value of Tara with respect to gold Gadyana is also mentioned in one of the inscriptions found in Chaulikeri of Barakuru in South Canara. It dated back to 1372 A.D. and gave the rate of 13 taras per dium equals to 55 gadyanas (honnu) per annum (S.I.I., Vol. VII, No. 352). This amount was granted for the purpose of feeding the Brahmins. Hence it gives it value almost at the rate of 85 taras per gadyana.

Copper coins were also called as ‘Jital’ or ‘Pana’. It was one-third of the Tara. Even Abdul Razzak has reported this. An inscription dated 1444 A.D. of Basrur also has a reference of Jita Gadyana which might be the same jital coin (S.I.I., Vol. IX, Part II, No. 449). Copper coins found in vast numbers mostly carries animals on the obverse.
Several varieties of coins are found throughout the coastal regions. Most of these coins were issued by the Vijayanagara rulers. Gold coins of Vijayanagara were famous for its quality. It is this reason that these coins enjoyed a greater degree of acceptance outside the jurisdiction and even later after the end of the ruling dynasties.

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15 [http://karnatakatravel.blogspot.in/2010/01/asi-booklet-on-mirjan-fort.html](http://karnatakatravel.blogspot.in/2010/01/asi-booklet-on-mirjan-fort.html)

With the arrival of Europeans to the coastal markets in the early Sixteenth century, certain changes took place in the agrarian and internal trade transactions. Increasing use of money changed not only the trade avenue but also accelerated the pace of transaction. Use of money started replacing the barter system due to which the area got monetary gain over both external and internal trade. Money added speed to the transaction due to that trade received new impetus in the coastal Karnataka. It is supported by the fact that use of Portuguese gold coins called ‘Curzado’ and ‘Sao Tomes’ in the middle Sixteenth century had become in trend in the trade transactions of the Canara region (Shastry 1981: 204, 205). It is important to note that the exchange rate of the coins of Portugal was similar with the coins used in Canara. This fact is also supported by the writing of Antonio Nunes in 1554 A.D. who mentioned that the currency of Bhatakala or other places of Canara was comparable to Goa. However, there was always some variation in the value of these two currencies. In one of the clauses of the treaty between Portuguese and Ikkeri in 1663 stated that the 100 pagodas of Ikkeri were equal 192 Sao Tomes which were gold coins of Goa that time. This comparison also reflected the value of both the gold coins were almost equal in value. Xerifim, another gold coin which was used

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by Portuguese in Goa, could also be swapped with the Ikkeri Pagodas at the rate of 3.5 to 16 (Shastry 1981: 208-209). Use of these gold coins for the exchange purposes gained so much popularity over time that not just the rulers of Canara demanded from the Portuguese traders to pay in the form of gold coins of their highest value but also the local merchants asked for a similar payment for their rice and pepper (Shastry 1981: 205). A Portuguese gold coin dated 1652 A.D found in Mirjan having an image of St. Thomas on one side whereas another side has human image holding a plough like object holding in his left hand. This coin weighs around 3.79 gms having diameter of 1.9 cms supposed to be released by the Portuguese Governor Conde De Sarzedes whose governing period falls between 1650 – 60 A.D.

Fig: Gold coins of Portuguese dates 1652 A.D found in Mirjan Fort (Source: ASI Dharwad Circle)

18 http://karnatakatravel.blogspot.in/2010/01/asi-booklet-on-mirjan-fort.html
4.2.3 Merchants

Commercial activities in this region was managed through full-time trading communities engaging with local exchange networks for the procurement of goods from the producer to fulfill the commercial needs of the locals as well as the overseas demands.

Trade in Tulunadu was in the hands of ‘Sreshthi’ (became a generic term for all Canara merchants), who were also known as ‘Settikaras’ (S.I.I. Vol VII: 196, 197, 206, 221, 242, 309, and 321). They were the trading community that represented matters connected with trade both local and overseas. They were actually the landlords, but they also formed one of the principal merchants group of this region. That is why some of the prominent merchants emerged from the landlord’s class. Before the arrival of the Europeans, trade was conducted in rice, sugarcane, spices, and coconut that were exchanged with the help of different trade associations and a group of merchants who were busy in conducting trade between above and below the Sahyadri (S.I.I., Vol. VII, No. 309, 340). Several trade associations and group of merchants who were engaged in the trading networks were ‘Settikaras’, ‘Elemagalu Nakhara’, ‘Banakudas’, ‘Govaras’ and ‘Nandesi’. These groups of merchants virtually control the overall trade in coastal Karnataka both inland and overland. A Large number of Settis noted in one of the epigraph of this region (S.I.I., Vol. VII, No. 197) and it is not possible all of them were associated only with the trade and commerce. It is possible some of them might have taken other jobs too, but the majority of them were connected with economic activities. Rice trade of Basrur was virtually controlled by the Settis who were very rich and had a stronghold and the upper hand in the trade of agrarian products. Several guilds organized themselves into several communities, and their roles were defined for the smooth functioning.

The importance of these communities in facilitating trading exercise in the coastal settlement has been rightly identified by eminent maritime historians such as Asin Das Gupta and Himanshu Prabha Ray. According to them in the absence of any impersonal law and jurisdiction, rules and regulations of the community became crucial in the successful completion of business deals (Ray 2008: 58). Gururaj Bhatt gives a list of the towns where trading communities played significant role and trade contracts were entered between various guilds and various ‘Keri’ (Street) represented by the Settikaras. Likewise, the guilds of the
Settikaras regulated and controlled the trading activities of such town as Karalakal, Mudabidure, Enure, Mangaluru, Basruru, Honnavara, Bhatakala, etc. (Bhatt 1975: 216).

The Balanjus were another significant groups of the guild who were acquired an important position in this region. A 15th century record can also identify their significant position that if any Setti violated the norms, he would be excommunicated from any association with the Balanjus (S.I.I., Vol. VII, No. 185). One more epigraph of the late 13th century also discussed the same punishment. This penalty in the form of non-association with the Balanjus conveys the powerful position of this group of merchant and keeping any kind of association was mostly desired by everyone. Gavaras, a group of traders, were also considered as the head of the commercial guild. Though their role was not defined anywhere, they set up their own temple which received gift and charity by traders. It is evident from the temple grant given to their temple by the Annapa Setti (S.I.I., Vol. VII, No. 338). They were settled mainly in the district of Barkur and Basrur.

Nakhara which means merchant guilds in Kannada. References of Nakharas in the several inscriptions of Tulu nadu make it clear that trade and commerce of important cities of coastal Karnataka were under control of this group of merchants. A 9th century inscription found Hattiyangadi very close to Basrur tells about remission of taxes by the Nakharas. The same record also gives the importance of trade with the region above the ghats that was Basrur close to Coondapur taluk (A. R. for 1929 - 30, Para 45, P-86). Mahalingeshwara also called as Nakareshwara temple could possibly have been built by this group of merchants (A. R. No. 415 for 1927 – 28 A.D. 1155). These merchant guilds had controlled the trade in the Basrur, Barakur and other neighbouring areas. These traders associated with the Nakhara temple and time to time donated to the temple.

Internal and international traders received a stimulus in the early sixteenth century this could be easily analysed through frequent references of then in the contemporary traveler’s accounts and also in the inscriptional records. Trade guilds of important port towns like Mangalore, Basrur, Bhatkal and also Honnavar received special recognition. Their recently acquired prominence allowed them to interfere not just in the lives of its people but also with the local authority like a temple and sometimes even with the central powers. Later on, from Eleventh century onwards, Muslim merchants groups entered the scenarios. They were known as
‘Hanjamana’s. They actively participated in the internal as well as external trade of coastal region but mainly controlled the sea trade where they enjoyed almost upper hand in dealing with Arabian, Muscat and African markets (Batutah 1929: 230, 231, 233, 265). Regarding their origin, Madras Epigraphical Report brought forth the name Hanjamana mentioned in one of the Basrur inscriptions and also found their connection with ‘Anjuvannattar’ of Tamilnadu. Finally, it organized them with the five artisan caste – ‘Pachlambaru’ of Telugu land (A. R. for 1927 – 28, p – 62). Parsees claim of Hamjamanas has no sense as there was no Parsee settlement in the Canara region. Even tracing the word Hanjamana to the Persian word ‘Anjuman’ seems correct. There is no confusion on the relationship between Middle East Countries and Western Coast since early eras. Hence prosperity and settlements of Persian Muslims merchants on the West Coast might be due to special privileges granted to them by the local rulers. Hence they flourished as an influential community in this area. Although the exact date of their arrival is not easy to confirm, their involvement in the trading activities can be estimated as early as 12th century A.D. (Bhat 1975: 220). However, several historians have studied about their origin, but still, there is more scope to cover several lithic records of Tulunadu to find out about their actual origin in Canara region. Champakalakshmi studies about the merchant group called ‘Anjuvannam’ as foreign merchants who in eighth and ninth centuries had started their commercial activities on the West coast of India mainly in Kerala and later in the eleventh century further moved to other coastal regions of South India. She further noted that the ‘Anjuvannam’ as per the oldest record, indicates to a group of Jewish merchants who settled on the west coast. She finally concludes all the projected theories about this in the following words,

“The term Anjuvannam, wrongly interpreted as a group of five different communities or castes, may be derived from Anjuman, perhaps first used by early Arab Muslim traders of the west coast, a name surviving down to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries on Canara coast among Muslim traders as Hanjumana.” (Champakalakshmi 2010: 49).

Hence, her findings clearly confirm that the term Hanjamanas was used for the Arab Muslim traders who came to the west coast of India purely for trade and started residing in the coastal cities. They were actually trading professional as there is no any reference about them as a part of the local agricultural communities. Their involvement listed for the controlling local
exchange nexus during the early medieval period. Hanjamanas of Basrur is one of the surviving examples of sixteenth century’s merchant guilds of local scale.

It is also true that these people emerged out in the districts of South Canara namely Mangalore, Basrur, and Barkur as one of the most influential classes in the matter relating to trade and commerce. They exercise their control over several commodities of exchange. Several inscriptions are available in support of this (S.I.I., Vol VII, No. 182, 350,380).

Some of the folk songs of Tulu also refer to the Arab traders who settled in coastal Karnataka. For example one of the Padadana – Alibhuta Bobbariya talks about the settlement of Arabs traders who due to their marital relation with local women mainly in the regions of Basruru and Barakuru got the chance to settle here (Rai 1985:89-94). It is quite surprising that Jains of Tulunadu considered their place of origin was Arabia. Buchanan also mentioned about their past connection and migration from Arabia (Buchanan 1870: 258). Some of the Tulupadanas tell about the settlement of Arab traders in the coastal Karnataka towns and their nature of trading activities. They were dealing with the rice, pepper, ginger and other commodities of trade. They participated in the import of Chinese goods especially vessels and their silk clothes. Their contact with the Persian merchants was mainly for bringing the fine quality of Persian horses to the Western coastal towns (Antiquary 1892: 272-74). For trading purposes in the coastal towns of Honnavar and Basrur, they came in contact with the Settikaras and Nakharas. The commercial contacts with locals later transformed into matrimonial alliances too. Tulu Padadanas also mentioned about the Tulu Mapillas as one more trading that community existed during this time. They were descendent of Arab fathers and Tulu mothers. These Mapillas merchants were quite unique in their culture and customs. They followed Islam but culturally they still adhered with their local surroundings in the sense of general practices (Saletore 1936: 482). A unique fusion of two different cultures was reflected in Tulu Mapillas who have religiously maintained their inherent basic values and also assimilated surrounding cultures. Navayatas of Bhatkal, another group of local traders who came from a similar origin. Like Mapillas their ancestors too came to port cities for trading purposes and later settled down here (Kamath 1984: 897). About Mapillas and Arabs study of Padadanas mainly Bobariya and Ali Bhuta also revealed that they were deeply rooted in the ports of Honnavar and Basrur due to its commercial importance. They earned the goodwill of the local
rulers by horse trade. They involved with horse trade and used to bring a high quality of horses to these ports. Indigenous sources also talk about the settlement of Arabs in these ports and some of them joined military services too (E.C. XXXIII, p. 52) and (E.C. (old ed.) V, p. 86, 91, 99, 104). Ibn Batutah too highlights the presence of Arabs in Basrur where they found abundant of coconut and palms (Batuta 1992: 233). Despite good knowledge of karnataka ports, Pace of trading exercises of Arabs was not fast and for a very long period trade was still in its nascent stage and based purely on the barter system. In the course of their trading activities in the coast, they gained considerable knowledge of seasonal monsoon winds and oceanic currents, rainfalls, etc. Though in the middle of the fourteenth century, political conditions of the coastal region encouraged the Arabs to establish the trade without any hurdles as they provided them the finest breed of horses from Persia. Their sea trade even then had a brisk trade in these coastal port until the end of the fifteenth century after that arrival of Portuguese totally disrupted the trading scenario of Arabs from there.

In the middle Eighteenth century trade of coastal Karnata again went into the hands of natives. European control faded due to frequent fights between the rivals Europeans and also with the local rulers. Therefore, external and internal trade and coastal produce passed to the Gowda – Saraswat, Mapillas and Arabs. Some of the Portuguese records refer to a merchant named Narayana Prabhu who was a merchant at Ankola used to supply rice to the Portuguese in Goa (Madhava 1991: 150). English records also mentioned about the ‘Hur Committee’ which was functioning in the area between Honnavar and Mangalore. The members of this Hur committee were responsible for the contract for pepper, rice, and agricultural produce which were collected, their payment to the producer and delivery of the commodities to the concerned person (SILB No. 4, 1741: 3AP.325). This committee had its trade centres at Honnavar, Basrur, Mulki and Mangalore. They looked after overall trading processes from its production till their delivery. For this, sometimes they hired agents to meet the deadlines. However, the actual sea trade tasks were handled by seafaring communities like ‘Kharvis’, ‘Mongeras’, ‘Mukharis’ and ‘Marakalas’. Later during the period of Haider and Tipu, merchants were invited from different parts of India to carry on trade in the ports of Honnavar, Karwar and Mangalore. Thus commerce again got a new lease of life in the coastal regions. Agricultural produce, especially like rice, pepper, sugarcane, and coconut, received great thrust as demands for them came from various traders from different parts of India. Though
Tipu’s efforts to invite Chinese merchants in these ports did not bring a much positive response from them but in this merchant friendly environment, other communities of coastal Canara also started participating in the trade and commerce. Bunts who were earlier not participating in the coastal trade also joined as a new trading community (Buchanan 1807: 243). Thus in eighteenth century trade of coastal Canara was again went in the hands of local traders mainly Gowda –Saraswats and the Muslims.

4.2.4 Means of transportation:
Several factors attributed to the rise of trade in the coastal zone of the Karnataka. Transportation was one who facilitated smooth movement of commodities, promoted easy contacts with a different part of the hinterlands, and also made easy life to people of towns and cities. Trade and transport are closely associated aspects that directly proportionate to each other. It means an efficient transport ensures a developed trade and commerce. In the medieval period, a mode of transport broadly can be divided into two categories: land transport and water transport. Ports of Canara maintained their trading network with the inland trade centres as well as oversea trade centres. Due to their trade contact, these port cities had evolved into entrepot trade centre and also as a trans-shipment (Rao 2002-2003: 150). That is why these trade centres also turned into a customs house where customs duties were collected. To connect with hinterlands, these ports cities were either connected with the water routes or land routes.

Various inscriptions have referred to highways (‘rajabidi’), roads (‘bidi’), lands for transportation of goods, footpath, and planting of trees for the purpose of shade and shelter to the travellers. Basarur inscription is one of the important sources for the study of socio-economic conditions of the time. It also gives local information relating to important road links and their maintenance. One of its record states that the ‘halaru’ of the mudakeri of Basrur gave their part of land measuring 12 ‘kolu’ in breadth for the construction of the public road. Even the outsiders were allowed to use this road: “sudesi-paradesigalu nadava ubhaya-margga” (S.I.I, Vol. IX, Part II, No. 457). Their contribution was highly recognized by the temple that is why ‘halaru of muadakeri’ enjoyed the exclusive privilege of using the said road for carrying offerings to the temple of Devi. It is also mentioned in the record that the

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19 Usually referred to traders Association of Basrur
‘halara of paduwakeri’ were not allowed to use this road for the same purpose. Again in the same record of Basrur, it is declared that the responsibility of developing an old road of another part of Basrur was done by the ‘halara of paduvakeri’. It is also given in the record that the sides of the important roads were planted with the mango tree for the purpose of serving shade and shelter to the travellers. These records confirm that Basrur took special care to facilitate the task of movement of goods and also made travelling within the city more convenient by taking care of planting trees and pedestrians. Local authorities gave this task to certain trading communities by giving them patronage.

For inland trade agricultural produce were carried on the back of bullocks. For the sea trade, larger ships and boats were used for carrying goods. Roads of coastal region were sufficient for the movement of bullocks in large number to carry goods from interior to the port town. Even in the early sixteenth century road routes were fit for transporting good. It is observed by Barbosa in 1516 A.D. about the movement of goods via road routes to the markets and trading centres. According to him, “agrarian products such as rice, vegetables, sugar cane produced in the interior region were taken to the coastal towns namely Mirjan, Honnavar, Bhatakala, Basruru, Mangalore, and Kumbala by means of Kavades on head, on the back of the horses and bullocks” (Barbosa Vol. 1, 1921: 181, 197). Kavades is a method of carrying loads with the help of stick where loads were hung at the both ends of the stick that were generally carried on shoulders or animal backs. A Portuguese traveller Domingo Paes who visited Vijayanagar Empire in 1522 observed that the Vijayanagara was well connected with the important ports like Goa, Bhatkal, Bankapur and Honnavar through roads for the transport of agricultural produce from different parts of coastal Canara. These products were usually transported from one region to another through the animal carts.

These port cities had a high demand for a variety of goods from the local markets as well as from the hinterlands. Though Basrur was itself a rice growing area but even then demands for the food material especially for rice was always on the increase due to export reasons. There were several roads to connect the interior of the coastal zone to fetch maximum produce from the crop growing area to the distributive centres like markets and ports. The period between 15th to 16th centuries witnessed the movement of a high volume of trading commodities from the hinterland to the various distributive centres via ghat routes and several other land routes.
About the condition of the road connecting Ikkeri, Sagar and other interior places in 1623 A.D. described by Della Valle as “handsome plane broad almost totally direct here and these beset with green thick trees” (Della Valle 2010: 266). Hence road journey was easy and pleasant due to thick and green trees along the roadsides. An English travellers Fryer also confirms about the broadness of the road of Coastal Karnataka (Fryer 1873: 224). When he visited Canara, he observed that

“The people have good laws and obey them and travel without guides on broad roads, bypaths as in Malabar.” (Abhishankar 1975: 58)

Regarding road connecting from hinterland to the prominent port cities, Hamilton observed that roads were plain and planted with four rows of trees for the traveller to get the proper shade to save from direct sun. Through these roads, agrarian products were transported from the hinterland to the ports (Hamilton 1930: 159). About the safety of the roads, Rice has mentioned that roads from Bednur to the seaports during the period of Basavappa Nayaka II, were planted with trees and also safe for the travellers to move with their valuables. There was no incident of robbery ever reported by the travellers. Even the stranger who had no knowledge of the region was ever robbed or even molested (Rice, II 1897: 435). The road referred by Rice was noted for the movement of a variety of goods like rice, jaggery, oil, paddy, arecanut, ragi, coconut and much more agrarian produce were loaded in bullocks carts to move from up and down of the Sahyadri to the seaports. Transportation of these commodities in the same road routes was also referred in some of the indigenous records (E.C. Vol. III, TI. No. 83, 92, 68, 69, March 1933, No. 33 and also 1928 No. 58).

State also realized the importance of sea coasts and ports that are why to control them is signified as status. In inscriptional accounts, such achievements of the ruler are also referred boastfully as “Lord of the east, west, and southern sea” (S.I.I. No. 190). Coastal belts were supported by several rivers and seaports and also river ports which facilitated transportation of goods smoothly to both coastal destinations and also overseas terminals. About water transportation, Portuguese sources have referred to different types of local boats which can be categorized under large, small and also as rafts boats of carrying out water trade. Traders usually owned These vessels and manned by local people called as ‘Mongeras’, ‘Karvis’, ‘Mukkavars’. Several prominent rivers of coastal Karnataka namely Netravati, Saravati, Kali,
Panch Gangavali and also Tunga river which provided excellent waterways to transport the produce from one region to another. These rivers were deep enough to sustain the movement of heavy traffic. They were wide and deep, mainly carried food articles. According to Pearson, Portuguese records of the late sixteenth century referred to “Food Convoys” which were shipped from Canara coast to Goa (Pearson 2004: 77, 123 & 125). They called it food convoy because most of the article transported through these native ships were food crops mainly rice, paddy, coconuts, pepper, and jaggery. Their movement was not restricted only to local ports but sailed to Arabia and Red Sea regions. Even ships of Canara traders found in the Maldives islands (Madhava 1991: 147). Such evidence confirms that Canara people not only engaged in local trade but also contributed largely in overseas trade too.

Fig: Honnavar port that facilitated both internal, inter-regional and international trade during the pre-colonial and colonial period.

These ships and boats were used mainly to carry agrarian products and were manned chiefly by Muslims or low caste Hindu. It is expected that the main owner of financiers were High caste Hindus (Pearson 2004: 123). Some of the Eighteenth century Kannada letters preserved in Cochin Archives, studied by the Prof. Madhava also confirmed that several large ships owned by coastal Karnataka people used for carrying goods from various locations to the
Malabar and Canara ports (Madhava 1991: 147). It is important to note that in the later period, means of communication especially water transportations were motivated by Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan. Both intentionally in order to increase overseas trade, encouraged agrarian produce along with the building of ships and boats for the sea trade. Such stimulation from the state increased the agricultural produce and their export to overseas markets during that time. State actively started participating in the trade and commerce due to increasing demands of Indian spices and other commodities enhanced the earning of the state to a great extent. Hence, realizing the importance of commerce, the state decided to join hands in facilitating the trade and commerce in their region. Hence for trading purposes, the state started maintaining roads and provided other facilities to the traders (Buchanan 1807:243). Buchanan has reported the involvement of state in the far distance trade like Muscat, Aden and even to China in his account. State not only involved in the construction of Boats and Ships for trade but also undertook the task of sailing goods in the ships to other countries. Their ships usually carried rice, pepper, sandalwood, sugarcane, and coir for the trading. The state too exercised their control over the means of communications (E.C. VII Sh No. 3). They charged the boatmen for taking their ferry through their rivers or roads falling under their territories. Foreign travellers too depicted in their account on such type of control exercised by the Nayakas of Keladi (Della Valle 2010: 395).

4.3 Importance of Neighbouring Trade Centres
Trade and trading activities cannot be studied in isolation. Thus this study looks into the possibility of making important trading neighbouring areas as one of the contributory factors in providing greater numbers of footfalls of foreign traders to Honnavar. For example areas like Bhatkala and Malabar also contributed to Honnavar directly and indirectly in supplying constant and regular movement of traders who usually followed trade route from south India to northern parts. Malabar remained the desired destination of foreign traders who came to the eastern world for want of exotic goods and spices. Afterward, their journey usually followed with Bombay and Surat, the other two important trade centres of the time. The journey from south to north was usually planned at Honnavar for further trade or even to halt as well. Thus location as mid-way of two important trading centres also contributed to the trading excellence of Honnavar.
Barbosa is of the opinion that many a ship anchored at the port of Bhatkala for which it was virtually an annual feature from Ormuz, to take cargos of white rice of which there were abundant stores. It also occupied a position of importance from the point of view of trade in horses. The Moors brought Arabian horses of the right breed to this town, which were supplied to Vijayanagara Empire (Barbosa 1886: 189). He further adds that there was a regular trade in pepper and spices which were brought to the town of Bhatkala for sale. These trade channels were mostly interconnected not just externally for the procurement of goods from one part to another, internally too sometimes became one when they came under the same hegemonic power or authority. Neighbouring excellent harbours might have attracted the traders and sailors from far off places. According to Hamilton, river Kali had a good harbour that could easily anchor large and heavy ships. It was capable enough to receive ships weighing 300 tons (Hamilton 1930: 147). Buchanan too has pointed similar facts. He finds out river Kali was broad and deep near the mouth of the Arabian Sea. The height of the tide contains almost 25 feet water. All these are excellent for harbouring any large ship or boat (Buchanan vol II 1807: 324).

Apart from travellers account of European contact we too have inscriptional evidence about the trade contact between Tulunadu and China. ‘Chinambara-Vikraya-Priyakarim’ refers to China cloth and an epigraph of Hosabasti, Mudabidure dated A.D. 1429 mentions the purchase of ‘China cloth’ (S.I.I Vol VII: 198). Dragon too depicted in one of the panels of the basement of the Bhairadevi mantapa, further support this possibility of trade contact with China. The epigraph of the town of Barakuru (one of the adjacent area of Honnavar) dated A.D. 1431 states that such commodities as rice, wheat, Bengal gram, black gram, green gram, gingili oil, sugarcane, jaggery, spices and pulses being got from the regions from above the Ghats (S.I.I Vol VII: 309). Another record of the same place and date refers to the same list of commodities being brought to Barakuru for sale. These are indisputably clear proof of regular commercial contact with the neighbouring areas (S.I.I Vol VII: 340). Rice growing areas like Barkur and Mulki benefitted Basrur in receiving large quantities of rice that were produced in the fields of these two places. Even proximity to Mangallore to Basrur also supported substantial nexus of rice trade that carried through places for their further export. Most of the requirements of Mangalore were usually transferred to Basrur to fulfill their demands. The distance between Honnavar to Basrur as noted by Linschoten was 5 miles whereas from Basrur to Mangalore
he wrote 9 miles (Burnell 1988: 66-67). Hence these neighbouring centres and their communication maintained through well-defined roads and also using water for the exchange of goods and the market for their surplus, created an excellent ground for commerce.

4.4 River system and strategic position of the ports in estuaries

Western Karnataka is blessed with several rivers, lakes, and streams. All these rivers originate from the Sahyadri range. Rivers in the Canara region can be divided on the basis of their direction of movements. These rivers build their water capacity during the Monsoon time and very much influence the agrarian system of the region. Some of the famous East flowing rivers are the Tunga, the Bhadra, and the Varada. All these when merge, is known as the Tungabhadra. Rulers of Vijayanagara and also Nayakas of Keladi utilized these waters resources by building the dams around it (E.C. VII Sh No. 7:195). Hence, it helped tremendously in the extensive cultivation of the region. These rivers also assisted in facilitating inland traffic of agricultural products. It allows smooth movement of goods from remote areas to the port cities (E.C. VII Sh No. 3 M.A.R 1920: 36).

Fig: River Sharavati, one of the West flowing river which not only facilitates inland traffic of agricultural products but also provides the richest land for cultivation.
West flowing rivers join the places to the Arabian Sea. Some of the important West flowing rivers are Kali, Gangavali, Aghanashini, Saravati which join Sadasivaghad, Manjuguni, Tadri, Honnnavar respectively to the Arabian Sea. Five West flowing rivers form a group called Panchagangavali which join Gangoli to the Sea. The area surrounding these rivers are very fertile and produced some of the specific quality of rice and coconut. Similarly, another important west flowing river which joins Mangalore to the Arabian Sea is the Netravati. Other than these rivers there are several small rivulets usually receive water from the South West Monsoon keep on changing their direction of flow which resulted in severe damages to the crop. Loss due to this reason is mentioned in the records as “Hole Harida Nashta” (Madhava 1991:10). Sometimes a fertile land comes into existence when a river changes its course of movement. Fertility of its soil is derived directly from the water. As these West flowing rivers ultimately merged with the Sea, therefore, Salt content is little higher on the mouth of the river bank in the coastal zone. This water is exquisite for the cultivation of the coconut, paddy, and vegetables. Other crops like arecanut, sugarcane, and pepper are also cultivated in the interior of these rivers. These rivers were further utilized by constructing dams on it.

Several foreign travellers have noticed vastness and beautiful picturesque of the river Saravathi. Italian traveller Della Valle has vividly described the beauty of the river in the following words, “the river itself being the most beautiful, the sides of the river all shady beset with flowers, herbs, and sundry plants which like ivy creeping about the tree and the Indian seeds of excessive heights make the wood more verdant.” He further elaborated its beauty as “the river Gerosopa for a natural thing without any artificial ornament of a building or like is a goodliest river that I have ever beheld” (Pietro Della Valle 2010: 205, 206, 220, 222). Paddy field on the river bank around Honnavar further adds to the green beauty. Hamilton points out the importance of river for harbouring the ships. About Saravathi he mentions that the river received ships of an average 200 to 300 tons of weight. Even the fertile banks of the river were used for cultivating rice and other crops of great variety (Hamilton 1930: 156). It originated in the place called Ambhutirtha in Tirthalli taluk of Shimoga District, and it is also known as Gersoppa River. Buchanan too accounted some of the important aspects of the river Saravathi. He called it as a lake that contained several islands – cultivable and non-cultivable. During dry season water become very salty and in monsoon level of water became so high and turbulent (Buchanan II 1807: 297). Travellers too have noticed the importance of these
river channels and have mentioned in their accounts about them. While preparing maps, they have also drawn the rivers which were originated from the ghats (Desai 1969: 10 - 11). Portuguese call the river Kali as Aliga (Buchanan - II 1807: 213). Barbosa too has mentioned Kali as Lingua (Barbosa 1921: 184).

Fig: Various river channels of Western Karnataka

River Panch-Gangavali, observed by Della Valle, was covered with paddy fields and sugarcane. He also mentioned about coconut garden around this river. This river had given birth to several fertile islands which were navigable with boats (Della Valle II 2010:297). When Portuguese got the control over the mouth area of this river called Ganguli, they virtually got a good complete supply of Rice and pepper of this entire zone. As per record,
after gaining control of this region, Portuguese received approximately 2999 bales of rice and 1500 khandis of pepper (Heras 1 928:108-113). This river structure provided the most favorable condition for the rice cultivation. That is why Basrur had produced the best quality of rice which had high demand in the foreign market (Hamilton 1930: 159). Modern historian B.S Shastry in his work on ports towns of coastal Karnataka gives details of rice cultivation in Basrur. According to him rice of various qualities was cultivated and exported to the places like Cannanor, Calicut and even to international trading centres like Ormuz, Aden, and Shaher. In returns, copper, jaggery, coconut and coconut oil were imported to Basrur (B.S.Shastry 1987: 98). In the overall trading exercise, these river channels played a pivotal role not just in providing extremely fertile river banks and several productive and rich island for cultivation but also facilitated the task of transporting goods from one place to other. Through these water navigation, a large quantity of commodities was smoothly sailed from one region to other. Even the larger ships easily entered to the vast sea for international marketing.

Fig: Varahi, one of the tributaries of the river Panch-Gangavali facilitate smooth movement of goods
Buchanan calls this river as lake having only one opening into the sea. He mentions it as very extensive one where fresh water comes from the hills and intersects with the salty tides of the sea. This occurrence gives rise to several islands which according to his words, “I have not seen a more beautiful country than this” (Buchanan II 1807: 275).

4.5 Haigunda and its significant place in the economic and political history of Honnavar

The historical relevance of a place is not only judged by the history it carries with it, but also of reasons that contribute towards making it a part of history. It is important to see what role a location can play in the making of the economic history of a place, and that requires to look into multidimensional and to analyse the geographic location of Honnavar and its prosperity due to Haigunda and Mirjan. Archaeological records have confirmed that Honnavar occupied a nodal position in the inland, coastal, and transoceanic network from the early Christian era. This economic prosperity was not only limited to the people of these places but also to the people around these areas. It is important to note how Francis Buchanan remarked over the people of Tulunadu in general, which reflected the prosperity without any dispute, “to judge from the appearances, the occupiers of land in Tuluva are richer than even those of Malabar who are no doubt in easier circumstances than those above the Ghats (Buchanan - III 1807: 34).”
This region supported by good physical and environmental conditions, regular and unfailing rainfall averaging 140 per annum (Stuart 1895: 223), hence there is no question of famine here. Adding to these favourable conditions, Honnavar also enjoyed the strategic location which got itself two loyal support from the strategic places like Haigunda and Mirjan in facilitating its trading activities. Both the places too occupied a great location. Both the places under study located in the middle of river Sharavati and Aghanashini played an integral and important role in transporting commodities for trade from the interior part of Coastal Karnataka to Honnavar port and helped in making Honnavar one of the most flourishing trade centre of the Western coast. The first mention of Honnavar appears to be ‘Naoura’ by the author of the Greek Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (A.D. 247) who calls it the first port of Limurike, that is Tamil country. (McCrindle 1879: 130-131). Honnavar is noted for its sandalwood carving. Some of the carved articles gained a silver medal at the Paris Exhibition of 1867 (Bombay Gazetteer: 1896: 306).
4.5.1 Strategic Location of Haigunda and Mirjan in Maritime Trade

The river system of this region remained the principal transportation route. River traffic undoubtedly was dominated by Pepper, Rice and Sandalwood which were produced in the neighbouring areas, collected, and coordinated by the local traders and these produce travelled down the river Sharavati and Aghanashini to its destination. Location of Haigunda provided these cargos a temporarily halt in the island. As per the version of local people, this island was controlled by Gersoppa Queen Rani Chennabhairadevi whom Portuguese called Raina-Da-Pimenta (Valle 1892: 191) or “Pepper Queen.” She used this route and island to transport pepper and maintained secrecy from the Portuguese.
Honnavar maintained its name as Pepper mart and considered as best in India. Mirjan too offered a platform to these goods which were transported through river Aghanashini and had a huge demand in the burgeoning European markets. Mirjan sent pepper, Saltpetre, and betel nut to Surat (Fryer 1698: 58). British traveller Fryer notices two places in South India namely Bhatkal and Sonda (Karwar) were the best in the world for pepper. Therefore, for the convenience in 1673, the Dutch and the Portuguese divided the trade of Honnavar (Fryer 1698: 57) into two parts – North and South. Honnavar had access to both the kinds of peppers, namely, Bhatkal pepper and Sonda pepper through the river channels and remained an important centre for trade for the procumbent and dispersal of goods to both international and local needs.
Fig: River Aghanashini forms island near Mirjan Fort which was used as a platform for loading and unloading of the commodities. Ships and boats could easily anchor to this place.

4.5.2 Travellers Account on Mirjan

In a second visit to the Canara coast in 1675, Fryer went from Gokarna to Mirjan where he described Mirjan Fort as very fine though old doubled walled and trenched with very high turrets on the bastions. It has been surrendered by the treachery of a Moor governor and was subject to the Carnatic Ranna that is the Bednur Kings. He also mentions that the town had a market and good stone aqueduct with a Musalman Cemetery at the end (Fryer 1698: 162).

Forbes, again another British traveller mentions about Mirjan as famous for Pepper, Cassia, and wild nutmeg. He identifies it with Mizuris of ancient Greek and notes that East India Company had for seventy years a large warehouse at Mirjan for storage of Pepper and
Sandalwood brought from Mysore. Haidar Ali allowed them the same privilege (Forbes 1834: 108 - 9).

Parsons (Parsons 1808: 220-225), an English sailor who visited Canara in 1775, says English had factory at Honnavar, and the river was very convenient for the export of pepper in which place was abounded along with sandalwood of which Haidar had a monopoly. He drew great profit from it as it was in constant demand in China. With European, he exchanged the same for firearms. Sandalwood oil was in great demand and worth its weight in silver (Parsons 1808: 224-25).

![Fig: 6, Mirjan Fort](image)

4.5.3 Loss of Glory of Haigunda, Mirjan and Honnavar as Strategic Holdings
When Maratha force became powerful, Mirjan was seized by their leader Balawantarao Ganapat who demanded a heavy exorbitant price from the Keladi queen in exchange for it. Things further deteriorated when Keladi rulers tried to buy off their lost territories by paying
heavy ransom amount. It adversely impacted the economy and affairs of the state including Fort of Mirjan.

In 1800, Colonel Wellesley, later Duke Wellington wrote that the fort of Mirjan had lately been taken by Bandits who came down from the Sahyadri passes. There were other forts in Canara unoccupied like Mirjan, and he thought it is desirable to destroy them as soon as they could be surveyed and their general utility determined (Wellington 1858: 86). Details and conditions of forts of Canara he has mentioned in ‘Supplementary Dispatches’ where he wrote that these hill forts are worse and unhealthy and it is not possible to leave large numbers of troops and European officials at the hill and finally decided to withdraw garrison from these places. However, realized that these forts would be gotten into the hands of bandits or rebels might cause future upheaval and threat to British authority. So as soon as they abandoned these forts, they destroyed it at the same time completely or cut the sources of water supply of these places (Wellington 1858: 10).

4.6 Effect of interaction with Portuguese

From early sixteenth to mid-sixteenth century there was a socio-economic interaction between people of Goa and Karnataka. When Portuguese consolidated their power in Goa, they needed supply from the Canara region. Ports of Canara especially Honnavar, Bhatkal and Basrur were Portuguese granary and served most of their commodities requirements. Most of their requirements fulfilled through treaties and tributes demanded from the local rulers of this region. Other than rice, ginger, and pepper, sugar was also brought from Canara and through these exchanges, they maintained a cordial trade relation with them (Madhava 1998: 27).

The introduction of Cartaz in the mid-sixteenth century initiated control over sea trade. Appointment of agents for the procurement of agrarian goods sometimes caused harassment to Canara merchants, and even instances of forcible taking of goods at a very low price were also registered (Shastry 1990: 48-51). The trade that flourished created huge demands for the agrarian produce and this gave rise to several mercantile classes – Brahmins, Shettis, Muslims who made their base at several important port towns.

It was only in the late sixteenth century, Portuguese started enforcing lots of discriminatory laws against Indian traders and Hindus as other than spices Portuguese came to spread the Christianity too (Shastry 1981: 48). That period saw a great number of Hindus migration from
Goa to different parts of Karnataka especially coastal Karnataka. Honnavar and Basrur too experienced this migration of Hindus mainly Gouda Saraswat Brahmins who migrated from Goa to escape the Portuguese policy of conversion. Several devotees of various sects, in order to escape the religious persecution of the Portuguese, they migrated from Goa to some places of North Canara and brought with them their deities images and relics. Sri Mahalasa Narayana Devi temple in Basrur and Kumta is the result of one of such migrations. Portuguese did not confine their missionary acts to Goa only but also tried to extend it to each port and factory by entering into treaties and agreement with the local chiefs to obtain a number of rights in favour of missionaries. By these agreements, they got the permission to construct churches at important port cities including Honnavar and Basrur. From late sixteenth to seventeenth century a large number of Christian converts too came to these port towns to escape the Marathas upsurge. Even the Churches in Basrur was built by the Goan priest (Bhat 2008: 169).

![Sri Mahalasa Narayana Devi temple at Basrur](image)

Hence, considerable attention was given to the agriculture-related activities as chief items of export mainly comprised of agrarian produce like rice, pepper and other spices, sugarcane, coconut and areca nut. Several factors like important means of transportation, well-organised
trading networks and monetary system facilitated the trade and commerce that resulted in remarkable changes in socio, economic and even religious life of the people. Propagation of Christianity especially around the ports of Honnavar and Basrur along with other ports of Canara was the result of commercial activities of Portuguese. Migration of people and emergence of new religion gave both cultural and linguistic pluralism to these port cities. Such exchanges in the socio-economic spheres added to the diversity of the region.