



Colonialism for Industrial Sector - with reference to Davanagere District

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Abstract: Davangere, a prominent city in central Karnataka, evolved from an agrarian settlement into a major industrial and commercial hub, largely driven by its cotton industry. Originating as a small village during the Western Chalukya and Hoysala periods, Davangere gained strategic importance under Tipu Sultan, who encouraged merchant and artisan settlements. The late nineteenth-century emergence of cotton markets, ginning factories and spinning mills accelerated industrialization. Post-independence, the cotton sector expanded rapidly, fostering employment, urban growth, trade diversification and social transformation. Known as the “Manchester of Karnataka,” Davangere's cotton industry shaped its urban landscape, migration patterns, infrastructure and education. Despite challenges like global competition and environmental concerns, the cotton industry remains central to Davangere’s economic progress and identity as a modern industrial and educational center.

Keywords: Economic transformations, Cotton industry, Manchester of Karnataka, Echoes of Ancient Empires

Introduction: Davangere, located in central Karnataka, is a prominent historical and industrial city renowned as the “Manchester of Karnataka” due to its long-standing cotton industry. For over a century, cotton cultivation, trade and textile manufacturing have driven the city’s economic, social and urban transformation from an agrarian settlement to a thriving industrial and commercial hub. Favorable geography, cotton-growing regions and transportation networks facilitated this growth, particularly during the colonial period with expanding cotton mills and related industries. The cotton sector shaped employment, migration, social structures, and cultural identity. Davangere played an active role in India’s freedom struggle, influenced by the Swadeshi movement, promotion of indigenous industries and local political activism involving workers, traders and citizens linked to the cotton

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industry. Post-independence, the city continued to develop through industrial expansion, educational progress and infrastructural growth, contributing significantly to regional urbanization and economic improvement. This study explores Davangere's cotton industry's origin, growth and socio-economic impact, alongside its participation in the nationalist movement and post-independence development, offering insights into industrialization and urban change in Karnataka and India.

History of Davangere: From a Small Settlement to an Industrial and Educational Centre: The history of Davangere represents a remarkable journey of transformation from a small agrarian settlement into one of the major industrial, commercial, and educational centres of Karnataka. The city's growth has been shaped by various historical, political, economic and social developments. The emergence of the cotton industry, improvement of transportation facilities, growth of trade and expansion of educational institutions played a significant role in the making of modern Davangere.

- **Early Historical Period (12th–13th Centuries):** The history of the region surrounding present-day Davangere can be traced back to the medieval period. During the 12th and 13th centuries, the area came under the influence of the **Western Chalukyas** and later the **Hoysalas**. These dynasties contributed to the political and cultural development of Karnataka through administrative systems, temple construction and promotion of agriculture and trade. The early settlements in the Davangere region developed within this broader historical framework of medieval Karnataka.
- **18th Century: Transition under Mysore Rule:** During the late 18th century, the region became associated with the Mysore Kingdom. It is believed that **Tipu Sultan**, the ruler of Mysore, granted lands in this area to a Maratha leader. This development encouraged settlement expansion and gradually transformed the region into a small trading centre. The availability of agricultural resources and its strategic location contributed to the growth of local commerce.
- **Early 19th Century: British Influence and Growth of Cotton Trade:** With the establishment of British authority in the Mysore region during the 19th century, Davangere witnessed important economic changes. The expansion of agriculture, particularly cotton cultivation in the surrounding areas, created favourable conditions for the growth of cotton trade. The British administrative system, improved

communication networks and increasing demand for cotton contributed to the economic rise of Davangere.

- **Mid-19th Century: Emergence of Cotton Industry:** The establishment of cotton mills during the middle of the 19th century marked a turning point in the history of Davangere. The growth of textile industries provided employment opportunities, encouraged migration and promoted urban expansion. Due to its flourishing cotton industry and textile activities, Davangere gradually earned the title “**Manchester of Karnataka.**” The cotton industry became the backbone of the city’s economy and played a crucial role in its industrial development.
- **1870: Establishment of Municipal Administration:** In 1870, Davangere was granted municipal status, reflecting its increasing economic and administrative importance. Municipal administration helped in the development of civic facilities, roads, sanitation systems and public infrastructure, which supported the city’s further growth.
- **Late 19th Century: Development of Railway Connectivity:** The construction of railway lines during the late 19th century brought significant changes to Davangere’s economic development. Railway connectivity improved the transportation of cotton, agricultural products and other commodities to different parts of the region. It strengthened trade networks and accelerated the city’s emergence as an important commercial centre.
- **Early 20th Century: Commercial and Educational Development:** By the beginning of the 20th century, Davangere had developed into a major cotton trading centre in Karnataka. Along with industrial growth, the city also became an important educational centre for the surrounding regions. The establishment of schools and educational institutions contributed to social awareness and human resource development.
- **Post-Independence Development (1947 onwards):** After India attained independence in 1947, Davangere continued to expand as an industrial and commercial centre within the former **Mysore State**, which was later renamed Karnataka. The city witnessed growth in textile industries, agriculture-based enterprises, trade, education and public institutions. The post-independence period marked a new phase of modernization and urban development.

- **Formation of Davangere District (1997):** A significant milestone in the history of Davangere occurred on **15 August 1997**, when Davangere was declared the headquarters of the newly created Davangere district. The district was formed by reorganizing parts of the former **Chitradurga, Shivamogga and Ballari districts**. The creation of the new district administration accelerated regional development and strengthened Davangere's role as an administrative, educational, and economic centre.

Key Milestones in the History of Davangere: Davangere's history reflects a remarkable transformation from a small agricultural settlement to a major industrial, commercial, administrative, and educational center in Karnataka. Its development has been influenced by geographical advantages, agricultural resources, colonial economic policies, nationalist movements, and post-independence modernization. During the British colonial era, Davangere integrated into the global cotton economy through commercial agriculture and cotton cultivation, earning the title "Manchester of Karnataka." However, colonial policies favored raw material supply and limited local manufacturing growth. Covering about 4,924 square kilometers with a population exceeding 1.9 million (2011 Census), Davangere experiences a tropical savanna climate supporting fertile cotton-growing lands that underpin agriculture-based industries. Historically, the region was shaped by dynasties such as the Western Chalukyas, Hoysalas, and Vijayanagara Empire, contributing to its administration, trade, culture, and architecture. The nearby Chitradurga Fort symbolizes its medieval military heritage. Davangere played an active role in India's freedom struggle, participating in the Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, and Quit India Movements. The nationalist spirit fostered social reforms and heightened political awareness, marking the region's significant contribution to the independence movement.

The historical development of Davangere can be understood through the following major milestones.

The Rise of the "Manchester of Karnataka": The emergence of the cotton industry was the most significant milestone in Davangere's history. The availability of cotton from surrounding agricultural regions, growth of cotton markets, establishment of textile mills and improved transport facilities contributed to rapid industrial development. The textile sector generated employment, encouraged migration and stimulated urban growth. The cotton industry became the economic foundation of Davangere and shaped its identity as the "Manchester of Karnataka."

Economic Diversification: Although cotton and textiles remained central to Davangere's economy, the city gradually diversified into other sectors. Agriculture, food processing, small-scale industries, trade and service activities expanded over time. The development of commercial markets and business institutions strengthened Davangere's position as an important economic centre in central Karnataka.

Establishment as an Administrative Centre: The formation of Davangere district on 15 August 1997 marked a major administrative milestone. The district was created by reorganizing parts of the former Chitradurga, Shivamogga and Ballari districts, with Davangere becoming the district headquarters. This administrative recognition accelerated regional development through improved governance, infrastructure and public services.

Development of Transport Infrastructure: Transport development played a crucial role in Davangere's economic progress. The introduction of railway connectivity during the colonial period improved the movement of cotton, agricultural products and commercial goods. Later, the expansion of roads and highways enhanced trade links with major cities of Karnataka and other parts of India. Improved connectivity supported industrial growth and urban expansion.

Evolution into an Educational Hub: Davangere gradually developed into an important centre for education and learning. The establishment of schools, colleges, technical institutions, and professional educational centres contributed to human resource development. Educational growth enhanced social mobility and helped the city emerge as a regional centre for higher education.

Participation in the Smart City Mission: In the 21st century, Davangere entered a new phase of urban development through initiatives aimed at improving urban infrastructure and quality of life. Its inclusion in the Smart City Mission reflected efforts toward better transportation systems, digital governance, improved public facilities and sustainable urban development.

A New Vector of Development: IT and Innovation: In recent years, Davangere has shown potential for growth in information technology, innovation, entrepreneurship and service-based industries. The expansion of digital infrastructure, technology education and startup-oriented initiatives has opened new possibilities beyond traditional textile-based industries. This transition represents Davangere's movement from a traditional industrial city toward a diversified knowledge-based economy.

Architectural Evolution of Davangere: The architectural history of Davangere reflects the city's long journey through different historical phases, ranging from ancient religious traditions and regional architectural influences to colonial industrial structures and contemporary urban development. Although Davangere was not the political capital of major South Indian dynasties, the region preserves important cultural and architectural elements that represent the broader traditions of Karnataka. The evolution of its architecture mirrors the changes in political authority, economic activities, religious practices and social transformation.

Temple Architecture: Echoes of Ancient Empires: The temple architecture of Davangere represents the influence of Karnataka's major medieval dynasties, particularly the Chalukyas and Hoysalas, whose architectural traditions spread across different parts of the state. Although the city itself did not serve as the centre of these empires, the surrounding region experienced their cultural and religious influence through temple construction and artistic traditions. The temples of Davangere and its surrounding areas reflect the broader South Indian Dravidian architectural style, characterized by features such as gopurams (gateway towers), vimanas, sculptural decorations and carved representations of Hindu deities. These structures served not only as places of worship but also as centres of social and cultural activities. One of the prominent religious landmarks of the city is the Durgambika Temple, which occupies an important place in the religious landscape of Davangere. The present structure belongs to the modern period, but it is associated with an older religious tradition. The temple architecture follows the Dravidian style, featuring a prominent entrance tower, artistic sculptures and traditional temple design elements. Other temples in and around Davangere also continue this South Indian architectural tradition, preserving the cultural memory of the region.

Colonial Period and Industrial Heritage: The colonial period brought significant changes to the architectural character of Davangere. The emergence of the city as a major cotton trading and textile centre during the 19th and early 20th centuries resulted in the construction of new industrial and administrative structures. Davangere's rise as the "Manchester of Karnataka" created a new urban landscape dominated by; Cotton mills, Warehouses and godowns, Railway-related buildings, Administrative offices, Residential bungalows for British officials and industrial managers, Colonial architecture in Davangere was primarily functional, designed to support industrial production and administration. However, many buildings incorporated European architectural influences, particularly

elements of British colonial and European Neoclassical styles, including; Simple geometric designs, Symmetrical layouts, Porticos, Verandas, High ceilings and spacious interiors. These structures represented the economic priorities of the colonial administration and the emerging industrial economy.

Colonial Economic Policies and Transformation of Traditional Industries: The economic transformation of Davangere during British rule was closely connected with colonial agricultural and industrial policies. After the defeat of Tipu Sultan in 1799, British administrative control expanded over the Mysore region. Under colonial rule, agricultural production was increasingly oriented towards commercial crops, particularly cotton, to meet the demands of British textile industries. The fertile lands around Davangere became important centres for cotton cultivation. Large quantities of raw cotton produced in the region were transported to ports and exported to Britain, where they served as raw materials for industrial textile mills. Before colonial intervention, Davangere and surrounding areas had a strong tradition of; Handloom weaving, Indigenous textile production, Local artisan networks, Small-scale craft industries. However, British trade policies favoured machine-made textiles produced in England. The arrival of inexpensive British manufactured cloth affected traditional local industries. Many independent weavers and artisans faced economic difficulties and were gradually forced to shift towards agricultural labour, cotton processing or other forms of employment. Thus, colonial economic policies simultaneously encouraged cotton cultivation while weakening traditional textile production systems.

The Rise of the Cotton Industry (1900–1950): The early twentieth century marked a turning point in the economic history of Davangere. Local entrepreneurs and industrialists recognized the potential of the region as a cotton-processing centre due to the availability of raw cotton and growing market opportunities. The establishment of cotton mills transformed Davangere into an important industrial city. Major textile establishments, including Davangere Cotton Mills and Rajeshwar Mills, contributed significantly to the growth of the textile sector. The cotton industry brought several important changes; Economic Development, Increased industrial production, Expansion of trade networks, Growth of employment opportunities, Social Transformation, Migration of workers into the city, Formation of working-class communities, Expansion of urban settlements, Urban Development, Growth of residential colonies, Establishment of schools and hospitals, Development of markets and civic facilities. The cotton industry became the foundation of Davangere's modern urban identity.

Railway and Infrastructure Development during Colonial Rule: Transport infrastructure played a major role in the growth of Davangere's cotton economy. The British introduced railway connectivity during the late nineteenth century, linking Davangere with important commercial centres. The railway system facilitated; Transportation of cotton to coastal ports, Movement of industrial goods, Expansion of regional trade. However, colonial infrastructure development was primarily designed to support economic extraction and export activities rather than balanced regional industrialization. Similarly, improvements to irrigation tanks and water resources were mainly aimed at stabilizing agricultural production, especially commercial crop cultivation.

Modern Architecture and Urban Development: After independence, Davangere entered a new phase of architectural and urban transformation. The growth of education, administration, healthcare and commerce introduced modern architectural forms into the city. The expansion of educational institutions resulted in the construction of modern campuses characterized by; Functional designs, Simple geometric forms, Reinforced concrete structures, Open and spacious layouts. The city's educational development strengthened its identity as an important learning centre in Karnataka. In the twenty-first century, urban development initiatives, including participation in the Smart Cities Mission, have further transformed Davangere's physical landscape. Contemporary buildings, commercial complexes, residential projects, and public infrastructure increasingly reflect modern architectural trends. Modern urban architecture in Davangere is characterized by; Glass and concrete structures, Minimalist designs, Technology-based infrastructure Improved urban amenities.

Colonial Impact on Davangere's Industry and Socio-Economic Transformation: The colonial period played a significant role in shaping the industrial and socio-economic development of Davangere. The introduction of colonial administrative systems, commercial agricultural policies, railway infrastructure, and the expansion of cotton trade transformed Davangere from a small agricultural and trading settlement into an important industrial centre of Karnataka. However, this transformation was complex, as colonial economic policies simultaneously promoted certain industries while weakening traditional crafts and local production systems. The Indian freedom movement also had a profound influence on the socio-economic landscape of Davangere. Nationalist movements encouraged the boycott of British manufactured goods and promoted Swadeshi ideals, which created renewed interest in indigenous industries, handloom production and local enterprises. These developments

contributed to economic awareness and strengthened social consciousness among the people of the region.

Cotton Boom and Industrial Transformation: The availability of fertile black soil in and around Davangere supported large-scale cotton cultivation. After the establishment of British control over the Mysore region following the fall of Tipu Sultan in 1799, cotton production became increasingly connected with colonial trade networks. The region's surplus cotton attracted; European trading companies, British commercial interests, Local merchants and entrepreneurs, Davangere gradually developed from an agricultural settlement into a commercial and industrial centre. The growth of cotton-related activities resulted in the establishment of; Cotton markets, Ginning factories, Warehouses, Spinning and textile units. This industrial expansion laid the foundation for Davangere's identity as the "Manchester of Karnataka."

Development of Transport Infrastructure: One of the major impacts of British rule was the development of railway connectivity. The introduction of broad-gauge railway lines connected Davangere with major commercial centres of the region. Railway development facilitated; Transportation of raw cotton to coastal ports, Movement of industrial goods, Expansion of trade networks, Growth of commercial activities, Although colonial infrastructure was primarily designed to serve British economic interests, it also contributed to the long-term urban development of Davangere.

Employment Generation: The growth of the cotton industry created new employment opportunities and transformed the occupational structure of the region. The textile sector provided employment in Cotton mills, Ginning and pressing units, Transport services, Trading establishments, Related small-scale industries. Large numbers of workers migrated to Davangere in search of employment, contributing to population growth and the expansion of urban settlements.

Urban Development: Industrial growth became the foundation for Davangere's urban expansion. The establishment of mills, markets and commercial institutions encouraged the development of new residential and civic areas. Important urban changes included; Expansion of residential colonies, Growth of commercial markets, Development of roads and public facilities, Improvement of municipal services. The city gradually evolved from a rural settlement into an organized industrial town.

Social and Cultural Impact: The industrial growth of Davangere brought significant social changes. The movement of workers, traders, and entrepreneurs created a diverse urban

society. The city witnessed; Formation of labour communities, Growth of trade associations, Expansion of social organizations, Increased interaction among different communities, The cotton industry also influenced local culture, lifestyles and social relationships.

Educational and Social Advancements: The freedom movement encouraged political awareness, education and social reform activities in Davangere. Nationalist leaders emphasized education as a means of social empowerment. The growth of educational institutions contributed to; Increased literacy levels, Political awareness, Development of skilled manpower, Social mobility. Education became an important factor in the post-independence development of the district.

Community and Lifestyle Changes: Industrialization changed the traditional lifestyle of the people of Davangere. The emergence of a working-class population introduced new social patterns, including; Factory-based employment, Urban living conditions, Labour organizations, New forms of community interaction. The city developed a distinct industrial culture influenced by workers, traders, and professionals.

Social Reforms and Community Work: The social awakening associated with the freedom movement encouraged several reform activities in Davangere. Local organizations and leaders worked towards; Promotion of education, Removal of social inequalities, Improvement of public health, Support for weaker sections of society, The spread of nationalist ideas strengthened community participation and social responsibility.

Challenges and Future Outlook: Despite its industrial achievements, Davangere has faced several challenges in maintaining economic growth. The decline of traditional textile industries, increasing competition, environmental concerns and the need for industrial modernization have created new challenges. Future development opportunities include; Diversification of industries, Growth of information technology and services, Modernization of textile industries, Promotion of entrepreneurship, Sustainable urban planning.

Conclusion: The cotton industry has been pivotal in shaping Davangere's historical, economic, and social development, transforming it from a modest agricultural settlement into Karnataka's "Manchester." The growth of cotton cultivation, trade, and textile industries from the late nineteenth century spurred industrialization, urbanization, employment, and a diverse urban culture. Colonial-era infrastructure developments, though serving British interests, facilitated this growth, while the freedom movement fostered indigenous industries and political awareness. Post-independence, Davangere's cotton industry remained central to its economy, supporting diversification into trade, education, and services, and contributing

to civic and cultural development. Challenges such as global competition, technological changes, and environmental concerns highlight the need for sustainable practices, innovation, and skill development. Future growth depends on integrating cotton-based industries with emerging sectors like IT and entrepreneurship. The cotton industry's legacy symbolizes the resilience and progress of Davangere's people and mirrors Karnataka's broader economic transformation.

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