

Volume - 1

DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH

- with emphasis on Social Sciences, Humanities, Business and Management, Science, Library Science and Physical Education

Proceedings of International Multidisciplinary Conference

Editor-in-Chief
Dr. D.G. KRISHNEGOWDA

Editors
RAMESHA K.N
MANSUR PASHA
GIRISH M.C
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RESEARCH IN INDIAN OCEAN STUDIES: HUMAN- ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTION AND THE MAKING OF SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY

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Abstract : *The international waters have played a significant role in shaping the nation's histories through the ages. While the Atlantic Ocean assumed an importance during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when European migrations to the New World were at the peak, the Mediterranean Sea occupied the centre stage in European history during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the twenty first century it was the Pacific Ocean which assumed high priority with American strategic interests being concentrated in these waters. But throughout history, whether pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial, the importance of the Indian Ocean has always been significant. Touching the coastlines of two major continents – Asia and Africa – the Indian Ocean has remained the main artery of East-West maritime traffic through centuries influencing commerce, and facilitating exchange of people, religions, cultures, identities and ideologies. In recent times there has been a spurt of literature dealing with the predominant role played by the Indian Ocean in influencing the South Asian history. This paper titled *Research in Indian Ocean Studies: Human-Environmental Interaction and the Making of South Asian History* surveys the contribution of the Indian Ocean in shaping the history of South Asia in general and India in particular and emphasizes the human-environment interactions in this process.*

The concept of 'Indian Ocean World' or 'Indian Ocean Studies' gained prominence in the recent past and is broadly based on Ferdinand Braudel's concept of the 'Mediterranean world' which developed around the mid-1980s. Various scholars too tried to integrate Indian Ocean as a cohesive unit and made it basis for the study of large-scale historical processes.¹ Though they do not constitute any specialised school or category, Indian Ocean studies did contribute immensely to the rich maritime tradition of India and its relation with other trading societies. There is no doubt that the Indian Ocean studies expanded the scope of maritime history of Asia in the ongoing debates on overseas trade and its impact on the Asian continent.

Oceans are useful analytical units to transcend national boundaries and explore history in the long duration. This is reflected in the growing number of monographs focused on the history of a sea or ocean.² Of the three great oceans, only the Indian Ocean is enclosed on three sides by an almost continuous landmass made up of the East African coast, the Arabian Peninsula, the South Asian continental plate, and the Southeast Asian archipelagos. Because of this configuration, the Indian Ocean has played an important role in shaping the fortunes of South Asian region.

Almost all of the existing books on the Indian Ocean fall into one of two categories. The first category, which still accounts for the bulk, comprises of histories of the region written from a western

¹ For thematic influence of the Indian Ocean studies, see, Fernand Braudel, *Mediterranean and Mediterranean in the Age of Louis Philippe*, London, 1979. For Indian Ocean studies, See Ashin Das Gupta and M.N. Pearson Ed., *India and the Indian Ocean*, Calcutta, 1987 and Satish Chandra, Ed., *The Indian Ocean: Exploration in History, Commerce and Politics*, New Delhi, 1987.

² Some of the most recent examples include, on the Baltic Sea: A. W. Palmer, *Northern Shores: A History of the Baltic Sea and its Peoples* (London: John Murray, 2005); on the Black Sea: C. King, *The Black Sea: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); on the Red Sea: M.F. Boussac and J.-F. Salles (eds.), *A Gateway from the Eastern Mediterranean to India: The Red Sea in Antiquity* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005); on the Atlantic: *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); on the Indian Ocean: M. N. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003).