CHAPTER V

TRADE AND COMMERCE

The economic condition of the Tamil country from 300 B.C. to 900 A.D was mostly an agrarian oriented one. The cultivation of commercial crops, consumer goods, the availability of vast stretch of coastal areas both in the east and the west, the economic wants and requirements of the people, the cultural contacts with societies of the countries of east and west enhanced scope of commercial contacts\textsuperscript{231}. Hence, it is warranted to have an analysis on that line. While the brave, adventurous and industrious Tamils of that age assisted them to establish colonial relationship with the eastern and south eastern area such as Java, Borneo, Asia Minor etc., in the west also were the other trade and commercial centres\textsuperscript{232}. The hoards of Roman gold coins excavated in different parts of Tamil Country, belonging to the periods of the Sangam age expose the brisk and expanded commercial pursuits between Rome and Tamil Country\textsuperscript{233}.

Even the mentioning of the ports and commercial centres such as Naura (Cannanore), Tyndis (Tondi), Musiris (Cranganore), Nelkyanda (Quilon) etc. by the anonymous author of Periplus of the Erythrean Sea expose the abundant cultural

\textsuperscript{233} B. N. Luniya, Life and Culture in Ancient India, Agra, 1978, p. 532.
prospects of the Tamil country\textsuperscript{234}. Even Pliny, the Elder, the Greek geographer Ptolemy around 75 A.D and 130 A.D respectively had mentioned about various ports such as Naura (Cannanore), Tyndis (Tondi), Musiris (Cranganore), Nelkeyanda (Quilon), Bakare (Parakod), Colchae (Korkai), Nicama (Nagapathinam), Camara (Puhas), Poduke (Pondichery), Soptama (Marakkanam) etc\textsuperscript{235}. All such things enriched the prospects of promoted commercial contacts with foreign countries in various commodities of luxury and normal use, one is compelled to devote the attention on the trade and commerce, which prevailed during the period of study. The availability of two pot shreds bearing Tamil names in Tamil Brahmi script, belonging to the first century A.D.\textsuperscript{236}. will attest the above mentioned facts. A contract signed during the second century A.D in papyrus document reveals that there was a shipment of merchandise from Musiri to Alexandria\textsuperscript{237}. Such facts testify to the foreign trade which lasted between the Tamil country and the west. Even Pattinappalai has given a graphic account about the Chola seaport.

As pointed out by the early foreign authors such as Ptolemy, the west had purchased pearls, spices, muslin,

\textsuperscript{234} K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, A History of South India, New Delhi, 1975, p. 139.
precious stones, etc\textsuperscript{238}. The paratavar or members of the fishermen community imported horse from the west and they exported sandalwood, white stone, pearls, right whorled conches, (Valampuri Changu) conch bangles, gems, tamarind, salt, fish, etc\textsuperscript{239}. The Tamils had the tradition of importing white silk from China, tortoise shell and betel leaf from South East Asia, Gold, Copper, tin, lead, brass, coral, glass, pearls, ivory and gems\textsuperscript{240} were some of the materials used for commercial purposes. Even during the absence of any natural ports and developed sea faring activities, various export materials of Tamilnadu comprised of the spices of Western Ghats, agricultural produces, pearls, beryl of Coimbatore, diamond saphire, sandalwood, aloes wood, cotton goods, fine muslins, peacocks, monkeys, etc. So it formed half of the eastern trade of the Roman Empire\textsuperscript{241}. It is also believed that during the reign of Solomon who ruled around 1000 B.C it was a customary practice among the Romans to purchase apes, peacocks, ivory, kavi, togai etc. from Tamilaham\textsuperscript{242}. At the time of Augustus during the first century B.C there was a Roman colony at the mouth of River Kaveri and yavana lamps, wines, vessels were available there\textsuperscript{243}. They testify to the commercial progress of that period.

\textsuperscript{238} S. Krishnasamy Iyengar, South Indian Culture, Veppery, 1912, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{239} Perumbanarruppadi, 319-324.
\textsuperscript{240} Burton Stein, Essays on South India, New Delhi, 1976, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{241} B.N. Luniya, op.cit, p. 532.
\textsuperscript{242} V. Kangasabhai, Tamils 1800 years Ago, Madras, 1966, p.7.
\textsuperscript{243} B. N. Luniya, op.cit, p. 152.
Further from the time of Augustus onwards the commercial activities were mostly confined to luxury goods. Due to the trade contacts between India and Rome there came up good harbours in the south of Arabia\textsuperscript{244}. As the goods of the Tamil country had heavy demands in the west, the western ships loaded with gold came to the south and purchased pepper from the Chera country\textsuperscript{245}. Indigenous ships were employed and the ships were kept prepared for sailing\textsuperscript{246}. Kaanalam Perumturai was the port which was a significant one and from where native goods such as pepper were exchanged for gold\textsuperscript{247}. According to the need of trade and also according to the quality of the harbours both small and big ships were employed\textsuperscript{248}. The rarity of the commodities of the Tamil country invited the foreigners to have commercial contact with the peninsular India especially with the Tamil country\textsuperscript{249}. The doll lamps, fine fermented liquor called wine were certain rare things brought to Tamil harbours\textsuperscript{250}. These merchants and traders indulged not only in commercial and economic activities but also served the purpose of mixing the culture and civilisation\textsuperscript{251}. During the time of the colonization of Arikkamedu by the Romans, the widened commercial contracts began to expand to the eastern

\textsuperscript{244} K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Colas, University of Madras, Madras, 1966, p. 84.  
\textsuperscript{245} Ahananuru, 149, 152:6-7.  
\textsuperscript{246} Padirruppathu, 76:4-5  
\textsuperscript{247} Ahananuru, 162:7.  
\textsuperscript{248} Purananuru, 343:5-6  
\textsuperscript{249} Padirruppathu, 52:3-4  
\textsuperscript{250} Nedunalvadai, 101, Pattinappalai, 185, Maduraikkanchi, 322-323.  
countries\textsuperscript{252}. Due to their knowledge of monsoon winds the nature and foreign ships selected the exact periods for commercial movement\textsuperscript{253}. At that time they sailed across the ocean instead of moving near the coast.

While they imported silk and camphor from China, after many ups and downs between first and fourth centuries A.D. a new era came up after the fourth century A.D\textsuperscript{254}. But at that time Rome had greatly yielded to the abundant purchase of the ornaments of women. But the need and requirement for pepper, ginger, clove, cardamom etc., did not recede but stable\textsuperscript{255}. The commercial prospects with Java, Sumatra, Borneo, China etc., had increased. The decline and fall of the Roman Empire had caused such transitions and transformations in the commercial pursuits\textsuperscript{256}.

With regard to trade there were both local or native or internal trade and foreign trade. The transport of various commodities from the place of production to the place of market or shandi or angadi was an essential feature. The business centre had certain aspect such as vehicles, warehouse, shops, protection of property etc.

\textsuperscript{252} Haripada Chakravarthi, Early Brahmi records in India (300 B.C. to 300 A.D) Calcutta, 1974, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{253} T. K. Venkatraman, South India and Indian culture, Madras, 1955, p. 174.
\textsuperscript{254} B. N. Luniya, op.cit, p. 532.
\textsuperscript{255} K. V. Subrahmanya Aiyar, Historical Sketches of the Ancient Dekhan, Madras, 1954, p. 379.
\textsuperscript{256} K.A. Nilaknata Sastri, op.cit, p. 85.
Before analyzing the facts about the foreign trade, it will be a must to have an analysis about the facts about the internal or local trade. The internal trade during the Sangam age in the Tamil country was a well organized and a brisk one. The merchants were moving from place to place\textsuperscript{257} without any gap. Transport facility was essential for the movement of commercial goods. In general the merchants carried the goods on the back of animals. Salt produced in the saltpans of east coasts was a popular commodity and the sellers of salt were called umanar\textsuperscript{258} or salt merchants. The workers in the salt pans were living a poor life in the huts\textsuperscript{259}. From Muduvellilai, which was a renowned centre of salt production\textsuperscript{260}, the salt produced there, salted dried fish along with tamarind were carried to other places by carts internally and by ships to foreign countries. They carried the loads in wooden carts\textsuperscript{261} or on the back of asses\textsuperscript{262}. Heavy strong bulls equal to powerful kings dragged the carts in the ruts and holes of the road with heavy load of salt from the eastern seashore region to the hill tracts of the western part of Tamilnadu\textsuperscript{263}. The strings of salt laden attracted the youth and it was a custom among Tamil

\textsuperscript{257} D. Devakunjari, Madurai Through the ages, Madras, 1975, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{259} Maduraikkanchi, pp.117-122.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid., 318 – 322.
\textsuperscript{261} Ahananuru, 343.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., p.247.
\textsuperscript{263} Purananuru, 55:6-9.
young girls to count the number of carts, which carried salt. While they had to move the salt loads to the areas after crossing the arid land, long legged camels were used. Further oxen, camel, carts were used to carry materials such as rice, cotton, cloth etc., which were also treated as regular commercial produces.

The Tamils had a sound knowledge of the means of transporting the commodities from one place to the other. As the villages were self-contained it was easy for them to move the essential commodities quickly without any difficulty. They used bullack carts to carry the goods from the place of production to seashore ports for transport. Sakatam generally a vehicle too was in vogue for transport. Uruli or the wheel of a cart was a significant part. The achu or the axle of a wheel too was prominent. It had Kurati, or the axle around which the wheel rotates. Hence it was known as kudam. There was a nukam to which two bullocks were tied and this was a common part of a ploughshare. Thus the above details regarding the cart, which was comparable to a mountain covered with a cart, will indicate the utility value of the cart in transporting

264 Ibid., p.116.
265 Ahananuru, 245.
266 Purananuru, 117-118.
267 Nalidiyar, 2:4, Paripadai, 10:17, Purananuru, 102:2 etc.
268 Padirrumpattu, 27:1, Perumbanarruppadai, 47.
269 Tirukkural, 475:1.
270 Purananuru, 283:8, 290:5.
272 Purananuru, 45:0.
men and material. The calling of a cart as Olukai\(^{273}\) moving one after the others in a row with loaded goods\(^{274}\), would testify to the regular employment of carts for transporting the goods.

While the merchants traveled for marketing their produces went in groups to avoid high way robbery and also the plunder by robbers\(^{275}\). As the merchants or traders were threatened and plundered with the use of spears, they sought the help of the warriors to serve as security guards\(^{276}\) and the kings also complied with their requests.

For executing the local trade between villages and mountainous regions the donkies served as means of transport. Particularly they were used to carry pepper bags\(^{277}\). In the same way

Porai mali kalutai retunirai\(^{278}\)

- Nedun Cevikkalutal Kurunkal errai
- Puraniraip pantattupporai\(^{279}\)
- Punarpporai tangiye vatuval
- Nan purattu anare cevikkalutai eathu\(^{280}\)

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\(^{274}\) Purananuru, 37.
\(^{275}\) Ahananuru, 245:5-7.
\(^{276}\) Ibid., 89:10.
\(^{277}\) Perumbanarruppadai, 50.
\(^{278}\) Ahananuru, 89:12
\(^{279}\) Ibid., 343:12-13.
\(^{280}\) Perumbanarruppadai.
Atthiri, the mule or Koveru kaludai were used by the kings to ride, to draw the chariot and also to carry loads. In Ahananuru the wounds in its legs are described\textsuperscript{281}. Thus within the landscape the Tamil traders adopted such transports.

In the Tamil country maritime commerce was also a flourishing one. The availability of Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean in the east, west and south respectively not only made the Tamil country as a peninsula but also had enabled its inhabitants as seafaring people. Further the rivers such as Kaveri, Palar, Ten Pennai, Vaigai, Porunai and their tributaries which irrigated the fields of the Tamil land too served the cause of seaborne commerce.

The various references about kalam as ships\textsuperscript{282}, vangam as boat or sea\textsuperscript{283}, odam, the boat used for crossing the river\textsuperscript{284}, navay or ship\textsuperscript{285}, thoni, the boat, marakkalam\textsuperscript{286}, midavai, the

\textsuperscript{281} Ahananuru, 120:0, 350:6, Narrinai, 278:7, Paripadal, 10:16, Silappatikaram, VI. 119.
\textsuperscript{282} Ahananuru, 152:10, Aingurunuru, 102:2, Inna narpadu, 17:1, Kalittogai, 134:24, Manimegalai, VII. 70, XI. 7, XVI. 20 etc., Naladiyar 12:4, 250:4, Perumbanarruppadai, 350, Purananuru 26, 30:112, 58:18 etc. Silappatikaram, II. 7, V. 11, VI. 130, XV. 29, XXI. 16, etc.
\textsuperscript{283} Ahananuru, 355:1, Kalittogai, 92:47, Manimegalai, IV. 34, XIV. 73, XVI. 11, etc. Narrinai, 189:5, 258:9, Padirruppatu, 52:4, Purananuru, 308:9, 400:20, Silappatikaram, XIV. 107, XXVI. 165.
\textsuperscript{284} Ahananuru, 101:12
boat\textsuperscript{287} etc. stand to prove the constant and regular use of boats for transport in Tamil Country. Such facts indicate the seafaring nature of the Tamils along with their sea borne commerce\textsuperscript{288}. The references about such things also reveal the fact that the Tamils of that period gave importance to ships and sea borne commerce. They exposed the importance assigned to the production of ships\textsuperscript{289} as well as their commercial economy.

As the boats were of various shapes and called by different names is evident that the Tamils of the early period used boats of different size for internal trade both in sea and rivers. They were often used to ferry merchandise in the rivers. The Tamil kings of that period were also experts in undertaking sea voyages and they knew about the sea wind and were able to make the travel a simple one\textsuperscript{290}. The name Kadal Pirakkottiya Cel Kelu Kuttuvan would attest this fact. He was able to overwhelm the northern kings and their allies in the western sea due to his naval capacities\textsuperscript{291}. These facts even testify to the promoted condition of the ship building industry\textsuperscript{292}. While

\textsuperscript{286} Ahananuru, 50:1, Kural, 1068L:1, Naladiyar, 136:1, Narrinai, 111:8, Palamoli Nanuru, 344:3, Purananuru, 299:3, etc.
\textsuperscript{287} Paripadal, 6:53.
\textsuperscript{288} V.S. Arulraj, “Tamilaka Patagukalin Vahaikalum Katta Muraikalum” Kalantorum Ariviyal Tolil nutpam, Anaittindiya Ariviya Tamil Kalagam, Thanjavur 1998, pp. 239-244.
\textsuperscript{290} Purananuru, 66.
\textsuperscript{291} A. S. Duraisamy Pillai, Pantai Nalaya Chera Munnar Varalaru, Tuticorin, 1961, p. 156.
\textsuperscript{292} Silappatikaram, XIII 176.
Maduraikkanchi has mentioned about the larger and bigger ships\textsuperscript{293} Pattinappalai has referred about the quality of the ship\textsuperscript{294}. While Timil was a big boat used to threaten the fish in the sea\textsuperscript{295}, it is obvious that the fishermen for fish hunting or Paratavar vettam utilised timil\textsuperscript{296}. So to transport fish caught from the sea to the shore they utilised specific kind of boat.

The sailors, who sailed from foreign countries, when they reached a particular port in the Tamil country with the goods due to the help of the winds, adopted a custom of taking toddy\textsuperscript{297}. Such facts reveal that the ships used were having proper sailors who were experts in sailing. The Tamil country also was not an exception and they too had their own sailors.

The merchants who returned safely after their foreign trade were given a warm welcome with boundless joy and mirth\textsuperscript{298}. The big ships were anchored in the harbours far away from the seashore and from there the merchandises were transferred by small boats to be carried to the shore. At that time there were opportunities for the pirates to loote. But the Chera rulers were capable of over powering them and protecting the goods transported\textsuperscript{299}.

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\textsuperscript{293} Maduraikkanchi, 83.
\textsuperscript{294} Pattinappalai, 175.
\textsuperscript{295} Ahananuru, 60:1-3.
\textsuperscript{296} Ibid., 70:1-2.
\textsuperscript{297} Narrinai, 295:5-6.
\textsuperscript{298} Paripadal, 10:38-39.
\textsuperscript{299} Padirruppattu, 1:12-16 and 10:2-5.
All the three Tamil kings had commercial as well as cultural contacts with the Far East. The Bay of Bengal, which was treated as “a Chola lake” at a later date, was more congenial and comfortable for the traders during the period before and after the Christian era and South India and Ceylon were important centres of active and regular trade with the Far East. They employed many number of ships and they were in greater number than those of the ships from Egypt\(^{300}\). Thus the people of the Sangam age had made the best use of the seas, which are around the Tamil country, for commercial purposes with the use of ships and boats. The boats were used to load and unload goods. Such facts indicate the uniform system of transport employed then.

The references about Vyakkan kanadikan, the salt merchant, Nedumalan the sugar merchant, Ila Atan, the aruvai or cloth merchant\(^{301}\) reveal that there were many types of merchants available in the Tamil country. From a brahmi inscription datable to 2\(^{nd}\) to 1\(^{st}\) century B.C. available at Mankulam one can get the fact that there prevailed a mercantile guild called Nigamam at Vellarai\(^{302}\). Madurai llavanigan llavettanar too will attest the existence of a cloth merchant\(^{303}\). There were separate market streets called

\(^{300}\) K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, loc.cit., p. 141.
\(^{301}\) 244-45 of 1963 and 334 of 1908.
\(^{302}\) 465 of 1906.
\(^{303}\) N. Subrahmanian, Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index, Madras Univeristy, Madras, 1966, p. 71.
avanam\textsuperscript{304}. The market place was also known as angadi\textsuperscript{305}. In the same way there existed a morning bazaar called nalangadi\textsuperscript{306}. They bare testimony to the then existed system of trade and commerce. The women also were engaged in selling salt and they were known as Umattiyar\textsuperscript{307}. In general while the merchant was known as Vanigan\textsuperscript{308} the term Chetti informs that there was a separate merchant community\textsuperscript{309} in the Tamil society of the earlier period. The term Olaikkadyattar Nalvelliyar, the poet and author or Narrinai song No. 250 suggests that even persons who maintained a palm leaf shop was a learned scholar\textsuperscript{310}. The Kambala Chetty was a merchant who was indulged in the sale of a blanket\textsuperscript{311}. As there was a grocery market called Kulamarugu\textsuperscript{312} those who indulged in grocery was Kulavanigan\textsuperscript{313}. Seethalai Sattanar, the author of the Buddhist epic Manimegalai was a Kulavanigan\textsuperscript{314}. There were separate sellers of cakes called Kuviyar\textsuperscript{315}.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{304} Nedunalvadai, 44, Padirrippattu, 68:10, Pattinappalai, 158, Silappatikaram XIV. 213.
\item \textsuperscript{305} Maduraikkanchi, 439, 544, Narrinai, 258:7, Palamoli, 108:3.
\item \textsuperscript{306} Ahananuru, 93:10, Silappatikaram, V. 196, XIII. 122, XIV. 179, XXIII. 150.
\item \textsuperscript{307} Cirubanarruppadai, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{308} Tolkappiyam, Porul, 632:1.
\item \textsuperscript{309} Manimegalai, XVI. 107, XXV. 165.
\item \textsuperscript{310} N. Subrahmanian, op.cit., p. 189.
\item \textsuperscript{311} Manimegalai, XXV: 184, XXIX. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{312} Silappatikaram, VIII: 73.
\item \textsuperscript{313} Purananuru, 59.
\item \textsuperscript{314} N. Subrahmanian, op.cit., p. 314.
\item \textsuperscript{315} Manimegalai, XXVII. 32, Perumbanarruppadai, 377 Silappatikaram, V. 24, VI. 138, XIII. 123.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Thus the trade and commerce was an extensive one and the merchants went in groups and merchants of caravans escorted them. The goods brought to the Chola ports were dumped like anything and the customs officials stamped them with the seals of the king. Such facts testify to the bulkiness of trade and commerce which existed in the then Tamil society.

The trade and commerce had made their own impacts and influences. The overseas trade caused a vigorous colonization movement. That paved the way for the movement of Brahmins and other scholars belonging to various other religions to move to East Asian Countries, Indo China and Malayan Peninsula etc. Those who visited the alien countries were able to make huge profits. Without any exception the merchants who moved for commercial causes too obtained abnormal income and that in turn enabled them to be philanthropic and to make endowments for temples and other welfare measures. So it is understood that the economic prosperity coincided with charitable activities.

The system of affixing the seal in the commodities by the customs officials, the collection of customs according to the weights of the commodities will indicate the contact between the state and commercial activities. The trade arrangements

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316 Kuruntogai, 390, Ahananuru, 89.
317 Pattinappalai, 116-137.
319 Perumbanarruppadai, 80-81.
were made with the use of barter system. The value of salt was equated with the value of paddy as given below.

Nellum Uppum nere urir Kollirovena cheritoru nuvalum\textsuperscript{320}

While Kuruntogai lines\textsuperscript{321} attest the above fact. The following lines also support it.

Ten neyyodu kilangu mariyor min neyyodu naravu marugavum tinkarumbodu aval valuttor man marayodu madhu varuhavum\textsuperscript{322}

In the same way Perumbanarruppadai too corroborates the above point in the following way Neivilai katti pasumbon Kollan erumai nallam karungau peruvom.

So it is evident that the Tamils had exchanged salt for paddy, exchanged honey or ghee with roots\textsuperscript{323}. Fish and ghee were exchanged for meat. The sweet sugarcane and rice flake were exchanged for venison and liquor. By offering ghee they never worried to have gold and were satisfied with the getting of either cow or black buffalo. So the economy of exchange of commodities on barter basis will explicate the traditional system of procuring things instead of buying them in the markets.

\textsuperscript{320} Ahananuru 390.
\textsuperscript{321} Kuruntogai, 26.
\textsuperscript{322} Purananuru, 214.
\textsuperscript{323} Perumbanarruppadai, 159-60.
At the same time it cannot be denied that there were coins. The archaeological excavations have revealed so many things. As the Sundaikkaimuthur inscription speaks about the existence of a road from Calicut to Nagapatinam during the Sangam age\textsuperscript{324} various Chola coins belonging to the second century A.D have been unearthed at Nadattur\textsuperscript{325}. In the same way at Alagankulam of Ramanathapuram there existed a Roman settlement and many artifacts have been unearthed\textsuperscript{326} and they prove the existence of commercial contact between Tamil Country and Rome during the early century of the Christian era. The artifacts the coins available there too pin point the commercial contact among those places. The availability of Pandya coins belonging to 325-184 B.C., the Pallava coin of Simhavishnu etc\textsuperscript{327}, too reveal the role of coins in dealing with commercial prospects. The archaeologists had discovered gold coins at Sengam, Arikkamedu, Karur and Madurai areas\textsuperscript{328}. So, one could estimate that the coins also played a significant role in the business transactions along with the barter system.

The commercial commodities were stored in huge godowns before marketing\textsuperscript{329}. So it is easy to infer that a bulk business prevailed then. They were of immense help to big foreign merchants and traders. When Kaverippumpattinam is

\textsuperscript{324} Mutharam, 18, July 1982, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{325} Dinamalar, 3, August, 1982, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{327} The Hindu, 15, October, 1983, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{328} A. Swaminathan, Social Cultural History of Tamilnadu, Madras, 1991, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{329} Pattinappalai, 137 – 141.
hailed as a popular commercial centre having people speaking varieties of language one can estimate the bulkiness of foreign trade, which existed then\(^{330}\). To direct the ships sailing in the seas there were light houses in the shores\(^{331}\). This will exhibit the importance assigned to foreign trade. All such arrangements were made by the rulers for the sake of promoting the foreign trade.

The following Pattinappalai lines\(^{332}\) Naduvu ninra Nannenjinor Vaduvanji voy molindu Tamavum piravum oppanadi Kuraippadum kurai kodadu stand testimony to the commercial civilization which prevailed then. It also proves that the merchant of that period were all judicious and honest. They were even ashamed to tell lies while dealing with business. Thus the trade and commerce of that age was a monument for the commercial supremacy and cultural heritage of the Tamils. The vast and extensive trade as an authentic source exposes the prosperous nature of a fertile country under a fairly well ordered government which assured peace, an essential requirement of a flourishing commerce\(^{333}\), Puhar, Saliyur, Musiris, Cannanore, Tyndis, Nelcyndia, Bacre, Kaverippumpattinam (Kamara), Poduca, Arik kamedu, Soptoma (Marakkanam) Varkala (balita) Comari (cape comerin) Golchi (Korkai) etc were the renowned centres of sea borne commerce, available both in the east as well as western coasts of Tamil

\(^{330}\) Ibid, 213-218.
\(^{331}\) Perumanarruppadai, 134 and 341.
\(^{332}\) Pattinappalai, 206-210.
\(^{333}\) Burton Stein (ed), Essay on South India, New Delhi, 1976, p. 534.
Country\textsuperscript{334}. Due to the leading commercial prospects the news about the accession of Augustus as Roman emperor in 27 B.C. reached India quickly. The majority of the commodities produced in the Tamil country ware mainly for local market and the merchants moved from part of the Tamil country to the other areas of India freely and in the same way the export of goods was also a thriving one\textsuperscript{335}. As such one could estimate the commercial oriented Tamil economy of the period. Further next to agriculture, flourishing trade and commerce assisted the economic prosperity of the Tamil country. Under such a pretext it becomes a must to have an analysis of the taxation which prevailed in the then Tamil Country. The non availability of any references about the nature of industries of modern type and the details relating to the varieties of industries one could infer that small scale as well as cottage industries were the general order in those days. The common industrial productions ware to satisfy the local needs. The luxury goods as well as rare commodities which captivated the attention of the foreigners stood for the foreign trade. The Sangam literary evidences, the brahmi inscriptions and the writings of foreign authors point out the commercial supremacy of the Tamils of the ancient period. Anyhow agriculture, trade and commerce and industries contributed to the self sufficient economy of the Tamils of the period taken up for study.

\textsuperscript{334} Idem.
\textsuperscript{335} K. A. Nilakknata Sastri, A History of South India, Madras, 1976, p. 329.
In the light of the above facts it is to note that the commercial prospects continued to exist even during the period of the subsequent Pallava, Pandya and Chola periods. During those periods it was intensified one because there were merchant guilds called Tisai Ayirattu Ainurruvar, Manigramattar, Anjuvannattar, Nagarathar etc, existed then. There are evidences to prove during the early period in Tamil country horse trade was popular in the east coast between the Tamils and the west. The commercial contacts with foreign countries enabled the Tamils to have an extensive economic activity in a promising way. Though agriculture played a significant role in the internal economy of the Tamil country, the internal as well as foreign trades stood for the developed economy due to the inflow of foreign exchange. The commercial prospects were well knitted and almost all the rulers of all the dynasties of the Tamil country during the early period were much inclined to promote them in all possible way. They in turn widened the scope of cultural contacts.