CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The Tamil country which occupies the southern part of the peninsular India is having a rich history from the early centuries of the Christian era with demarcated boundaries. The economic activities differed according to the five fold land divisions such as Kurinji, Mullai, Marudam, Neidal and Palai. Each and every one of them had its own geographical as well as physical features. Though Kurinji region was known for its forest wealth and Neidal or the coastal region was rich in sea foods and particularly significant for pearls, fish, conch etc., the Marudam was the actual soil utilised for agricultural activities which major role in the economic pursuits of Tamil Country from 300 B.C. to 900 A.D. The people who inhabited the Marudam region were known for their involvement in agricultural activities which formed the basis for the economy of the Tamils of that period. The early Tamils, who were ruled by Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas in three different areas of Tamil Country, were known for their traditions and customs. The profession of an individual was determined by one’s own caste there. Moreover each one of the five divisions of land has its own specific set of people and every one of them had their own occupations according to the conditions of the landscape in which they lived. There prevailed a belief among the Tamils that only those who possess wealth would claim various rights in
this world. They also believed that people of various professions should depend upon the farmers for their livelihood. Agriculturists were given a greater veneration. The Tamil society was also a component of artisans hailed from other parts of India. There were musicians and people who had deal with types of musical instruments. Those, who involved in entertainments such as kuthu and dance were called by names such as Adai Kuttiyar and kuttiyal madanthai. The Brahmins were also called as arul tolilar due to their six fold duties and services. The royal family including the king was called Iraikudi. Such classification of people on the basis of their professions and occupations express not only their cultured nature but also the importance assigned to the economic pursuits of the professionals. The Tamils, who were much interested in having a prosperous future, had faith over astrology and astronomy. The Tamils society was a composite society and the people spoke only Tamil. The regional variations and professional or occupational differences were united even by their reverence to economic prosperity. Along with their involvement in agrarian pursuits importance was offered to different varieties of industries which were major and subsidiary. The Tamil economy was agriculture based as well as occupations and professions oriented.

During the Sangam age the Tamils were having their own deities apportioned to various landscapes. No temples of modern type were available. So at that time there was no relationship between temples and economic activities. With the
introduction of the Bhakti movement structural temples emerged. When the administration was given importance there arose the opportunities for their involvement in economic activities. The temple activities of the Sangam age offered employment opportunities for various kinds of people such as flower gatherers, garlandmakers, producers of sandal paste etc.

At the initial period the Tamils had agricultural and non-agricultural professionals. Though there prevailed economic ups and downs. The Tamils were not able to estimate that poverty was the result of unequal distribution of wealth. But the fertility of the soil, industrious nature of the Tamils and availability of plenty of materials satisfied needs of the society. They never worried about anything other than floods, droughts and famine. The Tamils had their own hereditary professions. The peasants or farmers were hailed as protectors of others. The women of ancient Tamil country involved were in various activities.

The Tamils at that time had commercial contacts with Yavanas i.e., Romans, including Greeks and Egyptians. There were officials called porul kakkum tolil makkal. Importance was assigned to safety and security of the properties of the kings as well as people. The production of rice, cereals and pulses attained significance. Price was the principal item of food and vegetarianism was mostly preferred and prevalent. Spinning, weaving too gained veneration and the dress materials exposed the economic superiority of the individuals. The commodities sold in the markets too express the sophisticated trade oriented
economy of the Tamils. The absence of modern economic concepts never interrupted the economic pursuits of the Tamils. The ruling dynasties such as Pallavas, Pandyas and Cholas stood for the continuation of a solid economic order with elaborated ways and means with the inclusion of state officials, temple authorities, public servants, private individuals who were involved in trade and commerce of the Tamil country.

Agriculture was a noble profession and the farmers protected the rest of the population. The ethics known as Eror Kalavali was in practice. The Marudam landscape was congenial and conducive for agrarian activities. Importance was assigned to the paddy fields as source of life of all and it was treated as the gift of God. Specific methods were employed in the execution of the agricultural activities. Ploughing, manuring, weeding, watering and harvesting were all carried out in all proper ways. Every activity was carried out with all care mainly to have a huge yield. Certain areas were left aloof as unfit for cultivation. At the same time the king, village authorities, Ur Sabhas etc., concentrated more on land reclamation activities also. The Tamils were aware of the fact that use of proper agriculture implements will lead to a pumper yield. Much importance was assigned to irrigation. And the rulers devoted much attention to promote irrigation facilities. They also used natural water (rain). Generally the Tamil land was a monsoon rain expected one. The knowledge of seasons of the Tamils was a beneficial aspect for the flourishing agricultural production was assigned to rain in time and they
knew that failure of monsoon or belated rain will arrest agrarian activities and will avoid proper yield and that in turn will cause famine and pestilence. In addition to the use of canal water erram or pickota was used to fetch water from the wells. The rulers founded granaries by ensuring good irrigation methods. Even embankments of rivers were undertaken to avoid floods damaging the agricultural fields. Tanks were also used and Pallavas attached importance to the tanks. The state and private individuals also contributed to promote the irrigation facilities. Irrigation system was a captivating measure of agriculture. The Pandyas too attached significance to the varieties of cultivable lands. They too attached importance to irrigation. Varieties of outlets were used to release water from the stagnant areas such as eri. Manual and mechanical devices were in vogue according to the knowledge of those who were engaged in agriculture. Different land tenures were also in vogue. The lands were utilised for grant purposes by the kings. Different varieties of lands were in vogue. The agrarian produces had their own say in the economic activities of the state. The temples too played their role in land transactions. The Sangam classics stand testimony to the different things produced by the lands. They were responsible for promoting the agricultural activities of the state by way of sales. The lands yielded incomes to the individuals, states and temples. Mortgage and sale of lands were also in practice. In land transactions private individuals, state, temples were all involved. The land as a property had its own role to play in the economic pursuits of the Tamils.
The economy of the Tamil country even centred on its industries, which were not of the modern nature. No big industries with big machineries were available then. Along with the minor industries associated with agriculture, the spinning and weaving industries were of primary importance. The then flourished foreign trade enables one to presume the availability of ship building industry. The production and repair of carts utilised for internal trade formed the basis for another industry. Many crafts and industries available in Tamilnadu led to the growth of industries. Salt and sugar making industries were also available. Industries were there to produce musical instrument and weapons of different categories. Chariots were produced with mechanical devices. In the Pandya country pearl fishing, conch cutting, rope making, jaggery production, manufacture of leather sheaths were certain industries available. The conversion of the palm leaves into commodities of utility value gained importance. The term timbili endiram exposes the extraction of juice from sugarcane. The Tamils of the period between 300 B.C. and 900 A.D. had their own manufacturing industries of small nature.

The Tamilian economic order was also a one based on its commercial activities. The Tamils of the ancient period had trade contacts with east as well as western countries. Java, Sumatra, Borneo, China in the east, Rome, Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor etc, in the west were the countries which had commercial contacts with the Tamils. The writings of Ptolemy, Pliny and work like Periphus of the Erythrean sea contain the names of
many chief commercial cities of South India, Naura (Cannanore), Tyndis (Tondi), Musiris (Cranganore), Colci (Korkkai), Camara (Puhar), Poduke (Pondicheri), Sopotma (Marakkanam) were few commercial centre existed during the early centuries of the Christian era in the east and west coasts of the Peninsular India and they were all known to the foreigners. The fall of Roman Empire led to the increase in the commercial prospects with other areas. The hawkers and peddlers were engaged in local trade. The merchants moved in groups to the distant places with their commodities were briskly moving due to developed means of transports. There was widespread foreign trade. Carts, donkies were the local means of transport. The terms such as kalam, vangam, odam, navoy, thoni, marakkalam, midavai etc. pinpoint the importance assigned to sea borne commerce. The calling of the Bay of Bengal as the Chola Lake suggests the brisk movement of ships either for commercial or for cultural contacts. There were salt, sugar, cloth, kolu, kulam merchants even during the Sangam age itself. Separate merchant guild called nihamam was prevalent at Vellarai. The market places were called Nal angadi and Al angadi. Palm leaf, blankets, grocery, etc., were other salable commodities. The flourishing trade and commerce not only enriched the economy of the Tamils but also widened the prospects of the movement of the Tamils but also widened the prospects of the movement of the Tamils to different countries. Both the barter system and use of currencies continued to exist during those days. There were godowns to store the commercial commodities. Next to agriculture, trade
and commerce prompted the economic prosperity of the Tamils. The economy of the Tamils was a self sufficient one.

The Tamil rulers had their own uniform taxes. Wealth was the prerequisite for any community and the state cannot survive without income. Taxes were the primary sources of income of the state. The Tamil rulers too were collecting varieties of taxes through the ages. Though no specific canons of taxation were prevalent, customary and traditional practice led to the collection of various taxes at different levels by the state officials. They too had their own role in the economic activities of the state. Irai and Vari were the common terms which indicate the taxes. Land revenue occupied the chief position with regard to the income of the state. No specified references are available regarding the amount fixed as tax. Customs and tolls too were collected. Various professionals paid their own taxes. Salaba Thevai was a tax connected with pearl fishing. The taxes collected were given at times even to temples and Ur Sabha for executing welfare activities. The state’s income through various kinds of sources were responsible for the growth of economic development. But the revenue collected by the state confused the tax payers because they had to pay different taxes at various contexts. During the period of the Pallavas the herbal plants were even taxed and their system was an unique one.

The Sangam people had their own coins winted out were not of standard type. The Pandyas, Pallavas and Colas too issued their own coins. They were called by different names
such as Kasu, Kanam, Palankasu, Anaiachu, Diramam etc. In general the economic prosperity of the state was maintained by the income of the state. Both agriculture and various professions were giving their dues to the state either by cash or kind. The foreign trade too fetched a sizable income to the state. The knowledge of the Tamils regarding the measurements of different kinds suggests the importance assigned to economic activities. But for few references about droughts and famines no greater economic distresses are available from any sources. The economy of the Tamils was a sound and solid one.

Though the Tamil economy was a self sufficient one they had to depend upon the state for the satisfaction of their economic needs. The states, collected land taxes. The kings announcing grants and gifts of lands maintained the economic standards in the state. The existence of records such as avanam, pledging by panayam, the Kanakkar, the accountants one can notice economic pursuit. The various Variyams established, the officials to collect customs and to affix state’s seal on the commodities which were transferred. The Sabhas, Maha Sabhas, Perunguri Mahasabhas and the Devakanmis were all employed by the state in its economic pursuits. The fines imposed on defaulters, who failed to pay taxes, were ordered to satisfy certain public needs such as offering ghee to temples to light lamps. At times of floods and droughts the state came to the rescue of the public. The Sabhas sold lands with the specific instructions of the state. By making payments the state cleared the forests and reclamation of lands was
undertaken. Lands were purchased by the state and they were made as endowments for temple activities. Various irrigation facilities were provided by the state. For the safety and welfare of the people the state enlarged, fortified and enriched the towns. The state attached significance to its financial activities. Tax exemptions and remissions of taxes were certain economic activities arranged for satisfying the needs of the state. The temples served as a central pivot in executing the welfare activities of the state. Gifted and endowed lands were exempted from taxes. Even while dealing with misappropriations of the state funds they were punished with orders to satisfy the specific needs of the people. Though the taxes were many no references are available regarding any opposition to the taxes. At times of exigencies they just appealed to the rulers for remission, which was conceded. Thus the well being of the people on economic considerations were executed by the state. The kings never interfered with the economic activities of the people unnecessarily.

The recent years research in history is being pursued in relation to society and its environment. It is enlarged to the extent of exploring the entire gamut of human life of the past. This include the mode of production, consumption, accommodation, transaction and veneration. In otherwords research on the social, economic, cultural and religious life of the people find prominence.

Agriculture, industry, trade and commerce were the most important sectors, which contributed to the economic
development and progress of any empire in India. Sangam age in South India is considered as the earliest historical period. Both archaeological and literary sources were contributed much to this period. The material culture of the Tamils were brought out by archaeological sources, which are sufficiently corroborated by the Sangam Anthologies. In this connection the description of kaveirpumpattinam in Silapathikaram holds good. Most of the anthologies of the period throw light on their agricultural activities, commercial transactions and the manufacture of handicrafts. In most of the common industries the rule was production for local markets. The Sangam literature also mentioned both Inland and foreign trade, which was flourished in Tamil Country. Most of the trade was carried on by barter system. We get reference about the markets or bazaars called Angadi.

The famous historians like Pliny and Tacitus describe the commercial transactions of Tamil Nadu. Usually there was great demand for our goods in foreign markets. The Sangam people has trade connections with other countries like Hebrew, Greece, Burma, Malaya, Java, sumatra and China. The period which follows immediately is called the period of khalabhras, whose activities are in obscurity. The pallava ruled south India between the fifth century A.D to ninth century A.D. Their involvement in agriculture and expansion of trade and establishment of colonies in Indo-china and Malay peninsula are proof of their intensive activities. The pallavas maintained trade relations with South East Asia, China and other parts of
India. Mahabalipuram and Kancheepuram, the twin capital cities, stand as a monument to their activities. The number of tanks and irrigations canals found scattered throughout the Tamil country served for the development of agriculture. During this period handloom weaving and manufacture of textiles were the popular vocation. These textiles were either utilised for local people or exported to foreign countries. The cholas came to power in ninth century A.D. we inferred lot of information from the Tamil literature about the economic activities of the cholas. The chola kings took series of successful steps for the improvement of irrigation for their cultivation purposes. River kaveri made the chola region fertile. Moreover they built tank, canal, well and did incidental works like construction of embankments and tank bounds for the development agriculture. The cholamandalam was a busy coast frequented by ships from china and Arabia, Mahabalipuram, Saliyur and Korkai were the important ports in chola kingdom. Barter system was also followed by cholas. They had trade connection with Persia, Burma, Java, Sumatra, Ceylon and Maldives Islands.

Thus the economic condition of the Tamil society was a self sufficient and appreciable one and that brought stability and solidarity to the state in the hands of the rulers.