CHAPTER II

ECONOMY OF MAVELIKKARA

In an agricultural society land is the most important means of production. Foreign trade had a very important place in Mavelikkara’s economic planning. It can be seen that in the economic tradition of Mavelikkara, the role of foreign domination is being reflected. The society and economy of Mavelikkara were closely linked with the socio-economic condition of Tamilakam. Tamilakam consisted of five eco-zones. These Eco-zones were inhabited by several clans such as the vetar and kuzhavar (hunter/gatherer/shifting cultivators), Muravar (plunderers), Itayer (pastoralist), paratavar (fishing/salt manufacturing people) and uzhavar (ploughing agriculturalist) respectively.161 The Tamil poetic texts contain an allusion to a variety of institutions, groups, relations, customs, rituals, ideas and processes.

During that period, Odanadu royal dynasty had established a relationship with foreigners. They maintained relations with the Portuguese and the Dutch.162 Odanadu dynasty consisted of Mavelikkara, Kayamkulam, Karunagappally and Karthikappally taluks. Kandiyoor Mattom was the head quarters of this dynasty but later it was shifted to Eruva.

161. Rajan Gurukkal & Raghava warrior, cultural History of Kerala vol I, P.162
162. A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, Marthandavarma, adhumika thiruvithamkoorinte udayam, March, 1990, p66
Economic structure of a society very much influences the nature of its social relations. Geographically Mavelikkara is very ideal for wet land agriculture. There are vast and extensive fields with fertile alluvial soil. The main item of crop for wet land agriculture in Mavelikkara is paddy. Literary texts like Unnineelisandesam mention several varieties of paddy like kuruva, cenel, pokkali, Anakkodan Coilan, kudum, Monden, etc. Probably two crops were done annually in Mavelikkara. Judging from the inscriptions of the 9th to 12th centuries the fertile field yielded generally two crops annually, the first crop being in Kanni (September, October) and the second in Makaram (January -February).

"Poovelum pala poikayum puzhakulam

Thottangalum poondezhum

Mavelikkara"

(KumaranAsan in Prarodanam)

The hard work of the farmers made Mavelikkara the commercial nerve centre of Onattukara. Achana Kovil River, Thodiyoor, Arattukadavu canal and numerous other water bodies made the soil of Mavelikkara even more fertile. Paddy, coconut, banana and gingelly are the major crops of the area. Every household has Jack trees. Mango and other fruit yielding varieties, tapioca and other tuber crops are common. All types of oil seeds are available in the region. A majority of houses had their own

163. Dr. PJ Cheriyan, Perspectives of Kerala history, (ed) p, 91
164. Mavelikkara has been hailed as a immense prosperity not only by Kumaran asan but also in many ancient literary works in Malayalam
ponds in different parts of Mavelikkara. Front tipped ploughs were used to till the
field. It was probable that people used bullock carts, boats, etc. as means of transport
in Mavelikkara.\textsuperscript{165}

**Trade and Commerce**

Kerala had contacts with foreign countries even from time immemorial. Mavelikkara, a flourishing centre, had a great share in it during ancient, medieval and modern times. The Arabs, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Phoenicians, the Israelites, the Greeks, the Portuguese, Dutch, the Romans and the Chinese were among the foreign peoples who had contacts with Kerala coast in the ancient period.\textsuperscript{166}

The main item of trade at that time was pepper. Local traders and merchants gathered pepper from Mavelikkara and Suburban regions. The Portuguese and the Dutch carried out extensive trade with Odanadu. The article of trade was pepper. Out of 20 Lakh Pounds of pepper exported annually, one fifth of this was from Kulliquilon. Like the Portuguese, the Dutch also got permission to construct godowns (Pandakasalas). Trade transactions were through the harbour of Azheekkal on the western side of Kayamkulam. The place referred to as Ayogee Rajyam’ by Ptolemy is Azheekkal. Trade was very prominent in different sectors like fish, coconut fibre, copra, soft mats, gun-powder, Dutch guns etc. Certain old songs like “*Puzhathan Kayamkulam Chela*” make us understand the fame achieved by the products.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{165} Block Panchayath records 2007. p.25
\textsuperscript{166} Dr. Cheravally Sasi, *Odanadinte Ulttudippukal*, sky publishers, 2007.p.23
\textsuperscript{167} ibid.,p.24
Purakkudu which was called as ‘’Porce’ harbor in Europe was a place near Mavelikkara. Commercial relationships were maintained with many parts of south India like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Vishakapatnam. As a result of this materials like metals, silks, cloth, angadi medicines (ayurvedic drugs), etc. reached Kerala from other states. Coins such as pon, achu, panam, kasu, azhakachu, tirumam, etc. were current in Kerala during the period from 9th to 13th century.

Another important route of trade was by sea. The narration about the Kerala Chinese connection in the middle era gives its details China silk, China-clay vessels, copper, mercury, lead, etc. reached here. The copper vessels and bronze vessels were unavoidable in temples and ‘tharavadus’ and they were procured from the trade relation with China. The Arabs and the Jews also purchased them from here and sold these items in their countries. It strengthened the commercial activities between the east and the west.

In Unniyadi charitham Chambu, it is mentioned as follows:

“Kannar Chaliar Mattumorrovaka
Parezhumariyar Kannadar Malavar
Kunjaran Vanger Thulinger Kalingar Ja
Barbara Chazhiyar Panikalottiyar
Konkanar Chonakan Cheena Thulikka

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(In Unniyadi Charitham Chambu there is narration about the market ‘Sreeparvatham’ at Mattom near Kandiyoor. Mangoes, coconuts, silver, gold, navaratnangal (the nine gems) like immeasurable resources were available in this region. Besides this, connected with the market, people of various states and the Chinese used to come here. This makes it very clear that Mavelikkara had a thriving trade connection.)

Achan Kovil River had played an important part in the trade of Mavelikkara. The materials reached Kayamkulam, Alappuzha and Purakkadu, etc. through its tributaries. Kumbha Bharani market in connection with Mavelikkara Chettikulangara Kumbha Bharani festival originated as a result of the influence of Buddhism and was a platform suitable for transaction. Many consignments brought in large country boats (Kettuvallams) used to reach the bank of Achan Kovil River and were then taken to different places in bullock carts and sold.

In the Tharisapally order of the 9th century there is reference to trade guilds. In this too, much reference is there about ‘Manigramam’ and ‘Anchu Vannam’.

168. Suranad Kunjan pillai, Unniyadi charitham, The manuscripts library university of Travancore, 1956. p.27
Manigramam was the trade group of Syrian Christians and Anchuvannam was the trade group of Jews.\textsuperscript{169} During the feudal period, most of the agricultural work was done by the agricultural slaves. They did all the work like cultivating the field, planting pepper vines and watering, watching the crop, reaping and threshing the crop. With the passage of time there was increase in the number of slaves. A considerable part of the population was slaves. During Sangham period and the subsequent centuries an economic condition similar to slavery existed. This was called the community of ancient castes. Later they paved the way for feudalism. As far as is known from the temple records, the main crop was paddy. In an agricultural society land is the most important mean of production. Foreign trade had a very important place in Mavelikkara’s economic planning. It can be seen that in the economic tradition of Mavelikkara, the role of foreign domination is reflected. During that period; Odanadu royal dynasty established a relationship with foreigners. They maintained relations with the Portuguese and the Dutch.

\textit{“Banaresthath Bhavana Yugalam pinnliettangu chentar Kanam Kayamkulamathi Kulirtheedumangadi Thane:”}

\textit{(Purvabagam slokam, 94)}\textsuperscript{170}

The most remarkable feature in the economic–social relations of medieval Kerala was the emergence of Janmi system or landlordism. Elamkulam states that this

\textsuperscript{169} Dr. N.M. Namboothiri, Kerala Samskaram Akkavum Puravum, Calicut university central co-operativestore

\textsuperscript{170} In Unnuneeli Sandesam, it is clearly mentioned about the market of Kayamkulam
development took place during the long war in the 11th century.\textsuperscript{171} It was during this period some Namboothris acquired the status of Janmis or landlords. They were temple trustees who controlled the properties of the temple. Gradually they became the owners of the temple lands.

Janmi system was in vogue in Mavelikkara in the medieval and modern times also. Brahmin families possessed vast and extensive areas of land. People respectfully called the Brahmin landlord ‘yajaman’. Mortgage tenures called kasvam, kuzhikkaram otti, etc. were prevalent at that time and some of them even continued until the land legislation was implemented by the government of Kerala in 1957. It is clear from the fact that a kind of landlordism was prevalent in Kerala. The presence of Brahmin settlements, around a millenium old temples, etc. assert the fact that kasvam, kuzhikkaram, otti, etc. were prevalent at that time. The presence of Brahmin settlements, around a millenium old temples, etc. assert the fact that such a kind of economic relations existed in Mavelikkara and suburb regions.

The number of Brahmin villages in the traditional history is sixtyfour. Three types of village dwellings were there centres of Brahmin settlements. There is mention of the land ownership in the records of Brahmashwam and Devasvam. Brahmashwam was the property of Brahmins. This right was like share-right. The Devaswom land owner was God in principle but in practice it was the owners of the temples. The most

\textsuperscript{171} Ellam kunjan pillai, Samskarathinte narikkakkallukal, Kottayam, N.B.S p 137
important collection points of resources were the temples. Out of this paddy the temples were getting, a part was given to the employees as wages. Like this many people lived there around the temples.172

**Pattern of land Holdings**173

In Mavelikkara so many people of different communities like Chettys, Moosaris, Aasaris, and Kammalar, came here in connection with temple trade and later settled with different occupations. With the passage of time Mavelikkara’s economic foundation, as before, was agricultural only.

The transactions of agriculture were more or less continued without change till the end of the 19th century during which feudal connections existed and also in the initial stage of the 20th century. The leftist government which took over the rule of

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172. Dr RaghavaVarier & Dr .Rajan Gurukkal Kerala charitharam , Karshikka Vavastha , Vikasana prakkiriyakkal, p 104-127
173. Dr.Rajan Gurukkal, The Kerala Temple and The Early Medieval Agrarian System Valathol Vidapeetham, 1992,p, 74,
Kerala in 1957 inflicted a big blow on the land lord system. This helped to confirm the right of the workers like right of occupancy, tenants’ settlement and tenancy to break and throw the chain of slavery. The Travancore government exported varieties of articles from venad to other parts of the world. Our foreign trade was principally with Bombay, Calcutta and Colombo. The main items of export were coir, coffee, coconut, tamarind oil, arecanuts, dry ginger, jaggery, salt, fish, timber and pepper.

In the Travancore administration report, it is clearly stated that the world economic depression did not affect Travancore maritime trade. In spite of the world economic depression and consequent fall in commercial transactions, the sea-borne trade of the state, foreign as well as coastal, was on the whole maintained without any decrease, it did not affect the transportation of goods from Mavelikkara. The governments of Kerala took the initiative to introduce a leading sea port in the world\textsuperscript{174}. Besides, the project can boost our economy. Under this system, agriculture was the main form of economic activity that continued in Mavelikkara till the dawn of the twentieth century. Even today agriculture continues to be one of the chief occupations of the people of Mavelikkara. Mavelikkara is an area characterised by an expansive inhabitation. Paddy itself is an important agricultural wealth of Mavelikkara.

\textsuperscript{174} Travancore administration report for the year (1932-33),Trivandrum, Government press. P. 171
There are ten panchayats in Mavelikkara taluk.

The economic background of these panchayats from 1990 to 2010 is very strong. Chettikulangara, Thekkekkara, Palamel and Thamarakkulam panchayat are the areas where virippu cultivation is seen in plenty. But the village suitable for puncha cultivation is Chennithala panchayat. Two panchayats are famous for gingelly cultivation. They are Thekkekkara and Chettikulangara panchayats. In Chettikulangara panchayat, gingelly cultivation is being done in 240 hectares. Cocanut, plantains, areca, fruit yielding trees, etc. are seen in plenty here. Rubber cultivation is also seen in abundance. In panchayats like Chunakkara, Vallikunnam, Thamarakulam, and Thazakkara, rubber cultivation has gained importance.

One rubber nursery production group under the complete control of the Rubber Board has been working in Chunakkara panchayat since 1989. Rubber store in Thamarakkulam panchayat is engaged in 600 metric tone rubber sheet trades per year. Like this, betel leaf cultivation is the other crop which is extensively done here. It is seen that both Chunakkara and Thamarakkulam panchayat are engaged in 600 metric tonne rubber sheet trade per year. Like this betel leaf cultivation is the other crop which is extensively grown here. It is seen that in Chunakkara and Thamarakulam Panchayat betel leaf cultivation is seen in plenty.
Nooranadu panchayat is very famous for vegetable cultivation. Cattle rearing is seen in most of the panchayats. Panchayats like Chennithala, Palammel and Vallikkunnam have much possibility for milk production. Milk Co-operative Societies are working in Palamel panchayat. As per the economic survey of 1996, a total of 4100 litres of milk is being produced here. There are eight main milk collection centres in Vallikkunnam panchayat. In Cennithala panchayat and Vallikkunnam panchayat two gobar gas plants are in operation. Rearing of hens (poultry farming) is seen in most of the panchayat. But in Vallikkkunnam panchayats it is matchless. Poultry farming for meat is seen in various panchayat extensively. Traditional farming is seen in Chennithala panchayat only. About one thousand farmers from 150 families are directly involved in this field, units of such hatcheries are seen in Chennithala panchayat only.

In Thazhakkara and Thamarakkulam panchayats farming of goats, pigs and poultry for meat is done extensively. Fishing was seen as another important sector. Chennithala panchayat has much importance for fishing. Since Acchan Kovil river and its tributaries are there, 80 different varieties of fish like seabbard fish, viral, carpooorsole, musi, kari, sting fish, kuruva, Kallmutti, prawn or shrimp are available. But in Chunakkara, fishing activities are much less. In Chettikulangara and Thazhakkara a lot of inland fishing is done. The trade condition of Mavelikkara is seen as very limited. Brick business is a main occupation. In Chettikulangara and Thazhakkara a lot
of inland fishing is done. The trade condition of Mavelikkara is seen as very limited. Brick business is a main occupation. As per the requirement of bricks in the field of construction, business has improved.

In Chennithala Panchayat two factories and 27 small kilns are working. In Thamarakkulam also there one about 30 bricks units. In Vallikunnam Panchayat there are about 25 units. Another important trade is tile business. This is situated in Vallikunnam Panchayat. H.I.C. tile work was established in 1962. The establishment is working in the co-operative sector. Wirecut brick units and country kilns are also seen here. Cashew business is a very important business here. In Chunakkara, Thamarakkulam, Thekkekara, Vallikunnam and Palamel Panchayats many cashew factories are there. So many people are working in this sector. In most of the remaining panchayats small scale units are working. Saw-mills, copra mills, printing presses, flour mills, oil mills, rice mills and engineering workshops, etc. are seen in various panchayats of Mavelikkara. The important business establishments include welding, repairing and motor vehicle service units. etc.  

Industries

The people of Mavelikkara were engaged in various activities such as agriculture, improved prawn farming, coir–fibre processing and many more small scale activities based on raw materials derived from estuaries. The most important among them

175. Block panchayat various reports .(1991-2010)
were cotton & coir making. Cotton wearing has been the hereditary occupation of a certain caste called chaleyans distributed throughout the district. Today tapping, husking of Paddy and fishing were other of occupations in the region.

**Industrial Estate**

This Industrial estate was started in 1959. About 49 units are functioning inside this. One public sector establishment under the control of CISCO and one chemical factory in the name of Sangross Laboratory are also there in this estate. They manufacture soft gelain capsules, Clofazimine has only one manufacturers in world. One glass factory by name I.C. glass factory had been working in Thazhakkara. But this was shut down. Like this another establishment in the name of Venadu Pharmaceuticals was there. Glucose was being produced here. This also was closed later. Coir Lab of Thazhakkara, Travancore Oxygenfactory at Kunnam, Liquid Nitrogen Plant at Vazhavadi, Sangrose working in the Industrial Estate are the Trade Establishment working in Thazhakkara Village.

**Regional Workshop, KSRTC**

Regional Workshop of KSRTC is the only industrial unit situated in Municipal area. About 300 people work here. Body building, maintenance of buses are the works undertaken here.
District Agricultural Farm and Seed Farm

The district agricultural farm was started in Thazhakkara Village in July 1963. The district farm is established in an area of 37.66 hectares. The villages are calling this farm as ‘Noorekkar’. Out of the total land, 34.72 hectares are made suitable for cultivation. Highly productive seeds are being produced here. So many people work in the seed farm established in Arunootimangalam.

Khadi Welfare Co-operative Society in Pallarimangalam

Khadi Welfare Co-operative Society of Pallarimangalam is situated in Thekkekara Panchaya t. An establishment in the name of Khadi and Villages, Industries Association was registered in 1957. In these villages Khadi publicity activities take place as part of National Independence Agitation and popularisation of Khadi products. Other units like bleaching unit, Dyeing unit, oil unit, weaving centre, soap unit, also work here. Products from the above units are being distributed within the state and outside.176

Live Stock

Live stock and animal husbandry are equally important occupations in Mavelikkara. It has been suggested as an apt occupation for the rural population and for the people who are landless. It is the remedy for unemployed women and the

176 Data collected from various industrial departments
economically weaker classes. Most of the people in Mavelikkara were engaged in managing livestock and such activities like feeding, milking cattle and cattle breeding. The government of Kerala promotes livestock and cattle rearing by offering lucrative incentives to those engaged in the profession and holds educational programs. The introduction of new breeds of cattle such as Sunandine is also an encouraging factor.

Besides the above so many co-operative organisations and co-operative societies are seen in these panchayats. Many modern activities and co-operative activities are also taking place here. So many plants for the uplift of the farmers are implemented. It is seen that the traditional handicrafts still completely exist here. Cottage industries like weaving of pandanus mats, making of baskets, were there in many panchayats. But these do not exist now. Agricultural trades in some sectors are seen nicely here. The influence of Gulf money has brought about changes. A new transformation can be given in many sectors. The economic conditions of Mavelikkara can scale greater heights if the plans are made efficient and practicable. Tourism is another sector having the possibility of growth and development.

Thus the story of the economy of Mavelikkara down the centuries is one of growth and development.