CHAPTER - II

PEARLS AND CONCHES
PEARLS AND CONCHES

Since the study is on pearl-fishing in the Pāndya Coast, this chapter forms the crux of the theme. It deals with the Tamil, Sanskrit and Chinese names for pearls, the references to pearls and conches found in the Saṅgam works and other non-Tamil literary sources, the knowledge of our ancients about pearls and conches, varieties of pearls and conches and all other related matters. It is based on the information provided by the indigenous and foreign evidences. Indigenous evidences include what is found in Tamil, Sanskrit, and other languages and inscriptions. Foreign evidences are of Greek, Roman, Chinese, Arab and of Portuguese, Dutch and British origin and also of other European Countries. Both primary and secondary sources are made use of in this chapter. For the sake of scientific treatment, recent findings of scientists are made copious use of.

Pearl is one of the most valuable natural products. Large and perfectly shaped pearls rank in value with the most precious stones. But pearls differ from other gems. Most gems are minerals that are mined from beneath the soil. But pearls are formed inside the shells of oysters. Mineral gems are hard and
they usually reflect light. But pearls are rather soft and absorb as well as reflect light.\(^1\)

Man, immediately after the birth of anything, used to call it with a particular name. In that sense, ancient Tamils called pearls as Mutthu. Tolkappiyam the extant Tamil grammar, supposed to have been written in the 4th Century B.C., calls pearls as Mutthu. The Sanskrit name given to pearl is mukta. This word occurs in the form of vimukta in the Vedic literature. Vimukta is explained as secreted (in the oyster) by Macdonnel and Keith\(^2\) and mukta as the product released from the oyster by Monier Williams in his Sanskrit Dictionary.\(^3\) In the Chinese works, pearls are referred to as the products of South India. In Weishu (a Chinese work on trade), 102 pearls are mentioned, among the products of South India, and are called Mo-ni-chu, i.e. mani which is the Sanskrit word for the pearl. Chu-mu in Chinese means

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2. Ragozin, Vedic India, Madras, 1927, p.11.
pearl's mother. 4 *Purl* (Fr. *Perle*, < L.L. *Perula*, *Perla*), a pearl either for *pirula*, L.L *pirur*, a pear, or for *pilula* a pill, a globule. It is a smooth rounded nacreous body formed around an irritant usually produced by oysters and valued as a gem when perfectly coloured and lustrous. 5 The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines pearl as a small, hard, round, silvery-white or bluish grey lustrous mass that is formed inside the shells of some oysters and is of great value as a gem. 6

Cilappādikāram calls those who string *mutthu* as *mutthukkoppar* and the ornament as *mutthuvadam*. 7 A poet of the Puram Collection, who was familiar with the pearl in its native state within the oyster, describes gems emitting rays, while

5. *New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, p.1091.
lying on the bright long layers of sand which were like the pearl in a matured long shell.\(^8\) Again, a Puram poem speaks of pearl as the many-rayed pearl born from the sea.\(^9\) Perumpanarruppadai describes it as 'sand spread like pearls'.\(^10\) The pearl is considered to be one among the five jewels – ruby, sapphire, pearl, emerald and topaz.\(^11\)

The fishermen specialized in pearl-fishing, fish the pearl oysters and collect the pearls found in them. The simple but snowy, small but beautiful pearl, the product of nature was discovered by man even before 3500 B.C. The Vedas\(^12\) of India, the Bible\(^13\) and the Koran\(^14\) make several references to pearls, as

10. Perumpanarruppadai, 335.
objects of adoration and worship, as also the barometer of wealth. On the other hand, pearls had also been used in the burial rites of the dead as found in the excavated coffins, belonging to 2300 B.C. in Iran and in the crematory basins of the American Hopewill Indians. 15 These pearls have been fished from various parts of the globe, particularly from Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Erythraea, Sri Lanka, Bosporus and the British Isles. 16

ANCIENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF PEARLS

From time immemorial the Tamils have found that there are nine gems in the world. Seven of them, namely Topaz, Chrysoprasus, Ruby, Emerald, Sapphire, Diamond and Sardonyx grow on land and two, Pearl and Coral, in the sea. The Tamil Lexicon lists pearl as one of the nine gems (navamani), which are precious, costly, beautiful and reflective. 17 Pearl is the pride of the naturalists as diamond is that of the chemists. People

have found the pearl as a valuable item of jewellery through the ages. Because of its round and complete shape, 18 pearl got its name Mutthu (i.e.) something complete or perfect. In Ramayana, pearl is called Muktha. 19 Since pearls are of indigenous origin particularly of Tamil Nadu in India, Mutthu might have been the original name of this nature's gift.

All ancient literatures in Tamil and Sanskrit refer to pearls. They speak of pearl as a luxurious jewellery and a valuable trade commodity. Above all, pearls are used as an object of comparison. The Santhome Cross in the St.Thomas Mount, Chennai, has some artistic features. The palaka part of it carries the makara (fish) and from its mouth emerges the pearl (montika) torana or arch in the shape of a pipal leaf. 20 The wooden pulpit, decorated with finely carved out mermaid figure

18. Sometimes rough and shapeless pearls have also been noticed in some catches.


has floral designs. There is a beautiful gem necklace around its neck and armlets in the hands and pearl bracelets on the wrist. But, we are not able to know when the ancient Tamils first came to know of the pearls in the oysters and when they began to systematically exploit the pearl fishery.

As said earlier, references to pearls are found in the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The only story that we have about the origin of pearls is mentioned by Megasthenese of 3rd century B.C. and Aelien of fourth century A.D. The story goes on that Herakles had a daughter by his Indian wife, to whom he gave a precious pearl, which he found in deep sea, while he was getting rid of the evil monsters. There is no historical evidence as to how the early man in South India came to know the use of pearls and when the exploration of the pearl-fishery did occur. Perhaps it was by accident that the ancient Tamils came across the glittering pearls, when they fished in the sea and boiled the pearl oysters for food. Then they got the dead pearl

21. Ibid., 61.

only. Later, they opened the oysters before boiling and collected the pearls. This is the most possible way that our ancients learnt the art of pearl-fishing.

These pearls were being fished from various places in India, particularly from Perumuda in the Gulf of Kutch, from Korkai in the Pandya Coast, from Vilingam in the Aii (Cera) Coast, which also for sometimes formed part of the Pandya Country. Cladius Aelien records that pearls were fished from a port city ruled by the Sórás.23 Mc Crindle identifies Sórás as the Chōlas.24 In the Chōla Country, there is no reference to fishing pearls at any place, at any time, particularly in the Coromandel Coast (Chōla Mandala Kadarkarai). Pearls are also, according to Saṅgam works, fished from the Cera Coast.25 Perumuda mentioned by Aelien might have been Banther (Musiri) i.e., Murasī Banther or Marasee Banther as it is called in Sanskrit works or the Musiripattinam as referred to in Saṅgam works. Therefore, 

23. Ibid., p.143.

24. Ibid., p.144, foot note.

the Soras referred to by Aelien must have been the Čeras rather than the Chōlas. Further, pearl oysters were fished from the coast of Sri Lanka, near the Gulf of Mannār. Megasthenes knew that Ceylon was an island more productive than India of gold and large pearls.26 The Pāṇḍya Pearl-fishery Coast, otherwise called the Parava Coast, more specifically the Gulf of Mannār, extended from Ramanathapuram or Thondi proper to Kanyakumari. Vīlingam, situated on the West Coast or the Aii Coast, is a few kilometres away from the famous Muttom, which is very near to Kanyakumari, in the Aii Coast. Much details are not available about pearl-fishing at Vīlingam in the Saṅgam works. Perhaps the Chōla invasion of Kānthalūr Salai was motivated by the wealth at Vīlingam, which had already seen a number of battles between the Aii Kings and Pāṇḍyas and between the Āii Kings and the Chōlas. However, the Gulf of Mannār had gone in history as the pearl-fishery of the Pāṇḍyas.

GRADING OF PEARLS

The pearls fished are graded and classified into different categories based on their shape, size, weight and

lustre. The largest and the first class variety were the most valuable. Ten grades of pearls are recognized in India viz. Aney (perfect in shape, lustre and weight), ladivu (not so perfect as Aney), Anatharic (failing in shape or lustre), Mesegoe (failing both in shape and lustre), Kallipu (inferior to Mesegoe), Korower (a double pearl), Peesal (a cluster of more than two), Mandangoe (folded or best pearl), Kural (very mis-shapen and small), and Thools. They are Nalankol Mutthu, Venmutthu and Veyuthir mutthu. The price of pearls depended on their size and weight. Normally, it took nearly seven years for a pearl to attain maturity. The pearl oysters grow in the seas of hot places. In tropical countries such pearls are big, attractive and costly.

The following table shows the periodical growth of a pearl.

28. Sambandhar Tevaram, 197.3 and 294.8.
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<th>Age in month</th>
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The pearl kept at the South Kensington Museum, London, is the biggest of all the pearls in the world. Its circumference is 4 1/2 inches and it weighs 3 ounces. But the pearl 'La Pellagrina', kept at the Zosima Museum, Soviet Union, is the most beautiful of all the pearls in the world. Its weight is 28 carrots. It testifies to the glory of our country, since it was taken from India to Soviet Union.

Megasthenese, the Greek ambassador of Zeleukos Nikator to the court of Chandragupta Maurya in the 3rd century B.C. was the first foreigner to record his observations about pearls, pearl-fishing and the nature of pearls. He records that Ceylon (Toprabâne) was more productive of large pearls than India.  He gives a fairly good account of pearl-fishing, and states that each shoal of oysters had a leader, to capture whom was to get the whole group. "The fishermen allow the fleshy parts of such as they catch to rot away, and keep the bone, which forms the ornament; for the pearl in India is worth thrice its weight in gold".  

A number of varieties in pearls have been referred to in other records; like round pearls (vattam), roundish pearls (anuvattam), polished pearls (oppumutthu), small pearls (kurumutthu), nimbolam payittam, old pearls (paramutthu) ambumutthu, oruppuravan, irattai, sappatti, sakkattu, karadu, ...

ippippatru, aravāna, panichchāy tōl-teyndan and tolidandana,33 crude pearls, twin pearls,34 nalmutthu, fresh water pearls or cultured pearls, rice pearls, flower pearls, seed pearls and kalliiki pearls.35 Commonly the weight of a pearl is three quarters (of a Kalanju), (one) manjādi and one Kurnī.36

The Indian pearls are classified in the Bombay pearl market in the following four types:

Jeevan - Uniform shape, bright lustre, rose pink or pinkish white, tinge or rosy orange.

Gholwa - nearly rounded, bright coloured or varying shades.

Ghat - small irregular-shaped ones.

Masi - Very small ones.37


34. Ibid., p. 36. Inscriptions of Rājarāja I on the northern wall of Rājarājēśwaram at Tanjore lower tier. It is engraved in 38 sections of 15 lines each and contains a description of 30 sacred ornaments, made partly of gold and partly of pearls - issued in the 29th year of his reign.


Nearly 85 percent of pearls, obtained from the oysters are of the Gholwa type. The pearls are processed re-shapped, drilled and then exported to the European countries. 38

PELARS IN SACRED BOOKS

Hymns of Atharva Veda, together with extracts from the ritual books and Commentaries, mention pearl and its shell as an amulet bestowing long life and prosperity, protecting the people from straits, helping to slay the Rakshasas and conquer the Atrins (devouring demons). They consider that with the pearl and shell, people can conquer disease and poverty, they being their universal remedy. 39 The pearl as amulet - born from the sea - a sun born from Vritra (the cloud) shall on all sides protect the people from the missiles of the gods and the Asuras and it prolongs the lives of the people. 40 The Satapathabrahmana speaks of gold pearls woven into the hair of sacrificial horse. 41

41. Ibid., p.313.
book Smrti Srotam says that, yellow pearls bring riches, red ones bring knowledge, white ones bring fame and blue pearls bring all good fortunes with long life.  

PEARLS IN HOLY SCRIPTURE

Pearl has many references in the Holy Bible. The Book of Revelation points out that the city of Babylon was decked with pearls. It describes the twelve gates of new heaven, studded with pearls. King Solomon in his proverb compares pearl to wisdom and the price of a virtuous woman to that of a pearl. Matthew compares the kingdom of God to the Pearl of Great Price.

42. Ragozin, op.cit., p. 605.
43. Revelation, 18 : 12 and 16.
44. Ibid., 22 : 21.
45. Proverb, 3:15, 8:11, (Jerusalem Bible), Job, 28:18.
46. Ibid., 31:10.
47. Matthew, 13:45,46.
PEARLS IN FOLKLORE

Pearl had been the object of adoration, comparison and presentation. Folk songs of our countrysides are replete with references to pearls. King Brahmadatta had a great lake filled with swans, with bodies of pure gold, eyes of pearls, beaks and feet of coral, and the tips of their wings of emerald. He spent his whole time on the bank of that lake watching those swans. Pearl is often used as descriptive and personifying object in folklore.

In this folklore the pearl has been used to describe the child. 49

Seasonal migration of Mukkuvas to Mannar and Ceylon for pearl fishing is indicated in some of those folk songs.

PEARLS AND CHANKS IN TAMIL WORKS

Tamil literature, particularly Cilappadikaram speaks of 'Ven Mutthu' (white pearl) 'sennir Mutthu' (red pearl) and 'Ani Mutthu' (yellow pearl). 51 Perungathai refers to the use of pearls

49. R. Arumuganathan, The Life of the Tamils as Revealed in Folk Songs (Tl.), Chidambaram, 1982, p. 75.
50. Folk songs of Kanyakumari District. (This information is passed on to the present scholar by Dr. V. Sathianesan, Reader in History, 'Periyar' EVR College, Thiruchirapalli).
51. Cilappadikaram, XIV: 90.
In continuation of the above, I am by direction to inform you that you have been appointed as a Convenor of the Board for the adjudication of Ph.D thesis entitled, submitted by, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

I am also sending herewith the xerox copies of the individual reports sent by the examiners namely, so as to enable you to send your original evaluation proforma, individual report along with the consolidated report to this University. Further, you are requested to suggest a suitable date for the conduct of viva-voce examination in consultation
D. DORCAS - SHANTHINI
in necklace (Mutthu vadam). The Periapurāṇam also speaks of the pearls. The pearl is given out by the chaṅk with a broad mouth. The pearls born of the chaṅk. Generally, the moon is said to be the god of pearls. Varuna is said to be the god of pearls that are as white as milk. Agni is the god of pearls that are as pink as the evening sun. Thirumāl is the god of pearls of blue colour. Vāyu is the god of pearls that are as red as the blood and Imayan is the god of green pearls and Indiran is the god of pearls with golden colour. There are many references to pearls in the Tēvāram hymns. It speaks about Mutthu, Muttham, Vēyuthir Mutthu (light-shedding pearl), Thankathirmuttham (cool bright pearl), Māmuttham (the big pearl). It speaks about chaṅk also. A verse in Mutthollāyiram reveals the use of chaṅk in two ways one as an instrument of music and the other as a bangle.

52. Kathai Pattu, 15.
53. Sekkilar, Periyapurāṇam, Thirunāttuchirappu, stanza 16, "கிழக்காக்கிரமை முன்புமுன்பு க்குறையா "
54. Ibid., stanza 23, "சிவனால் இந்தில் புது".
55. Sekkilar, op. cit., stanza 18.
57. Sambhandar Tēvāram, 174:6 "இறைவேதை தீஸ்தம் கரவுப்பான் கிராமாணப் புதுக்கன் புறந்து மூலங்க மிக்கம் கையா.".
58. Mutthollāyiram, stanza 46.
PEARL AND CHAŇK IN TAMIL EPICS

While being in the outskirts of Madurai, Kannagi said to Kovalan that they had many relatives in Madurai, who used to sell pearls got from Korkai and had built palatial buildings on the fort. In reply Kovalan said, there is a possibility of conducting trade at Madurai. There the conches and pearls from the Tondi and Korkai ports and silk were exported to foreign countries. The profession of making bangles out of conches, weaving of dress of gold colour and production of salt were there in the Pāndī Nādu. This passage shows that Pāndyān pearls were in great demand in foreign countries and therefore were world famous.

In the Mahābhārata there are many references to chaňk. The blowing of the chaňk meant the starting of a battle. In the Bhagavad Gītā there are many references to the blowing of chaňks.60 Manimekhalai speaks about the pearl ornament made by the smiths of Magadha in the following lines.

60. Bhagavad Gītā, 11, st.15-17.
PEARL IN JAIN AND OTHER TAMIL WORKS

The 'Manipallava', a Jain work, 'Sripuranam', which narrates the history of Thirthaîkaras and other great men, tells us about pearls in the Ramacharitam. It occurs in the address of Ravana to Sûrpanakai as follows.


In the Palathirattu of the Madras Manuscript Library, one manuscript about Rāmāyana Venba refers to pearls:

A moffusil area of Colombo in Sri Lanka is called Mutthuvela.

PEARLS IN INSCRIPTIONS

The kings of the early period had the practice of using Pearl water (taken form pearls) to worship gods. Rājarāja I (985-1014 A.D.), the great Chōla monarch, had poured out pearls of brilliant water and of red water at the sacred feet, with which he had worshipped the feet of the god. 65

"எழு சாவின் விளையாட்டு செறத்து விளையாட்டு
சமயின் விளையாட்டு".

"திருநூறுகால கோசின் மேற்புற விளையாட்டு
சாவின் விளையாட்டு சாவின் விளையாட்டு
சமயின் விளையாட்டு சமயின் விளையாட்டு விளையாட்டு விளையாட்டு".

63. Ibid., p.19.
64. Thinamani (Tl.), dated 01.06.99, para.7, p.10.
Half of the money obtained by selling every hundred pearls at Keelakarai had been used for meeting the requirements of worship and repairs in the temple of Ninaitṭadu - Mudittā - Pillaiyār at Anutṭogaimampalam in Sembai-nādu. 66

1. பஞ்சநி பக்ஷங்களில் உட்பட்டல் வழுவின உண்மை

முதல் போடி முத்தியல் வந்தால்

என்று தருவி ஏன் பார்வு கான்று திருத்த

2. என்று உட்பட்டல் அளவில்லாமே

போடி முத்தியல் வந்தால் வைக்கின்று அக

முதல் தொண்டையும் விளக்கும்.

PEARL ORNAMENTS IN TAMIL WORKS

There are many references to different types of pearl ornaments in the Saṅgam literature and inscriptions, which adorned the kings and deities. Mutthirkörtha mutthu, (a necklace fully

made of pearls, big and small, followed one another), Mutthumalai and Mutthin Citukku, an ear ring made of pearls.

Mutthin Cutakam, a gold bangle intertwined with pearls and other ratnas. A gold bangle embedded with pearls.

Cilappadikaram speaks of a pearl ornament namely Manimuttaram, said to have been worn by Kannagi. The same literary work speaks of different pearl ornaments like Mutthu

68. Ibid., Vol.2.2, No.57.
69. Ibid., Vol.2.2, No.51.
70. Ibid., Vol.2, No.3.
71. Cilappadikaram, 11.63-64.
Valai, Mutthuvadam, Mutthumani. Kalinhtupparani also speaks of Mutthuvadam - pearl ornament. Civakacintamani mentions about aram, a pearl ornament.

Pearls were being used as an object to honour great people. The Mysore King, Krishna Raja Wudaiyar, in recognition of the great scholarship of Mahavidwan R. Raghavaiyengar, the Asthana scholar of Ramnad Samasthanam, presented the great scholar with a palanquin, umbrella and a bangle of pearls and gold coins.

Moreover, persons and places are named with 'pearl' as prefix or suffix. The following are the examples, Mutthappa

72. Ibid., 11. 89-90.
73. Ibid., 1. 73.
74. Ibid., 11.19-20.
75. Kalinhtupparani: stanza 120.
77. V.R.Ramachandra Dikshitar, "Life History of the Author", in M.Raghavaiyengar, Collected Essays, Madras, 1938, p.15.
Pillai, Mutthappan, Mutthayyar, Mutthukumaran, Mutthukumarasamy, Mutthu Mudhalivar, Mutthulla Chettiyar, Mutthulakshmi, Mutthuvillai Chetty and Mutthukaruppa Pillai,78 Antonymutthu, Savarimutthu, Petchimutthu, Vellamtthu, etc. The names of places like Mutthammalpuram and Mutthammalpurachathiram79 have 'Mutthu' as their prefix. Cilappadikaram speaks of Pulambu Mutthu to express the sorrow of the wailing heroine of the epic. 80

E.H. Warmington divides the exports from India into three categories: a) animals and animal products, b) plant products, and c) mineral products.81 Of the animal products, tortois-shell and pearls were exported from the Pandya and Chola Kingdoms,82 conch-shells from China and India. Of these, pearls, 

80. Cilappadikaram, 1.71.
81. F.A. Warmington, The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India, New Delhi, 1969, p. 35.
Ivory and parrots had the highest demand. The pearls of the Pandyan Kingdom attracted the invaders. When Malik Kafur invaded the Pandya Kingdom in 1310-11 A.D. he looted huge booty including 572 elephants, 50,000 horses (Arabian and Syrian) and 500 maunds of jewels of diamonds, pearls, emeralds and rubies. The whole country was ravaged though it was not annexed.

To say the truth, pearl is not permanently beautiful like other gems. When it is aged, it fades. The age of a pearl is calculated to be between 100 and 150 years. One or two pearls remain good for even 700 years. Afterwards, the pearls lose their shining, lustre and colour. They develop cracks. That is why the once famous pearls are not to be found today. By birth pearls are said to have some drawbacks. These are: Varai (line), Karai (stain), Kuru, Karadu(rough), Suppiram, Thiraŋgal, lessening of outer layer or the loss of outer layer.

83. R.Sathianathaier, History of India (Reprint), Vol.1, Madras, 1972, p.229.
84. S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar, South India and her Muhammaddan Invaders, New Delhi, 1921, p. 123.
On chemical consideration, pearls are not to be exposed to the sun. They are to be kept in cool places. Pearls are not to be kept near chemical acids and liquid solutions. Colour papers are not to be used to cover pearls. 86

CONCHES IN LITERATURE

Another important and costly commercial product of the Gulf of Mannar is the sacred chaṅk or conch. Conch (Kon(g)k), 87 is a type of sea-shell. The chaṅk or conch had been in use long before the Christian era. There are frequent references to it in the ancient literature of the land. Indians considered conch sacred from time immemorial.

Aryans do not seem to have used the chaṅk in the early days of their civilization, before they came into contact with the Dravidans. There is every probability that the Dravidians, who occupied the coastal territories of South India and Kathiawar, used chaṅk as an ornament, and an instrument of music.

87. It is also spelt as (kontp) a type of sea-shell from a large sea snail; the animal itself.
etc. History tells us that the Dravidians were highly civilized when the Aryans descended on the Indo-Gangetic plains. It may be noted that chaṅks were had from the Tamil Coast and Kathiawar in India.\textsuperscript{88} The Aryans who subsequently occupied the Dravidian's habitats began to mingle with them and, as a result of this, they also adopted chaṅk as an instrument of music.\textsuperscript{89}

It is note-worthy that the womenfolk of the Paravas do not wear chaṅk bangles now. But in those days they wore bangles made of chaṅk as a lovely ornament. But their children of four months to about two years were often given roughly-made chaṅk bracelets to wear. This is in accordance with a belief that such a practice will protect them against the baleful influence of the evil eye, from vomiting and from a wasting disease called Chēdi, which appears to be rickets.\textsuperscript{90} This custom has now been mostly abandoned. But the great majority, naturally, the whole of the

\textsuperscript{88} Ragozin, \textit{Vedic India}, pp.175-176.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p.180.

\textsuperscript{90} P.V. Jegadisa Ayyar, \textit{South Indian Customs}, Madras, 1974, pp.80-83.
poor (or) and the more ignorant sections of the community, continue to adhere strongly to the custom. The ancient literature makes mention of the 'wearing of bangles' made of chaṅk, as the water used by woman wearing this, is believed to get purified in the process of cooking.\(^9\) The bangles are roughly fashioned and are made by Muslims at Keelakarai, their chief settlement on the coast of the Gulf of Mānnar.\(^9\)

But the decay of chaṅk - cutting industry in the Pāndya Coast might have been due to the Muslim invasion. It took place in about the 14th century, a time which marks the close of unchallenged Hindu supremacy in the South. The Muslim spoilation of the vast riches of the Pāndya cities and the heyday of Arab sea-power in this area of Indian coast was irredeemable. Malik Kafur's loot and ruin of the wealthy temples and long prosperous cities created a state of depression. He is said to have carried away maunds of gold and gems of the Pāndya Country including pearls and chaṅks. Trade in pearls and chaṅks became disorganized thereafter within the Pāndya Country and the whole

\(^9\) Ibid., p.76.

\(^9\) James Hornell, op.cit. (1912), pp.40-44.
of the shells were exported to Bengal to be cut there instead of being treated locally at the place of the fishing. 93

CATEGORIES OF CONCHES:

The chaṅks fall into two categories, the right whorled or Valampuri and ordinary or Edampuri. The right whorled chaṅk has its opening from the left to the right and is very rarely found. Whereas the ordinary chaṅk, which has its opening from the right to the left, is available in plenty. 94 The former is held in respect and even worshipped by the Indians, Hindus as well as Muslims. In the Hindu temples, it is used for the purpose of abhishekam. It costs sometimes even lakhs of rupees. The Indians who come across it will never be prepared to part with it.

The chaṅk is one of the eight lucky signs recognized by the Buddhists of the Northern cult and, as such, is constantly reproduced in Buddhist ornamentation in Tibet and Bhutan. 95 It is

93. Ibid., p.56.
employed as a talisman to ensure good fortune and possibly even as an amulet against the evil eye. It is known from the fact that the chaṅk shell is placed on the forehead of draft bulls in Southern India. 96

The earliest notices of the use of chaṅk are entirely of a secular nature. These notices occur in the two great Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which mention about the employment of the chaṅk as a martial trumpet by the great warriors. In the Bhagavad Gita, 97 we find the heroes heartening their forces to the fight with loud blasts of their battle conches.

In the Tevāram hymns, there are many references to the shell. They are called chippi orippi. 98 Some of them are Voliippi. 99 (Bright Oyster), puriippi 100 (whorled oyster),

98. Sambhandar Tevāram, 4-6.
99. Ibid., 333-2.
100. Ibid., 324-6.
nalanthinamum ilangippi\textsuperscript{101} (the young healthy oyster), Vellippi\textsuperscript{102} (white oyster). The Southern sea is full of tides with the chaṅk and round shaped pearls.\textsuperscript{103}

These pearls and conches were fished by a section of the fishing population, called the Paratavar, who had specialized in this profession from very ancient days. They developed this expertise by experience in breath control, physical training and knowledge in seasonal changes. Since the Paravars were the expert fishers in the Pandya Coast (also called the Parava Coast or the Pearl-fishery Coast), a study of these people is made in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 79-9.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 140-1.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 137-3.