Chapter II

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Agriculture flourished and improved during the early period particularly in the lands round the Mediterranean. It revolutionised the whole course of man's life and enabled him to lead a settled life. Such facts enabled him to dominate the nature. But at that time the knowledge of agriculture was slowly gained. It began to spread slowly and for centuries the old and new ways of life coincided with one another. In the same way, Tamil country, without any exception, also devoted attention to agriculture from time immemorial. Hence it widens the scope to estimate the various facts associated with agricultural pursuits and agriculturists during the period that ranges from the Sangam Age to 1070 A.D. Food, clothing and shelter are the prime and essential requirements of every human being in their life-career. So it is a must to understand the top priority assigned to the agricultural pursuits and production of food materials through agriculture. So one has to have a portrayal of the agriculture and agriculturists of the Tamil Country through the ages upto 1070 A.D.

Agriculture was in no laborious act and was considered an excellent form of labour even from the Sangam Age because all the people are expected to depend on the farmer. Agriculture, being the basic profession of the Tamils, was associated with the main life of the individuals. The Tamils also believed that even the maiden earth will definitely laugh at those who lead an idle life and invite poverty without involving in ploughing. The term or kalavali i.e. the ethics of the cultivators too will expose the importance assigned to agriculture by the then Tamils. The early Tamils were much fascinated to their literary glory and offered greater veneration for ploughing.

The natural fertility and richness of the prosperous soil assisted the Tamils to engage themselves in agriculture in almost every part of the land which was more valuable in the delta areas than elsewhere. The harvest festival was celebrated during the first day of the Tamil month Tai (January-February) every year. It will expose the stress assigned to agrarian pursuits. The feast called Tai was arranged on the first day of the

3. Tirukkural: 1031.
4. Ibid., 1040.
Tamil month Tai. It will also attest the value of agriculture. Agriculture carried out by individuals. This monopolised occupation was the main source of food supply for the masses.

The Tamils treated agriculture, as a noble and venerable profession because the Tamils were well aware of the fact that a bumper harvest and a rich agricultural yield will keep the state away from famine. The Tamils were aware of the fact that the abundance of wealth imparting rain will reduce the labour of plough and the yield also will stop. The fact that they alone live who live by agriculture and all the others will lead a cringing and dependent life too will expose the importance and the prominence attached to agricultural activities and services.

Since agriculture was generally known as Velanmai the peasant was also called as Velalan. The entire peasantry involved in Velanmai

13. Ibid., 1033.
was called Vēlānkudi. It was also described as Vēlānmāntar\textsuperscript{16} or people engaged in agriculture.

The society’s economic prosperity was based on the prosperity of the land, which was the outcome of the regular rain. Superiority was given to the plough like the supremacy of the army. It will indicate the venerable position of agriculture. The venerable status offered to paddy and grass\textsuperscript{17} also will pinpoint the Tamils’ concern over agriculture. The age-old traditional custom of utilising mulaippālīgai i.e. “the tender sprouts of the seeds of the nine grains (cereals) sown to be grown specially as an indication of prosperity”\textsuperscript{18} will expose the renowned position assigned to agriculture.

The Tamils, because of their pragmatic and practical approach, considered the cultivable land called Vayal\textsuperscript{19}, as a source of life of the living beings. Another tradition of spreading paddy along with the flowers while welcoming the most respected one will bring the sentimental

\textsuperscript{16} Tolkāppiyam: Porul: 635:1.
\textsuperscript{17} Cilappatikāram: IV: 126.
\textsuperscript{18} N. Subrahmanian, pre-Pallavan Tamil Index (1966) p.558.
\textsuperscript{19} Maduraikkāṇṭchi: 173 and Narrinai, 290:1.
attachment of the Tamils with special reference to agriculture. The pious Tamils did not hesitate to equate agriculture with the monarchical form of government, which was the political order of Tamilnadu of the Saṅgam period. The farmers being patriotic citizens were desirous of subduing all the other states under the control of their rulers. Such appreciable agricultural activities within the purview of the states will prompt the unique status assigned to agriculture. Since agriculture is a strenuous act based on manual labour from the initial stage of preparation of land till the final level of harvesting, the farmers are considered as persons who will be the patrons of those who demand alms.

Thus agriculture, the noble profession of the state surpassed and predominate all the other activities. Agriculture was linked with the different aspects of life of the Saṅgam Tamil society. The relationship, which existed between agriculture and other aspects such as politics, religion, society and nature, too suggests the importance of agricultural pursuits.

20. Sundarar Devaram: 1 Tiruparuppadam, 10.1.
Ploughing:

Agriculture was known for comparable to sacrifices\(^\text{22}\). It was carried out regularly in a uniform pattern. Almost all the agricultural activities were carried out in a methodical routine way with all earnestness and promptness. Agrarian activities commenced with the offering of greater attention to the preparation of the land such as preparing, tilling and ploughing. They had faith over the fact that there will be bumper yield only when the lands are prepared. The Tamils were well aware of the fact that deforestation and creation of irrigation facilities like forming tanks are the most needed prerequisites of agriculture\(^\text{23}\). The growth of abnormal wastes in the cultivable lands was removed earlier before ploughing and sowing the seed\(^\text{24}\). Though no improved and mechanised forms of agriculture were available during that period, the Tamils had faith and belief over the fact that co-operative joint endeavour at all levels will offer a prosperous yield\(^\text{25}\).

\(^{22}\) Nānmanikkādigai: 51:3-4.
\(^{24}\) Puranānūru: 120:3-4.
By adhering to the regular preparation of the land, proper manuring and sufficient proper ploughing and tilling of the soil were considered as the appropriate practice of cultivation\textsuperscript{26}. After setting the soil, apt and appropriate for cultivation, the other subsequent aspects of cultivation were continued. So the first and foremost function of agriculture was to smooth the soil by frequent and repeated tilling. Ploughing the soil with the own ploughs of the farmer was a happy measure, because that will assist the ploughing to be a deep and narrow one. It is a right measure of agriculture. The ploughshare was a prime wealth of the then agriculturists. The early Tamils had realised that sufficient ploughing was the fundamental aspects for achieving a good yield\textsuperscript{27}. The Tamils, of the \textit{Saṅgam} age who had divided the entire landscape as \textit{kuriṅji}, \textit{mullai}, \textit{marudam}, \textit{neidal} and \textit{pālai} were well aware of the fact that the ploughs could be used in proper soils. They had the knowledge that the plough could not be used in hilly tracts where the elephants live. They knew the fact that the battlegrounds also will not be suitable and conducive for ploughing. The lands, which assisted the breeding and increase in the

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Cirupaṅchamulam}: 58:1-4.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Maduruaikkaṅchi}: 173.
number of animals, were considered as unfit for ploughing. M. Arokiasamy on the basis of Tirukkural has pointed out the fact that the dried land was to be reduced to one quarter of its actual weight through constant ploughing would require no much quantum of manuring. The absence and non-availability of the modern methods of scientific cultivation techniques compelled them to insist on pressed ploughing until the ploughshares had gone deep into the soil. For achieving such benefits the Tamils were much fascinated in utilising pointed ploughshares. Such a pointed plough was called āṇi. Such a plough share will be hard to be pressed to the ground until the piercing point (kolu) reaches a depth in the ground. This was based on the technique of ploughing. It will be possible only when the land is ploughed straight and crosswise many times. Purananūru also stands testimony to this fact. They were wise and clever enough to choose the morning cool hours for tilling the soil. The Tamils devoted much attention to the

30. Tirukkural: 1037.
32. Purananūru: 120:3.
ploughing of different varieties of lands and were much aware of the workers involved in agriculture\textsuperscript{33}.

The farmers were aware of the strength and capacity of the oxen for carrying out the ploughing. Ox was considered as a rare animal for carrying out their agricultural activities\textsuperscript{34}. Straw was the usual fodder for the oxen and the farmers who owned oxen were known as $\text{V¯al¯er}$\textsuperscript{35}. Since oxen were essential for executing the basic agricultural deed of ploughing it was believed that those who possess sufficient number of oxen would always be benefited\textsuperscript{36}. The oxen were allowed to feed themselves at the beds of the banks and were collected back by the beating of drums. So it is obvious that there was a custom of having separate pasture lands.

The frequent use of the oxen in different agricultural activities threatened them and it was customary among those animals to run and jump into the tanks for evading work\textsuperscript{37}. They believed that the constant use of the oxen will offer a good agricultural yield\textsuperscript{38}. The farmers as a

\textsuperscript{33} Palam\text{\textcolor{red}{o}}ji: 177:1-2.
\textsuperscript{34} Sundarar Dev\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}ram: 3: Tiruv\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}njim\text{\textcolor{red}{\textacutedash}}kadal: 6:2.
\textsuperscript{35} N\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}\text{\textcolor{red}{\textacutedash}}manikkadigai: 52:1.
\textsuperscript{36} Inn\text{\textcolor{red}{\textacutedash}}n\text{\textcolor{red}{\textacutedash}}arpadu: 4:1.
\textsuperscript{37} Kainilai: 37:1-2.
\textsuperscript{38} Narrin\text{\textcolor{red}{a}}i: 60:2.
traditional act used separate cowsheds for cows and bulls\textsuperscript{39}. Bulls of selective types above were utilised in agrarian activities\textsuperscript{40}. Buffaloes were also employed in agricultural purposes\textsuperscript{41}. Thus it is obvious that the agriculturists were adopting regular customary and traditional practices in their agrarian pursuits.

**Seasons:**

The *Vellālars* were the inhabitants of the Chola region even long before the first century of the Christian era\textsuperscript{42} probably due to the perennial river Kāvēri, which assisted the irrigation of the paddy fields sufficiently. Thus it is obvious that agriculture was a primary and a systematic industry and sole occupation of the Tamils\textsuperscript{43}. It was mostly based on the natural water resources caused due to constant rain. As such it is evident that the farmers, who depended upon the landed properties\textsuperscript{44}, assigned importance to seasons, which caused to obtain sufficient water supply for their occupation of agriculture.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} *Perumbānāṟṟuppadai*: 325-326.
\item \textsuperscript{40} *Puranānūru*: 289:2-3.
\item \textsuperscript{41} *Cilappatikāram*: XII: 101.
\item \textsuperscript{42} S. Radhakrishna Aiyar, *A General History of the Pudukkottai State* (1916), p.54.
\item \textsuperscript{43} V. S. Padmanabha Ayyar, *loc.cit.*
\item \textsuperscript{44} *Nāladiyār*: 356:2.
\end{itemize}
As the Tamils relied upon the rain, which caused prosperity, one can estimate the importance assigned to rainy seasons. The arrival of rainy season with thunder and lightning was considered as the forecast of prosperity. The cool breeze, which preceded the rainy season, enabled the Tamils to contemplate and expect the short arrival of rain. Such facts stand to prove the knowledge of the seasons of the Tamil farmers. The agrarian set up was based on rain and the farmers were much fascinated in welcoming the rainy season with joy and happiness. The Tamils exhibited their happiness by way of dance and music. The association of the Kuravai dance with the rainy season will indicate the prominence assigned to rain by the Tamils.

The period of rain was generally known as Karpeyal. It was the period, which lasted between the Tamil months of Aippasi and Kārthigai (October to December). This could be inferred from the old Tamil proverb that the Tamil months Aippasi and Kārthigai will have constant rain (Aippasi, Kārthigai aḍai māḷai kālam). Another Tamil proverb informs that the seeds sown during the Tamil month Āvani (August – September)

45. Cilappatikāram: XXVI: 118.
will offer a glorious yield like the services rendered by a monarch to the world. In the same way it is stated that the seed should be sown during Adi (July-August) (Adippattam tedi vidai). It also attests the importance attached to seasons with regard to agricultural activities.

As importance was given to sowing at appropriate seasons, they showed great care in weeding at appropriate periods. The Tamil month Karthigai, which was a period of torrential rain, was considered as an apt month for weeding. Since Karthigai was a month of continuous rains it was treated as a proper period for the removal of the quantum of weeds easily without any difficulty. It should also be remembered here that the weeds would grow in plenty due to the water available by rains.

Since the Tamil country was depending upon monsoon rain for agriculture, the Tamil farmers due to its economic prosperity treated rainy season as significant period. The rain, which produces good food, it was treated a food and as rain served the purpose of existence they considered rain unhesitatingly as an ambrosia. They were well aware of the fact that “if the abundance of wealth imparting rain diminishes the labour of the plough

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48 Ibid., p.27
49 Tirukkural: 12.
50 Ibid., 11.
also will cease\textsuperscript{51}. The ancient Tamils had the faith that “if no drop falls from the clouds, not even the green blade of grass will be seen”\textsuperscript{52}. Since the prosperity was based on rainfall and water, the Tamils, who were dependents of rainfall, were congnizant of the fact that no penance and alms giving will ever thrive in the absence of rain\textsuperscript{53}. Since agriculture was centering on monsoon rain and the enhanced yield was also depended on it, the Tamils were much inclined to have sufficient quantum of rain at the appropriate hour. Much importance was attached to the ever flourishing rainy season\textsuperscript{54} because the people were well aware of the fact that due to seasonal rain men thrive, fruits yield seeds and the trees and fields yield wealth to all. The rainy season, which succeeded the summer season, was considered as a protective force of the burning heat of the scorching sun\textsuperscript{55}. It was also realised that the seasonal rain will not only yield a bumper harvest, but also it will set aside the economic and natural distresses such as famine and pestilence\textsuperscript{56}. The terms \textbf{Kōdaibōgam} (summer harvest of paddy) and \textbf{Kālabōgam} (normal harvest of paddy) will also indicate the importance assigned to seasons. Thus the

\textsuperscript{51} Lbid., 14.
\textsuperscript{52} Lbid., 16.
\textsuperscript{53} Lbid., 19.
\textsuperscript{54} Pattinappalai: 128.
\textsuperscript{55} Paripadal: 11:12-13.
\textsuperscript{56} Gnanasambandar \textit{Devāram}: 3, Tiruppatticcuram: 5:1.
practical-minded Tamil farmers were keen and familiar with the appropriate seasons for ploughing, sowing, weeding and harvesting\textsuperscript{57}.

**Manuring:**

For making the land to be fertile and to make it to regain its lost virility, manuring is necessary. The ancient Tamils on that line attached importance to manuring. They were so particular that "to cast manure is better than to plough"\textsuperscript{58}. It was believed that ploughing without manuring will be always a futile effort. Instead of removing the grass and other waste growths in the land they were also ploughed with the faith that they could be treated as green manuring\textsuperscript{59}. Such facts enable us to note that they were not aware of the modern scientific manuring for obtaining a better yield from the land. The availability of cattle would have been possible for them to have there execrated as manure.

\textsuperscript{58} Tirukkural: 1038.
\textsuperscript{59} Tinamalai Nurranimbatu: 14: 1-3.
Agricultural Implements:

The farmers of the ancient Tamil country offered much significance to the use of specific kinds of agricultural implements. The tillers, who were known as ērōr, were offering veneration for the weapon error ploughshare. Ploughshare was considered as the basic implement for agriculture. As it was a renowned and significant weapon of agriculture in the festival called ēr maṅgalam is celebrated. They used a bent plough known as Koḍumēli with a cross bar viz., Koḍunugam or nugam. It was studded with an iron tip. Nāñjil was also a popular term used to indicate the ploughshare. Due to the importance assigned to the primary implement called ploughshare the Tamil farmers, due to the significance of the implement, attached divinity with thus and associated them with their primary deity. For instance they had treated the ploughshare as the

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60. Ciruṇchamūlam: 233 and Tolkāppiyam: Porūl: 76:3.
64. Perumbānāṟṟuppaṭai: 183.
weapon of Yadhava Balaraman, the brother of Lord Krishna. His title 
Naṇjilān,66 i.e., the possessor of naṇjil and named as Naṇjilōn67. Such 
was the prominence assigned to the plough, which was bent in shape. 
They attached a ploughshare with a movable crossbar while ploughing68. 
Bulls were attached to that crossbar at the tip of the ploughs. They had 
much devotion to prosperous agriculture. With the objective of achieving a 
good yield the earnest and devoted farmers were interested in using a 
straight and strong ploughs. The bottom edge of the ploughshare was so 
sharp and strong and the tillers were particular that such an implement 
will permit the tilling-operation as an efficient one69. The significance 
assigned to the shape and size of the ploughs, reveals not only the 
knowledge of agriculturists but also it proves that they had a sound 
knowledge of even the minute details of farming. They deliberately 
neglected to plough the barren fallow lands for they were conscious of the 
fact that the ploughshare will get blunted by such unfair and unjust an

act. They had a practical knowledge that the ploughshare would penetrate deep into the muddy and dusty field. Kalappai was also a term to denote the ploughshare. Since ploughing was treated as the basic feature in cultivation, the tillers had an unshakable faith over the fact that a constant and proper ploughing will assist a good harvest and that in turn will set aside famine. The pointed tip of the ploughshare was generally called kolu. Due to their technical skill and knowledge, the farmers preferred a bend plough, which would assist them to have a deep ploughing and a good harvest. They adopted certain traditional techniques such as placing the plough in a vertical position at the support of walls. Such an age-old ancient traditional custom continues to exist even to day in the rural areas of Tamilnadu. Primitive implements or agricultural instruments are still in vogue. They are such as the ordinary wooden country plough and the hand sickle.

70. Ibid., 117-118.
73. Perumbānārruppadai: 188.
In addition to the ploughs, the ancient Tamil farmers had the habit of using iron, various implements too. The use of iron instruments for agriculture suggests that they devoted much attention in their agricultural operations. Tular, a pickaxe, made of iron, was used to dig the land. A knife with wooden handle was also used. They used the sickle called koival for weeding and harvesting paddy. Pestle and mortar occupied a significant place among all the common public for removing the husks and also for pounding. The pestles had iron club at both ends and the grinder had a handle made of wood. Thus it is obvious that various implements were used for varied purposes in connection with agricultural produce. It should also be remembered here that no modern devices were employed then because no reference are made available regarding new techniques.

Peasant community:

Velankudi was the general name assigned to the peasant community. As they were honest-workers they did not aspire for the

wealth of others. They led an independent life and as they deeply loved their profession they devoted to agriculture. The peasants did not lead a sophisticated life but lived in small huts, which were encircled by mud walls and thatched roofs. The land was the hereditary possession of the ryots. The Saṅgam society comprised of different sets of professionals, which formed the basis for the future caste system. The same trend continued throughout Tamilnadu during the period of this study. During the reign of Raja Raja (985-1014 A.D.) the Vellālas, indulged in agricultural activities, were treated as a venerable separate caste. The agriculturists generally known as Vellālar did not deviate from their commitment to agriculture.

Generally the Chola monarchs were interested in bringing the agricultural labours as slaves from the captivated areas. They were settled at different colonies specially established for the peasants. The

Tamil Pallis and Vellâlar were included among them. The Chōla Pūrva Pattayam also attests this fact. The tillers were generally called by the term Ulavar and the peasants were rarely known as Ulavar. So it will not be wrong to consider that the Vellâlar must have derived from the term Vēlānmai. Since the caste system during Sangam Age emerged on the basis of profession it will not be wrong to infer that the Vellâlar emerged from their occupation called Vēlānmai. As the Ulavar was people engaged in agriculture, the field also known as kalam associated with agriculture the peasants were known as kalamar. The Vellâlers lived in the marudam region, which comprised of doab regions and deltas. They were even classified as people belonged to the fourth Varna. But it must also be remembered that Chathur Varna system has developed.

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85. C. Nachchimuthu, Chōlan Pūrva Pattayam.
91. B. Arunachalam, Cilappatikāra Cintanai, 1971, p.50.
The Vellālers were closely associated with sāmaikudi\textsuperscript{92} i.e., they were people who cultivated sāmai.

The above facts indicate that the peasant community was functioning as a separate but recognised group in the Tamil country throughout the ages. They were even venerated because they were people who were the lords of the people of all the areas.

**Professionals and Labourers:**

The peasants, who were Vellālar, Ulavar, Kaḷamar etc. were noted for their noble services. Because they assisted the life of the people of all walks of life. Since the services of the peasantry were mostly executed on different kinds of agricultural fields called Kālam, as seen earlier they were known as Kaḷamar. Their involvement in the profession called ulavu gained them the name Ulavar. As they were engaged in the cultivation of different varieties of paddy and sugarcane, the name inakkāḷamar\textsuperscript{93} was offered to them. There were different sets of agriculturists. There were people who had subordinate cultivation rights, were particularly known as

\textsuperscript{92} S.I.I., Vol. V, No.573.

\textsuperscript{93} Porunarrṟruppadai: 193-94.
kil kārāṇmai uḍaya kuḍīgaī. The trained tillers, who were subordinated to others, were known as *tonḍauḷavaru*. They were engaged in agriculture as paid servants and were wage earners.

Like the *tonḍauḷavaru*, ordinary laymen were hired for carrying out the different kinds of agricultural activities. For harvesting paddy there were separate set of people who were called *arinār*. Since they used sharp sickle they were generally known as *nel ari toḷuvar*. The term *Vennel arinar* will testify to the above fact. For irrigating the fields, through the sluice from the tanks, separate set of labourers was employed. Such facts stand to prove that there existed the system of division of labour in agrarian pursuits. To carry out the duties without any strain the farmers were having the habit of consuming intoxicating liquor. They were even used to sing while doing agricultural activities to be free from the problem of tiredness. Their regular and constant services enabled them to gain experience in farming and they

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94. 75 of 1896.
95. *Tirumandāṅkuṭi*: 94.
became experts. The tillers who utilised the paddy preserved for future sowing as food were called by the name viludi. This practice of improper use of the seed was found common only among the economically backward and downtrodden group. There was a separate set of people called kāvalar who were employed as security guards of the ripened paddy and other cornfields. They were further known as enal kāppōr. Erinvalunar were people whose main occupation was agriculture. The paddy fields were also protected by a separate set of people called Kalani kāvalar. Ulupadai was an honorary title assigned to the ryots for they were also more in number like the armed forces, which saved the people from their foes and enemies. There were separate labourers who were engaged in cutting the thick and hallow stalks of paddy. Kalainar were people engaged specifically for removing the weeds from the fields. It was a practice among the tillers themselves to devote on sowing the seeds as soon as they obtained

103. Purananūru: 35:25.
sufficient water by rain. Due to their talents and efficiency they obtained the title Vankai Vinaignar. The Pallars were mostly agricultural labourers and their women were experts in transplantation of paddy even from the early days onwards. Another set of people called Parayar, who were downtrodden and were at the bottom of the social ladder, were mostly agricultural labourers. Vegetarianism was the main practice of the Vellālas because they were either Saivites or Vaishnavites. This suggests that caste or religious disparities did not prevent the agriculturists in carrying out their functions. The landowners were called kāniyālar kondaikattiyār. They were named so because of their hairstyle. Kodikkālar (those who served in betel-leave garden) were certain notable groups among the Vellālers. Such facts testify to the availability of groups among the peasant community. The Kadalsiyar were labourers or slaves employed in the execution of mean activities. Those who were involved in toddy tapping were ilavar. As the

106. Ibid., VI: 58:15.
108. Ibid., p.128.
109. Tandamdottam copper plates, lines 34-37 and Veṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟenames and Veṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟירועיו

lines 61-62.
agricultural labourers were wage earners and were given salary by cash or kind. They were allowed to settle at specific areas\textsuperscript{110}. In the same way the oxen used for agrarian activities were reared by separate set of people\textsuperscript{111}. The transplantation activities were executed by separate set of people who were experts in the art.

Thus the agrarian life of the Tamil society was centering around division of labour, which in turn caused social divisions and economic disparities. It is also obvious that while the farmers were given veneration and recognition to the labourers' position was not so appreciable and they were only occupying the status of slaves.

**Role of women in Agrarian life:**

There prevailed no legal and social equality among the sexes. The position of women was generally low when compared with men. The economically poor set of people was compelled to involve their women-folk in distinctive agrarian pursuits. The women who were employed and engaged in agricultural activities were called *Kādaisiyar*\textsuperscript{112}. One can estimate their place in the vertical hierarchy of castes in the then Tamil

\textsuperscript{110} S.I.I., Vol. VI, No. 58.
\textsuperscript{111} Narrinai: 125:9.
\textsuperscript{112} Cilappatikāram: X: 130.
society. While the women of lower order were engaged as slaves in agricultural activities, the Vellāla women called Vëlatti were always kind and generous. They even announced grants and donations to temples because of their richness and devotion towards Gods.

Only women were sent for protecting the ripened grain in the fields. Aintnai Elubatu and, Tiṇaimolli Aimbadu also attest this fact. The women protecting fully ripened grain used a weapon called sling for driving away the birds from damaging the grains. The women who carried out security-duties were resting in the thatched shed erected by the farmers at an elevated place.

The women because of their qualities of tenderness, kind heart and patience were engaged mostly in the unique act of transplantation. Women also carried out harvesting. Women for harvesting paddy used scythe or sickle. Paruthippendir were women used to pluck and collect cotton from the plants. They were employed for cleaning the raw cotton

113. 542 of 1920.
114. Tiṇaimalai Nūṟṟaimbadu: 30:3.
and the spinning of cotton, which was a continuous process after cultivation. They also served as subsidiary industries of agricultural products.

Likewise the women were engaged in another process of preparing rice flakes by removing the husks from paddy. They were accustomed to use winnows, pestle and mortar for cleaning and crushing. The pestle was like the tusk of an elephant and the mortar was made up of sandalwood. While the women pounded the millet, they used to sing a specific kind of song called Vallaippāṭṭu to keep away their tiredness. In addition to the above it was agreed that the good yield of the crop was one of the reasons to make the women to shout in joy at times of harvesting. Such an involvement of women in agricultural activities indicates that they should have been utilised as a means in the absence of modern mechanical devices, in transplanting, weeding, harvesting, thrashing, and pounding etc.

The trends:

Greater veneration was assigned to agriculture as a profession, because it was a life-centered activity. In the customary and tradition oriented agrarian-life beliefs, music etc. too had their own links. They expose the trends and sentiments, which were associated with the agricultural activities of the then Tamil Country. It is also unique to note that agriculture offered scope for promoting skills and fine arts.

The Tamils believed that cultivation would give them a prosperous life by avoiding famine and also the effects of natural calamities. While evergreen paddy fields and grooves occupied most of the territories, they never worried about the formation of roads and widened passages. Agriculture had its own echo regarding the fodder of the cattle. In addition to straws it was also a custom to use the greens and grass as fodder for cattle. The fertile and prosperous cultivation enabled them to have widened customary practices. For instance the Vellāḷas never used to eat without a guest. Further when there was a guest in the house they kept away from food. They considered the act of entertaining the guest as a

prime aspect\textsuperscript{126}. They were always immersed in their routine activities without any deviation. Their uninterrupted regular activities even after the harvest of the ripened grains, will exhibit their shrewdness. They were quite jubilant and busy at the time of harvest and were always conscious of the fact that they should endeavour to have a prosperous life with a bumper harvest\textsuperscript{127}. From the time of tilling the soil to the time of harvesting\textsuperscript{128} no effort was left undone for achieving their objectives. The importance assigned to the ploughing for gaining a good turn-out will also prove their zeal and enthusiasm in their profession. Such personal traits of the good-natured peasants\textsuperscript{129} encouraged the common public to appreciate the dedicated services of the farmers.

The peasants led an everlasting happy life and were prompt in their pursuits. They expressed their happiness by singing a specific song called \textit{er maṅgalam} during festive occasion\textsuperscript{130}. They attached greater prominence and prestige to the ploughshare. The people were much acclimatised and accustomed to the constant noise produced by the

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Tirikadugam}: 12:2.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Ahanānūru}: 266:17.
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Padippappattu}: VI: 58: 17-18.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Cilappatikāram}: XIV: 9.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., V: 43.
activities of the tillers of the soil. It suggests not only the superior virtue of agriculture but also the consistent activities pertaining to farming. The farmers sang the *muhavaippattu* while they were engaged in the collection of harvested paddy. They each and every agrarian activity was executed with all joy and happiness in an uninterrupted way.

Due to the highness assigned to agriculture even the victorious rulers of the soil imposed the disgraceful act of sowing black gram after ploughing their field with an ass on the vanquished. Thus agriculture, having its contact with political activities had its own individualistic status in the then Tamil society. They believed that the earnestness and efforts of the pastoral people would captivate the attention of even the celestials. Such facts throw much light on the superior nature of agriculture. This will be substantiated by the fact that the Tamils revered agricultural implements as most venerable weapons. Since rice was the principal item of food of them the Tamils showed greater devotion and attention to cultivate paddy of different varieties such as sabi, vennel etc.

The farmers had their own traditional way of life, and the Kadaisiyar, i.e., the women folk, of that sect were not exempted from such acts. For instance the women of the farmers used to have their hair coiled and adorn it with specific leaves. Further to have a continuous and venerable work the workers who were indulged in agricultural activities were forbidden from chewing while executing their duties\textsuperscript{135}. As seen earlier different types of songs such as \textit{Vallaip\ddot{a}ttu, muhavaip\ddot{a}ttu} were associated with them. They reveal their zeal in fine arts. The peasants who dedicated themselves for the welfare of others used to sing the \textit{Marudappan} while they were happy due to their flourishing agriculture\textsuperscript{136}. Such facts stand to prove that the Tamil farmers never felt irksome or difficult in executing their traditional profession of agriculture. All things went on with joy and happiness.

It was also a customary practice to convene the public by a beat of the drum to attend to the emergency work of arresting the flood in the rivers\textsuperscript{137}. Further as irrigation was mostly depending upon the river water for irrigation they were cautious of the calamity of the floods. They were

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Ibid.}, 62:14.\\
\textsuperscript{136} A.M. Paramasivanandam, \textit{Tamilagavara\'{l}\~nu} (1979), p.139.\\
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Parip\'{a}\~nal}: 10: 6-8.
well aware of the fact that there will not be water scarcity, which hinders the agricultural pursuits, when there was water in the rivers throughout the year\textsuperscript{138}.

The peasants were much fascinated in adhering to the traditional way of life of the Tamils. Without worrying about their \textsuperscript{139} they lived in huts carved with dry plaited leaves of coconut trees\textsuperscript{139}. The use of cattle and oxen was also a part and parcel of their routine life\textsuperscript{140}. It was also customary to grow lotus flowers amidst the paddy fields, which were always filled with stagnant waters. It was also a custom among the peasants to treat the ripened clustered paddy as the real wealth\textsuperscript{141}. The possession of field itself was the real property and prospects for conspicuous prosperity. They hailed it so because they knew that the field would offer a rich yield and beauteous red paddy. It was also treated that the fields will offer prosperity due to its leveled furrows\textsuperscript{142}. Agriculture due to its sanctity and venerable nature was even associated with religious

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{138} Ibid., 7:39 and 7:16.
\bibitem{139} \textit{Perumbanāṟṟuppaḷai}: 353-355.
\bibitem{140} \textit{Paripāḍal}: 20: 62-63.
\bibitem{141} \textit{Ahaṇānūṭu}: 269: 22-23.
\bibitem{142} \textit{Gñanasambandar Dēvāram}: 3: \textit{Tirunanampuli\textup{y}ur}: 11:1, \textit{Tirukkuruv\textup{ǔ}du}: 1, \textit{Tirukkuruv\textup{ǔ}du}: 1
\end{thebibliography}
trends. Those who relieve their worldly distresses of material wealth were compared with the peasants who escape the floods\textsuperscript{143}. Such facts also will attest the value of agriculture. Likewise Lord Sīva was believed to have closed the breaches on the banks of river \textit{Vaigai} as a labourer\textsuperscript{144}. Such treatments will disclose the fact that agriculture was given a venerable status on par with divinity and a unique position in the social set up of the ancient Tamils. It also testifies to the genial qualities and character of Tamils.

\textbf{Difficulties:}

The farmers of Tamil Nadu along with natural oddities had to overcome difficulties of varied nature during that period. The problem of rats and caterpillars caused damages to the grains\textsuperscript{145}. Sometimes the peasants, due to personal difficulties and other distresses were unable to execute their agricultural activities. At times of calamities and disturbances they requested their kings to accept their lands as donations and to transfer them as properties of the temples\textsuperscript{146}. Such facts expose

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{143} Manikkavācagar, \textit{Adaikkalappattu}: 4: 1-2.
\bibitem{144} Ibid., \textit{Kīrtītiruvagaval}: 47.
\bibitem{145} \textit{Purāṇānūru}: 321:6.
\bibitem{146} \textit{S.I.I.}, Vol. V. No. 984.
\end{thebibliography}
that lands were treated as measures of philanthropic activities. The floods in the rivers also caused great havoc to the fields of ripened grain. Some diseases also affected the grown up plants. Lack of sufficient rain was yet another natural difficulty caused to the peasants at regular intervals.

The non-availability of rain due to failure of monsoon affected the people and the fields. The 28th regnal year (1013 A.D.) record of Raja Raja I (985-1014 A.D.) too suggests a difficulty of agriculture due to drought. The droughts affected agrarian activities and at that time the ploughshares slept idle. Unexpected heavy floods in the rivers also damaged the yields. The village councils were entrusted with the duties to avoid natural calamities such as the avoidance of the breaches in the bunds of the rivers caused by floods. The irrigation canals were also damaged due to heavy floods. At times when the farmer was unable to pay the taxes, his lands were auctioned and the dues in taxes due to

150. 229 of 1926-1927.
154. 274 of 1909.
the state were made over by that amount\textsuperscript{155}. Since no frequent references about such distresses are available from any sources, it will be apt to note that such disturbances would have been occasional and rare in nature during that age. But the Tamil farmers were not exempted from such natural oddities.

Thus the agriculture of the Tamil country of the ancient Tamils was a tradition-oriented and a customary practice. Transplantation, tilling, ploughing, weeding etc. were carried out with much care. Due to non-availability of any scientific manure, greater stress was assigned only to green manure. With regard to agricultural implements the ploughshare and other instruments such as pickaxe and sickle were commonly used. There are ample references to suggest that the old traditional implements were in vogue and no modern measures were employed. So the agricultural activities were undertaken in a crude form with strenuous efforts.

The peasants, who hailed from the \textit{Velān} or \textit{Vellāla} community, were known as \textit{Vellālas}. They were also called by different names such

\textsuperscript{155} 4 of 1914.
as Ulavar and Kalamar. Skilled people who were specially experts in their respective areas carried out different activities associated with agriculture. Different labourers called inakkalamar, tonda ulavar, nelari toluvār, venneal arinar, kāvalar, ēnalkāppōr, kalani kāvalar, kalainar, vankai ulavar, kāniyālar, kōndai kattiyār, kodikkālar, īlavar, kadaisiyar, paruthippenēdir etc, were involved in agriculture. The above names without any doubt indicate their respective duties. That in turn suggests the division of labour employed in agriculture. In certain aspects the women labourers were also employed. They were mostly engaged in transplantation, weeding, harvesting etc. They were employed in cotton growing and collection of raw cotton. The agrarian activities of the Tamils were generally indigenous in character. The peasants carried out their duties without any negligence though their work was a strenuous one. They were much impressed to have their yield as the fruit of their hard earned labour. To keep away the strain and tiredness of the work they used to sing different songs such as muhavaippāṭṭu, marudappan and vallaippāṭṭu. Such measures will also attest their fascination towards their occupation and also the linkage between occupations and fine arts.
The peasants were not free from certain natural and economic difficulties and distresses. Famine, droughts, floods were some of the calamitous dangers, which caused great havoc to the agrarian fields and yields. As, agriculture was a seasonal one, the failure of monsoon also affected their social and economic pursuits. But it is obvious that such disturbances did not affect their zeal and enthusiasm. Relief measures were undertaken by the rich people and kings at all times. Under such circumstances it is also possible to have the facts relating to land and other aspects pertaining to agriculture in the succeeding pages.