CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

Aim of the Study

The aim of the thesis is to take a fresh look on Kuntrakudi Mutt and its impact on the socio-economic life of the people of Kuntrakudi village. Indeed, it is essentially a study on the village life of Kuntrakudi and the ecclesiastical Mutt which stood by the side of the people of Kuntrakudi in all their socio-economic endeavors. The thesis attempts to present a detailed and objective account through examination of the Mutt, its character and its activities in a tradition-bound Kuntrakudi village.

Period of the Study

In an attempt to have an in-depth study of the Mutt and its activities, the period has been restricted to the years between 1952 and 1995 i.e. the period of time which witnessed Adigalar as the Chief Administrator of the Kuntrakudi Mutt.

Significance of the Period

The period witnessed post-independence developments in governance, economic planning, agricultural growth and the
transformation from colonial economy to industrial economy. The *Mutt* was the product of the feudal Society. It was for the exclusive promotion of Hinduism and its values, tradition and customs. Though the *Mutt* had secular features and social relevance, it could not champion the secular and material interests of people for a long time since its inception. Infact, spiritualism was the centre of *Mutt* activity. But, with the elevation of Adigalar as the head of the Kunrakudi *Mutt*, in 1952 the *Mutt* and its sphere of activity had been subjected to great transformation and the *Mutt* acquired new input and identified with the socio-economic problems of the Kunrakudi village.

The striking feature of this post-Independence period was the attempt of economic reconstruction of India by attaining self-sufficiency and self-reliance aiming at egalitarian society. It was an age of socio-economic and political reforms. Statesmen and academics debated the policy of the Government in education, agriculture, industry, the problems of governance and poverty alleviation.

**Reasons for the Study**

The pivotal role of religious sectarianism, linguistic consciousness of the Tamils and increased importance of Periyar's rational movement in Tamil Nadu had developed a sort of
reservations and inhibitions in local scholars to attempt scholarly work on religious organisations and most of the scholars belonging to western countries could not get access to the Mutt which had distanced itself from busy socio-economic and political life. Proper focus and due treatment is not yet given to this area of study. It was also due to the difficulties of foreign scholars in the local language and the indifference of the Indian scholars owing to cultural, linguistic and sectarian embarrassment etc. Trying to overcome these inhibitions the researcher attempted the study on Kunrakudi Mutt whose main play of action centred around the people of Kunrakudi and their socio-economic development in the contemporary history.

No scholarly work has been published so far on the Kunrakudi Mutt and its socio-economic impact on the people of Kunrakudi village which lies in Sivaganga District in Tamil Nadu.

Sources

Most of the source material is found in Tamil. The Thalapuranam (History of the place), eye witness contemporary sources like men and newspapers, periodicals, village planning forum records and other official records and records of the co-operative societies the periodicals and books published by Kunrakudi Adigalar,
the head of the *Mutṭ*, were useful for the study. Next to the above, the other important source material used and perused are archival records such as Government orders, Administrative reports, Legislative Debates, Census figures and District Gazetteers.

Interviews with those who have been intimately connected with the *Mutṭ* and Kuntrakudi village proved helpful in providing first hand information about the *Mutṭ* and its impact on Kuntrakudi village. Apart from this, interviews were also useful in getting access to source material.

**Survey of Relevant Literature**

Kunrakudi *Mutt* is not high-lighted in this work. K.K. Pillai's, social History of Tamils published in 1972 was a well researched work which concentrate on the Tamils social condition. The scope of the book is limited as far as a small village like Kunrakudi is concerned or the *Mutt*'s role in society.

**Methodology**

The non-availability of a complete scholarly work on this subject and due to the unexplored nature of the area of study, it became essential to collect as far as possible all reliable data accessible to the scholar. In the collection and use of data historic methodology is adopted to narrate the theme.

**Scheme of Chapters**

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter by way of introduction states the aim, problem, period and reasons for this study. The chapter also indicates the research methodology adopted, reviews the relevant literature and explains the sources of the study.

In the second chapter, the geographical condition, demography, socio-economic conditions of the people and their
history is given. It also sketches various other details pertaining to the people of Tamil Nadu, the flora and fauna, the crop and cultivation.

The third chapter traces the history of the Kunrakudi *Mutt*, its character and nature, purpose and its assets. This chapter also traces the origin, organisation and assets of the Kunrakudi *Mutt* in particular.

Chapter fourth narrates the history of Kunrakudi village its people, their occupation and socio-economic conditions.

The fifth chapter attempts to give an account of the career and achievements of Adigalar, the head of the *Mutt*.

The sixth chapter attempts to inquire into the social impact of the *Mutt* and the role of *Mutt* in promoting the social welfare of the people of Kunrakudi. This chapter also deals about the celebrations and festivals and the role of the *Mutt* leading to social harmony and corporate life.

The seventh chapter gives details about the economic measures of the *Mutt* in co-operation with the Government machinery and experts in order to develop the economic condition and living standards of the people of Kunrakudi by generating employment opportunities through co-operative movement in agriculture and small industry.

The eighth chapter is the concluding chapter.