CONCLUSION

India of course had a crucial role in Indian Ocean commerce not only in terms of geographical contours but also in terms of the overall volume and value of the commodities exchanged. India was the centre point for both the Euro-Asian as well as the intra-Asian trading networks of Europeans. The location of ports in the Indian Ocean was the result of an interaction between geographical features and historical developments. The coastal rulers of South India and the Malabar occasionally emerged as sea-powers strong enough to demand toll money from passing ships and even to organize naval expeditions to the Indonesian archipelago.

The large territorial kingdoms of India with their capital cities far from the sea, showed no real interest in maritime mastery. In the distant past the main barrier to trade involving long voyages was neither the pirate not the hungry prince but the most unpredictable tyrant of all, the sea, itself. While the pack animal was the early means of transporting goods by land, the nautical skills necessary for seaborne trade were available to the coastal communities of the Indian Ocean. However the possession of these skills was not constant factor in time and people who had once been accomplished theoretical navigators and long-distance sailors lost the art with the decline of their status as commercial carriers and intermediaries.
The Islamic empire created an environment favouring a growth in urban centers as well as economic activity, by restoring peace to the agricultural land of the Middle East, which had been long ravaged by wars between the Persian and Byzantine empires. This was the biggest empire and largest collection of economics and cultures under one political system that the world had seen. A sophisticated and cosmopolitan Islamic culture and society grew out of this blending of old and new, incorporating ancient merchant communities and traditions which were to flourish under the peace which was established by the foundation of the Islamic empire.

Kollam began to develop as a maritime trading centre from 9th century onwards. The coming of Sassanid traders with Mar Sapir Iso gave a new impetus to the commercial field of Kollam. The ports of Gujarat, Konkan, South Canara, Malabar, Coromandel and Sri Lanka provided the chief doors for these Sassanid traders to interact with the regional economies of South Asia.

The gradual development of this merchant community and the application of their commercial tactics in Kollam gave a boosting power to the port city and the operating areas of the merchant guilds also began to widen. Actually the Persians, who settled here had their own commercial connections which they used to connect Kollam with the international trading centers of the world. The cultural interactions with the settled groups gave a new outlook to Kollam. With the coming of European to the coast of Kollam, it became a part of the international networks of new world system.
The time from 8th to 11th centuries, was considered as the period of Perumal supremacy. During this time, it was not a fully centralised administration. But the rulers have independent policies. The position of *yuvaraja* (youngest raja) as *Elamkur* denotes the decentralisation of power. Kollam was in the peak of the development of maritime trade during the period between 9th and 13th centuries. But later situation is changed, by 13th century the merchant guilds began to disappear. The merchant guilds helped very much for the development of the trade relations of Kollam. The destruction of merchant guilds was one of the reasons for the decay of the trade and commerce of Kollam. But in this situation Arab and Chinese trade helped for the balancing of the economy of Kollam.

The enormous wealth and autonomous status of merchant guilds in important towns helped them to play an important role in the social, economic and cultural life of the region. The trade guilds had well organised settlements in all important centres of South India. The merchant guilds became the back bone of the trade and economy of Kollam and have helped the religious and social institutions.

The development of coinage was made possible by the activities of the traders and merchant guilds. It was the presence of Christians and Muslims helped for the existence of minimum trade and trade relations in Kollam in the later period. Tharisappally copper plates indicate the spirit of religious toleration of the contemporary ruler and society of Kollam.

The Christians were assigned a place of honour in the economic and social life of Kollam. Actually the trading activities of these groups helped for the survival of Kollam as a maritime trading centre. From 9th century onwards Syrian
Christians grew as the leading trading community of Kollam. The active involvement of the Christians in the spice production was testified by Marignoli (c.1346). He referred to the Christians of Kollam as ‘rich people’ and as owners of pepper plantations. They fostered the maritime trade of the city, and very much contributed to the state coffers. Christianity made steady progress in Kollam and the church of Tharisa became one of the well established institutions in the course of time.

There was a merging of the Christians into the socio-cultural processes of Kollam between the ninth and sixteenth centuries. But the rise and development of Calicut into prominence effected the future of Kollam. Calicut concentrated to the bulk trade and it caused for the weakening of the Christian traders of Kollam.

Commercial practices spread through the Islamic lands. The period between 10th -15th centuries saw a remarkable increase in world trade in which the regions of Europe, west Asian, India, South East Asia and China were knit-together in a complementary exchange of goods, services, people and culture. Trade was transformed in nature from a low volume- high-value trade to a bulk trade. It includes a variety of commodities of daily consumption, luxury items etc. The volume of shipping increased enormously, especially on the coast of Europe West Asia and China.

Kollam witnessed drastic development in the direction of trade with the penetration of Islamic power. These developments helped the city to bring her closer into the commercial networks of world trade. Spread of Islamic religion was a favourable factor for the development of the maritime trade of Kollam and
at the same time it helped shape the culture of the city. Wherever they reached the
art of trade and commerce also carried along with them. With the spread of Islam
trade and commerce also developed, consumption of luxury items increased.
Kollam became a meeting centre of merchants from the markets of different
countries.

Trade relations of Kollam with China has special significance in the
socio-economic history of medieval Kollam. Chinese rulers encouraged foreign
traders to come to the Chinese ports. The increased demand for Chinese ceramics
resulted in the growth of kiln sites in China. The increased external commerce in
the twelfth century seem to have been associated with commercialisation of
agriculture in southern F-jian (China) and the growth of local industries including
ceramics, textiles, wine, sugar, minerals and salt. Kollam imported Chinese
ceramics, silks and copper and along with the commerce metal industries of
Kollam were also developed. As a result of these developments the social groups
of Kollam were strengthened, the socio economic status of the artisans began to
raise.

Maritime trade was given royal patronage during the 9th and 10th
centuries. There was reciprocity between the rulers and the traders. But by the
coming of Europeans this reciprocity disappeared and there was only a one sided
development. All the profit flowed to the coffers of the Europeans. Production of
commodities, its quantity, rate etc. were fixed by the Europeans. The traders were
given safety from the rulers of Kollam and Purakkad before the coming of the
Europeans. But later, by the coming of the Europeans, the traders were exploited by them and trade became an armed competition.

With the coming of the Portuguese a new era was started. They considered the Arabs as a whole as their enemies. The Muslims of Kollam also were under the enmity of the Portuguese. They wanted to put an end to the monopoly of Muslims in the sea trade of Kerala. This enmity paved way for many problems in Kerala society and polity in general and socio-political and economic field of Kollam in particular.

The Muslims of Kollam were thrown away by the Portuguese. The policy of the Portuguese towards the Muslims was very rough and rude. The Portuguese took initiative for the education of the native people of Kollam. But the Muslims remained uneducated. They were pushed back from all the opportunities and degraded their social and economic status. The Portuguese domination compelled them to turn inward from the profitable seaward commerce in search of new avenues of economic well-being. But there they found the land totally occupied by the Hindu landlords. The Mappilas did not have adequate resources. It is here that we must find the starting point for the later poverty, ignorance and inwardness of the community. The Portuguese planted the seed of destruction.

The Muslims have much contributed to the socio-economic and cultural development of Kollam. They never turned against the socio-cultural elements of Kollam. The Arab merchants had close familiarity with the coastal regions of Kerala. They had established their contact with trade guilds like Anjuvannam and
Marigramam. The international trade in which the Arabs and the Mappilas jointly participated came to gradual decline due to the Portuguese intervention.

The continuous encounters which had taken place between the Arabs and the Portuguese over a century for control of the Arabian Sea resulted in the withdrawal of the Arabs from the coastal lines of Kerala. Later with the expansion of European powers and their frequent conflicts and struggles for resources restricted the growth of the Muslims as a trading community. Because of this frequent invasions and conflicts began to move from coastal belt to hinterlands. They engaged in agriculture and small size trade. In fact the Muslim community has maintained a distinct cultural entity in Kerala. As a community, its contribution to the arts and culture of Kerala is significant. The Muslims in fact are a potential group of Kerala society.

The European interference and continuous competitions affected the economic prosperity of Kollam. The armed superiority of the European ships over their Asian counterparts was a feature of this period. The political power of Kollam slipped out from the hands of the local rulers and it was in the hands of diverse European powers like the Portuguese and the Dutch.

During the Dutch period spice trade, especially pepper trade was in a pathetic condition. They tried to procure all the pepper at a lowest rate than the market rate. Cultivators and rules are hesitated to sell pepper at 12 ducats, since the market rate was higher than it. The destruction of the pepper trade shook the economic base of Kollam. Continuous warfare with the Portuguese and the Dutch
weakened the town. The harbour city pushed back and became a secondary or tertiary port city of Kerala.

The accession of Marthanda Varma to the throne of Travancore changed the socio-political set-up of the whole Travancore. He bravely fought against the European powers and kept Travancore secure. The existing political and beaurocratic set up re-organized by him, revenue system was renewed. The intermediaries between the traders and rulers became powerful. The presence of mulakumadissilakkar denotes the direct interference of the ruling authority in commercial dealings. Similarly salt monopoly and pepper monopoly etc. shows the strong influence of the authority on trade. Marthanda Varma took initiative to give European model training to the Travancore army. He brought reforms in the field of cultivation and irrigation and introduced surveying of land. It was a revival period for the socio-economic field of Travancore. By the Trippadidanam of 1750 he became a dasa (servant) of Sri Padmanabha Swami.

The Dutch reduced the urban space of the Portuguese town of Kollam as to suit their military and commercial needs. What they tried to do in Kollam was to maximize the volume of trade by entering into agreements with the neighbouring rulers. Though they did succeed for some time, the entry of the Travancoreans into the coastal politics, followed by the annexation of Kollam dismembered the latter from the hand of the Dutch. In the attempts of the Travancoreans to convert Alleppey as the principal port of the kingdom, Kollam was made a feeding port for it. The Jesuits in Kollam and so also the Dutch were the principal carriers of the seeds of European renaissance to this part of Kerala.
The coming of Europeans caused for the increased production. During the Portuguese period production was increased and a large quantity of spices exported to Portugal. Later, the Dutch came to the scene and they also tried to maximum export of spices, especially pepper. But in this context the greatest loser was Kollam.

However, during the colonial rule the society of Kollam experienced a social transformation. Western education, change in land ownership pattern, etc. introduced a change in the outlook of people. The evolution of internal structure and institutions of the economy and society of Kollam as well as social and political movements occurred as an integral part of this development. The caste system seems to be the main reason for the socio-economic backwardness of the people. Each caste was supposed to continue in the same profession as their forefathers and they were not at liberty to think about any new lines. The economic, political and social interventions of the colonial power radically altered the caste based social structure. The traditional system of education was supplanted by a new system of education. The missionaries asserted the right of people of oppressed castes to modern education.

The European powers connected Kollam to the international networks of new world system. Though they connected Kollam into a new world system the beneficiaries were themselves. Similarly the various activities of the European powers along with the competition of local rulers further caused for the destruction of Kollam. Thus the town was degraded into a small port city and lost its importance as a major maritime trading centre.
Though it failed later to attract many foreign vessels in substantial numbers and consequently foreign wealth in greater amount, it linked the regional economy of south Kerala through the port of Cochin with the global network of trade that evolved by this time. Cochin operated as one of the principal state units of the new world system. But the closed doors have to open for regain the lost glory of Kollam. The revival of the city will contribute a wonderful port city to Kerala.