CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

Recognition to the importance of social history is a modern concept. Researchers have been quite fascinated by the dynastic history, but the social life of the people, the study of the origin, history and characteristic of various castes and subcastes that constitute a society have been rather unattractive to them. The present work is an attempt to probe into the origin and history of Thuluva vellalas which hitherto remained an unexplored one and the following conclusions have been arrived.

The presence of endogamous groups namely castes had been a unique feature of the Indian society. Though caste system was an all India phenomenon, the origin and development of the caste system was not on the same lines in different parts of the country. Especially the caste system of Tamilnadu was different from the varna system of the north. The Tamil society was divided on the geographical basis of land occupied by the people. Another point of difference between caste system of the North and that of Tamilnadu was the absence of Kshatriya class in the Tamil society and the concept of intermarriage between kings and vellalas who constituted the farming class. But later with the arrivals of Aryans the caste system of Tamilnadu became more rigid.
The vellalas were the farmers of the marudam region. They had consistently held a high position in society from the Sangam age to the modern period. Whenever there was an attempt at degradation of their social status, they were quick to rise against that as it happened during the enumeration of census of 1871 and very zealously guarded their social status. This had lead to many other castes identifying themselves with vellalas which is brought out in the Tamil proverb A Kallan may come to be a Maravan. By respectability he may develop into an Agamudaiyan and by slow degrees, become a vellala.

Though one speaks of the endogamy of a caste, traditionally each caste, or jāti has been a category embracing a number of endogamous sub castes. Within the caste, the distinctions of sub castes are basic for each may be ranked hierarchically just as the caste is ranked with the larger system. Each individual is traditionally a member of both a caste and sub-caste\(^1\). The vellala caste is comprised of as many as 110 subsects. The main subdivisions of the vellala class were tondaimandala vellalas, sozhia vellala, pandya vellala and kongu vellala. Thuluva vellalas belonged to the group of tondaimandalam vellalas. They migrated from Tulu in south

Canara and settled in Tondaimandalam in 2nd century A.D. The emigration of vellalas has been a policy of the Cholamandalam. Forest regions were converted into cultivable lands and to increase its fertility the Chola rulers tried their best to develop agriculture by extending their patronage more than any other dynasty in the history of India. The Thuluva vellalas contributed their might to the conversion of forest land into cultivable land. They were main contributors of revenue to the government. Tulu in those day formed a part of Tamilnadu and hence Thuluva vellalas were also Tamils.

From Tondaimandalam Thuluva vellalas had migrated to different areas of Tamilnadu. During the reign of Raja Raja they migrated to Nulambadi in Kolar region. Epigraphic evidence throws light on the migration of Tondaimandalam vellalas, the major constituents of whom were the Thuluva vellalas to Nulambadi. The Thuluva vellalas had moved to the Kongu region as well. The palayapattu geneologies record these migrations. Copper plates in possession of the natives of Javvadu and Kolli hills speak of migration of vellalas to these places. During the days of Ariyanathamudali the Dalavai of Nayaka kingdom of Madurai the Thuluva vellalas had moved as far as Tinnevelly. Thus Thuluva Vellalas moved from Tondaimandalam to different regions of Tamilnadu. They have
assumed different titles in different places of the state. They were referred to as Mudalis in Madras and Chengleput, Udayar in certain areas of south Arcot, Nayakar in Salem and Pillai in other areas.

The Thuluva vellalas who were primarily agriculturists in course of time indulged in maritime activities. They invested their wealth earned through agricultural enterprise in trading activities. With the advent of Europeans, they have assisted the Portuguese in their business transactions in the Coromandel coast. During the rule of the East India Company, they held sway over the land as Mirasidars enjoying mirasi or kaniyatchi rights. They were recognised as owners of land, given power to collect taxes from tenants and exempted from payment of certain fees. They have played an active role in the nationalist movement and in self respect movement in Tamilnadu.

In modern times the concept of caste has assumed more significance. As M.N.Srinivasa points out ‘caste is everywhere the union of social action’. He argues that the development of modern communications, the spread of education and literacy and rising prosperity have contributed not to the
disintegration of caste, but to its strengthening. The development of transport and communication facilitated the process of self awareness of different castes. Roads and railways enabled members of the caste spread over a wide area to come together. The availability of cheap paper and printing facilitated the founding of caste journal, to promote the interests of the community, record its grievances and give permanent form to the aspiration. These associations sought to organise and unite all members of the caste so that their claims might be advanced more effectively against other castes. Thuluva vellalas caste was not an exception to this rule. The self awareness resulted in the founding of Thuluva vellala association as early as 1914. Over the years the association had played a key role in maintaining the link among the members and safeguarding their rights. It is evident from the role played by the association in retaining the backward status of the community.

The customs and traditions of Thuluva vellalas are many spreading over the life of an individual from birth to death. Cradling, tonsuring, earring, manjal nirattu, betrothal, marriage ceremonies are the rituals celebrated by members on joyful occasion. Nadappu and karumathi are the

---

rituals observed by them during sad event of death in a family. The performance of the rituals had necessitated the contact with other communities. This had helped in ensuring co-operation among members of different communities. Caste system can in fact be seen in terms of interdependency which link together members of different castes in local societies. Caste system is what Alan Beal Calls "being together separately". "To survive" he says is required ‘the cooperation of only a few Jāti, to enjoy life and do things in proper manner one require the co-operation of many". The various rituals practiced by the Thuluva vellalas only highlight this fact. Their rituals involve the participation of members of other communities like brahmins, barber, gold smith, washer men, potter, dasaris, pandārams etc.

Religion plays a predominant role in society. "It has not merely been the serious business of mankind but the business of the bulk of mankind". Religion was certainly associated with rituals and as regards religion of Thuluva vellalas there are both Saivites and Vaishnavites in the community. They have made endowments to temples and they celebrate various festivals in honour of different forces of nature like sun, water, fire, etc.

Greatmen stride the stage that is the world and their doings which change the course of history must be recorded. These men had a burning desire to serve their fellowmen and they set up institutions which function for the welfare of mankind. These men by their very presence and by the inspiration they give to other individuals have something to do with the making of history. They have given to the community a great deal, more than what they have received from it. Theirs had been a life of dedication and service. By virtue of their sterling character, scintillating intellect, outstanding calibre and single minded devotion to lofty ideas they have left an indelible imprint in every sphere of constructive activity. Narration of the qualities of eminence would inspire young and old in this country to emulate them and serve the society.

Tamilnadu has a hoary heritage of possessing a long line of eminent men in different fields of activity. Eminent personalities of the Thuluva vellala community have made considerable contributions to society.
Pammal Sambanada Mudaliar a greatest dramatist had made many contributions in the field of Tamil theatre. He had many firsts to his credit. He was the first to write plays of tragedy and satire types of Tamil language. By organizing the Suguna vilasa sabha the amateur drama troupe and staging more than 90 plays penned by him and introducing welcome changes in the Tamil theatre like restricting the duration of plays to three hours and quick transformation of scenes he had revolutionised the field Tamil drama. His greatest contribution was the respect he earned for the artists of the stage. He has rightly been called the father of Tamil drama, Dr.Mu. Varadarajan, had enriched Tamil literature by his novels, dramas, essay, letters and work on linguistics. As Vice-chancellor of Madurai University, he had introduced the system of correspondence education which had benefitted students who could not attend colleges during regular working hours. He had liberally contributed to Thiru.Vi.Ka school functioning at shenoy nagar. Dr.A. Ramaswami Mudaliar had contributed to the cause of Non-Brahmin by his involvement in Justice Party. As mayor of Madras Corporation, member of the Madras Legislature,
Central Legislature, Delhi, Round Table Conference of 1932 he was instrumental in introduction of several welfare measures and constitutional reforms. He had projected the cause of India in international bodies and played a significant role in getting beneficial measures for his mother country. As Director of many companies he had helped in the economic development of the country as well. Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar was a famous surgeon and administrator. The public of Tamilnadu especially womenfolk have gained much by the services of this eminent gynaecologist. Medical students had benefitted from his books on gynaecology. As Vice-Chancellor of Madras University for twenty five years he had contributed much to the field of education. Introduction of many new courses, starting of many colleges, inauguration of Alagappa Chettiar College of Technology are some of the administrative reforms introduced by him. As a member of the legislature, he had served as guardian of democratic and constitutional concepts. Dr. Guruswami Mudaliar was the doyen of medicine. He was a saint like physician diagnosing the ills of patients and providing them relief from diseases without any insistence on consultation fees. His philanthropic deed had assisted the scheme of mid-day meals to school students in George Town area and in the foundation of Tondaimandalam Thuluva vellala school named after him in the same area.
Barrister V.L. Ethiraj was another eminent member of the Thuluva Vellala community who reached the pinnacle of fame as a lawyer. His greatest contribution was to the cause of Women’s education. He had created history by making a munificent donation of ten lakhs of rupees to this noble cause and had founded The Ethiraj College for Women, Madras which serves the cause for which it had been established. Mailai Guruji Sundararama Swamigal had served the society by renovating many temples that were in ruins and individuals by relieving them from sufferings of diseases and many personal problems.

Thus the Thuluva vellala caste is one of the ancient communities of Tamilnadu with a hoary past, distinct customs and traditions and comprising of eminent personalities who have enriched the society.