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THE HISTORY OF THE PEARL FISHERY of THE TAMIL COAST

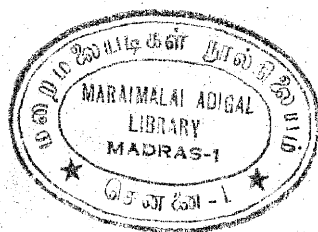
BY

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WITH A FOREWORD

BY

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FOREWORD

Pearl and pepper fascinated and energised the West; they enriched the export of animal-products and plant-products from India to the Roman Empire and excited the indignation of the classical authors of the first century A. D. like Seneca, Petronius and Pliny, who thundered against the extensive use of pearls and pepper and castigated the Roman ladies in particular because the Indian products drained the wealth of that Empire to the tune of about £ 600,000. Lollia Paulina, Queen of Emperor Gaius Caligula (A. D. 37 - 41), wore pearls and precious stones worth about £ 436,363 at an ordinary marriage festivity. Nero (A. D. 54 - 68) decked his shoes with pearls. The *Kautiliya* (4th century B. C.) gives the place of honour among pearls to *Tamraparnika* and *Pandyakavataka*. In his M. Litt. thesis Sri S. Arunachalam discusses the story of the Indian pearl from the earliest times to A. D. 1900 and gives adequate attention to the cognate theme of chank fishery. He has placed before us a well-documented survey, based on a careful study of the available materials, with special reference to the Tamil literary and epigraphical data. I have great pleasure in commending his monograph to the earnest attention of all students of Indian History on the eve of an organised attempt at pearl-fishing in the Gulf of Mannar after an interval of more than two decades.

Annamalainagar }

June 15, 1952 }

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PREFACE

In the following pages, the thesis on the "History of the Pearl Fishery of the Tamil Coast", is printed. The thesis is the result of my research for two years in the Annamalai University.

As there had been no Pearl Fishery in any other part of India except the Tamil Coast, it may be conveniently stated that it is the history of the Indian Pearl Fishery that is narrated in the pages of this book. There was a Chank Fishery operated in Kathiawar Coast but it was not a flourishing one.

While tracing the history of the Pearl Fishery, I have also briefly traced the history of the Chank Fishery of the area as one is not complete without the other. The power that possessed one, held the other also in the same limits in the Gulf of Mannar. Hence it is useful to sketch the history of the Chank Fishery also.

The period covered by the thesis is long, and I have divided it into convenient chapters. There is also an "Introduction" to the thesis wherein I have dealt with the peculiarities in the fisheries and the sources of information. The first eight chapters deal with the history of the

fisheries and the ninth chapter is the "Conclusion". In appendix A, "The Role of Chank in Indian life", I have briefly narrated the uses to which the chank was put in India.

I am greatly indebted to my esteemed Professor, the late Diwan Bahadur C.S. Srinivasachari for his guidance in my research. He was kind enough to allow me to use his splendid library.

My thanks are also due to the Annamalai University for publishing this book, and the Tapovanam Press, Tirupparaithurai for their neat execution of the work. I am thankful to Prof. R. Sathianathaier for his Foreword to this book.

S. Arunachalam.

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INTRODUCTION.

“Small is the pearl but queen among the jewels” are the words of St. Gregory. Though there were pearls of inferior variety in the European waters, the people of Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome and also those of China, valued the Oriental pearls—pearls from the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Mannar. The largest producer of the oriental pearls till the beginning of the present century was the Gulf of Mannar, both the Ceylon and the Indian side of the Gulf.

In the very early days, the Pandyas who ruled first from Korkai, a famous seaport and then from Madura, had the monopoly in the fishing and the trade in the pearls. Avvayar, the great Tamil Poetess, says in one of her ballads that the Pandyas had the monopoly in pearls as the Cholas and the Cheras had rice and elephants respectively to their credit.

Till the beginning of the Christian era, the Pandyas had an undisputed monopoly in the fishing and the trade in pearls. But the position had changed in the beginning of the first century A.D., when the Cholas began to develop their own fisheries in the Palk bay. The Cholas conquered Ceylon and the great Karikala conquered the Pandyas too. When the Pandyan power regained its former

position under Nedunchezian Pandya, already the Cholas had their pearl fisheries in the Palk bay. Hence the monopoly in the pearl trade was no more to exist with the Pandyas. Yet the largest quantity of the pearls was continued to be exported to the Mediterranean countries from the Pandyan ports.

The conch-shell, called the sacred chank of India, is also a product of the Indian seas. The chank is very sacred to the Indians. In the very early days, bangles were made of the chank and were used all over India. The chank is purely an Indian product and there was a flourishing trade in the bangles made of this shell all over India. Sometimes the chank was bought by the foreigners too..

Though the use of the chank diminished in the place of its production, it continues to be used in Bengal, Assam, and other hill areas. The trade in the chank continues to be very considerable and the Madras Government gets a handsome profit from this trade.

Apart from the Tamil coast, the chank is to be found in the Kathiawar coast also. Along the Tamil coast, it may be noted, the chank is fished for in the Tinnevely, Ramnad, Tanjore, South Arcot and Travancore coasts and in the Ceylon waters in the Gulf of Mannar. At the present day, Ceylon is the largest producer of the chank, though the best are taken from the fishery of the Ramnad District.

We shall detail the history of the pearl and the chank fisheries in the pages of the thesis. It would suffice for us to take notice of certain peculiarities in the pearl and the chank fisheries carried on from time to time, and also the sources which give us the information regarding the history of these fisheries on the Tamil coast.

From the very early days, the pearl fishery had been exploited by the Tamils. The ancient works in Tamil and Sanskrit speak of the use of the pearls. We are not able to decide the date when this important industry began to be operated. How the South Indian came to know of the pearl in the oyster, when he first tried to get hold of this precious article and what methods he first adopted to fish the pearl oysters, are questions that can never be answered as we do not have any recorded history of this part of India in the early period. When history dawned on this ancient land, there was the pearl fishery existing.

We are not in a position to know how the pearls were fished for till about 1200 A. D. Travellers from various countries visited India from time to time and have written much regarding the nature and the habits of the Indians. Though many of them refer to the pearls and the fishing for them, they do not give us details of how the pearls were fished for. The only information that we get, that, too from Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador at

the Court of Chandragupta Maurya, and Aelian, the Roman author of the first century A. D., is that the pearl oysters lived in great shoals, having a leader of their own. If the pearl fisher had the luck of catching the leader, he would very easily catch the entire shoal. We are not favoured with any more details than this and the Tamil literature also gives no information except that the pearl is given birth to by the oyster. Some Tamil poets maintain that the chank gives birth to the pearls.

The first details about the diving for the pearls are given by the writers of the thirteenth century A. D. They are Chau Ju Kua and Marco Polo. We may infer that the method of fishing described by Marco Polo would hold good for the earlier period also. Marco Polo describes the pearl fishery conducted in the Gulf of Mannar in a vivid manner. His information regarding the stone tied with the great toe of the diver, the basket used for getting the oysters and the shark-charming by the so-called "Kadalkattis", would be true of the earlier times as it holds good even to this day.

A special feature of the pearl fishery of the Tamil coast is that when the Indian side of the Gulf of Mannar yielded much revenue, the fishery on the Ceylon side yielded only less. There was no or only a small fishery on the Indian coast when the Ceylon fishery yielded a large amount of the pearls. This phenomenon was observed from early

days to the present time. When the Indian pearl fishery was yielding much revenue, Albiruni (1030 A. D.) observed that the pearl fishery was abandoned on the Ceylon coast as there was continued deterioration resulting in the complete disappearance of the oysters. Again Valentyn quotes Governor Van Goens' Memoir dated 1663 A. D. in his "History of the East Indies" to the effect that "the banks of Mannar (Island of Mannar) have given no profit, although the revenue from them was once most considerable..... The fishery at Tuticorin gave last season a profit of 18,000 florins".

In the nineteenth century also, we notice the same feature regarding the pearl fisheries held on the Tuticorin and Ceylon coasts. Many of the fisheries held on the Tuticorin banks coincide with the blank years on the Ceylon banks. The following two features also may be noticed:—

(1) Usually any particular fishery on the Indian coast, was preceded at a distance of from two or three years by a Ceylon fishery.

(2) In the same way, each Indian fishery was followed at a similar interval, by one on the Ceylon banks. For example, the Indian fisheries of the years 1818, 1822; 1830, 1889 and 1890 were preceded respectively by Ceylon fisheries held in 1814-1816, 1820, 1828-1829, and 1884-1887. Likewise, the Indian fisheries of 1818, 1822, 1830, and

1860-1862 were followed respectively by Ceylon fisheries in 1820, 1828, 1829-1833 and 1863.

The reasons for this special phenomenon may be attributed to the prevalence of strong under-water currents in the Gulf of Mannar. The prevalence of these currents near the Ceylon coast preventing formation of pearl-banks there and their absence at the opposite end explains the occurrence of this phenomenon. Ocean currents change their course and when the currents happen to be strong on the Indian side, the pearl-banks accumulate on the Ceylon side.

The chank fishery was held in a quite unostentatious manner in October and November every year. This fishery is widely referred to in the Tamil works and in the accounts of the foreigners who visited India. The glamour of the pearl fishery was eclipsing the greatness of the chank fishery. On the Tamil coast, the chank fishery existed on the coasts of Tirunelveli, Ramnad, Tanjore and South Arcot Districts and Ceylon and Travancore. The chank fishery of the Tirunelveli and Ramnad coasts was a very prosperous one and it continues to be so. The fishery of the Carnatic coast (Tanjore and South Arcot Districts) was once very prosperous according to the accounts that are available. But it is nothing compared with the fishery of the Tirunelveli and Ramnad coasts. The political and the economic changes that were effected as a result

of the British annexing the kingdom of Tanjore seems to have dealt a heavy blow on the once famous chank fishery of the Carnatic coast. The Ceylon chank fishery is the largest producer in the present days.

The importance of the chank fishery was observed only by the Dutch who saw much profit in the trade in the chanks. Father Martin (1700 A.D.) says the following of the trade in the chank:—
 “The Dutch are surprisingly jealous of this trade (in the chank) in so much that it would cost any Indian his life, who should dare to sell one of them (chanks) to any other person but such as belong to the Dutch East India Company”. (John Lockman, “The Travels of Jesuits” p. 381).

In the nineteenth century, there was an annual chank fishery on the Tirunelveli coast and it would be shown in the chapter dealing with the pearl fishery in the nineteenth century that the total revenue derived from this chank fishery was equal to, if not more than, the revenue derived from the pearl fishery of the period.

Having noticed the noteworthy features of the pearl and chank fisheries of the Tamil coast, we shall now consider the sources of information to the history of the fisheries.

Tamil works of the Sangam Age, namely Pattu-pattu, Silappadhikaram, Agananuru, Purananuru,

Kalithogai, Narrinai, Manimekhalai and Muthollayiram, all said to be composed in the period of the first three centuries of the Christian era, speak much of the pearls and the chanks and their trade, both inland and foreign. References to the pearls and the chanks occur widely in the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Other Sanskrit works also have references to the pearls. Yet there are no specific details in these works of the methods employed in fishing for the pearls, the countries with whom the trade in the pearls was conducted and also the situation of the pearl and the chank fisheries. Want of details in this respect is partly filled by the accounts of the foreigners.

The unknown author of the "Periplus" (60 A.D.), Pliny (77 A. D.) who wrote the Natural History of the then known world and Ptolemy (130 A. D.), the geographer, have left accounts of what they knew of the pearl fisheries of the Tamil coast. As to the situation of the Kholkhic emporium referred to by these writers as the seat of the pearl fishery, we are indebted to Dr. Caldwell who conducted small excavations near Korkai and Kayal, now small villages some miles inland at the mouth of the river Tamraparni on the Tirunelveli coast and unearthed large quantities of pearl oyster shells. After this, the controversy among scholars as to the identity of the Kholkhic emporium came to rest.

'Maduraikanchi' of 'Pattupattu' in Tamil says that there were chank cutters at Korkai. To corroborate this, Mr. James Hornell of the Madras Fisheries Department unearthed the machinery to cut chanks into bangles, when he conducted an excavation at Korkai. At the recent excavations made at Arikamedu, a village near Pondicherry, cut chank cores were found and this has strengthened the fact of the existence of chank fishery and chank cutting industry on the Tamil coast. Roman coins of Augustus (14 A.D.) and other Roman Emperors ending with Arcadius (400 A. D.) have also been unearthed from various parts of South India. These have much to tell us about the history of the pearl and the chank fisheries of the Tamil coast till 400 A. D.

With regard to the history of the pearl fishery between 400 A. D. and 1000 A. D., the sources are very meagre and the information offered very vague. Tamil literature of this period, namely, Tevaram, Nalayiraprabhandam, Jeevakachintamani and Periyapuramam refers to the use of the pearls and the chanks but does not give us any information regarding the situation of the fishery and the trade in the pearls. Foreign visitors of this period too do not give us any details. The Chinese travellers, Fa-Hsien and Yuang Ch Wang, who visited South India in this period, have left practically no information regarding this industry and trade.

The same difficulty crops up when we go to the next period, the pearl fishery under the Imperial Cholas (1000 A. D. to 1216 A. D.). That there was a great inflow of the pearls into the Chola Empire is evidenced by the numerous grants of the pearls, the Cholas made to the various temples. The inscriptions of the Cholas, especially those found in the great temple at Tanjore, give us much information regarding the grants of the pearls and gold. Tamil literature of this period, the "Ulas", the "Paranis", and the "Nikantus" refers to the use of pearls in different ways.

To trace the history of the pearl and the chank fisheries under the later Pandyas (1216-1524 A. D.), we have enough sources to tap. Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller, who visited South India on his way back to Venice from China, has left a splendid account of the pearl fishery of his time, 1270-1300 A. D. Earlier to Marco Polo, Chau Ju Kua, the Chinese author of "Chu Fan Chi," has also spoken of the pearl fishery in South India. The Arabs, the Jesuits and the Chinese travellers of this period, have left accounts of this prosperous industry. Of these travellers, Friar Jordannus (1330 A. D.) gives the interesting information that eight thousand boats were employed for three months in fishing for the pearls. The chank fishery and the trade with Greater Bengal in the chank are evidenced by the foreign visitors of this period. Korkai which had become an inland city due to the accumulation

of silt at the mouth of river Tamraparni, gave place to a new port, named Kayal (meaning backwater), a few miles south-east of Korkai. Marco Polo, Wassaf, the Muhammadan historian, Rashiduddin, Abdul Razzack, Nicolo Conti, Varthema and Barbosa refer to Kayal as a very prosperous port on the Tirunelveli coast.

As to the history of the pearl fishery under the Portuguese, there are enough sources of information. Though the Dutch who succeeded the Portuguese on this coast, had destroyed the records of the Portuguese, we get details of the pearl fishery from the accounts of Ceaser Frederic, a Venetian who was in India for well over eighteen years (1563-1581 A. D.), and J. H. Van Linschoten who wrote about his voyages in 1585 A. D. Jean Ribeyro who presented the King of Portugal with the history of Ceylon in the year 1685 A. D. and who seems to have written the same by about 1658 A. D., the last year of the Portuguese possession of the pearl fishery of the Tamil coast, has also given very valuable information regarding the subject under examination.

The Dutch have left accounts of the pearl fisheries conducted season after season. We also get access to the letters exchanged between the Dutch Officials and the Viceroy and the Board of Directors of the Dutch East India Company. The letters of the Jesuits also give us much information

regarding the conduct and situation of the pearl and the chank fisheries. The memoirs left by the Dutch Governors of Ceylon give us details of the condition and the working of the fisheries.

Government records of the nineteenth century and the Natural History of Ceylon by Tennent and Bennett help us to trace the history of the fisheries in the pearl and the chank in the nineteenth century. Edgar Thurston who superintended the pearl and the chank fisheries in the year 1889 A .D., has also left an account of them.

To conclude, we may note that except for the period between 400 and 1000 A. D., we have access to many sources of information to trace the history of the pearl and the chank fisheries of the Tamil coast from the earliest times to the present day.

Chapter I.

The History of the Pearl Fishery from the earliest time to 400 A. D.

When history dawned on this ancient land, we find that there was the pearl fishery existing. All the ancient literature in Sanskrit and Tamil refers to the pearls and the chanks and as such, we are not able to find when the ancient Tamils first came to know of the pearls in the oysters and when they began to systematically exploit the pearl fishery. References to the pearl and the chank are to be had in the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The only story that we have regarding the origin of the pearls and the pearl history is that of Megasthenes (third century B. C.) and Arrian (140 A. D.). The story goes to say that, Herakles who had a daughter by his Indian wife gave her the precious pearl which he found in the deep sea while he was getting rid of the evil monsters.¹ There is no historical evidence as to how the early man in South India came to know the use of pearls and the exploitation of the pearl fishery.

The existence of the pearl and the chank fisheries on the Tamil coast is evidenced by the foreign as well as the native writers. The 'Periplus', Pliny and Ptolemy refer to the Kholkhic Gulf as the emporium of the pearl fishery. This Kholkhic

1. Mc. Crindle, "Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian", page 206.

Gulf is the Gulf of Mannar. Though the Sanskrit literature of the ancient period never refers to the situation of the pearl fishery, we can, from the frequent references to the use of the pearls and the chanks in the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, infer that there was a great demand for the pearls and the pearl fisheries were fully exploited to meet this great demand. The Ramayana speaks of "the Pandya's gates of pearl and gold" ¹ and this shows that there was an abundant supply of the pearls in the Pandyan Kingdom.

South India attracted the foreign merchants and travellers with its pearls, ivory and incenses. When the Greek merchants and travellers visited Korkai, the ancient seat of the pearl fishery, they found the industry fully developed and carried on in a scientific way. The author of the 'Periplus' (60 A. D.) says that the pearl fishery at Korkai was worked by the condemned criminals for the Pandyas ². Earlier in the third century, Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador at the Court of Chandragupta Maurya, notices the pearl fishery in Ceylon which he calls "Palaiogonoi" (meaning old generation) and says that Ceylon was more productive of gold and pearls than India ³.

1. Griffiths, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, Book IV, Chapter 21.

2. W. H. Schoff, "*The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*", P. 59.

3. Mc Grindle, "*Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*", p. 60.

Korkai, the seat of the pearl fishery, is referred to as "Kolkhoi" and "Colchi" respectively by Ptolemy and the author of the 'Periplus'. There was a confusion among the scholars as to the situation of this Kolkhoi emporium. Lassen identified this with Kilakarai on the Ramnad coast; but this identification seems to be merely conjectural, founded on nothing better than a slight apparent resemblance in the names. But Dr. Caldwell correctly identified this ancient city of trade with Korkai, now a small village, some five miles inland from the mouth of the river Tamraparni in the Tinnevely District. He points out that Kolkhai became Korkai by "l" changing into "r" by modern refinement. Korkai is still called 'Kolka' in Malayalam. Dr. Caldwell further says that Korkai is regarded as the birth-place of the Pandya dynasty, wherefrom the Pandyas changed their capital to Madura. It is interesting to note that the Pandyas called themselves "Ruler of Korkai"¹.

The Tamil Poems of the Sangam Age (about the first three centuries of the Christian era) point to the pearl fishery and the pearl trade in the city of Korkai. From them we understand that the Parawas, called in Tamil "Parathavar", were the people that were engaged in pearl fishing.

1. Dr. Caldwell, "The History of Tinnevely", pp. 282-288.

'Maturaikanchi' ¹ talks of the Parawas as a very warlike race and they had the priceless pearl and conch-shell and dived for them ². When Nedunchezhan Pandya was ruling the Pandya Kingdom, he subdued the warlike Parawas and extended his authority over the pearl fisheries. Nedunchezhan Pandya, according to 'Chirupanarrupadai', conquered this warlike race of Parawas, in whose territories were the pearl fisheries and took a necklace of lustrous pearls as an honour of his victory ³.

There are many evidences in the Tamil Poem^s of the Sangam Age to show that the Prndyas had the possession of the pearl fisheries at Korkai. "Muthollayiram" ⁴ says that the pearls were found in Korkai only and that the Pandya was the

1. "Maduraikanchi" is one of the ten poems which are collectively called "Pattupattu" (ten songs). It speaks of the greatness and valour of the Pandyan King Nedunchezhan who ruled the Pandya Kingdom by about the beginning of the 2nd century A. D.

2. Ibid, ll. 133-138 :

"பேருலகத்துமே எந்தோன்றி சீருடை விழுச்சிறப்பின், விளைந்து
முதிர்ந்த விழுமுத்தின், இலங்குவளை யிருஞ்சேரிக் கட்டுகாண்டிக்
குடிப்பாக்கத்து, நற்கொற்கையோர் ..."

3. "Chirupanarrupadai" is one of the ten poems called 'Pattupattu'. ll. 56-58.

4. "Muthollayiram" is a collection of about hundred stanzas available of 2700 stanzas composed by a great poet, whose name is not known and who is said to have lived in the beginning of the 2nd century A. D.

owner of Korkai on the black sea.¹ 'Silappadhikaram'² states that the Pandyan Monarch had the monopoly in the pearls and sandalwood³. That the Pandya King owned the sea near Korkai is best explained by 'Agananuru'⁴. At one place, the Poet says that the Pandya King had a necklace of pearls taken from *his* sea⁵. At another place it is said that the Pandyas guarded the pearl fishery at Korkai⁶. Another Poem in the same 'Agananuru' says that "Korkai belongs to the Pandyan who possesses a beautiful chariot to which are yoked beautifully trotting horses, whose hoof marks cannot be traced on the ground covered with the coolrayed pearls, which the surging waves

1. Ibid, Stanza 36 :

“கார்க்கடல் கொற்கையர் காவலனும் தானேயால்”

2. “Silappadhikaram” is one of the five great epics in Tamil and it was composed by Elango Adigal, brother of the great Chera King, Chera Chinguttuvan.

3. Ibid,, Canto 17 :

“கோவா மலையாரங் கோத்த கடலாரங்

தேவர்கோன் பூனாங் தென்னர்கோன் மார்பினவே.”

4. “Agananuru” is a collection of four hundred verses composed by different Poets who are said to have lived in the first three centuries of the Christian era. In this collection, the glories of the different kings of Tamilnad are sung by poets belonging to the different parts of the country. These verses were collected by about the fourth century A. D. by the Sangam Poets on the request of the Pandyan King.

5. Ibid, Stanza 3, “தன்கடல் பிறந்த முத்திரனும்”

6. Ibid, Stanza 27,

“மறப்போர் பாண்டியன் அறத்திற் காக்குங்

கொற்கையம் பெருந்துறைமுத்து”

yield.”¹. Yet another Poet, in the same collection of verses, says the following: “The brilliant pearls and chanks are taken from the harbour of the famous Korkai which belongs to the valiant fighter, Pandyan”².

The pearl fishers dived in the deep sea when fishing for pearls. Deep sea pearls were greatly valued³. While one verse in ‘Agananuru’ speaks of the pearls got from the sea by diving⁴, yet another verse says that “the fishermen who from white boats dive into the black sea, avoid the attacks of the shark and bring up the rightwhorled chank, blow on the sounding shell and thus a great noise rises in Korkai”⁵. The pearl divers used to collect their oysters on the banks of the sea and they seem to have bartered the pearl oysters for other commodities that they needed. A verse

1. Ibid Stanza 130 : “இவர்திரைதந்த வீரங் கதிர்முத்தங்
கவர்நடை புரவிகால் வடுத்தபுக்கு
நறநேர் வழுதிகொற்கை முன்றுறை”

2. Ibid, Stanza 201 :
“பாண்டியன் புகழ்மவிசிறப்பின் கொற்கை முன்றுறை
யவிற்கதிர் முத்தமொடு வலம்புரி சொரிந்து”

3. “Kalithogai”, Stanza 131, 1. 22.

4. “Agananuru”, Stanza 280 :

“விரிதிரை கண்டிரன் முத்தங்கொண்டு,”

5. Ibid, Stanza 350 :

“வலம்புரி மூழ்கிய வான்றியிர் பரதவ
ரொலிதலைப்பணில மார்ப்பக் கல்லெனக்
கவிசெழு கொற்கை.”

from 'Agananuru' speaks of the barter of the pearl oysters for toddy. "They barter for the sweet-smelling toddy, filtered in the web of the palmyra leaf, the pearl oysters brought by the men who fish in the broad sea¹. At Korkai, the pearls of excellent water were fished. 'Narrinai'² says that "in the broad expanse of the sea near this harbour of Korkai grow pearls of excellent water"³.

'Kalithogai'⁴ speaks of the pearls from the sea by saying that though the pearls were born of the sea, they never benefited the sea, but only beautified those who wore them⁵. 'Purananuru'⁶

1. Ibid, Stanza 296: "பண்மீன் கொள்பவர் முகந்தவிப்பி

நாரரி நறவின் மகிழ்கொடை கூட்டும்

பேரிசைக் கொற்கை"

2. "Narrinai" is a collection of four hundred verses sung by different Poets belonging to the different parts of the Tamil country and of different times. These were collected by a Board of Poets on the request of the Pandyan King, by about the fourth century A. D.

3. Ibid, Stanza 28, l. 6:

"முத்துபடு பரப்பிற் கொற்கை முன்றுரை".

4. "Kalithogai" is a collection of 150 verses sung by five great Poets of the Sangam Age about the five divisions of the Tamil country and society, called "Thinai".

5. Ibid, Stanza 9, ll. 15-16.

"சீர்கெழு வெண்முத்த மணிபவர்க் கல்லதை

நீருளே அிறப்பினும் நீர்க்கவை தாமென்செய்யும்"

6. "Purananuru" is a collection of four hundred verses sung by different Poets in the first three centuries of the Christian era. They were collected on the request of the Pandya King by a committee of Poets of the Sangam in about the fourth century A. D.

speaks of the pearl as a gem emitting rays while lying on bright, long layers of sand ¹. It is further remarked in another stanza that the Pandya King ruled from Madura with sandalwood from the Podya hills and the pearls from the sea. ²

The chank was also obtained from the Gulf of Mannar. We have noticed a verse from 'Agananuru' ³ which speaks of the right-whorled chank obtaining from the waters of Korkai. The chanks were classified into two categories. That which has the opening to the right was called "Valampuri" or right-whorled chank. That which has the opening to the left was called "Edampuri" or ordinary chank. The former was very rare to find, whereas the latter was fished in a very large quantity. The right-whorled chank was very much revered by the Indians and it still continues to be respected and worshipped.

People of the Tamil country used to wear chank bangles. A verse in 'Muthollayiram' says that the heroine was wearing the chank bangles ⁴. Another verse says that the sea abounded in pearls and chanks ⁵. The description of the girl-in-love with the Pandya King is vivid. She consoles

1. Ibid, Stanza 53 : "முற்றிரீண்ட சிப்பிக்கண்முத்து"

2. Ibid, Stanza 58 : "வரையசாந்தமும் திரையமுத்தமும்".

3. "Agananuru", Stanza 350.

4. "Muthollayiram", Stanza 46, "வரிவளை நின்றன"

5. Ibid, Stanza 47, "நீர்படுபவன வெண்கங்கும் நித்திலமும்"

herself saying that “the chank bangles I wear are from the sea belonging to him; so too, are the pearls.”¹ An incident on the sea coast is described by the Poet. A chank which is sent up the sands by a big wave has given birth to a pearl there. It is moving hither and thither waiting for a big wave to come and take it down to the sea.²

The Cholas too had their pearl fisheries in the Palk Strait, as there is a reference in “the Periplus” to the pearls for sale at Argaru, gathered from the coasts thereabout. “Beyond Colchi there follows another district called the coast country which lies on a bay and has region inside called Argaru. At this place and nowhere else, are brought the pearls gathered on the coast thereabouts; and from there are exported muslins, those called Argaritic”³. The conquest of Ceylon by the Chola Monarch Karikala in the first century A. D. might have given the Cholas an abundant supply of the pearls from Ceylon waters.

Mr. Schoff, in his note on the fragment from the ‘Periplus’ quoted above, says that “the pearl

1. Ibid Stanza 63,

“கையது அவன் கடலுள் சங்கமால் பூண்பதுவும்
செய்ய சங்கு ஈன்ற செழுமுத்தால்”.

2. Ibid, Stanza 73,

“உருவாய் நிலத்த உயர்மணல் மேல் ஏறி
நகுவாய்முத்து ஈன்று அசைந்த சங்கம்—புகுவான்
திரைவரவு பார்த்திருக்க”

3. Schoff, op. cit. p. 59.

fisheries belonging to the Chola Kingdom, the product of which was sold only at the Capital, 'Uraiyur', were those of the Palk Strait, north of Adam's bridge" Mr. C. Rasanayagam¹ tries to identify this Argaru of the 'Periplus' with the north of Ceylon. His only argument in favour of this identification is that Uraiyur was not the capital of the Cholas and that Uraiyur was not a district but only a town. Though Kaveripattinam was the capital of the greater Cholas, Uraiyur was independently ruled by a Chola dynasty, the existence of which was eclipsed by the greatness of the former. In 'Purananuru'² we hear of a war between the Chola Kings of Kaveripattinam and Uraiyur, named Nalankilli and Nedunkilli respectively. They came to terms on the advice of Poet Kovurkizhar. It may be assumed that 'Argaru' referred to by the 'Periplus' as an emporium of pearl trade is nothing but Uraiyur.

Having detailed the situation and the working of the pearl banks, we may now consider what the Ancients thought of the origin of the pearl. As early as the third century B. C., Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador, wrote interesting details of the origin of the pearls and the fishing for them³.

1. C. Rasanayagam, "Ancient Jaffna", p. 106.

2. "Purananuru" Stanza 45.

3. Mc. Crindle, "Ancient India as described by Megasthenes, and Arrian", p. 115.

The pearl fishers dived for the pearls with nets in their hands. If they happened to catch the leader of the shoal, they would catch the entire shoal. If the leader escaped, he will lead the entire shoal to safety. Both Magasthenes and Arrian (140 A. D.) have very interesting tales to tell us about the origin of the pearl and the Pandyan monopoly over the pearl fishery. ¹

Pliny ² in his Natural History gives an account of how the pearl takes its shape in the oyster. He

“ The oyster which yields this pearl is there fished for with nets and that in the same parts, the oysters live in the sea in shoals like bee-swarms; for oysters, like bees, have a king or queen, and if anyone is lucky enough to catch the king, he readily encloses in the net all the rest of the shoal, but if the king makes his escape, there is no chance that the others can be caught. The fishermen allow the fleshy parts of such as they catch to rot away and keep the bone which forms the ornament.”

1. Ibid, p. 206.

“ Herakles (Indian Herakles being Lord Krishna) had many sons and a daughter by his Indian wives. His daughter was Pandeia who was given the kingdom called Pandya kingdom after her. When Herakles was going over the world and ridding land and sea of whatever evil monsters infected them, he found in the sea an ornament for women, which even to this day, the Indian traders, who bring us (the Romans) their wares, eagerly buy up and carry away to foreign markets. This article is the sea pearl called in the Indian tongue ‘Margarita’. Herakles appreciated its beauty as a wearing ornament, caused it to be brought from all the sea into India, that he might adorn with it the person of his daughter.”

2. Pliny, **Natural History**, Bk. IX, Chap. 54, 55.

“ When the genial season of the year exercises its influence on the animal, it is said, that yawning, as it were, it opens its shell, and so receives a kind of dew, by means of

maintains that the quality of the pearl depends on the condition of the sky when it takes its shape. He, as almost all the writers of that period state, declares that the pearl is formed by a kind of dew which the shell takes in the genial season of the year. The Sanskrit writers, like Bhartrhari, also contend that the pearl oysters come to the surface of the water in expectation of absorbing the dew which dew forms itself into a pearl. An extract from the Atharvana Veda says that "when the ocean roared against Paranjaya with lightning therefrom was born this golden drop (of pearl)"¹. Whitney points out that this alludes to the belief that the pearls originated by the transformation of rain drops falling into the sea. The Tamils also had the same notion of the origin and production

which it is impregnated ; and that at length it gives birth after many struggles, to the burden of its shell in the shape of pearls which vary according to the quality of the dew. If this has been in a perfectly pure state when it flowed into the shell, then the pearl produced, is pure and brilliant, but if it was turbid, then the pearl is of a clouded colour also ; if the sky should happen to have been lowering when it was generated, the pearl will be of a pallid colour. It is quite evident from these that the quality of the pearl depends much more upon the calm state of heavens, than of the sea, and hence it is that it contrates a cloudy hue, or a limpid appearance, according to the serenity of the sky in the morning. It is wonderful that they should be influenced thus pleasurably by the state of the heavens seeing that by the action of the sun the pearls are turned of a red colour and lose all their whiteness, just like the human body. Hence it is that those which keep their whiteness best are the deep sea pearls, which lie at too great a depth adhering to the, shell for which reason the shells are used as boxes of ointment.

" The greater part of these pearls are only to be found among rocks and cargs, while, on the other hand, those that lie out in the deep sea, are generally accompanied by sea dogs ".

1. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, " The History of Tamils from the Earliest Times to 600 A. D.", p. 23.

of the pearl. They were quite sure that the oysters yielded the pearls as is referred to in 'Purananuru' ¹. Some Poets allude to the pearls being given birth to by the chank ². 'Silappadhikaram' talks of the pearls taken from the oysters ³. The Tamil Poets speak much only of the uses of the pearls in various ways, but they do not bear any evidence to the origin and production of the pearls as such. But such a great flow of pearls into the country from the Tamil coast testifies to the scientific methods adopted in gathering them.

The following account of Aelian ⁴ is worth considering along with that of Megasthenes as he also speaks of the oysters living in a shoal with a leader to guide them. He bears witness to the existence of the pearl fisheries in the Indian and Red Sea waters in the second century B. C. He further says that the pearls of Indian waters were considered to be the best in those days ⁵

1. "Purananuru", Stanza 53

முற்றி நீண்ட சிற்றிக்கண் முத்து"

2. "Muthallayiram" Stanza 63 :

"செய்ய சங்கு சன்ற செழுமுத்து"

3. "Silappadhikaram", Canto 27 :

"வலம்புரி சன்ற நலம்புரிமுத்து"

4. Aelian was a Latin writer. Though his date is unknown, he is said to have lived in the first century A. D.

5. Mc Crindle, "Ancient India as described in the Classical Literature" pp. 143-144.

"The Indian pearl oyster is caught in the following manner. There is a city which a man of royal extraction called

To conclude, we may note that the Ancients had such a queer notion of the origin of the pearl and this folk-biology of the origin seems to have originated in South India, where the pearls were fished for from time immemorial and spread all through the then known world:

Before concluding this chapter on the habitat of the pearl and chank fisheries in the early period, we should take note of the important fishery on the other side of the Gulf of Mannar, the Ceylon side. We have already noticed the observations of Megasthenes in the third Century B. C. to the effect that Ceylon produced more pearls than India, In the sixth century B. C., Vijaya (550-540 B. C.) the Aryan conqueror of Ceylon, is said to have included rich offerings of pearls among presents to his father-in-law, the Pandyan King of Madura ¹.

Soras (Solas) governed at the time when Eukratides governed the Baktrians (181-147 B. C.) and the name of the city is Perimuda. It is inhabited by a race of fish eaters who are said to go off with nets and catch the kind of oysters mentioned, in a great bay by which a vast extent of the coast is indented. It is said that the pearl grows upon a shell like that of a large mussel and that the oysters swim in great shoals, and have leaders, just as bees in their hives have their queen bees. I learn further that the leader is bigger and more beautifully coloured than the others, and that in consequence the divers have a keen struggle in the depths which of them shall catch him, since when he is taken they catch also the entire shoal, now left so to speak, forlorn and leaderless, so that it stirs not and like a flock of sheep that has lost its shepherd, no longer moves forward against any incipient danger. As long, however, as the leader escapes and skilfully evades capture, he guides their movements and upholds discipline. Such as are caught are put into tubs to decay, and when the flesh has rotted and run off, nothing is left but the round pebble. The best sort of pearl is the Indian and that of Red Sea."

1. "*Mahawamsa*".

The 'Periplus' refers to the island of Ephidorus which should be the island of Mannar, and the island of Palaesimundu, called Taprobane by the Ancients as producing pearls among other articles ¹. Ptolemy (130 A. D.) says that diving i. e. the pearl fishery was pursued at Sindokande with Chilaw ² on the west coast of the island of Taprobane (Ceylon) ³.

There was the chank fishery on the Ceylon coast between the island of Mannar and Jaffna. This must have given work to a large number of chank fishers and chank cutters. As there was a colony of chank cutters at Korkai ⁴, there was also a chank cutting industry in the north of Ceylon ⁵. This view is strengthened by the discovery of cut chank cores in the small excavation conducted by Dr. P. E. Pieris at Kandarodai ⁶. This is a sure indication that when Kudiraimalai was the capital, there were these artificers in chank and when the chank bangles became old-fashioned, the industry vanished.

1. Schoff, op. cit. p. 61.

2. *Chilwa* is from Salabana. The Tamil equivalent is Salabham. meaning diving.

3. Mc. Grindle, "*Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*" p. 258.

4. "*Maduraikanchi*".

5. Rasanayagam. op. cit. p. 137.

6. Ibid, p. 137.

Lastly we may note that in all the places where the pearl fisheries existed on the Tamil coast, the Government had the monopoly of them. This is evidenced by the remark of the author of the 'Periplus' to the effect that the pearl fisheries at Korkai were worked by the condemned criminals of the Pandya Kingdom ¹.

To sum up, we may notice that the time of the first exploitation of the pearl fishery is not known. Since there are wide references to the pearls in the literature of the very early times, we may conclude that the pearl fisheries were being exploited many centuries before Christ. From Megasthenes, we learn that Ceylon was producing more pearls than India even in the third century B. C. Korkai was the seat of the pearl fishery and an important port of the Pandya kingdom. It has been identified to be a village of that name near the mouth of river Tamraparni. Uraiyr, referred to by the 'Periplus' as Argaru, had pearls for trade gathered from the Palk Bay. The large production of pearls and the king's monopoly over them are evidenced by the Tamil works of the period. We have noticed in this chapter the importance of Korkai. Argaru refers only to Uraiyr though Mr. Rasanayagam tries to identify the same with North Ceylon. In this chapter, we have also noticed that the chank-cutting industry existed at Korkai and North-Ceylon.

1. Schoff, op. cit. p. 59.

Chapter II.

The History of the Pearl Trade and the Commercial Relations between South India and other countries till 400 A. D.

South India had much commercial intercourse and political relations with the countries of the West and East. First of all, we shall consider the commercial relations between the Kingdoms in this great sub-continent itself.

Though the Rishis confined the Aryas to Aryavarta so far as the religious purposes were concerned, yet there must have been much commercial intercourse between Aryavarta and Dakshinapatha, as they called South India, for one of the articles much used for decoration in the vedic period was the pearl from the extreme south of India.

A few extracts from some 'mantras' will show the wide use of the pearls in the Aryavarta in the Vedic and post-Vedic periods. A 'mantra' from Rig Veda runs as follows: "The car (of Savita) was decked with pearls of various colours"¹. The use of the pearl and the mother-of-pearl was so great that the small supply of inferior pearls from the Ganges could not have met the demand and hence the pearls must have been carried from, South India to North. One whole sukta of

1. P. T. Srinivasa-Iyengar, op. cit. pp. 23-24

Atharvana Veda Samhita called Sankamani Sukta recited when wearing an amulet of the mother-of-pearl, thus eulogises the pearl, "born out of the atmosphere, cut from the light of the lightning, let this golden shell of pearl protect us" ¹. "Thou art as conspicuous on the chariot, lustrous on the quiver, thou" ².

We may also confirm the existence of the commercial intercourse between North and South India by the identity of the folk-biology regarding the origin of the pearls in Tamil as well as in Sanskrit Works. Already we have seen how the Sanskrit writers allude to the dew forming itself into the pearl.

We can easily understand that considerable intercourse had existed between these two parts of India to enable the pearls to have been carried in large quantities needed for decorating not only the persons but also their chariots, quivers and other articles of use.

Kautalya in his 'Artha Sastra', written about the fourth century B. C., tells us that there was a flourishing trade between South India and North India in shells of all kinds including the mother-of-pearl, diamonds and other precious stones, pearls and gold, which were available in plenty

1. Ibid, p. 23.

2. Ibid, p. 24.

in South India ¹. We can easily assume that this was no marcantile development of the Mauryan epoch, but a continuation of the trade of the Vedic times, for the men of the earlier times could not have got the articles from any other quarter.

In South India, Korkai, Madura, Uraiyur Kaveripattinam, Nelkynda (Kottayam) and Muziris (Cranganore) were the chief trade centres and Kaveripattinam in the Chola Kingdom, Korkai and Nelkynda in the Pandyan territories and Muziris in the Chera country were flourishing ports and emporiums of commerce and foreign trade. They were visited often by the foreign visitors and traders. Reference to the trade in the pearls in Barygaza (Broach) suggests the possibility of the Indians monopolising the entire trade in the pearls by buying up the pearls of the fishery in the Persian Gulf. In the ancient days, the pearls of Ormus (in the Persian Gulf), Korkai and Taprobane (Ceylon) were highly esteemed and were given the honour of being called the "oriental pearls". But for a few fluctuations in their fortune when the Cholas became powerful, conquered their territories and held them for sometime, the Pandyas enjoyed complete control over the trade in pearls. Mr. Warmington ² says that he is tempted to conjecture that by agreement, the Cheras monopolised the pepper, the Pandyas the pearls and the Cholas the

1. Ibid, p. 24.

2. E. H. Warmington, "*Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*", Chap. III.

beryls and fine muslins. This is untenable since we hear much of the trade in pearls at Kaveri pattinam from the Tamil Poems “Pattinapalai” and “Silappadhikaram”.

Korkai was the seat of the pearl fishery and gave immense revenue to the Pandya King. It seems to have been the second capital of the Pandyas. Native traditions point out that Korkai was the cradle of South Indian civilisation, the place where the Pandya rule began. It is maintained that Korkai was the capital of the Pandya Kingdom and it was abandoned in favour of Madura only just before the time of Ptolemy since he refers to the shifting of the Pandya capital to the inland town of Madura. The Pandyas called themselves ‘Ruler of Korkai’ and this is advanced to strengthen the thesis that Korkai was the first capital of the Pandyas and it was abandoned in the first century A. D. in favour of Madura.

We learn from ‘Silappadhikaram’ that when Madura was put to fire by the divine wrath of Kannagi, the Pandya King fled to Korkai. He made Korkai his temporary capital and ruled from there till Madura was rebuilt. He shifted his capital back to Madura after he made suitable amends for the sin of his father in believing the goldsmith and murdering Kovalan. I am tempted to think that if we take the date of ‘Silappadhikaram’ as the first century A. D., we may find a

due to the shifting of the capital to Madura as referred to by Ptolemy. I am led to this thought since there is practically no reference whatsoever in any of the ancient Tamil Poems about Korkai being the capital of the Pandya Kingdom. Korkai was only a sub-capital where the heir-apparent of the Pandya Kingdom lived. But there is a tradition which says that the three brothers Chera, Chora and Pandya lived at Korkai and when they grew up, Chora and Chera left their brother Pandya in the homeland and went out to seek their fortune elsewhere. If we could believe this tradition (though the Choras or Cholas called themselves Kings of Solar line and the Pandyas of Lunar line), the time when this could have happened should be atleast third or second millenium B. C. The Ramayana refers to Kapata-puram as the capital of the Pandyas. But the Mahabharata refers only to Madura as the Pandyan capital. The Sangam literature never points to Korkai as the capital of the Pandyas. So we may conclude that Ptolemy's reference must hold good only to the change of capital to Madura from Korkai where the Pandyan King resided for some years when Madura was rebuilt.

The pearls gathered at Korkai were sold at Nelkynda (Kottayam) which was an emporium of foreign trade in the first century A. D. Pliny and the 'Periplus' refer to this trade centre. The pearls intended to be exported to the foreign

countries were sent to Nelkynda and the pearls for the inland trade were despatched to the capital, Madura. The pearls were found in large quantities at Madura. 'Silappadhikaram' talks of the pearls exhibited at the bazaars at Madura. "They are devoid of flaws that are generally to be found in the products of land, sea, air and rock" ¹.

Ptolemy (130 A. D.) refers to one Sosikourai in the country of Kareoi ². Kareoi should be the coast people - fishermen and boatmen - called "Karaiyar". Even now these coast people are called "Karayalars". Now we may trace the place referred to by Ptolemy as Sosikourai. As James Hornell ³ and others clearly show, it should be the modern Tuticorin called in Tamil 'Tuttukudi'.

We have already seen the reference to the pearl trade at Uraiyur from the extract from the 'Periplus' that refers to Argaru. We have also seen that the pearls sold there were gathered from the fishery in the Palk Bay. But Kaveripattinam the capital and port of the Cholas till the beginning of the second century A. D. had large store of the pearls. This information we get from 'Pattina-

1. "Silappadhikaram", Canto 14, 11, 193-196.

2. MC. Grindle, *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*, p. 57

"The country of Kareoi, in the Kolchic Gulf where there is a pearl fishery; Sosikourai and Kolkhai, an emporium at the mouth of river Solen".

3. James Hornell, "The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay" p. 8.

palai' ¹ and Silappadhikaram'. While talking of the pearl ornaments and the pearl trade in the Pandyan Kingdom, it is clearly said that the pearls came from the Korkai coast. For example, 'Silappadhikaram' says that the Pandyan King was 'wearing the necklace made of pearls taken from the great coast of Korkai.' ² But when the Poets talk of the pearls in the Chola Kingdom, they do not say wherefrom the pearls came. Uraiyur got its supply of pearls from the Palk Strait. But Palk Strait fishery would never have been able to supply such a large quantity of pearls as to allow the Cholas to export so much. The Pandyan monarch would not have allowed the pearls of his coast to go to Kaveripattinam for re-export to the foreign countries. Nor would the foreign traders move the pearls purchased at Korkoi or Nelkynda to Kaveripattinam as they would incur much expenditure and would have to pay customs charges to the Chola King. 'Pattinapalai' clearly says that customs were collected at the port of Kaveripattinam for all commodities that were imported and exported. 'Pattinapalai' at one place refers to the pearls amassed in large quantities at the Chola capital as "South Sea pearls". So we may conclude that these pearls should have come from the Gulf of Mannar ;

1. "Pattinapalai". is one of the Ten Poems called "Pattupattu" and it was sung in praise of Karikala Chola.

2. "Silappadhikaram", Canto 14.

"கொற்கையும் பெருந்துறை முத்தொடு பூண்டு"

if not from the Korkai coast, it should be from the Ceylon coast. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that Ceylon in the first century A. D. was conquered by the great Chola King Karikala, the hero of 'Pattinapalai'. The Cholas held Ceylon for some decades and when they left Kaveripattinam as the city was taken by the sea, they lost their hold over Ceylon.

The Cholas had their chank fishery in the Carnatic coast. The chanks were also had from Ceylon. Among the inhabitants of Pattinapakkam, a suburb of Kaveripattinam, there were chank cutters and those skilled in making strings of pearls ¹. Maruvurpakkam situated near the sea-side beach of Kaveripattinam, was inhabited by the merchants, natives and foreigners. There were storehouses. Traders in coral, pearls, gold and precious stones, had their residence at Maruvurpakkam ². It is further said that the people of Kaveripattinam used the pearls in such extravagant ways as to tie strings of pearls from the roof of the house ³. The large supply of the pearls at Kaveripattinam is testified by the statement of Kovalan in "Silappadhikaram", which runs as follows: "My town Pukar (Kaveripattinam) has a large store of the pearls taken from the oysters" ⁴.

1. "Silappadhikaram", Canto 5.

2. Ibid, Canto 5.

3. Ibid, Canto 5.

4. Ibid, Canto 7, "புரிவினையும் முத்துங் கண்டாம்பல்
பொதியவிழ்க்கும் புகாரே யெம்மார்"

Different commodities for sale flowed into Kaveripattinam from the various parts of the country and the "South Sea pearl" was one of them.¹

Recent excavations made at Arikamedu, two miles south of Pondicherry on the east coast of India, showed signs of its flourishing state as an Indo-Roman trade mart from the days of Augustus' Principate (23 B. C.) to the end of the second century A. D. Mr. R. E. M. Wheeler excavated this locality in 1945 and he found in the layers of the northern sector, a very large number of cut conch shells, possibly unfinished bangles, although no finished bangles were found². This emporium is identified by Mr. Wheeler with "Puduka" of the 'Periplus'.

We have seen at length the important trade marts of the Tamil coast where the pearls were to be had, namely, Korkai, Nelkynda, Madura, Uraiyur, Kaveripattinam and Puduka. Now we shall notice the various uses of the pearls in Tamilnad and the export trade in them.

The pearls were used in our country in many ways. Anklets were made with pearls inside them and the Ancients amused themselves by the sweet sound made by the pearls from inside the anklets.

1. "Pattinapalai", I. 189.

"தென் கடல் முத்து".

2. "Ancient India"—Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, July 1946 - p. 108.

The great epic 'Silappadhikaram' centres round this anklet. Another ornament made of pearls was the pearl necklace. Rich and poor alike vied in having this ornament of merit. The king had this on him as a mark of respect and an honour of conquest. Poets were presented with these necklaces. These necklaces of pearls were strung either with the thread of gold or with a silken thread. In Tamil Poetry of the Sangam Age, there are many references to the pearls falling from the strings ¹. A passage in 'Silappadhikaram' describes Madavi while she was dancing. She had a necklace of pearls and rubies. She also had a right-whorled chank ².

Palaces and the mansions of rich people were decorated with strings of pearls hung from the roof. Apart from the Ramayana's reference to the "Pandya's gates of pearl and gold", there are many references in the Tamil Poems to this ³.

The chanks had a very wide use in those days. They were used for religious as well as social functions. When addressing the Pandya King, a Poet says that "the right-whorled chank is ever sounding on the coast of your country" ⁴.

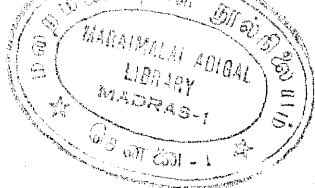
1. "Manimekhalai", Canto 19.

2. "Silappadhikaram", Canto 6.

3. "Nedunalvadai", I. 125.

4. "Narrinai", Stanza 172:

“வலம்புரிவான் கொடு நாலு மிலங்கு
நீர்த்துறை கெழுகொண்க”.



Tamil ladies used to wear the chank-bangles. They seem to have used chank cut into crescent-like shape as ear ornaments as is evidenced by the recent finds at Arikamedu.

In the early period, the pearls were mainly exported to Egypt, Rome, Greece and China. Many Latin writers of this period have referred to the wide use of the pearls in the Roman Empire. The commercial relations between India and Rome is confirmed by the large number of Roman coins found in the various parts of South India.

Among the ancient Persians, the pearls were known and prized as early as the fourth century B. C. and probably much earlier. The Babylonians and Assyrians also valued and used them as ornaments. In the Greek dynasties founded by Alexander's Generals after his death in 323 B. C., the pearls gained rapidly in favour, a noted instance being the pearls of Cleopatra ¹.

“ The pearls came to the common use in Rome after the surrender of Alexandria ; but they first began to be used about the time of Sylla (Circa 78 B. C.) ; the pearls were made popular by the large quantities brought back to Italy by Pompey and they became common at the fall of the republic when Augustus brought

1. C. F. Kunz, “ *The Pearl and Pearl Industry* ” in “ *Marine Products of Commerce* ”, edited by D. K. Tressler.

back the treasures of Ptolemies ¹". Even earlier, the Romans learnt from Isidore of Charax (B. C. 284) full details of the Persian Gulf pearls and their high value, and in due course the already extensive trade in the Indian pearls was raised to an enormous height by the discovery of the full use of the monsoons and by the demand of Greek and Roman girls and ladies for this typically feminine ornament ². The Roman authors of the later period like Martial (Circa 104 A. D.) and Statius refer to the wide use of the pearls in Rome. With ordinary writers too, apart from those who took voyages, Indian products appear as usual. Lucian (Circa 180 A. D.) refers to the pearls, ivory, muslins and tortoise-shells. Arrian (140 A. D.) makes special mention of the pearls, cotton muslins and parrots ³.

Pliny says ⁴ that the pearls were mainly imported into Rome from the Indian Ocean. He puts in a nutshell the carriage of the pearls from India to the Roman Empire by stating that "it is the Indian Ocean that principally sends them to us; and thus have they, amidst those monsters so frightful and so huge, to cross so many seas, and to traverse such lengthened tracts of lands scorched by the ardent rays of a burning sun". Roman luxury first gave the name of

1. Pliny, op. cit. Book IX, Chapter 59.

2. E. H. Warmington, op. cit. Part I. Chapter 3.

3. Ibid, Part I, Chapter 3.

4. Pliny op. cit. Book IX, Chapter 54.

“ unio ” to the pearl, meaning unique gem, since two pearls are not alike with regard to the whiteness, size, roundness, polish and weight. The Roman ladies quite gloried in having the pearls of a long size called “ elanchi ” ending in a full bulb, suspended from their ears. ¹ At the time of Pliny (77 A. D.) even the poorer classes were affecting the pearls as Roman people were in the habit of saying that “ a pearl worn by a woman in public, is as good as a lictor walking before her ” ². Even more than this, they put them on their feet, and that, not only on the laces of their sandals but all over the shoes. It was not enough to wear the pearls, but they should tread upon them and walk with them under foot as well ³. The pearls were being paid for mostly in gold ⁴.

Moralists like the Jewish Philosopher Philon of Alexandria (Circa 40 A. D.) and St. Paul were lamenting the wearing of the pearls by the women and the girls. Pliny becomes almost incoherent with wrath in his contemplation of this luxury, which he says, reached the extreme point of expenditure and necessitated voyages on the Indian seas over large distances. It is in connection with the pearls Pliny speaks, with a gust of

1. Ibid, Book IX, Chapter 56.

2. Ibid. Book IX, Chapter 56.

3. Ibid, Book IX, Chapter 56.

4. E. H. Warmington, op, cit. Part II Chapter 1.

anger against feminine luxury, of the wealth drained by India from the Roman Empire ¹.

The craving for the pearls was not confined to one sex, a fact lamented by Quintilian (Circa 95 A. D.). Emperors like Nero (60 A. D.) possessed large quantities of pearls. Normally this kind of luxury took two forms. The pearls were either worn in necklaces upto three rows or else they were suspended by ladies from their fingerings or from their ears ². The necklaces could be obtained in India as is revealed by the Indian literature. Special keepers of the pearls and the pearl-studded jewellery seem to have spread all over the Roman Empire. In the New Testament, we have the pearl of the great price. "Small is the pearl but Queen among the jewels" are the words of St. Gregory ³.

That the pearls were in very common use in Egypt is meant by Pliny when he says that Augustus brought back to Rome the pearls of the Ptolemies of Egypt. The pearls of Cleopatra are very famous in history. The famous pearl earrings of Cleopatra were in value £. 1,51,458. ⁴ It is well-known that Cleopatra dissolved a pearl of high value in her wine and drank it.

1. Pliny, op. cit. Book IX, Chapter 59.

2. Warmington, op. cit. Part II, Chapter 1.

3. Ibid, Part II, Chapter 1.

4. William Robertson, "The Historical Disquisition concerning Ancient India". p. 69.

Pliny refers to Port Nelkynda, an emporium where the Egyptian and the Greek merchants thronged to buy the Indian goods for export ¹. The author of the 'Periplus' says that the pearls fished in the Korkai seas were to be had at Nelkynda and the merchants of his country visited that place. That Nelkynda and Muziris on the west coast of India were flourishing trade marts visited by the foreign merchants and travellers is attested by the Tamil Poems also. Bacre is also referred to by Pliny as a trade mart ². It is Porakad in Tamil spoken of as a notable port by the Tamil Works. These three centres of trade were often visited by the Egyptian and the Greek merchants. Love to see for themselves the places where the valuable goods like pearls, muslin, silk, pepper, etc. were produced and the adventurous spirit to visit the various trade marts and make money had induced ever so many people of Egypt and Greece to sail in the torrid seas to India. "Yavanas" referred to by the Tamil Poets were nobody except the Egyptian Greeks.

The instances given above show clearly that the pearls were imported in a very large quantity into the Roman Empire from India and that the pearls were held in high esteem there. Pliny says ³ that India drained the Roman Empire of at least

1. Pliny, op. cit. Book VI, Chapter 26.

2. Ibid, Book VI, Chapter 26.

3. Ibid, Book VI, Chapter 26.

55 million sasterces (nearly a million pounds) a year sending in return wares which were sold for a hundred times their original value. From the time of Augustus, the pearls were consumed in a larger quantity than before. The Romans had leisure and wealth enough to indulge in the extravagant luxuries of life. India was only too glad to send her goods and get gold in return, a fact attested by the finds of Roman coins in Tamilnad and Ceylon.

Roman coins of various Kings were found in the different parts of South India. Coimbatore District tops the list as it was famous, under the Cholas, for its beryl mines. Coins of Augustus (14 A. D.), Tiberious (37 A. D.), Claudious (54 A. D.), Nero (61—62 A. D.), Domitian (96 A. D.), Hadrian (138 A. D.), Antonius Pius (161 A. D.), Marcus Aurelius (180 A. D.), Caracalla (217 A. D.), Diocletian (305 A. D.), Constantine the Great (337 A. D.), Theodosius (395 A. D.), Honorius and Arcadius (400 A. D.) were found in the various parts of Madras Presidency.¹

The large number of the coins of Augustus, Claudius, Nero and Domitian found in the Southern Districts of Madras Province suggests that there was an extensive trade between South India and the Roman Empire. Perhaps trade in the Indian

1. "ANCIENT INDIA"—Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, July 1946, p. 118.

goods especially the pearls declined in Rome after 100 A. D. When Vespasian became Emperor, he issued enactments to suppress the excesses of the nobles. Even earlier, Emperor Tiberius tried in vain to stop the flow of gold from Rome into India, since he was worried over the fact that Roman money was beginning to leave the Empire in large quantities in order to pay for the Indian goods loved by the girls and women and even by men ¹. The age of luxury was succeeded by one of self-denial. Under the Byzantine Emperors, from 376 A. D., the upper classes of Byzantium had leisure as well as wealth to indulge in the luxuries. Placed nearer East, the demand for Indian luxuries developed. As a result, in India had been found coins of these Emperors. Finds of Six coins of Hadrian (138 A. D.) at Karivalamvandanallur in Tirunelveli District, eleven gold coins ending with Nero dated A. D. 61-62 at Madura, silver washed coins of Diocletian (305 A. D.) at Tanjore, copper coins including those of Honorius and Arcadius (400 A. D.) at Madura, ² attest to the trade in the goods of Tirunelveli, Madura, and Tanjore Districts, namely the pearls and the muslin.

In Ceylon, coins of Constantius, Theodosius and Arcadius were found at Attikuzhi in Mannar District. Coins of Antonious Pius have been

1. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, op. cit. p. 320.

2. "ANCIENT INDIA" Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, July 1946, p. 118.

found at Mantota in the Mannar island ¹. These places were, in days of old, the situation of the pearl fisheries. The finds of these coins in Tamil-land, generally, and in the pearl coasts particularly, show the magnitude of the trade in pearls. Starbo (19 A. D.) says that about 120 ships sailed from Myos Hermos (a port on the Red Sea) to India ².

The Tamil Poems talk much of the foreign trade and especially export of the pearls to other countries. 'Maduraikanci' says that "the merchants take the pearls and gold from the Pandya Kingdom and bring back, after selling them in the countries where they are scarce, goods which are not to be found in their country" ³. It is clearly seen from the above extract that the merchants of the Tamil country went out to the far away countries to exchange their products with those that were rarely found in Tamilnad. Into Kaveripattinam, the great port and the capital of the Chola Kingdom, "horses are brought from distant lands beyond seas; pepper is brought in ships; gold and precious products from the northern mountains; pearl from the southern

1. Ibid, page 118.

2. V. Kanakasabhai, "The Tamils 1800 years ago", p. 31.

3. "Maduraikanchi", 11. 504-506.

“மலையவும் நிலத்தவும் நீரவும் குறவும்
பல்வேறு திருமணி முத்தமொடு பொன்கொண்டு
சிறந்த தேயத்து பண்ணியம் பகர்நரும்”.

sea and coral from the eastern sea " ¹. These products were imported into Kaveripattinam not only for inland trade but also for re-export. Kaveripattinam, in the first century A. D., exercised the position of an imperial port where the goods from all parts of the Chola Empire as well as from other countries poured in. After giving them the seal of the tiger, the emblem of the Cholas, the goods were exported to other countries. Excise was collected at the port ². Streets were there at Maruvurpakkam where the goods were grouped ³

"Perumpanarrupadai" ⁴ talks about the merchants dealing in the precious stones, pearls, and sandalwood, and characterises them as "people who give the world the use of these precious articles" ⁵. 'Silappadhikaram' says that "the merchants who go out to the various countries to exchange the bright pearls with beautiful damsels live in my town, Pukar (Kaveripattinam)" ⁶. It is easily understandable from this statement that the merchants of Kaveripattinam went to the foreign countries for trade purposes and among

1. "Pattinapalai", II. 184-190.

2. Ibid,

3. "Silappadhikaram", Canto 5.

4. "Perumpanarrupadai" is one of the ten poems comprising "Pattupattu".

5. Ibid, II, 67-68.

6. 'Silappadhikaram', Canto 7, 1. 23.

the commodities they dealt in, the pearl was one. This is further supported by 'Manimekhalai' which speaks of one Saduvan, a merchant, who met with an accident in the sea when he was going abroad for trade purposes.

It seems to be very common with the Tamil people, especially of the Chetty caste, to go out by land and sea to the foreign countries on commercial missions. That the Tamils brought back beautiful "Yavana" girls and warriors in exchange for their goods is revealed by the ancient Tamil literature. In "Purananuru", there are very frequent references to the 'Yavana' girls serving the three Tamil Kings, especially the Pandya monarch, with wine brought from the west. These 'Yavanas' seem to be the Egyptian Greeks. These details strengthen the thesis that there was a flourishing trade between Egypt and India, even before the Christian era. The Tamils do not seem to have traded with the Greeks direct when the latter were powerful in the Mediterranean sea. They seem to have sent goods only through Egypt.

In Kanchi (Conjeevaram) also, there were merchants who dealt in the pearls and the precious stones. This city seems to be of a later development. As long as Kaveripattinam was a flourishing trade mart, Kanchi could not flourish as an important trade emporium. Yet it was a big

city where big merchants and artisans lived. 'Manimekhalai' says that there were chank cutters and pearl perforators at Kanchi ¹. 'Manimekhalai' further reports that the Chola monarch went to Kanchi after Kaveripattinam was taken by the sea. This is not much supported by the historians. But an interesting piece of information given by a Chinese writer about the commercial relations between Kanchi and China is given by Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri in his "Foreign Notices of South India".

Pan Kou, a Chinese writer who lived not later than the end of the first century A. D. says the following in his "Tselien Lan Chow". "After a travel of twelve months from Jenam ², you reach the Kingdom of Hounang-tche. There are extensive and populous lands full of strange products. From the time of Emperor Wou ³ all of them have been sending tribute ⁴. There are official interpreters who belong to the administration of the palace houagmen (yellow gate); with the recruits they go by sea to buy shining pearls, glass, rare stones, and strange products, giving gold and silk in exchange..... The large pearls measure upto seven inches." ⁵ The last sentence sounds un-

1. "Manimekhalai", Canto 28.

2. Upper Annam.

3. 140 to 86 B. C.

4. 'Tribute' should mean 'Trade relations'.

5. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "Foreign Notices of South India" pp. 44-45.

natural. There had been no pearl found measuring seven inches. Mr. Pelliot, the translator, himself expresses doubt about his translation of this sentence. Hounang-tche, according to Mr. Pelliot, should be in the Indian Ocean as there are mentions of the pearls and the glass in the extract. Herrman located it in Abyssinia and Laufer in Malaya. A somewhat correct and reasonable identification had been made by Ferrand, who¹ has stated that Hounang-tche should be Kanchi.

Ma Twan lin who lived in the middle of the twelfth century A. D., a possible contemporary of Chau Ju Kua, has something to say about the relations between Hounang-tche and China in the second century B. C. The notice of Ma Twan lin is worth considering along with that of Pan Kou.

“The Kingdom of Hounang-tche (Kanchi according to Ferrand) sent for the first time some ambassadors at the time of Han and since the reign of Emperor Outi² regularly paid a visit of homage. It furnished beautiful pearls, fine stones, and many curious things. Pearls which are two tsun³ in circumference are found there, and others smaller, with a perfect roundness which, when laid on a polished surface, keep moving for a whole day before coming to a standstill.”⁴

1. Ibid, p. 45.

2. Placed in the years 140-86 B. C., by Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri.

3. Nearly 3 centimetres.

4. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit. p. 319.

From the above two extracts we may conclude that the Chinese knew the use of the pearls and had them imported from India even in the very early period, the second and the first century B. C.

As a result of her commercial relations with other countries, South India had political relations also. From Ma Twan lin, we come to know that Kanchi sent an embassy to China. This is not supported by either the historians or the other writers on the subject. There was an exchange of embassies between Rome and India. In the reign of Augustus, fresh embassies passed between India and Rome.¹ One mission from Broach brought to Rome snakes and a boy born without arms; another from South India offered pearls, precious stones etc., and gave the Roman subjects permission to visit the courts of the Indian Kings.² It is said that the trade of Rome with India commenced under favourable auspices in the time of Augustus who received embassies between 25 and 11 B. C. from North-western India, Western India and the Chera and the Pandya Kings.³ These embassies were followed or preceded, we may be sure, by others on the part of the Romans. These exchanges of embassies very much favoured peaceful prosecution of trade relations between the two countries, Rome and India.

1. M. Cary and Warmington. "*The Ancient Explorers*," p. 74.

2. Ibid, p. 74.

3. Professor R. Satyanatha Iyer, "*The History of India*" Volume I, p. 164.

In summing up the contents of this chapter, we may note that references to the pearls and the trade between Aryavarta and Dakshinapatha are extant in the Vedic literature and Kautilya's 'Artha Sastra' written about the fourth century B. C. We have also seen the role played by the following important trade marts in exporting pearls to the foreign countries ; Korkai, Nelkynda, Muziris, Uraiyur, Kaveripattinam and Kanchi. The pearl trade with Rome is strongly evidenced by what the Roman writers like Pliny say and also by the finds of Roman coins throughout South India, especially Tirunelveli District and the island of Mannar. We have also noticed the importance of Arikamedu as an Indo-Roman trade centre in the first century A. D. referred to by the 'Periplus' as Puduka. We have also seen in this chapter, the various uses to which the pearls were put in Rome and in our country. Extravagant dedications of pearls were made in Rome in the first century A. D. Even earlier Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians and Greeks used the pearls to a large extent. The Tamil literature reveals that the trade in the pearls with the foreign countries was conducted by the Tamils themselves who are said to have exchanged the pearls and other articles of commerce with gold and rare articles of other countries not available in India. The Tamil country had political relations also with foreign countries, especially with Rome.

Chapter III.

The History of the Pearl Fishery between 400 A.D. and 1000 A.D.

As we have seen in the Introduction, the sources for tracing the history of the pearl and the chank fisheries after the decline of the Chola and the Pandya powers in the fifth century A. D. are lacking. As a matter of fact, the history of the Chola and the Pandya Kingdoms itself is in a gap in this period. Though the Pandyas were not virtually conquered by the Pallavas as the Cholas had been, yet details are lacking with regard to their commercial relations with other countries. After the Augustan age of Tamil literature of the first three centuries of the Christian era, we find a gap in the literary works also. These were the days when Saivite and Vaishnavite saints lived and sang the praise of God and these saints do not refer anything in their poems except the praise of God. Whether any other Tamil Work was ever attempted or not, we are not able to gauge. In short, between 400 and 800 A. D., there were no Tamil Works composed, that merit consideration. "Jeevaka Chintamani" one of the five great epics is of the ninth century and "Periyapuranam" which gives the biographies of sixty and odd Saivite saints dates to the tenth century A. D.

Notices of the foreigners who visited South India in this period are only very scarce. But we

may ascertain the fact that the pearls were fished in the seas and used in a very large scale, from the many references to the pearls as such made in the 'Tevaram' and 'Nalayiraprabandham' sung by the saints referred to in the foregoing paragraph. There are many references to the pearls used in a necklace and so on in the "Jeevaka Chintamani". The "Periyapuranam" also speaks of the pearls. For example, the following two references may be noted: "The pearls given out by the chank with a broad mouth" ¹. "The pearls born of the chank" ². From these extracts we may find that the pearl fisheries were continued to be exploited.

Korkai continued to be the chief port for the pearl trade though river Tamraparni was accumulating silt in the sea near its mouth. Korkai was becoming more and more an inland town and was finally abandoned in favour of Kayal which rose up on the delta formed by river Tamraparni at its mouth. This Kayal, referred to by Marco Polo as Cael, was only a daughter city of Korkai and it seemed to have included Korkai which had now become a suburb of the great port of Kayal.

The Arabs were the main traders of this period and they refer to the pearl fisheries of

1. Sekkizhar, "Periyapuranam", "Tirunattuchirappu".

Stanza 16. "வியல்வாய் வெள்வளைத்தரளம்"

2. Ibid, Stanza 23. "சுரிவளைசொரிந்தமுத்து"

Ceylon as well as Maabar.¹ Though their references to Maabar as a pearl producing country, are only very scarce, we cannot think that the Indian side of the Gulf of Mannar became unproductive as the accounts left by the later authors state that there was a great pearl producing industry at Kayal. The Imperial Power of the Pallavas ought to have got the pearls they needed from this fishery of the Tirunelveli coast.

Parantaka I. (907-953 A. D.), the Chola monarch who conquered the Pandyas and Ceylon thereby taking the title "Maduraiyum Ilangaiyum Konda" Chola, provided the shrine of Lord Nata-raja at Chidambaram with a gold roof and made a present of many pearls. The Chola power though had its regeneration under Parantaka Chola, became an Imperial Power under the great Rajaraja Chola, who conquered the whole of South India and North Ceylon.

We shall consider what the foreigners who visited South India in this period say about the pearl fishery.

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1. "Maabar" was the name used by the Arabs to denote the Coromandel Coast, the regions covered by the Chola and the Pandya Kingdoms in the former days. 'Maabar' in the Arabian tongue means "passage" and it was applied to the Coromandel Coast in that meaning. Later on Maabar, corrupted into Malabar, came to denote the Kerala country, though originally the Arabs did not have the least idea of using this term to the present day Malabar.

Fa Hsien (399-414 A. D.) tells us nothing about the pearl fishery in South India. But he says that there was a fishery at the Mannar Island which was under the Government of Ceylon.¹ Cosmos Indicopleustes (530-550 A.D.) an Egyptian travelling monk, refers to the chank shells at Marallo. He says that "then, again, farther away on the mainland is the mart, Marallo, which exports chank shells."² This chank fishery at Marallo should be the chank fishery of the Ramnad coast.³

Yuan Chwang (645 A. D.) the Chinese traveller, says that Malaka⁴ was a depot for sea pearls.⁵

1. H. A. Giles, "The Travels of Fa Hsien", p. 66.

"The small islands round about the island of Ceylon number about hundred. They are all subject to the mother island, and produce chiefly pearls and precious stones. There is one island where the manibeads (fine pearls used by the Buddhists) are found; it is about ten li square. The King sends men to guard it; and if any pearls are obtained, he takes three-tenths."

2. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit. p. 89.

3. Tennent in his "Ceylon" misses the significance of the expression "on the mainland" in the extract quoted above and identifies Marallo with Mantota near Mannar on the north-west coast of Ceylon. Mr. Yule places this on the Indian coast, on the mainland opposite to Ceylon and suggests that Marallo was the corrupted form of "Maravar" the name of the chief caste of the Ramnad District, now the location of one of the most productive and accessible present day chank fisheries. (Yule, "*Cathay and the Way Thither*", Vol. 1.).

4. Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri says that Malaka or Malakuta denotes the Pandya Kingdom. (Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit. p. 103.)

5. Ibid, p. 103.

Iben Khordadzbh (844-848 A. D.) speaks of the exports from Ceylon to include varieties of rubies, diamonds, pearls etc. ¹ He further says that "the pearl and the chank, a name by which they designate the great shell which serves for a trumpet and which is most sought for, are found on the shores of Ceylon." ²

Two Arab writers of this period had noticed the pearl and chank fisheries and the trade in India and Ceylon. They are Suleiman and Abu Zaid. The first, Suleiman, says that the sea of Ceylon gives valuable pearls and chanks. ³ The second, Abu Zaid, who wrote in 916 A. D. says that the pearls had greater value than any other precious articles and they were constituting the treasure of the Indian Kings. ⁴ Abul Faradj

1. Henry Yule, "Hobson-Jobson," Chank.

2. Ferrand, "Relation de voyages et textes Geographiques Arabes, Persians et Turks."

3. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit. p. 123.

"The Island of Ceylon is big and extensive. Aloes, gold and precious stones are found on it and in the sea which bathes it, the pearl and shank are found. The latter is a big shell used as a trumpet into which one blows. It is preserved like a precious thing."

4. Ibid, p. 130.

"The Kings of India wear round their neck collars of great value made of precious stones red and green; but the pearls have the greatest value and in most cases they are used. In fact, pearls constitute the treasure of the Kings and their financial reserve. The generals and high functionaries wear equally collars of pearls."

(988 A. D.) and L. Abrege Des Marveilles (1000 A. D.) refer to the pearls in Ceylon. ¹

From these references we find that in this period, Ceylon was the primary emporium of trade in the pearls and South India came only next. The foreigners came to know that there was the chank fishery and the chank was used in many ways. They describe the chank to be of importance to the Hindus as a religious symbol. In this period, South India was visited by the Chinese travellers, Fa Hsien and Yuan Chwang. But they have left no information about the industry under consideration. An explanation may be offered to this negligence which is not due to their ignorance or absence of the exploitation of the pearl fishery. They seem to have been preoccupied with their religious activities. Though the Arab writers refer to the pearls and the chank in Ceylon and South India, they do not give us any details as to the method of fishing or the trade in them.

To sum up we may notice that there are no materials much worthy of note, available to trace the history of the pearl fishery in the period of 400-1000 A. D. The pearls were continued to be fished and we may presume that the trade in pearls with other countries also continued, Arabs now taking the place of the Egyptian Greeks.

1. Ferrand, op cit.

Chapter IV.

The History of the Pearl Fishery under the Imperial Cholas, (990 - 1216 A. D.)

Rajaraja the Great established an empire for the Cholas by conquering the Pandyas and North Ceylon by about 990 A. D. The entire pearl fisheries came to the possession of the Cholas by this conquest. His son, Rajendra under whom the Cholas became more powerful, put down the King of Ceylon who rose against him. He conquered the Chera Kingdom also and took the title "Mudikonda". This Chola overlordship of the entire South India and parts of Ceylon continued till the beginning of the thirteenth century when after Kulothunga III (1178 - 1216), the power of the Cholas declined. Ceylon became independent of the Chola overlordship even earlier. Yet the Chola influence was very great till 1216 A. D., when Maravarman Sundara Pandya II established his power in the Pandya Kingdom. Hence we call this period of nearly two centuries as the Chola period.

The inscriptions of this period give us details of the large scale presents of pearls to various temples by the different kings of the Chola dynasty. For example, in "South Indian Inscriptions", we get so many references to the dedication of pearls, of which a few are given below. "One pearl

ornament inclusive of gold and a pearl.”¹ “One panchasari with two paligai of the midde gold clasp each consisting of five pieces.....inclusive of the lac and the one hundred and eighty-seven pearls in all strung on it, viz. small pearls, polished pearls, crude pearls and sakkatu.”² “One girdle with eighty one pearls in all, viz. round pearls and roundish pearls, polished pearls and small pearls strung on its three strings.”³

An inscription of Rajarajendra Chola at Tanjore Temple runs as follows: “One ring for the tusk of Ganapathi.....eight rubies, two crystals and fourteen crystal diamonds fastened in it and of the one hundred and nineteen pearls in all strung on it.”⁴ An inscription of the same

1. “South Indian Inscriptions,” Volume II. p. 398.

“முத்து மாத்திரை ஒன்றிற் கொத்த முத்து
சப்பத்தி ஒன்றும்.”

2. Ibid Volume II, p. 398.

“பஞ்சரி பொன்னின் ஒன்றிற் கொத்த
முத்து ஒப்பு முத்தால் குறு முத்தும்
காடும் சக்கத்தும் ஆக முத்து நூற்று எண்பத்தேழும்.”

3. Ibid, Volume II, p. 399.

“களாவம் ஒன்றிற் வடம் முன்றிற் கொத்த
முத்து வட்டமும் அனு வட்டமும் ஒப்பு முத்துங்
குறு முத்துங் ஆக முத்து எண்பத்தொன்றும்.”

4. Ibid, Volume, II, p. 410.

“கொம்பிற் முத்து வட்டமும் அனு வட்டமும்
ஒப்பு முத்துங் குறு முத்தும் சப்பத்தியும் ஆக
முத்து நூற்றொருபத் தொன்பதும்.”

king at the same place is as follows: "One forehead ornament weighing including the eleven pearls strung on it." ¹ Lastly here is an inscription of Rajaraja Choladeva: "Sixtyfour pearls in all strung on it out of the pearls which the Lord Sri Rajarajadeva has poured out as flowers at the sacred feet and with which he had worshipped the feet of God." ² We have hundreds of references like these in the inscriptions of the great Cholas. If the King Rajaraja Chola should have poured the pearls at the feet of God as flowers, we can understand the munificent supply he had of the pearls from the fisheries of his empire. Rajendra Chola's inscriptions as well as the inscriptions of the Kings that succeeded him show the extravagant presents of the pearls to various temples scattered all over the Chola empire.

Apart from these inscriptions, we get enough evidence to show that the pearls were very common with the people of this period and that they were dived for in the seas. The Tamil literature of this period are in the form of "Ulas" and "Nikandus". In these "Ulas" and "Nikandus"

1. Ibid, Volume II. p. 411.

"சட்டி ஒன்றிற் கொத்த முத்து பதினென்றும்."

2. Ibid, Volume II, p. 436.

"ஸ்ரீ ராஜராஜ தேவர் அட்டித்திருவடி தொழுத முத்தில்
கொத்த முத்து வட்டமும் அனு வட்டமும்
ஒப்ப முத்துங் குறு முத்தும் ஆகமுத்து அறுபத்திராலு."

there are many passing remarks regarding the fishing for the pearls and the various uses to which the pearls were put.

“Thakkayakaparani”¹, composed in the twelfth century A. D., have many references to the pearls. There is a reference to the matchless pearls.² Another passage says that the products of the mountain and sea were to be had in this land.³ The products of the sea are the chank, the pearl and the coral. Another passage refers to the large pearls from the sea.⁴ Lastly it is said that “a shark discloses pearls of very large quantities when cut”⁵. The great epic “Kamba Ramayanam” of this period also refers to the pearls in many places. But these are mainly passing references. As we saw in the period of 400-1000 A. D., here too no information is given in the Tamil Works regarding the place or the method of the pearl fishing.

Arab traders and Geographers have continued to refer to this industry of the pearl and the chank fisheries. In Arabic poetry, the pearls are

1. “Thakkayakaparani”. a Tamil Poem sung by Ottakoothar, the Court Poet of Kulothunga Chola III.

2. “Thakkayakaparani”, 1. 41. “அரிய தரளம்.”

3. Ibid, 1. 72. “மலை தருவன. கடல் தருவன.”

4. Ibid, 1. 181. “உவரி பரு முத்தம்.”

5. Ibid, 1. “கலக்கல முத்து குப்ப வடற் கடற் சுறவை கடித்தே.”

fabled to be drops of vernal rain congealed in oyster shells. ¹ Benjamin of Tudela says that in the month of March the drops of rain water which fall on the surface of the sea are swallowed by the mothers-of-pearl, and carried to the bottom of the sea, where being fished for and opened in September, they are found to contain pearls. ²

Al Edirisi (1154 A. D.) says that the sea on every side of Ceylon had a fishery of magnificent and priceless pearls. ³ Albiruni (1030 A. D.) states that "in the former times there were pearl banks in the bay of Serendib (Ceylon), but at present they have been abandoned. Since the Serendib pearls have disappeared, other pearls have been found at Sufala in the country of the Zang ⁴ so that the people say that the pearls of Serendib have migrated to Sufala" ⁵. We are unable to believe that the pearl oysters of the Gulf of Mannar would have migrated to Sufala in East Africa since Chau Ju Kua and Marce Polo in the thirteenth century have described the pearl fisheries of their times to be more productive than one could expect. Hence we may take that the abandoning referred to by Albiruni should be the result of successive failures of the fishery for some

1. Edward Balfour. "The Cyclopaedia of India". Vol. III.

2. Ibid, Volume III.

3. J. E. Tennant, "Ceylon", Volume II, p. 449.

4. Zang denotes Portuguese East Africa.

5. Edward Sachau, "Albiruni's India".

years. This failure had happened many times in the days of the Portuguese and the Dutch and of late the pearl fisheries of both Tirunelveli and Ceylon coasts had been abandoned. So we find from Albiruni that the Ceylon pearl fishery was not productive for many years in the eleventh century. But the South Indian - Tirunelveli and Palk Strait - fisheries were productive. This is clearly understood by the large quantities of pearls the Cholas had in their Imperial period. Much commerce would have taken place in this period between South India and China, Persia and Arabia.

Ma Twan lin who lived not later than the middle of the thirteenth century has got the following account of the Chola country to offer us. "Tchu lieu (Chola country) produced pearls, coral, crystal etc. This kingdom which in antiquity had no communications with the Chinese Empire, sent ambassadors for the first time in 1009 A. D. The letter of the King (Rajaraja Chola) written in an elegant style stated that he ordered the ambassadors to offer the Chinese Emperor a robe and cap decorated with pearls, of different sizes weighing 21,000 leang.¹ The ambassadors distributed besides, personally their own presents, six thousand six hundred leang of pearls and 3300 lbs. of perfumes."² His account of the presents is very

1. 1/16th part of chinese lb. of 38 grammes.

2. K. A. Nilakanda Sastri, op. cit. pp. 321-322.

exaggerating. By 21,000 leang, he means 800 kilogrammes of fine pearls which is an exaggeration so fantastic as to merit the least discussion.

Ma Twan lin further records embassies from the Chola Kingdom in the years 1020, 1033 & 1077 A.D. In these accounts also, he exaggerates very much the presents made and the respect shown by the ambassadors towards the Chinese Emperor.¹ His account of Nan-pi (Malabar) says that the people there fished for pearls and made cotton clothes of all colours.² Though we may dismiss the details of Ma Twan lin as exaggeration, we may believe that the great Cholas had political and commercial relations with China.

To conclude we may sum up the contents of this chapter in a few words. There is no authentic information regarding the pearl fishery of this period, but the inscriptions of the Chola Emperors refer to the wide grants of the pearls to various temples. Since Albiruni (1030 A. D.) has said that Ceylon did not produce pearls and that the pearl oysters of Ceylon had migrated to East Africa, we may conclude that the pearls were obtained only from the pearl fishery of the Indian side of the Gulf of Mannar. The Chola Empire included North Ceylon, and the Pandya Kingdom and we may take it that they monopolised the entire pearl fisheries of the Tamil Coast.

1. Ibid, pp. 322-324.

2. Ibid, p. 325.

Chapter V.

The History of the Pearl Fishery under the Later Pandyas, (1216 - 1524 A. D.)

Maravarman Sundara Pandya II asserted the Pandyan independence from the Chola overlordship by the year 1216 A. D. Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I (1251 - 1268 A. D.) who is referred to by Marco Polo as Sunder Bandi ¹, was a great king of this dynasty. Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandya I (1268 - 1310 A. D.) was the last great king of this Pandya dynasty. He conquered Quilon and Ceylon in about 1284 A. D. But for these wars, his reign was a peaceful and a prosperous one. He is referred to as Kales Dewar ² by the Muslim historian Wassaf, as Ashar ³ by Marco Polo and as the ruler of Maabar by both.

1. Yule, "**The Travels of Marco Polo**", Volume II, p. 331.

"In the province of Maabar which is styled India the greater, five kings rule. They are brothers. At this end of the province reigns one of these five royal brothers, who is a crowned king, and his name is Sonder Bandi Dewar. In his kingdom they find very fine and great pearls."

2. H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson, "**The History of India as told by its own Historians**", Volume III, p. 152.

"Kales Dewar, the ruler of Maabar, enjoyed a highly prosperous life, extending to forty and odd years, during which time neither any foreign enemy entered his country nor any severe malady confined him to bed. His coffers were replete with wealth in as much as that in the treasury of the city of Madi (Madura) there were 1200 crores of gold (dinars) deposited Besides this there was an accumulation of precious stones, such as pearls, rubies, turquoises and emeralds, more than in the power of the language to express."

3. Yule, op. cit. Volume II, p. 370.

"Cail is a great and noble city and belongs to Ashar, the eldest of the five brother kings."

There was a war of succession to the Pandya throne between the two sons of Kulasekhara Pandya. The one Vira Pandya II came to power, The other Sundara Pandya, expelled from Madura. sought the help of Malik Kafur, the commander of Allauddin Khilji, the Sultan of Delhi, who wanted to annex South India with his empire. Kafur seized Madura and took a very large booty consisting of elephants, horses and jewels-diamonds, pearls and rubies. Again Khusru Khan (1318 A. D.) invaded the Pandya territory. Muhamed bin Tughluk's invasion in the year 1327 A. D. resulted in the annexation of Madura in his empire as a province. The greatness of the Pandyas thus declined and they became powerless. The line of the Pandya kings was there till they were finally replaced with the Nayaks by Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagar in the beginning of the sixteenth century.

We shall now see the condition of the pearl fishery and the pearl trade in this period. Fortunately, we have enough evidence to trace the history of the pearl fishery in this period.

Chau Ju Kua ¹ (1225 A. D.) who wrote about the trade in Arabia and China in the 12th and 13th centuries, has got much to tell us of South India and its products. "The native products of

1. Hirth and Bockhill, *Chu Ju Kua*, His work on Chinese and Arab trade in the 12th and 13th Centuries entitled "Chufanchi".

Maabar and the Chola Kingdom include pearls." ¹ With regard to the pearl fishery, Chau Ju Kua has interesting details to offer us. ² He is the first author to explain the way how the pearls were fished. His account though partially true of the Indian pearl fisheries, cannot be said to be a correct one. His reference to the number of boats employed and the tying of the rope around the diver's bodies proves correct, but his reference to the application of the hot quilt on the diver never points to the correctness of the picture. Further he does not refer to the so called "Kadal-kattis" or shark-charmers who featured prominently in the pearl fisheries of the Tamil coast. They are referred to by Marco Polo.

1. Ibid, p. 88 and 96.

2. Ibid, pp. 232-240.

"Whenever pearls are fished for they make use of thirty or forty boats, with crews of several dozens of men (to each). Pearl fishers with ropes fastened around their bodies, their ears and noses stopped with wax, are let down into the water about two hundred or three hundred feet or more, the ropes being fastened on board. When a man makes a signal by shaking the rope, he is pulled up. Before this is done, however, a soft quilt is made as hot as possible in boiling water, in order to throw over the diver the moment he comes out, lest he should be seized with a fit or ague and die. They may fall in with huge fishes, dragons and other sea-monsters and have their stomachs ripped open or limb broken by collision with their dorsal fins. When the people on board notice even as much as a drop of blood on the surface of the water, this is a sign to them that the diver has been swallowed by a fish. Cases occur in which the pearl fisher makes a signal with his rope and the man on board is not able to pull him up; then the whole crew pull with all their strength and bring him up with his feet bitten of by the monster."

Chau Ju Kua talks of the chank fishery also. The fishery was under the officials "who keep a register in which the finds of the shells, are entered under the names of the fishermen." ¹ This statement is true even to this day. He further notes that the pearls were divided between the Government and the fishers after the pearls were taken from the oysters. ²

That the pearls were taken to China for trade purposes is also evidenced by Chau Ju Kua. There were heavy customs there, in China, for these articles and the foreign traders going to China were in the habit of concealing the pearls in the lining of their clothes and in the handles of their umbrellas, thus evading the duties leviable upon them. ³

In the Chinese Works, the pearls are referred to be the products of South India. "In Weishu, 102, pearls are mentioned among the products of South India and are called Mo-ni-chu, 'mani' being the Sanskrit word for the pearl, chu-mu in Chinese means pearls's mother." ⁴

Marco Polo (1260-1300 A. D) accounts the following regarding the pearls with the King of

1. Ibid, p. 240.

2. Ibid, p. 240.

"The shells are then placed in a pit. After rather more than a month. the shells will be found to have decayed, when the pearls may be removed, cleaned and divided between (the Government and) the pearl fishers."

3. Ibid, p. 240.

4. Ibid, pp. 240.

Maabar. "The King of Maabar wears hanging in front of his chest from the neck downwards, a fine silk thread strung with 104 pearls and rubies of great price. The reason why he wears this chord with 104 great pearls and rubies is (according to what they say) that everyday, morning and evening, he has to say 104 prayers to his 'idols'. Such is their religion and their custom. And thus did all the kings, his ancestors before him, and they bequeathed the string of pearls to him that he should do the like. The king aforesaid also wears on his arms three golden bracelets thickly set with pearls of great value and anklets also of the like kind he wears on his legs, and rings on his toes likewise. So let me tell you what this king wears between gold and gems and pearls, is worth more than a city's ransom. And it is no wonder for he hath great store of such gear; and besides they are found in his kingdom. Moreover, nobody is permitted to take out of kingdom a pearl weighing more than half a saggio, unless he manages to do it secretly. This order has been given because the king desires to reserve all such to himself; and so in fact the quantity he has, is something almost incredible. Moreover several times every year, he sends his proclamation through the realm that if any one possesses a pearl or a stone of great value will bring it to him, he will pay for it twice as much as it costs. Everybody is glad to do this, and thus the king gets

all into his own hands, giving every man his price." ¹

From the extract quoted above, we understand that the Pandya Kings had a great reserve of the pearls. It is also suggested that the Pandya Kings monopolised the possession of the best pearls. They never allowed anybody to take the pearls out of the Kingdom without their notice. So it can be inferred that the trade in pearls with the foreigners was handled by the Pandyan Government itself if not by the king's men. There would have been officials who would deal with the foreign trade. These officials were sometimes, foreign merchants having the confidence of the Pandyan monarch. ² There was a flourishing trade with the foreign countries conducted under the aegis of the Pandya monarch. ³

1. Yule, op. cit. Volume II, pp. 338-339.

2. Muslim historians say that some of the Arab merchants held high position in the Pandya Councils. One Abdul Rahman is described as the Prime Minister in charge of the customs, to which office his son and grandson succeeded. (R. Satyanatha Iyer, "The History of India". Volume II.)

3. Wassaf, the Muslim historian, a contemporary of Marco Polo writes that "the curiosities of China and Machin (Canton) and the beautiful products of Sind and Hind are always arriving there (in Maabar). The wealth of the Isles of the Persian Gulf in particular, and in part the beauty and adornment of other countries, from Iraq and Khurasan as far as Rum (Turkey) and Europe are derived from Maabar which is so situated as to be the key of Hind." (H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson, op. cit. Volume III, p. 54).

Indian kings of Guzarat ¹ who were very rich and powerful and very eager to purchase pearls and precious stones, sent their Brahmin merchants² to Maabar to purchase them. These Brahmin merchants came to the kingdom of Maabar called soli ³ to get the pearls from its fisheries ⁴

Marco Polo says that Cael (Kayal) was a great city and the seat of the pearl fishery. This Kayal is referred to by the travellers of this period between 1200 and 1600 A. D. as Kahil, Cahila, Caell, Gael and so on. Dr. Caldwell identified Kayal with Palayakayal, now two miles inland of sea at the mouth of river Tamraparni on the Tirunelveli coast. ⁵ This was formerly identified with Kayalpattinam by some scholars. This Kayalpattinam is some miles further south of River Tamraparni. But this theory lost its ground when

1. Marco Polo calls this "Lar". Lar is identified with Guzerat. It is a corrupted form of Lata, Southern Guzerat including Khandesh, between river Mahi and the lower Tapti. It is referred as "Larika" by Ptolemy. It is mentioned in the "Kamasutra" of Vatsyayana. According to Henry Yule. Lada, was the ancient name of Guzerat and Northern Konkan.

2. Marco Po'o calls these Brahmin merchants "Abraimon".

3. "Soli" here means "Chola". Though at the time of Marco Polo, the Cholas were in a humiliated position and the Pandyas were powerful in South India, the greatness of the Cholas that were powerful till 1216 A. D. was still remembered and cherished by the people of Northern India. The pearls going to Guzerat as described by Marco Polo, should be only from the Pandya Kingdom.

4. Yule. op. cit. Volume II. p. 364.

5. Dr. Caldwell. op. cit. p. 283.

Dr. Caldwell proved its identity with Palayakayal, on the authority of the finds at Korkai and Palayakayal, now small villages at the mouth of river Tamraparni. ¹ According to the Roteiro of Vasco da Gama (1498 A. D.), Kayal, the daughter city of Korkai, was a great city which was the capital of a Moorish King ². Its importance lay in the fact that it was the headquarters of the pearl fishery in the Gulf of Mannar. We have already seen in chapter IV that Korkai which was becoming more and more useless as a port, was abandoned in favour of Kayal. Kayal rose as Korkai fell.

Kayal is mentioned as a port of Maabar by Rashidudin, Marco Polo's contemporary, though the name has been perverted by careless transcription into Bawal and Kahal ³. It is also mistranscribed as Kabil in Quartermere's publication of Abdul Razaack who mentions it as "a place situated opposite the island of Serendib, otherwise called Ceylon", and as being the extremity of what he was led to regard as Malabar ⁴. It is mentioned as Cahila, the site of the pearl fishery by Nicolo Conti ⁵, The Roteiro of Vasco da Gama notices it as Caell, a state having a Muslim King and a Christian people ⁶. Gio Vanni d'empoli notices it, as Gael, for the pearl fishery as do Varthema and Barbosa ⁷.

1. Ibid, pp. 282-288.

2. and Yule, op. cit. Volume II, p. 372.

3. 2 to 7. Yule op. cit. Vol. II p. 372.

4. Ibid, Volume II, p. 372.

Marco Polo describes the pearl fishery held at the waters of Kayal when he visited this place. His statement holds good even to this day and merits consideration at length. His description of the methods of pearl fishing and the time and site of the exploitation of the fishery, is vivid.

“You must know that the sea here forms a gulf between the island of Seilan (Ceylon) and the mainland. And all around this gulf, the water has a depth of not more than ten or twelve fathoms. The pearl fishers take their vessels, great and small, and proceed into this gulf where they stop from the beginning of April till the middle of May. They go first to a place called Bettelar and then go sixty miles into the gulf. Here they cast anchor and shift from their large vessels into small boats. You must know that the many merchants who go, divide into various companies, and each of these must engage a number of men on wages, hiring them for April and half of May. Of all the produce they have first to pay the king, as his royalty, a tenth part. And they must also pay those men who charm the great fishes, to prevent them from injuring the diver whilst engaged in seeking pearls under water, $\frac{1}{20}$ th of all they take. These fish-charmers are termed Abraimen; and their charm holds good for that day only, for at night they dissolve the charm so that fishes can work mischief at their will. These Abraimen know also how to charm beasts and

birds and every living thing. When the men have got into the small boats, they jump into the water and dive to the bottom which may be at a depth of 4 to 12 fathoms, and there they remain as long as they are able to. And here they find the shells that contain the pearls. The shells are in fashion like oysters or seahoods. And in these shells are found the pearls, great and small, of every kind, sticking in the flesh of the shell-fish.

“ In this mannar, pearls are fished in great quantities for thence in fact come the pearls which are spread all over the world. And I can tell you that the king of that state (Maabar) hath a very great receipt and treasure from his dues from those pearls. As soon as the middle of May is past, no more of these pearl shells are found there. It is a time that a long way from the spot, some three hundred miles distant, they are also found ; but that is in September and the first half of October. ” ¹

Bettler, rendezvous of the fishery was Patlam ² on the coast of Ceylon called by Ibn Battuta as Butthale. Though the centre of the pearl fishery at the beginning of the present century, was at Arippe and Kondatche further north ³, its site

1. Ibid, Volume II, pp. 331-332.

2. Putlam, otherwise called Pattalam, is the place where the pearl fishery was held in the 12th and the 13th centuries and it is situated on the North-west coast of Ceylon.

3. Bennet, “ Ceylon ”, Chapter 25.

has varied sometimes so low as Chilaw, the name of which is that given by the Tamils as Salabham ¹. In the days of Sundara Pandya (1251-1268 A. D.) and Kulasekhara (1268-1310 A. D.), Ceylon, especially North Ceylon, was part of the Pandya empire and as such the pearl fishery of the coast of Ceylon also came under the Pandyas. This has to be borne in mind when we consider the account of Marco Polo that the pearl fishery was held at Bettler on the Ceylon coast.

The shark-charmers are called "Kadalkattis" ² in Tamil. At Arippe in Ceylon, they belonged to one family supposed to have the monopoly of the charm. The chief operator was, not long ago, paid by the Government and he also received ten oysters from each boat daily during the fishery. Tennent, on his visit, found the incumbent of the office to be a Roman Catholic Christian, but that did not seem to affect the exercise or the validity of his functions. It is remarkable that when Tennent wrote, not more than one authenticated accident from the sharks had taken place, during the whole period of the British occupation. ³ Some people considered the shark-charming as

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1. The place where there was a pearl fishery in the first five centuries A. D. situated further South of Puttalam. Salabham means "diving" i. e. the pearl fishery.
 2. "Kadalkatti" in Tamil means sea-binder. Here the shark is meant by the "sea", the container for the thing contained.
 3. Tennent, op. cit. Volume II, p. 560.

purely superstitious and advised the divers accordingly. But the divers whether Hindus, Muslims or Christians, refused to take the advice. They had, and still continue to have, implicit faith in the shark charmers and believed that their safety inside the sea lay in their charm to bind the sharks.

With regard to the time of the fishery, it is little earlier than what Marco Polo mentions viz. in March and April, just between the cessation of the north-east and the commencement of south-west monsoons. His statement of the depth is quite correct; the diving is carried on in water of four to ten fathoms deep, and never in a greater depth than thirteen fathoms. Regarding the other fishery spoken of by Marco Polo as being held in September and October, we could get no information. The time implies shelter from the south-west monsoon. It was probably on the east coast of Ceylon where in 1750, there was a pearl fishery at Trincomalee. ¹

John of Montecorvino (1292-1293 A. D.) ² and Friar Oderic (1321-1322 A. D.) ³ notice the

1. Ibid, Volume II, p. 565.

2. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit. p. 139.

“The sea (of Maabar) abounds greatly with fish; and in some parts they fish for pearls.”

3. Ibid, p. 197.

“The King of this island (Oderic mistakes the province of Maabar to be an island) of Mohar (Chola Mandalam) is passing rich in gold and silver and precious stones. And in this island are found a great store of good pearls as in any part of the world.”

pearl fishery in the province of Maabar. Friar Jordannus (1323-1330 A. D.), a French Dominican monk, says the following regarding the pearl fishery in the Gulf of Mannar. "Between the island of Seilan (Ceylon) and the mainland are taken pearls or "Margarites" in such quantity as to be quite wonderful. So indeed that there are sometimes more than 8,000 boats or vessels, for three months continuously engaged in this fishery. It is astounding and almost incredible to those who have seen it how many are taken."¹ It seems probable that when Friar Jordannus visited South India, our pearl fisheries were in such a prosperous condition as to engage eight thousand boats for three months.

Ibn Battuta (1325-1354 A. D.) though he stayed in South India and Ceylon for many years as the Wazir of the Sultan of Delhi, has nothing to tell us about the pearl fishery of his time. Friar Jordannus, a contemporary of Ibn Battuta, attests to the flourishing nature of the pearl fishery at the time. It is strange that Ibn Battuta does not say anything. Nor does he make mention of the port of Kayal, Marco Polo's Cael, situated just opposite the coast of Ceylon. The only mention he makes of the pearl is that the Arya Chakravarti of Ceylon addressed him after presenting him with valuable pearls.²

1. Ibid. p. 207.

2. H. A. R. Gibb, "Ibn Battuta", Chapter 8.

Wang ta Yuan (1330-1340 A. D.) deals with the pearl fishery in the Gulf of Mannar in a full chapter.¹ He talks of Jurfatan as being beyond of Kulifo (Calicut). The people of Jurfatan were sea-farers and this was the principal port for the pearl trade. As to the natural products of Jurfatan, the author says that "they are cotton cloth and the pearls all of which latter are

1 Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit. pp. 291-292.

"It is formerly called 'Wei Yiian' and now it is called 'the new harbour'. The shore trends north and south; the inhabitants live scattered about. The soil climate, the customs, the people are like those of Shalipatan (Jurfatan).

"Some eighty odd li away from the harbour at a spot in the sea called 'Ta-lang pong-chu' (great bright oyster pearls) here the waters are very rich in pearl oysters. When about to begin gathering them, the chief kills a human being and some tens of animals in sacrifice to the Gods of the sea. Then they make choice of the day, the boats and the men, to gather the pearls. "Each boat has a crew of five men; two to row, two to manage the ropes. The fifth man hangs around his neck a bag, the mouth of which is held open by means of a bamboo ring, and providing himself with a safety rope, he ties a stone to his waist and lets himself sink down to the bottom of the sea. Then with his hand he pulls up the pearl oysters and puts them in his bag. In response to his pulling the rope, the men in the boat, who are looking after it, pull him and the bag of oysters on his neck, into the boat. And so they do until the boats are full, when they go back to the Government station, where under the guard of soldiers, the oysters remain for a number of days until the meat rots. Then they remove the shells and wash away the rotten meat by stirring them around in a sieve, by which the meat is got rid of and the pearls are left. They are then classed by means of a very fine sieve, and the official levy as duty is five-tenths of the whole and the five tenths remaining are equally divided among the boat

brought here from the Tisen Chiang (Gulf of Mannar), their place of production." ¹

Wang ta Yuan's account of the pearl fishery differs in many respects with that of Marco Polo. There is no reference to the "Shark-charmers". Whereas Marco Polo refers to the renting of the pearl fishery to the merchants, this author says that the Government directly took part in the fisheries and obtained half of what was procured. The Chinese writer is not known to have visited this country whereas Marco Polo stayed here for many years. Hence Marco Polo's details are to be taken to be true. That there might have been a charge of system is not out of question.

The other Chinese writers that have referred to the pearl fishery of the Tamil coast are Fa Hsin (1436 A. D.) and Ma Huan (1451 A. D.), Fa Hsin ² says that the pearls were gathered in the sea near the coast of Ceylon. Ma Huan says that the pearls were the tears of Lord Buddha and states that the pearl oysters spread on the sands of the coast of Ceylon. ³

crews, if indeed the Gods of the sea have not claimed the divers, for many of them get buried in the bellies of the rapacious fish. Some sailor-men who are so lucky as to get their shares of profits for some years, sell their pearls for money to do some trading but such are few indeed."

1. Ibid, p. 295.
2. Ibid. p. 296 : " In the sea near the cost of Ceylon there is a pearl shcal; here they are in the habit of going and gathering oysters with nets".
3. Ibid, p. 298.

Ma Huan refers to the wide use of the chanks. He says that "there is a class of men in Cochin called Chokis (Yogis) who lead austere lives like Taoists of China. They carry a conch-shell, which they blow as they go along the road." ¹ With regard to the pearl trade, Ma Huan says that all transactions were carried on by Chittis. He further remarks that South India traded with China in pearls. ²

Earlier in the first half of the 14th century A. D. Ibn Fadbullah-ul Omari (circa 1348 A. D.), the author of Masalik-ul-alzar says that India was a country in whose seas there were pearls and in whose land there was gold and in whose mountain there were rubies and diamonds. ³

Ludovico de Varthema mentions having seen the pearls fished for in the sea near the town Chayal (Kayal) in about 1500 A. D. ; and Barbosa who travelled in South India by about the same time says that the people of Chayl (Kayal) traded in the pearls. ⁴

To facilitate the trade to be successfully conducted, the Pandya monarch extended great favours to the merchants. In those days the

1. Ibid, p. 305.

2. Ibid, p. 307.

3. Otta Spies, "An Arab Account of India in the fourteenth century", p. 15.

4. Balfour, op. cit. Volume III, Pearl.

main traders were the Arabs and they had much influence with the Pandya Kings. These Arabs imported horses from Arabia for the Pandyan King and got pearls, precious stones, etc., in exchange. Muslim historians say that some of the Arab merchants held high positions in the Pandya councils. One Abdul Rahman is described as the Prime Minister in charge of Customs, to which office his son and grandson succeeded. It seems to be true, therefore, that merchants engaged in foreign trade received due encouragement at the hands of the monarch in the East coast of South India. The first group of ports lay in the Pandya Kingdom, they being Kayal, Vadalai, Marakayarpattinam, Devipattinam, Tondi and Pasi-pattinam. Their importance arose, in general, from the export of pearls and chanks and the import of horses. Marco Polo, when he talks of Kayal, says that "Cael is a great and noble city and belongs to Ashar, the eldest of the five brother kings. It is at this city that all the ships touch that come from the west, as from Hormos and from Kis (an island in the Persian Gulf) and from Aden, and all Arabia laden with horses and with other things for sale.....The king maintains great state and administers his kingdom with great equity and extends great favour to the merchants and foreigners so that they are very glad to visit the city." ¹.

1. Yule, *op. cit.* Volume II, p. 367.

Mr. Rasanayagam has some interesting details to offer us with regard to the pearl fishery of the Ceylon coast in this period. He refers ¹ to the Arabian Nights wherein it is said that Es Sindabad, in his fifth voyage, went to the pearl fisheries after visiting the island where Cinnamon and pepper were produced. The bay of the pearl fisheries was, no doubt, the Gulf of Mannar.

Jaffna was ruled by the Aryan Kings. There was a misunderstanding between the young king Jaya Virasingha Aryan of Jaffna and Puvinaya Vaku (Buvaneka Bahu) King of Kandy, touching the pearl fisheries. The former won the battle and became the master of the vanquished. The date of this misunderstanding is reported to be 1380 Salivahanam (1458 A. D.). But the account of an embassy as reported in Quartremere's memoir on "Egypt and the Mamelouk Sultan" tempts us to think that this date is mistaken and it should be 1200 Salivahanam (1278 A. D.) ².

In Quartremere's memoir translated from the Arabian Manuscripts, there is an account of an embassy which arrived at Cairo during the reign of Melek Mansour Qulayoon, one of the Mamelouk Sultans, from a king of Ceylon named Abu Nekbah Lahabah. The object of the mission was to establish commercial relations with Egypt. The

1. Rasanayagam, op. cit. pp. 222-223.

2. Ibid, p. 344.

embassy arrived in the year 682 Hegira (1283 A.D.). They handed over a letter to the Sultan. The ambassador explained its contents verbally saying that his master possessed prodigious quantity of pearls, for the fishery formed part of his dominions. The king Abu Nekbah should be Buvaneka Bahu defeated by the king of Jaffna. The mention of pearls and the pearl fisheries in his letter appears to be a special inducement offered to elicit the Sultan's sympathies and to arouse his desire with the ultimate object of wresting the fisheries from the hands of the king of Jaffna.¹

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the condition of the pearl fishery of the Tamil coast can be summarised in the following words. The Moors who had spread over India, especially along the coasts of the Pandya kingdom, were strengthened by the natives who professed Muhammadanism and by the Arabs, the Saracens, and the privateers of the Zamorin of Calicut who was very powerful on the sea. These people (Moors) began to take the diving for pearls as an occupation but being led away by ill-feeling and hope of gain, they often attempted to outreach the Parawas, the native people of the coast. They did not stop with this. They even compelled some of the Parawas to adopt the religion of Islam. The Rajahs of the land, being aware of the importance of the Moors on the coast and of their wide trade

1. Ibid, pp. 353-354,

and power on the seas, joined them anticipating great advantages from the trade which they carried on. Thus the Parawas were oppressed and they waited for an opportunity to strike at the Moors. At a pearl fishery held near Tuticorin, they picked up a quarrel with the Moors and falling on them, killed some hundreds of them. Though they were the masters of the coast for the time being, they were afraid that the Moors, joined by the pirates of Calicut, would come upon them. So they sought the help of the Portuguese who were now the masters of the sea, by defeating the Zamorin of Calicut. The Parawas got the help of the Portuguese on the condition that they should all become Christians. ¹.

We shall consider in details in the next chapter how the Parawas were converted into Christianity and how the pearl fisheries of the Tamil coast passed into the hands of the Portuguese.

To sum up, we may notice that in this period the pearl fisheries of the Tamil coast were prospering. Marco Polo has vividly described the methods adopted to dive and to fish for the pearls. He says that the Pandya Kings had a vast store of very valuable pearls. Friar Jordannus has said that the pearl fishery of the Gulf of Mannar was engaging eight thousand boats for three months.

1. Hornell, "Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay", pp. 12-13.

Many of the travellers of this period, most of them being Jesuits and Arabs, and some Chinese too, have noticed the pearl fishery in this period and have written accounts of the same. The Pandyan monarch in the thirteenth century was very powerful and he conquered Ceylon and completed his hold over the pearl fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar. But after the Muslim invaders from the North had devastated his kingdom in the fourteenth century, he became powerless. The coast country was under the Moors, who, by then, became very powerful. They coerced the Parawas and made muslims of many of them. The Parawas who were very much oppressed by the Moors, sought the help of the Portuguese and got it. We get the interesting information from Mr. Rasanayagam, of the conflict between the Kings of Jaffna and Kandy over the pearl fishery and the latter seeking the help of the Sultan of Egypt which help does not seem to have been given. We have also noticed the important position held by Kayal, the seat of the pearl fishery and the foreign trade in pearl and other commodities of South India. The chank fishery was giving a considerable revenue to the Government since we hear of the export of the chanks to Bengal.

Chapter VI.

The History of the Pearl Fishery under the Portuguese (1524 - 1658 A. D.)

At the close of the last chapter we had seen in brief the general condition of the Fishery Coast (Tirunelveli coast) at the time of the advent of the Portuguese on the Indian Ocean. We shall now see in details the circumstances that forced the Parawas to adopt Christianity as their religion and to become citizens of the King of Portugal.

For at least two hundred years prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in India, the growth of the Muhamadan power on the coast of the Pandya country had been progressive. The Arabs had long traded with Kayal and Korkai, and now instead of returning home periodically, they began to have matrimonial relations with the natives and to settle down in the seaports where they and their adherents entered into competition with the Parawas in their hereditary occupation of fishing for the pearls and the chanks.

The Parawas were the people who were inhabiting the sea coast of the Pandya kingdom from time immemorial and their occupation was that of the pearl and the chank fishing. In the Tamil literature of the Sangam Age, they are described as great warriors and the Pandyan King

Nedunchezhian conquered them and gave them many privileges. They were the people who were residing at Korkai and Kayal and the villages north and south of them. They had a "Jati Talaivan" whom they regarded as their chief and with the privileges they were enjoining, they were content to be under the Pandyan Rule.

That the Parawas were the people who were connected with this industry of the pearl fishing is best explained by what Simon Casie Chetty (Tamil Plutarch) says in the following words : " In the drama of Alliarasany who is supposed to have resided at Kudiraimalai on the North-west coast of Ceylon, the Parawas act a conspicuous part. We find them employed by the Princess Alliarasany in fishing for the pearls off the coastThe fact of the pearl fishery is corroborated by the vast quantity of oyster-shells which are found embedded in the sand along the seashore from Putalam and Kondatche." ¹

This condition of the peaceful settlement of the Parawas on the Fishery coast continued till 1200 A. D., when Arabs in a very large number began to visit Kayal, the primary seaport of the Pandya kindom for commercial purposes. The Arabs had much influence with the Pandyan Kings who befriended them to give impetus to their

1. J. R. A. S. - 1837. Article on " Remarks on the origin of the Parawas " by Simon Casie Chetty.

export trade and the import of horses from Arabia and Syria. We have already seen the high position that some of the Arabs held in the councils of the Pandyas and also the enviable position of the Prime Minister for customs held by a Mussalman. This and the other privileges they enjoyed in the Pandya kingdom made them think of settling down in this country itself. Not only did they settle here on the Tirunelveli coast but they even propagated their religion first under peaceful means. They made matrimonial relations with some of the Parawas. The decay of the Pandya power and the humiliations the Pandyas were put to by the Muslim invaders from the North gave encouragement to the Moors to publicly force the Parawas to embrace Islam. Moreover, the Moors were very powerful on the sea and they became stronger by the help given to them by the Zamorin of Calicut. The Empire of Vijayanagar which had, by this time, the beginning of the sixteenth century, acquired almost the whole of South India except Travancore, did not take interest in what was happening on the fishery coast. The local Rajahs were on friendly terms with the Moors since they were afraid of their sea power and anticipated some advantages from the trade the Moors were conducting.

The Parawas who were thus oppressed, rose many times against the Moors but they failed at every time. Their wrath was very great and they

waited for an opportunity to fall on the Moors. The opportunity for the same came not very late. At a pearl fishery held at Tuticorin, the Parawas had purposely picked up a quarrel with the Moors and killed some hundreds of them. They even burnt their vessels and remained masters of the coast for some time. They were apprehending trouble from the Moors at any time. At this juncture the Portuguese power in India has come to rise. The Portuguese defeated the Zamorin of Calicut in 1502 A. D. and established themselves in Cochin. They were very eager to seize the Tirunelveli coast and the pearl fishery therein. The time for the expansion of their power to the Tirunelveli coast was not far off. The Parawas fearing Moorish retaliation for the murders they had committed on them, heard of the rising power of the Portuguese on the sea and their success over the Zamorin of Calicut and they decided to seek their help against the Moors. ¹

When the condition of the Tirunelveli coast was like this, the Portuguese mission under Manual de Fries sailing round Cape Comorin in 1523-1525 A. D. on their way to search for the remains of St. Thomas on the Caromandel coast, arrived at Kayal. They found the Parawas hard-

1. The details are taken from the Report of Van Rceede and Laurens Pyl to Van Goens, the Governor of Dutch India and Ceylon. (Hornell. "The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay", pp. 12-16.)

pressed by the Moors and the Muslim converts obtained partly from the Parawas themselves. The Parawas requested them for assistance and obtained their help on condition that they should become Christians. The Portuguese who had come with the express intention of seizing the pearl fishery, had on board Joao Froles, already appointed by the King of Portugal as the Captain and Factor of the pearl fishery. ¹ And on the Parawas promising to become Christians, the Portuguese had no difficulty in exacting a rent from the headman of the coast of 1500 cruzados per annum and Froles was left with a small force to guard the pearl fishery and enforce due payment. ²

The Parawas sent commissioners with some of the Portuguese to Goa. The commissioners returned with the priests and all the Parawas of the seven ports were baptised and accepted as subjects of the King of Portugal. Thus, the Parawas, though saved from the oppression of the Moors, dwindled from having their own chief and their own laws, into subordination to the priests and the Portuguese who, however, settled the rights and the privileges of the Parawas so firmly that the Rajahs of the land no longer dared to interfere with them or attempted to impede or abridge their prerogative. On the contrary, the

1. Hornell, "The Sacred Chank of India", P. 4.

2. Ibid, p. 4.

Rajahs were compelled to admit of separate laws for the Parawas from those which bound their subjects. The wholesale conversion of the Parawas is attested by the following remarks of Baldaeus. He says that the Parawas were freed from the yoke of Muslims and they were returned their pearl fisheries which formerly belonged to them and twenty thousand of them adopted Christianity. ¹ The census report of 1871 says that the Parawas "were found by the Portuguese on their arrival in India to be groaning under the Mahamudan yoke and were assisted by the Portuguese on condition of their becoming Christians. This general conversion for political ends explains why the fishing population of the present day along the South-east coast is to a considerable extent Roman Catholic." ² The Parawas who feared that the Moors would force them to embrace Islam, had, by their own will to become Christians. This did not satisfy them and they waited for an opportunity to release themselves from Christianity. These baptised Parawas were condemned by the others who continued to follow their own religion and at one time most of the people who became Christians, began to throw away Christianity in favour of their old religion. They were saved to Christianity only by the timely arrival of St. Xavier. ³ In the year 1543 A. D., this great

1. Thurston. "Castes and Tribes of South India", Paravan

2. Ibid.

3. J. R. A. S. 1887. Simon Casie Chetty, "*Remarks on the origin of Parawas,*"

saint began to preach his religion among the discontented Parawas. His headquarters was at Tuticorin. His biographers represent him as being constantly on the move and devoting from one to three weeks to each village according to its population. By his patient working, by his service among the people and by the miracles he did, he converted the entire Parawa community to the Christian religion. After this, the Parawas remained sincere Christians and had many monasteries built for them in the villages and towns. Tuticorin, their chief town, was provided with an excellent hospital, Church and school. "The marvellous conversion begun by Xavier had been continued for fifty-three years by Father Henriquez, who died in 1600 A. D. leaving more than 1,35,000 converts." ¹

After the Portuguese completed their conquest of the Fishery coast, they turned towards Ceylon. In the reign of Vijayabahu VII (1509-1521 A. D.), a fort which was erected by them at Colombo in 1508, had to be defended against the attacks of the King of Ceylon. In the succession struggles between 1526 and 1539 A. D., Bhavanikabahu (1521-1550 A. D.) was aided by the Portuguese. King Dharmapala (1550-1597 A. D.) was converted to Christianity in 1556 A. D. In 1580 A. D. Dharmapala who had no child, transferred his

1. J. D. D'Orsey, "Portuguese Discoveries, Dependencies and missions in Asia and Africa", p. 147.

dominions and the sovereignty of Ceylon to the King of Portugal and when he died in 1597 A. D., the Portuguese became the masters of Ceylon. ¹

With the political situation remaining thus, the Portuguese missionaries were not resting all the time. In 1543, St. Xavier sent a priest to the island of Mannar and succeeded in converting many of the natives to Christianity. The King of Jaffnapatnam in whose territories the Island of Mannar was a part, did not like this. He ordered the massacre of six hundred of the converts. St. Xavier visited the Rajah of Jaffna whom his eloquence persuaded to treat the converts with humanity. ²

The conversion did not proceed to a larger extent since there arose differences between the missionaries and the political department. With utter disregard of what the Political Department would view, the missionaries began to go headlong with their work. The political department was afraid that their hold over the people would be impaired if the priests should have their own way and so began to check the priests. This resulted in the slackening, if not the abandoning, of the work of the missionaries.

After annexing the Fishery coast to their sphere of influence, the Portuguese kept for them-

1. R. Sathianatha Iyer, "*History of India*", Volume II, pp. 420-421.

2. D'Orsey, op. cit. pp. 128-129.

selves the command at sea, the pearl fisheries and the sovereignty over the Parawas, their villages and harbours. The Nayak of Madura who was a vassal under the king of Vijayanagar, made himself master of the lands about Madura by this time. In a short time afterwards the Nayak captured all the lower regions from Cape Comorin to Tanjore, expelling and rooting out all the princes and land proprietors who were living and reigning there; and on obtaining the sovereignty of all these countries, he wished to subject the Parawas to his authority, in which attempt he was opposed by the Portuguese. The Portuguese, often being not powerful enough effectively to resist, left the lands with the priests and the Parawas and went to the islands of Mannar and Jaffnapatnam, from where they sent coasting vessels along the coast of the Tirunelveli and Ramnad Districts and caused so much disquiet as a result of which the revenue of the Nayaks was ruined, trade circumscribed and almost annihilated. For these reasons, the Nayak of Madura himself was obliged to solicit the Portuguese to come back again¹.

The Nayaks of Madura, in general, seem to have left the coast region open to the enterprise of the foreign nations. The position of the Nayaks in regard to the foreigners trading along the

1. Hornell, "*The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay*", p. 14.

coast country was probably a mere continuation of the policy pursued by the Pandyas. There are good reasons to believe that with the great Cholas the overseas enterprise of the Tamils came to an end and gradually gave place to the Arab enterprise, which ultimately superceded all Tamil efforts in this direction, both on the coast and in the Archipelago. Under the last great Pandya, Kulasekhara, the agent of the horse trading Jamaludin, Governor of Shiraz, held the chief place in the region. He occupied, according to Muslim historians, a high place even in the councils of the Pandyas. This position of the Arab trader at Kayal is in striking contrast to the position that the foreigners occupied under the great Cholas as exemplified in the case of the mere building of a Buddhist Vihara, and making grants of lands to it by the rulers of Kadaram. The rulers of Kadaram had to obtain permission in both the cases by sending out special missions and obtaining the requisite licence, through the intervention of the foreign Secretary of the Cholas. That state of things vanished under the Pandyas. The conquest of the Pandya country by Vijayanagar does not appear to have provided for this immediately as in all probability this conquest did not involve the acquisition of all the coast territory by the new empire. ¹

In the sixteenth century, this policy of the open door remained unaltered. Gradually, however,

1. R. Sathianatha Iyer, " *The History of the Nayaks of Madura* ", pp. 90-92.

the establishment of an independent authority at the back of their dominions, was felt by the Nayaks to be prejudicial to their interests. When they turned their attention towards the coast, there was already rivalry between the Portuguese and the Dutch.

Dr. Caldwell says the following which explains the situation created by the policy of indifference towards the coast region, which the Nayaks followed in the beginning. "Xavier speaks of the Parawas as subjects of the King of Portugal..... The entire civil and criminal jurisdiction of the fishery coast had been seized by the Portuguese and all dues and taxes including the valuable revenue arising from the pearl fishery, had been assumed by the Governors appointed by the Portuguese Viceroy. The Portuguese had not asked any native potentate's consent to the formation of their settlements." ¹ Thus political disruption and financial spoliation were the results of the commercial and the religious penetration of the Portuguese who came to India to establish commercial relations with her as they were stimulated by the desire of the precious luxuries of the East and the vast riches they could get out of the trade with India. It was probably to counteract the hostile influence of the foreigners that Muthukrishnappa Nayak established a strong Government in the Marava country (Ramnad District).

1. Dr. Caldwell op. cit. p. 71.

We shall now turn to see the habitat of the pearl and the chank fisheries of the Tamil coast. The pearl was continued to be taken from the waters of the Gulf of Mannar near the port Kayal, though by continued accumulation of silt at the mouth of river Tamraparni Kayal was becoming more and more an inland city. The chank was fished for in the Fishery and the Carnatic coasts and the former came to the possession of the Portuguese. The Portuguese do not seem to have been very particular about the chank fishery since they were much allured of the pearl fishery and the revenue they derived from them. By about the time the Portuguese acquired the pearl fishery of the Tirunelveli coast, the Moors resident at Kayal left that place and established themselves at Cailpatnam, south of the town. The Parawas, mostly Christians, abandoned Kayal (now called Palayakayal in favour of another place near the sea, a few miles off the old town, named Punnakayal (New Kayal). This Punnakayal was also abandoned later in favour of Tuticorin which became the headquarters of the pearl and the chank fisheries of the Tirunelveli coast.

The description of the pearl fishery near the Tirunelveli coast by Ceaser Frederic is worth noticing. He was a Venetian merchant and spent nearly eighteen years in India between 1563 and 1581 A. D., and his visit to the Tirunelveli coast must have been in or soon after 1563 A. D. It

seems probable that his observations were made at Kayal (Punnakayal) that being the only place he mentions on this coast. He says that "the sea along the coast which extends from Cape Comorin to the low land of Kayal and the Island of Zeilan (Ceylon) is called the pearl fishery. This fishery is made every year beginning in March or April and lasts fifty days. The fishing is by no means made every year at one place, but one year at one place and another year at another place; all however in the same sea. When the fishing season approaches, some good divers are sent to discover where the greatest quantity of oysters are to be found under water; and then directly facing that place which is chosen for the fishery, a village with a number of houses and a bazar all of stone is built, which stands as long as the fishery lasts. The fishers or divers are all Christians of the country and all are permitted to engage in the fishery on payment of certain duties to the King of Portugal and the Churches of the Friars of St. Paul on the coast. During the continuence of the fishery, there are always three or four armed joists or galliots stationed to defend the fishermen from pirates. Usually the fishing boats combine in companies of three or four together."¹

Frederic's account as quoted above, merits careful consideration. He says that almost all the divers were Christians. The Portuguese engaged

1. Dr. Caldwell, op. cit. pp. 73-74.

only the Christian Parawas to dive and the Moors were left out. The springing up of a township at the place where the fishery was held is a noticeable fact. In this account, we hear first in the history of the pearl fishery of the Tamil coast that there was an examination of the pearl banks before they were operated upon. Expert divers conducted this examination and there was an annual fishing in different places in the Gulf of Mannar. This system had been giving a good out put of pearls. Lastly we hear of the pirates against whom the divers had to be defended. Who were these pirates? We may presume that these were the pirates from Malabar. The Portuguese conquered the Zamorin of Calicut and the privateers of of this Zamorin took to this trade of relieving the people coming by the sea, of their valuable burdens. The pearl fishery was not left out from the scene of their operation. The discontented Moors that were not encouraged in their lawful pursuit of the pearl fishing, might have joined the pirates.

Ceaser Frederic continues to give a description of the methods adopted by the pearl fishers. It is the same story of the rope, stone and signal. He further points out that if all the oysters had pearls in them, it would be a very profitable affair. But most of the oyters did not have pearls in them. Frederic refers to the trade in pearls

and the sorting of the pearls.¹ Frederic further informs us that the merchants from other countries thronged at the pearl fishery to buy the pearls. We get the first mention of 'Chittis' employed to value and sort the pearls. We are further informed that the Portuguese got their revenue by taxing the divers employed. This seems to be a progressive way of obtaining the revenue. But this did not last long. Frederic's information of annual fisheries, is worth noticing. Of late in the last 200 or 300 years, the pearl fisheries had failed continuously for many years, But in the sixteenth century, that was not the case. The fishery was exploited every year now at one place and again at another place.

We shall now briefly review the circumstances that led to the change of the headquarters of the pearl fishery to Tuticorin. The political department of the Portuguese in India wanted to build a fort at Tuticorin to protect the political interests of the Portuguese against the priestly disorders. But their work could not be completed since the priests opposed this. Yet, gradually Punnakayal became more and more

1. Ibid, p. 74. "There are certain people called Chitni (Chetti) who are learned in pearls, and are employed to sort and value them according to their weight, beauty and goodness, dividing them into four sorts..... Thus sorted and prices fixed there are merchants from all countries ready with their money so that in a few days all the pearls are brought up according to their goodness and weight."

insignificant and its place was rightfully taken by Tuticorin as the headquarters of the pearl fishery. In this connection the following extract from the Report of the two Dutch officials to Governor Van Goens is worth quoting.

“ The Political Government of India. perceiving the great benefit of the pearl fishery appointed in the name of the King of Portugal, military chiefs and captains to superintend it, leaving the churches and the administration to the priests. Those captains obtained from the fisheries each time a profit of six thousand rix dollars for the King, leaving the remainder of the income from them for the Parawas ; but seeing that they could not retain their superiority in that manna over the people, which was becoming rich, luxurious, drunken with prosperity, and with the help of the priests who protected them, threatening the captains, which often occasioned great disorders, the latter determined to build a fort for the King at Tuticorin which was the chief place of all the villages ; but the priests who feared by this to lose much of their consequence as well as their revenue insisted that if such a measure was proceeded with, they would all be ruined, on which account they urged the people to do all irregularities.” ¹ Though the fort was not completed, Tuticorin took the place of Punnakayal.

1. Hornell, “ The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay ”, p. 14.

Regarding the pearl fisheries, we get no information from the Portuguese records, regarding the frequency of the reference to fisheries under the Portuguese or of the approximate value and the site of the fishery. This lack of knowledge is greatly to be regretted as it becomes impossible to say with certainty whether or not there has been deterioration, progressive or intermittent, in the oyster producing beds. The only information that we get is from Ceaser Frederic quoted elsewhere in this chapter. Ribeyro says that the people of Mannar of his time (circa 1658 A. D.) had become impoverished by the decadence of the pearl fishery on the Ceylon coast and its transference to the Tuticorin side, his words being, "at present the oysters have migrated and are to be found on the coasts of Tuticorin." ¹

There was a great loss of revenue from the pearl fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar due to the differences between the captain of the fisheries and the Jesuits. Mr. Pieris says that the pearl fishery which had formerly been rented out by the captains of Mannar who had sent armed vessels to guard the place, had lately suffered in consequence of a policy of showing favour to the divers who had begun to turn Christian and as a result the revenue obtained therefrom had steadily diminished. The Jesuits who were in charge of the work of conversion, accused the captains of oppression,

1. Lee. "Ribeyro's Ceylon", p. 51.

while the latter reported that the true explanation of the unsatisfactory state of affairs lay in the laziness of the divers who were pampered by the Jesuits. It had been the custom to assign the whole of one day's fishery to shoe the wife of the captain, and the interfering action of the Jesuits in stopping this, did not tend to increase the good feeling between the parties. Moreover the fishery sustained yet further damage from the quarrels which arose between the Jesuits and the Bishop of Cochin. The loss to the treasury was serious. No fishery at all was held from 1604 to 1612 A. D., and it was proposed by the King to settle a colony of the Parawa divers on the West coast of Ceylon, that the work might be carried on without friction. The suggestion, however, was not acted upon. ¹

This and the other differences between the Jesuits and the Political Government had resulted in the slackening of the work of the conversion, as we had noticed earlier in this chapter. The King of Portugal did not interfere seriously with the situation in the pearl fishery and so these differences were never patched up.

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese seem to have changed the system of collecting the revenue from taxing the divers to that of farming the fishery for a fixed amount.

1. P. E. Pieris, "Ceylon and the Portuguese," p. 135.

They included the chank fishery also in this. As a result of this policy, the chank fishery was farmed out to a group of wealthy merchants.

The chanks were exported to Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, where the people continued to wear the chank bangles. As soon as the wearing of the chank bangles disappeared in the Tamil country, the chank bangle workshops at Korkai and North Ceylon were also closed. As against sending chank cut into bangles to Bengal, the Tamils now sent the chanks themselves. So workshops to make bangles out of the chanks came to exist in many parts of Greater Bengal, viz: Dacca, Patna, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Burdwan, Balasore, Bankura and Sylhet. The chief workshops were found in Dacca and Dinajpur.

Garcia de Orta (1563 A. D.) has spoken of the chank trade with Bengal. He says that formerly no virgin of honour and esteem in Bengal could be corrupted unless it were by placing bracelets made of chank in her arms. He also testifies to the decline in the trade of chanks with Bengal after the advent of the Pathans there, when this usage had more or less ceased.¹ This state of affairs would not have lasted long as we cannot expect the Hindus to completely do away

1. Henry Yule, "Hobson Jobson", chank.

with a sacred practice and to abandon the use of the chank bangles. Hence we find Boccario (1644 A. D.) saying that the chanks were imported into Bengal from Tuticorin and the Bengalees made bangles of them. ¹

Van Linschoten travelled in India between 1576 and 1592 A. D. He had noticed the pearl fishery at Bahrein in the Persian Gulf where, as he says, the best and the right oriental pearls were to be had. According to Linschoten the pearls from Ceylon were not so good as the Bahrein pearls. ²

Linschoten talks of a fish in the Gulf of Mannar called Hayen which was doing great mischief and devoured many men that fished for pearls. ³ This seems to be incorrect. As we had seen earlier in the preceding chapters, there was practically no accident to the divers from the sharks. Tennent says that not more than one authenticated accident had occurred in the whole of the period of the British occupation. What is true of the British period should be true of the earlier periods also. We had noticed that the socalled 'Kadalkattis' were requisitioned for char-

1. Ibid.

2. Burnell and Tiele, "**The Voyage of J. H. Van Linschoten to the East Indies**", Vol. I, p. 80.

3. Ibid, Volume II, p. 134.

ming the sharks. Whether the shark-charmers were really able to charm the huge fishes or no, it is quite immaterial for us. But the continued demand for them and their charm, the Government subsidy they were receiving till very recently and the one-twentieth part of the oysters given to them in the time of Marco Polo,¹ speak to the wonder that there was practically no accident to the divers from the sharks. Had the divers died of sharks devouring them, the service of the shark-charmers would not be continued to be requisitioned and the Government of any day would not have encouraged the same. The divers' refusal to dive unless the shark-charmers were with them to bind the mouths of the sharks, attests to their belief in them. That they continued to believe in the charm can only be due to the fact that there was no accident to them from the sharks. So we may dismiss this remark of Linschoten as incorrect.

Linschoten says that the pearls were fished in the sea between the island of Ceylon and Cape Comorin, where great numbers were yearly found. The King of Portugal had a captain there with soldiers that looked to the fishery. Yearly 3000 or 4000 divers were engaged in the fishery. After explaining the methods of diving and the collection of the oysters, the writer speaks of the

1. Yule, *op cit.* Vol. II, p. 331.

dividing of the pearls among the many parties.¹ The policy of renting the fishery had been given up by the Portuguese and they had adopted a third method of assessing the revenue. They got half the produce, one-fourth for the King of Portugal and another one-fourth for the captain and soldiers for guarding the fishery from the attacks of the pirates. The Jesuits took one-fourth and the divers the remaining one-fourth. Whereas in Marco Polo's time the royalty was only one-tenth, now under the Portugues it had become half. Even the remaining half did not go to the divers as they had to give the half of the remaining pearls to the Jesuits.

Linschoten, in his account of the pearl fishery held in the Gulf of Mannar, never refers to the shark-charmers. One could hear from the people of Tuticorin and Kilakarai in the Ramnad District, that many times the divers had refused to dive as they found the shark-charmers absent from the fishery. So any account of the Indian pearl fishery

1. Burnell and Tiele, op. cit. Volume II, pp. 133-135.

"When they have made an end of the fishing for that day, all the fishers, with the captain, soldiers, labourers and the watchmen for the King, go together, and taking all the pearls that are caught that day, they divide them into certain heaps, that is one part for the King, another part for the Captain and soldiers, the third part for Jesuits because they have their cloyster in that place, and brought the country into the Christian faith and the last part for the fishers, which is done with great justice and equity."

wherein the 'Kadalkattis' are not mentioned, is not to be taken as complete.

Sometimes, says Linschoten, many pearls were found in one oyster and at times only very few were to be had. Spoons and cups were made of the oysters that contained the best pearls in them, and they were always thin and white. The pearls were sold by sieves which were made of metal driven into thin plate for that purpose, whereof the holes were round. The small stuff that served for no pearls were sold by the ounce. The pearl dealers were giving a fair colour to the pearls by using rice beaten a bit with salt wherewith they rubbed the pearls. ¹

Reference to the chank fishery is also made by Linschoten. ² The chanks were mostly used in India especially in Bengal. They were also carried to Portugal and other Western countries.

1. Ibid, Volume II, pp. 135-136.

2. Ibid, Volume II, p. 136.

"There is yet another sort of oysters by the Indians called Chancha and the Portuguese as 'mother-of-pearls.' They bring many of them into Portugal to serve for to drink in, and to keep for an ornament. It is likewise much carried abroad, both into Portugal and elsewhere, but they are most used in India for there the women, especially those of Bengala use to wear manillas or bracelets of them about their arms, and they must not take a maiden's hand from her that is of any estate or degree, but they must have some of those mother-of-pearl bracelets about her arms which at this day is yet much used whereby it is much worn."

There had been a flourishing trade in the chank and the chank fishery would have yielded the Portuguese a considerable revenue.

Master Ralph Fitch who visited Ceylon in 1589 and stayed at Cochin for eight months,¹ noticed the pearl fishery in the Gulf of Mannar which yielded much revenue to the Portuguese. He says² that because of the pearl fishery, the Portuguese called the Tirunelveli coast 'pis caria' or 'fishery' coast.

The Portuguese records were purposely destroyed by the Dutch who took the coast from the Portuguese and the few remaining records do not have many references to the pearl fisheries of the Tamil coast.

The Nayakship of Madura was instituted in the year 1529 A. D., at the reign of Krishna-devaraya of Vijayanagar. When at the battle of Talakottah in 1565, Ramaraya was defeated by the combined muslim hordes, the Nayak of Madura became independent of the suzerainty of the Vijaya-

1. Sir Henry Johnson, "Pioneers in India" — p. 170.

2. Courtenay Locke, "The First Englishman in India" p. 144.
 "Not far from thence (Cape Comorin) between Ceylon and the mainland of Nagapatam. they fish for pearls And there is fished every year very much, which doth serve all India, Cambia, Bengala. It is not so orient as the pearl of Bahrein in the Gulf of Persia..... The Portuguese called the Tinnevelly coast as pis caria "a fishery" from its great pearl fishery".

nagar Emperor. Earlier in this chapter, we have dealt with the details of how the Nayaks of Madura tried to get back the Parawas to their control, but failed because of the havoc wrought by the Portuguese on their sea-borne trade. The Nayaks had to be content with the privileges they received in the pearl fishery and allowed the Portuguese to hold sway over the fishery coast. The Nayaks were allowed to engage a certain number of boats in the pearl fishery free of any tax.

Anyway the growth of the power of the portuguese on their seacoast were causing disquiet to the Nayaks of Madura. They instituted a very strong power in Ramnad, the people of which District were famous for their valour. It was presumably to frighten the Parawas who acknowledged no master other than the King of Portugal, that the Nayaks of Madura sent, by about the middle of the sixteenth century, Vadugas (Badugas as they were called), the tax-farming people of the Nayaks to raid the Tirunelveli coast and the villages of the Parawas. These Vadugas are referred as "Badages" by St. Xavier.

During the period of the disturbance, when the Nayak of Madura turned his attention towards the foreign nation occupying his coast, the Portuguese fled to the island of Mannar leaving the Parawas and the Jesuits there. Then the Parawas

too left the coast and held the pearl fisheries from the small islands along the Madura coast and assisted to the best of their power, the Portuguese vessels. The attack by the Vadugas is borne testimony by De Sa'e Menezes who describes Punnakayal (Puticale as he calls it) at the time of the tranference as "a place on the fishery inhabited by the Parawas, who, tired of the continued attacks of Bodaguas, their neighbours, lived more the life of Fronteros than of fishermen, which trade they plied for subsistence, but were continually robbed and cut off by their neighbours." ¹ Hence in about 1560 A. D., Viceroy Don Constantine de Braganza erected a fort at Mannar and transferred thereto the inhabitants of the Parawa town of Punnakayal. By this exchange the island of Mannar became rich and prosperous as long as the fisheries continued to give handsome returns. ²

The Nayaks of the later days supported the Moors against the Parawas and the Portuguese. Earlier to Tirumala Nayak, the Nayaks were content to have the privileges given to them in the pearl fishery. But Tirumala Nayaka who came to power in 1623 A. D., great as he was, could not brook an alien power holding his coast regions. So he entered into an agreement with the headman

1. Hornell, "The Indian Pearls Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay", p- 28.

2. Ibid. p. 28.

of the Moorish community for resettling the town of Kayalpatnam, a device by which he established a strong port for the Nayaks in the Gulf of Mannar.

We shall now see the nature of the concessions given to the Nayak of Madura by the Portuguese. They were conceded an allowance of $96\frac{1}{2}$ free stones (by stone the diver is meant) in return for the facilities given by them to the pearl merchants to travel without exactions to the scene of the fishery. The Nayaks used to grant free stones out of the privileged ones to various temples on religious motives. They seem to have given free stones to some persons for political reasons also and we shall see how Tirumala Nayaka diverted these free stones towards the Moors to establish his power on the coast.

Besides the Nayak of Madura, the Portuguese allowed to his tributary, the Sethupathi of Ramnad, sixty free stones in each fishery in return for the help he gave in contributing to the success of the fishery and in guarding and providing pilots for the passage of the narrow strait, called Pamban Pass, separating the mainland from the island of Rameswaram. Though nominally the Sethupathi was under the Nayak of Madura, he was virtually independent. The Nayak of Madura himself allowed much freedom to the Sethupathi since he ruled the coastal territories of the Ramnad District. Like the Nayak of Madura, the Rajah of Ramnad

also granted some of his privileged stones to the great Hindu temples of Ramnad District, giving seven stones to Rameswaram temple in 1609 and three more in 1714. ¹

Besides these free stones, both the Nayak of Madura and the Sethupathi had, by right of custom, under the Portuguese, to one day's fishing from all their subjects.

When Tirumala Nayaka came to the Nayakship of Madura, he felt that he should have a port worth the name on the Fishery coast. A grant engraved on copper made by him in favour of Mudaliar Pillai Marakayar, the head of the Moorish community, gives details of his arrangement to resettle Kayalpatnam. It seems the Nayak was very particular of having a sea-port near the mouth of river Tamraparni, free from the domination of the Portuguese. In recognition of the headman's enterprise in settling a large number of his people at Kayalpatnam and thus conserving to the Nayak a sea-port able to rival Punnakayal and Tuticorin of the Portuguese, several gifts were made to him, the chief of which being the grant of ten free stones at the pearl fishery. In return the head of the Moorish community was with " seven large boats, with 96½ stones at 13½ stones to each boat, to fish the pearl banks for the use and benefit of the said government

1. Ibid, p. 27.

(of Madura)". It is expressly said that "he is to reside near the Government house of the Portuguese at the sea-port of Mannar and near Mariamman's chapel at Tuticorin. He shall have the superintendency of the pearl fishery and shall receive 60 chacrums per month and shall be favoured with ten stones to dive for him at the said two places (Mannar and Tuticorin)"¹. The Portuguese did not seem to have objected to this superintendency of the agent of the Nayak of Madura as long as it did not affect their revenue. But later, we will note that this question of the privilege of the superintendency became the source of continual disputes between the Dutch and the Nawab of Carnatic, the former succeeding the Portuguese and the latter becoming masters of the territories of the Nayak of Madura in the early part of the eighteenth century.

In short, it may be easily concluded that the pearl fisheries under the Portuguese were very prospering and yielded considerable revenue to them. This is evidenced by the lofty Churches erected on the Fishery coast. The scanty records available clearly show that the Parawas as well as the Portuguese Government derived large profits out of the pearl fisheries. The chank fishery also gave the Portuguese a lot of income. It seems that the Portuguese rented out the chank fishery to wealthy merchants. The Portuguese were fortu-

1. Ibid, p. 26,

nate in that when they held sway over the pearl and the chank fisheries, there was neither a white competitor nor a powerful chief in the country. When at last the Nayak of Madura became powerful and tried to displace them, the Dutch conquered them.

When the Portuguese were enjoying, after breaking the power of the Arabs, all the advantages conferred on the nation possessing the mastery of the sea, a consideration of supreme importance in connection with such an essentially maritime industry as the pearl fishery, the Dutch made their appearance in the Indian waters. The Portuguese had already enjoyed the pearl and the chank fisheries for more than one and a quarter centuries when the Dutch dispossessed them of the fisheries.

De Sa'e Menezes writing in 1622 A. D., states that for many years the fisheries had become extinct because of the great poverty into which the Parawas had fallen for they made no profit for want of accommodation and of boats, a result likely to arise from the exactions of the Church and the State, from the natural improvidence of the race and from the rapid decay of the Portuguese sea-power consequent upon the successful inroads made upon their monopoly of sea-borne commerce between India and Europe. The Portuguese, struggling for their very existence and in continual straits for the money required to carry on an exhausting contest, increased their exac-

tions from the natives and at the same time, were unable to give them adequate protection, especially at sea. We may infer with every probability of this being true; that from the time the Dutch appeared in force in the Indian seas, a time coinciding with a period of great official corruption and internal unrest among the Portuguese, the management of the pearl banks became inefficient and badly conducted.¹ It is no wonder that the Dutch were able to capture Tuticorin when the Portuguese power was cracking from within and also from without.

In summing up the contents of this chapter, we may take note of the following points. The Parawas who were subjected to great hardships by the Moors, were saved by the Portuguese on their becoming Christians and subjects of the King of Portugal. This was not liked by the Nayaks of Madura who wanted to get back the Parawas to their control. Since the Portuguese did not allow them to do this, they despatched Vadugas to raid the Parawa villages. Their attempts proving fruitless, they came to an understanding with the Portuguese who allowed them free stones to a limited number in the pearl fishery held off Tuticorin. We have also seen in this chapter, the accounts of the Pearl fishery by Ceaser Frederic and Van Linschoten. In 1658 A. D., the Portuguese were dispossessed of their control over the pearl fisheries by the Dutch.

1. Ibid, pp. 28-29.

Chapter VII.

The History of the Pearl Fishery under the Dutch (1658-1796 A. D.)

To understand the condition of the pearl fishery of the Tamil coast when the Dutch came to possess it by the year 1658 A. D., we are indebted to Captain John Ribeyro who presented the King of Portugal with a history of Ceylon, in the year 1685 A. D. The details of the pearl fishery that he gives, is one of general application though written in the last days of Portuguese ownership (circa 1658 A. D.). He says that the pearls of the fishery at Arippe in Ceylon, were considered to be the best and they were of the highest value. But when the Dutch took possession of the fishery in 1658 A. D., the pearl fishery off the coast of Ceylon was not productive. He says that "at present the oysters have migrated and are to be found on the coasts of Tuticorin." ¹

Regarding the conduct of the pearl fishery, Ribeyro gives us very valuable details. At the beginning of March there assembled on the coast four or five thousand boats got together and paid by the Moorish and the Hindu merchants and by some Christians. They had partnerships among themselves. They first sent four or five boats to examine the site of the fishery, to know where the fishery was likely to be the most profitable.

1. Lee, op. cit, p, 51.

They sent these boats in different directions and caused them to bring thousand oysters each. These were opened in the presence of the merchants and the pearls contained in them were examined and the value estimated. After the examination of the pearl banks, the merchants went to the King (the Political Government is meant by the King) to bargain the fishery of that year. When the bargain was made, the King usually sent four vessels of war to defend the pearl fishers from the Malabar and other pirates. Then the pearl fishers took to sea and began to dive for the pearls. ¹ Ribeyro's account holds good to the present day with only one difference. Whereas the merchants themselves conducted the examination in the days of Ribeyro, now the examination is conducted by the Government through the Fisheries Department.

Ribeyro never misses even the little details of the pearl fishery. His reference to the presence of the children of the neighbourhood at the fishery, offering their services with the intention of stealing some oysters than of assisting the sailors or the merchants, is interesting. ² He also refers to the fair that was held as soon as the fishery was over. There were magnificent tents, and all sorts of merchandise of the most valuable kind were to be had there as vendors came from all the parts of

1. Ibid. pp. 75-77.

2. Ibid. p. 77.

the world. To the fair, the sailors and the children brought the pearls they had managed to steal. Not only the pearls are bought and sold, but jewellery of every kind, bar gold, dollars, fine Turkey carpets, and all the beautiful stuff of India could be had there. ¹

On the last day of the fishery, the merchants of the several partnerships assembled together and shared the pearls belonging to their respective boats. The pearls were classified into nine varieties. The small ones were sold at a sufficiently moderate price and the seed pearls were left on the sea beach. ²

The political history of the rivalry between the Portuguese and the Dutch, is worth noticing. In this connection, an extract from Professor Sathianatha Iyer's "The Nayaks of Madura" may be considered. "In 1635 A. D., a Portuguese fleet arrived at Tuticorin to punish the Naique of Madura, and to overawe the Jesuits there - the former having seized at the instance of the latter a Portuguese agent who had been sent to purchase saltpetre in exchange for elephants'. Tirumala Nayaka promised, when he got the Portuguese help in the war against the Sethupathi of Ramnad, to assist them in Ceylon against the Dutch. In February 1646 A. D., the King of Portugal sent

1. Ibid, p. 77.

2. Ibid, p. 77.

instructions to his Indian Viceroy to persuade the native rulers to fight against the Dutch. Accordingly Tirumala Nayaka turned the Dutch out of Patnam (Kayalpatnam) in 1648 A. D. To avenge this insult, the Dutch turned with ten vessels about the 10th February 1648, and commenced hostile operations. They captured the pagoda of Tiruchendur and fortified it strongly. Then they marched to Tuticorin and demanded payment of a penalty for the alleged intrigues of the Parawas with the Nayak of Madura, and the consequent expulsion of the Dutch from Patnam..... They got a written promise to pay a fixed sum, they left the place on the 13th February 1649 A. D. and carried even the fishing boats along with them. In 1658 A. D. the Dutch captured Tuticorin from the Portuguese.”¹

When the pearl fishery came to the Dutch in 1658 A. D., it was not in a prosperous condition. Earlier in 1649, the Dutch themselves destroyed the fishing boats of the Parawas and we have also noticed earlier that when the Dutch acquired the pearl fishery, the Parawas were very much impoverished by the heavy exactions that the Portuguese inflicted on them in their last days of control. The Church and the State alike exploited the fisherman and exacted whatever they could get from them. It was at this juncture, the Dutch

1. R. Sathianatha Iyer, "The Nayaks of Madura", pp. 137-138.

took possession of the fisheries. So they could not have a fishery in the five years between 1658 and 1663 A. D. The Parawas had to get new boats and other fishing materials. Added to this the pearl banks began to show signs of deterioration.

The first pearl fishery under the Dutch, was held in 1663 A. D. and it yielded 18,000 florins. Van Goens, the Governor of Dutch India and Ceylon, left a memoir that year for the use of his successor. In that memoir he deals with the pearl fishery also. He says that "the whole of the inner Gulf (of Mannar) was always under the authority of the King of Portugal, during the time of his possessing Ceylon and Tuticorin, and on that account the Portuguese always took to themselves the full empire of the sea including the income of the pearl fishery, which is of some consequence particularly when diving can take place on all the banks at once, as used frequently to be the case; but for the time the banks of Mannar have given no profit although the revenue from them was once most considerable..... The fishery at Tuticorin gave last season a profit of 18,000 florins."

This report clearly shows that the fishery off the island of Mannar gave no revenue and only the banks of Tuticorin were operated upon. At this fishery of 1663 A. D., the Nayak of Madura,

1. Valentyn, "History of the East Indies", Vol. V, p. 146.

the Sethupathi of Ramnad and the head Moorman of Kayalpatnam had their accustomed number of boats free of tax as under the Portuguese. ¹ Just prior to this fishery, Cornelius Valkenburg had said that the fishery of Mannar was in great repute with the Portuguese and everybody else, but if it be really of much importance had not yet been experienced. ²

The second Dutch fishery was conducted in 1669 A. D., six years after the first. The revenue got from this fishery is not known. Dr. Caldwell says that the Dutch obtained from the King of Madura the monopoly of the pearl fishery of the Tirunelveli coast and drew a considerable revenue from the licenses which they granted to all applicants to engage in the fishing for the pearls at the rate of sixty ecus ³ and occasionally more, for each vessel employed, the number of the licensed vessels amounting to as many as six or seven hundred. The conch-shell fishery was also theirs within the same limits as the pearl fishery and yielded a considerable amount. ⁴

Regarding the pearl fishery on the Ceylon coast, Mr. P. E. Pieris quotes Van Goens as saying that the pearl fisheries of Tuticorin and Mannar were leased for eight thousand patacos (dollars) a

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1. Hornell, "The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay," p. 29.
 2. Ibid, p. 29.
 3. Five francs.
 4. Dr. Caldwell, op. cit. p. 80.

year. Van Goens says further that the pearl fisheries of Mannar were also much more productive than would appear from the information supplied to the Dutch.¹ We learn from a letter from Governor-General Joan Maetsuycker dated 16—12—1659 A. D. that the fortifications of Mannar were completed and the pearl fisheries were at a standstill, the beds having been covered with sand. From the same letter we understand that the Rajah of Ramnad (called Thevar) had the right to employ five stones in the pearl fishery at Mannar, the same privilege enjoyed by him at the time of the Portuguese in accordance with a treaty concluded "in May that year by the Dutch with Perunali Chedupathi Katta Devar, Lord of Ramanacoil and the neighbouring districts"²

In a letter from the Governor-General to the Directors dated 30th January, 1666, we find the following information regarding the pearl fisheries of Tuticorin and Mannar. "We are pleased to learn from advices dated March 23rd (1665) that the last parcel of pearls had good sale at home. There seems a good prospect that the bed at Mannar will produce this year a larger quantity than ever before. Governor Van Goens intends to employ F. 1,00,000 of the F. 4,00,000 received from Persia for the pearl fisheries which have

1. Pieris, "The Dutch Power in Ceylon" pp. 236-241.

(Letter from Governor Van Goens to the Governor-General Joan Maetsuycker and the Council for India).

2. Ibid, pp. 277-279.

lately been much neglected at Tuticorin and Mannar. It appears that much thieving has gone on at these places. Factor Nyhof is accused of having sent divers down for his own profits under pretext of their fishing for chank shells. Six of the smuggling crafts have been brought to Tuticorin, but the culprits got off safe. This fact proves however that the oysters are mature and careful supervision will be exercised at Jaffnapatnam, Arippe, Mannar and Tuticorin. " 1

The above extract gives us the information that there was smuggling of pearls in the pretext of fishing for the chanks. Whether the pearl fishery referred to be undertaken the succeeding year did take place or not, we are not able to gather. But the Governor-General's as well as the Governor's prediction of the improvement and the larger production in the succeeding fisheries proved a failure. As far as the Tuticorin fishery was concerned, there was an intermission for twenty-two years between the second and the third fishery held under the Dutch. After the fishery of 1669 A. D., the next fishery was held only in 1691 A. D. On the Ceylon coast there was an interval of 27 years between the second and the third fishery. The first pearl fishery was held in 1666, the second in 1667 and the third only in 1694. After 1694 A. D. there was an annual fishery for three years till 1697 A. D. 2

1. Ibid, p. 285.

2. Hornell, " *The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay* ", p. 46.

In this period of long intermission, a notable foreign visitor visited India between 1670 and 1689 A. D. and he is Tavernier. He has written about the pearl and the chank fisheries of the Tamil coast.

Tavernier noticed the pearl fisheries in the island of Bahrein in the Persian Gulf and at Mannar near the island of Ceylon. He says that the pearls found at Mannar were the most beautiful of the kind. He gives in details the fishing methods adopted in the Gulf of Mannar though, it may be noted, there was not even a single fishery held in the nineteen years he stayed in India. He talks of the examination of the pearl banks. With regard to the revenue the Dutch got from the fisheries, Tavernier says that they got nearly 17,200 reals from taxing the divers. The reason, he says, why the Portuguese and the Dutch took this toll from the poor divers, was that they had to protect them against their enemies, the Malabaris who came with armed boats to capture these fishermen in order to make slaves of them. He further reveals that the Dutch taxed the Moorish divers more than they taxed others; for the Moors had to give, besides the usual tax, one day's take, the particular day being left to the choice of the Dutch.¹ Tavernier's account is very interesting. His reference to Malabar pirates who are said to have disturbed the fishery with a view to make

1. J. B. Tavernier, "Travels In India", Chapter 21.

slaves of the fishermen, does not seem to be correct. The pirates, no doubt, invaded the fisheries but that seems only to rob the fishers. of their burden namely, the pearl oysters. His defence of the exaction of money from the divers, does not carry conviction. No doubt, the State needed money to protect the fishing population but that is not the criterion for taxing the fishers. It is only because the fishery belonged to the state. Unlike Linschoten, Tavernier says that the pearls of Mannar were the best and the pearls of Bahrein were equal to that of Mannar in the estimation of the people. ¹

Walter Shouten noticed the pearl fishery at Tuticorin in the year 1661. He says that the Portuguese formerly made great profits from this fishery at Tuticorin.² John Fryer (1672-1681 A. D.) says that the pearls were taken from the sea at Tuticaree (Tuticorin) and Tuticorin was then in the hands of the Dutch. ³ With regard to the chank shell, Fryer says that "there are others they call chanquo, the shells of which are mother-of-pearl." ⁴

Coming back to the history of the pearl fishery, we noticed earlier that there was an intermission for twenty two years between 1669 and 1691 A. D.

1. Ibid, chapter 20.

2. Bowrey, "*Countries round the Bay of Bengal - 1669 - 1979*", p. 208.

3. John Fryer, "*A New Account of the East indies*".
Volume I, p. 129.

4. Ibid, Volume II, p. 366.

This was not the beginning of the systematic and continued failures of the pearl fisheries, for even earlier in 1615 A. D., Baretto, the Bishop of Cochin, in an account of the Missions published that year, says that the pearl fishery along the coast had failed for thirtyfour years. It commenced again, he says, four years ago. (1611 A. D.) ¹

At the fishery of 1691 held near Tuticorin, 385½ stones were admitted free. Of theses, 96½ stones were for the Nayak of Madura and 59 for the Rajah of Ramnad. 181 stones were allowed free for the 'Pattangattiyan' (headman of the Parawas) of Tuticorin and nine stones for the head Moor-man. The rest were allowed for the various 'Pattangattiyans' of the various places.² The headman of the Parawas now claimed privileges for them. Under the Portuguese, the head-Moor-man of Kayalpatnam had 10 free stones granted to him by the Nayak of Madura from among his privileged 96½ stones. Now the Dutch allowed him 9 stones apart from the 96½ of the Nayak of Mudura.

The Dutch, as soon as they got hold of the pearl fisheries of the Tamil coast, made the 'Jatitalaivan' (Pattangattiyan) an important personage, by proclaiming him as "the lord of the seven seas".³

1. Dr. Caldwell, op. cit. p. 82.

2. Hornell, "*The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay*", pp. 173-174.

3. Thurston, "*Castes and Tribes of South India*",—Paravan.

He was given many privileges and was allowed free stones in the fisheries. In the pearl fishery of 1691, he was given 181 free stones. As a result of the grant of so many free stones in the pearl fisheries, the revenue that the Dutch derived from the fisheries was not so considerable, as that derived by the Portuguese, since the Portuguese granted free stones only to the Nayak of Madura and the Sethupathi of Ramnad.

In 1697 A. D., Croon, the Commandant of Jaffna, wrote that the pearl fishery was an extraordinary source of revenue on which no reliance could be placed, as it depended on various contingencies which might ruin the bank or spoil the oysters. If the oysters happened to be washed off the banks or to be disturbed by storms, the banks might be totally ruined in a very short time. He further states that the 'Pattangattiyan' went with the Commissioners appointed for the purpose of examination, in 'dhonies' to conduct the examination of the banks.¹ On the Ceylon coast the fishery of 1697 A. D. was followed by a period of intermission of eleven years and the next fishery was held only in 1708 A. D. whereas a fishery was held off Tuticorin in 1700 A. D. According to Father Martin who has given a brilliant account of this fishery, it was a total failure.

Father Martin has given a very vivid picture of the fishery held in 1700 A. D. and it is very instruc-

1. Lee, op. cit. p. 247.

tive in spite of some minor errors in details. It may well be reproduced here as it gives a full account of the fishery held that year. Moreover, the account of Father Martin is worth studying in details and the following extract may be considered.

“In the early part of the year, the Dutch sent ten or twelve vessels in different directions to test the localities in which it appeared desirable that the fishery of the year should be carried on; and from each vessel a few divers were let down, who brought up each a few thousand oysters, which were heaped upon the shore in separate heaps of thousand each, opened and examined. If the pearls found in each heap were found by the appraisers to be worth an “ecu” or more, the beds from which the oysters were taken, were held to be capable of yielding a rich harvest; if they were worth not more than thirty ‘sous’, the beds were considered unlikely to yield a profit over and above the expense of working them. As soon as the testing was completed, it was publicly announced either that there would or there would not, be a fishery that year. In the former case enormous crowds of people assembled on the coast on the day appointed for the commencement of the fishery; traders came there with wares of all kinds; the roadstead was crowded with shipping, drums were beaten, and muskets fired; and everywhere the greatest excitement prevailed, until the Dutch commissioners arrived from Colombo with great pomp, and ordered the proceedings to be opened with a salute of

cannon. Immediately afterwards the fishing vessels all weighed anchor and stood out to sea, preceded with two large Dutch sloops, which in due time drew off to the right and left marked the limits of the fishery and when each vessel reached its place, half of its complement of divers plunged into the sea, each with a heavy stone tied to his feet to make him sink rapidly and furnished with a sack into which he put his oysters, and having a rope tied round a pulley and held by some of the boatmen. Thus equipped the diver plunged in, and on reaching the bottom filled his sack with oysters until his breath failed, when he pulled a string with which he was provided, and the signal being perceived by the boatmen above, he was forthwith hauled up by the rope, together with his sack of oysters. No artificial appliances of any kind were used to enable the men to stay under water for long period; they were accustomed to the work almost from infancy, and consequently did it easily and well. Some were more skilful and lasting than others, and it was usual to pay them in proportion to their powers, a practice which led to much emulation and occasionally to fatal results.

“As soon as the first set of divers had come up and their takings had been examined and thrown into the hold, the second set went down. After an interval, the first set dived again, and after them the second; and so on turn by turn.

The work was very exhausting and the strongest could not dive oftener than seven or eight times in a day so that the day's diving was finished always before noon.

“ The diving over, the vessels returned to the coast and discharged their cargoes ; and the oysters were all thrown into a kind of park and left for two or three days, at the end of which they opened and disclosed their treasures. The pearls, having been extracted from the shells, and carefully washed, were placed in a metal receptacle contained some five or six colanders of graduated sizes, which were fitted one into another, so as to leave a space between the bottoms of every two, and were pierced into holes being the topmost colander, and that which had the smallest being the undermost. When dropped into colander No. 1 all but the very finest pearls fell through into No. 2, and most of them passed into Nos. 3, 4 & 5 ; while smallest of all, the seeds were strained off into the receptacle at the bottom. When all had staid in their proper colanders they were classified and valued accordingly. The largest or those of the first class, were the most valuable and it is expressly stated in the letter from which this information is extracted that the value of any given pearl was appraised almost exclusively with reference to its size, and was held to be affected but little by its shape or lustre. The valuation over, the Dutch generally bought the

finest pearls. They considered that they had a right of pre-emption. At the same time, they did not compell individuals to sell, if unwilling. All the pearls taken on the first day belonged by express reservation to the King or the Sethupathi according as the place of their taking lay off the coasts of one or the other. The Dutch did not, as was often asserted, claim the pearls taken on the second day. They had other and more certain modes of making profit of which the very best was to bring plenty of cash into a market where cash was not very plentiful, and so enable themselves to purchase at very easy prices. The amount of oysters found in different years varied infinitely. Some years the divers had only to pick up as fast as they were able, and as long as they would keep under water; in others they could only find a few here and there. In 1700 A. D., the testing was not encouraging, and an unusaully large number of boat-owners took out licences to fish; but the season proved most disastrous. Only a few thousands were taken on the first day by all the divers together and a day or two afterwards not a single oyster could be found. It was supposed by many that strong under-currents had suddenly set in owing to some unknown cause. Whatever the cause, the results of the failure were most ruinous. Several merchants had advanced large sums of money to the boat-owners on speculation, which were, of

course, lost. The boat-owners had, in like manner, advanced money to the divers and others, and they also lost their moneys." ¹

Martin's statement of one day's catch belonging to the Nayak of Madura or the Sethupathi of Ramnad according to the situation of the locality where the pearl fishery was held, was correct only with regard to India. On the Ceylon coast the Dutch seem to have reserved the suzerain right to one day's fishing for themselves as one of their sources of revenue.

Martin's account covers the chank fishery and the political situation as well. The following extract from one of his letters is worth noticing. "The Dutch draw a considerable revenue from Tuticorin, though they are not absolute masters of it. The whole fishing coast belongs partly to the King of Madura and the rest to the Prince of Marava, who, not long since, shook off the yoke of Maduran monarch whose tributary he was. The Dutch attempted to purchase, of the Prince of Marava, his right to the Fishing coast and all the country dependant on it; and for this purpose, sent him a splendid embassy with magnificent presents. The prince thought it fit to receive the presents and promised fine things, but has not yet been so good as his word." ²

1. Edgar Thurston, "*The Pearl and Chank Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar*," — pp. 8-9.

2. John Lockman, "*Travels of the Jesuits*", p. 380

“With respect to the trade carried on by the Dutch,” Martin goes on to say, “besides the linens brought by them from Madura, and for which they barter the leather of Japan and the spices of Moluccas, they gain considerable advantages by the two fisheries carried on here, that of pearls and that of xanxus (Chanks). The xanxus is a vast shell like those which the Tritons are represented sounding in sculpture and painting. The Dutch are surprisingly jealous of this trade in so much that it would cost any Indian his life, who should dare to sell one of them to any other person but such as belongs to the Dutch East India Company. They purchase them for a trifle, and send them to the Kingdom of Bengal, sawed in proportions to their breadth. Being round and hallow, they are wrought into bracelets, which has as bright a polish as ivory. Such of them as are fished (and that in prodigious quantities) on this coast have their volutes from right to left. If the idolators were to take one whose volutes are from left to right, they would consider it as a treasure worth millions; they imagining that one of their gods was forced to hide himself, when his enemies pursued him furiously by sea, in a Xanxus of the latter kind.”¹

Regarding the revenue from the pearl fishery, we get the information from Martin that the

1. Ibid, p. 381.

Dutch did not undertake the fishing on their own account, but permitted every inhabitant of the country, whether Christian, Hindu or Muslim to keep as many fishing boats as he pleased on condition that every boat paid the Dutch sixty crowns and sometimes more. This duty rose to a considerable sum, six or seven hundred boats sometimes going upon the fishery. All persons were not allowed to go whithersoever they pleased; but certain places were allotted for several boats. ¹

It is seen from Martin's account quoted above that the Dutch tried to get hold of the Fishery coast from the Sethupathi but failed. They had an inland trade in almost all commodities in Madura and as such they did not dare to annex the coast regions belonging to the Nayak of Madura by any means, peaceful or aggressive, and they continued to allow the free stones to both the Nayak of Madura and the Rejah of Ramnad.

In 1708, there was another fishery on the Tuticorin coast after the failure in 1700. This year witnessed another fishery on the Ceylon coast also. Both the fisheries proved satisfactory. As usual the privileged stones were allowed to the Nayak and the Sethupathi apart from the headmen of the Parawas and the Moors. The free stones allowed to the 'Jatitalaivans' were in the nature of remuneration to these men for assistance

1. Ibid, p. 382.

in inspecting the pearl banks, in guarding the oyster beds discovered, in recruiting the divers and in superintending operations during the fishery. On the Ceylon coast also free stones were allowed to the headmen of the fishing castes for the duties detailed above. The 1703 fishery at Tuticorin yielded a revenue of £. 9,000 and an equal amount was got from the Ceylon fishery of that year. After this fishery there was an intermission of thirty-two years till 1740. In this interval there was no fishery on the Tuticorin side whereas there was a fishery off Ceylon in the year 1732. There was another fishery on the Ceylon side in 1746. ¹

Manucci (1683-1708 A. D.) mentions about the deterioration of the pearl banks. He says that already the seas of Tuticorin and Mannar no longer yielded the quantity of pearls that they were yielding in the ancient days. ²

The memoir of Van Imhoff, Governor of Ceylon, left for the instruction of his successor, speaks of the lengthy intermission in the productiveness of the pearl fisheries at Arippe in Ceylon and at Tuticorin. We shall see the portion of his memoir which relates to the pearl fisheries in details. In this connection, the following extract from his memoir may be considered.

1. Lee, op. cit. pp. 248-249.

2. H. R. Pate, "Madras District Gazetteers - Tinnevely",
P. 293.

“The Arippe and Tuticorin pearl fisheries are certainly to be reckoned among the sources of produce to this island or rather of revenue, for the profit which the Company derives from the holding of a fishery must rather be classed under the latter head than under the former, as it consists in different duties which are paid for diving those banks, and divers' sums paid for the stones used in catching the oysters, and some part in oysters themselves paid as taxes, which are sold when the fishery is at an end; duties are also paid on what is called the exchange, and on clothes which are brought to the bazaar, but the Company does not, in fact, obtain any pearls, nor is there even a chance for the Company to purchase any pearls there, although the highest authorities have so often endeavoured to do so, for at the fishery pearls are sold at so high a price, that the Moors are cunning to rub up¹ even old pearls and to bring them there for sale, with a certainty of taking in the unwary and deriving more profit from it.

“But it is not so much a matter of concern whether the fishery is to be called a source of revenue or of produce; as whether it can in reality be looked upon as a source of advantage and profit derived from Ceylon, or whether it is more glitter than gold, as many things are that belong to the Company which shine uncommonly,

1. “To Swallow” according to Lee.

but have no real substance. This question is neither a novel nor unfounded one, and to properly answer it, we must weigh against the advantages which we have just detailed, the inconveniences, discomforts noise, expenses, the risks of the Commissioners, the employment of the militia, the consumption of provisions, the danger of ships etc., we must also mention the hazards run by a few hundred men sent to keep immense crowds in order, and their exposure to sickness and death as well after the fishery as during its continuance from the stench of the oysters; the price of provisions is also enormously increased; the Company's trade in cloth is discontinued for a long time from the prevalence of smuggling which is occasioned by the immense numbers of persons resorting to those parts of the island; we may also add that pepper is smuggled away, as well as arecanuts, although it would be thought that a multitude of more than 1,00,000 persons who consume these nuts for the space of two or three months should give some profit, yet the Company draws nothing from it. If therefore all the matters be weighed, one against the other, it must be decided, as I, for my part, maintain that unless the fishery be indeed a full and opulent one, all others must be prejudicial to the Company's interests; and it were really desirable that no such fisheries should take place, but that there should be an annual rent for the diving of the banks, as now takes place with regard to the chanks, with a limited number of persons

and of boats ; or in some other convenient way that a mode should be devised to acquire for the company the profit which they should derive from the fisheries, both here and on the opposite coast, as Lords of the country, without the holding of any public fishery. The bad condition of the pearl banks on both sides of the coast has lasted for some years, and there is now no prospect of an early fishery; yet this cannot be attributed to any disorder in the country any more than the want of purchasers of our Madura cloths. This is mere chance and experience had shown that the banks have lain fallow for a much longer time than has as yet been the case on this occasion, and it is useless therefore to seek for the causes of things which are neither uncommon nor unheard of. I only mention this cursorily and to prove that the interests of the company requires that an examination of the banks should take place every two years, if not every year, which indeed is not absolutely necessary, and the expense may therefore be spared; yet from time to time or say every two years, an investigation should take place.

“ As far as the inspection of the Arippe banks is concerned, Tuticorin boats should be employed, as their Honors recommended in a recent despatch, a Dissave from Jaffnapatam should also be present to see that no neglect takes place, and to summon the boats from the opposite coast, and to take all necessary precautions when appearances prove

favourable, in order to ensure a good result; for the company has been shamefully treated in this respect since the fishery of 1732. Indeed there are many natives who pretend to give reasons for the failure of the banks, and who say that the multitude of persons forced there against their will have ruined the banks, whilst others looked to their own profits too much, and also that the divers had not spared the young oysters, and that this accounts for the nakedness of the banks which have not yet recovered from the last pillaging. All this is as probable as the pretext of the country being under a spell, but to end this matter, we will pray God that the island may never again suffer losses such as it now sustains from one cause or the other." ¹

Van Imhoff who seems to be a practical man, has clearly stated the disadvantages in conducting the pearl fishery in 'aumeny' ². He advocates renting out the fishery to a single individual or a group of merchants. Under the then existing system, the Government made profits from selling the right to use the diving stones, say, taxing the divers employed in the fishery, and of the sundries duties levied in the fishing camp. In 1744, when Van Imhoff became the Governor-General of Netherlands Indies, he immediately called attention to his Ceylon memoir. He liked to know whether it would not be

1. Lee, op cit. pp. 174 - 175-

2. "Fishing to take place directly on behalf of the Government."

advisable to discontinue open fisheries and preferable to rent them out to a single individual. The new Governor of Ceylon advocated the change which was thereupon sanctioned. ¹

In the fishery of 1746, this new system was followed and all the free stones were abolished. The Dutch Government showed reason for this abolition of the privileges as under. These privileges were conceded to the Nayak of Madura and the Sethupathi since a large number of the 'dhonies' and the people required at a public fishery came from their territories and there would be no necessity to continue this concession as the diving took place under the new system only with a limited number of persons. ² Accordingly all the privileges were withdrawn and instructions were issued to the Commissioners of the pearl fishery that they should not allow any ambassador of the Nawab of the Carnatic or the Sethupathi of Ramnad to visit the fishery and, if they persisted, they should be treated seriously. ³

In the year 1736, the Nawab of the Carnatic conquered the Nayak of Madura and acquired his kingdom. The Nawab was very powerful on land as well as on the sea, as he had the active support of the English East India Company. In the fishery

1. Hornell, "The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay", p. 38.

2. Ibid. p. 39.

3. Ibid, p. 39.

of 1747, the pearl banks of Tuticorin and Arippe in Ceylon yielded a considerable revenue, the former was rented out for £. 5,000 and the latter for £. 21,400.¹ Powerful as he was, the Nawab of the Carnatic did not acquiesce to the new system which abolished his privileges, without stout opposition. The Dutch thought it fit to allow him in the fishery of 1747, thirtyfive free divers and the renter had a proportionate reduction in his rent.² In the fisheries of 1748 & 1749 also the Nawab was allowed his thirty-five free divers. The Dutch who were afraid of the power of the Nawab of the Carnatic and his alliance with the British, did not have the courage to refuse the privileges that were demanded by him. But the Sethupathi did not get any privilege and the Dutch Company strictly instructed the commissioner of the pearl fishery that "if the Catta Theuvar (Sethupathi is meant) or any other native chief, should request a similar concession (similar to that of the Nawab of the Carnatic) you must refuse it flatly."³

Alexander Hamilton (circa 1744 A. D.) says that Tuticorin was the seat of the pearl fishery which brought the Dutch Company L. 20,000 yearly tribute.⁴

1. Lee, op. cit. p. 249.

2. Hornell, "*The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay*", p. 40.

3. Ibid, p. 40.

4. Alexander Hamilton. "*A New Account of East Indies*"
Volume I, p. 336.

The memoir of Governor Schrender in 1762 A. D. says that the fisheries on the coast of Ceylon should be inspected only once in three years. Though no fishery took place under his regime, he was of opinion that if they did not disturb the oysters by inspecting them very frequently, they might expect to have three fisheries in every ten years. With regard to the fisheries he recommended that the banks should not be stripped too bare or disturbed too often, for that which is called a valuable fishery could never compensate for the loss sustained by the banks not being in a state to be fished upon for many years following. ¹

Between 1749 and 1784 there was no fishery held off Tuticorin, whereas four fisheries were held off the coast of Ceylon in the years 1750, 1753, 1754 and 1768 on very moderate revenues. In 1784 a fishery was held off Tuticorin under the English East India Company that held Tuticorin temporarily and the revenue from this fishery amounted to Rs, 42,000. ²

The long intermission of the pearl fishery on the Tuticorin coast for thirtyfive years (1749-1784) was due partly to the reluctance of the Dutch to agree to the pressing demands of the Nawab of the Carnatic. The Nawab of the Carnatic cited the instance of the superintendency of the pearl fisheries at Tuticorin and on the Ceylon coasts, held by the

1. Lee, op. cit. p. 249.

2. Ibid, p. 249.

Nayak of Madura at the reign of Thirumala Nayaka and demanded the same rights for him. The Dutch were not prepared to accept the suzerainty of the Nawab over the pearl fisheries of the Ceylon coast also. In 1768 at the Ceylon pearl fishery held off Arippe that year, violent disputes occurred between the Dutch and the Nawab's envoys who went to the fishery attended by a large body of armed sepoys and tried to carry matters with a high hand. The Dutch, fearing the interruption with their cloth monopoly at Madura, preferred to let the pearl fisheries remain in abeyance till a settlement could be effected on what they considered equitable terms which meant the curtailment, if possible, of the Nawab's pretensions. so matters stood when in 1782 the English East India Company took Tuticorin from the Dutch holding it till 1785. During this period the Nawab's revenue being assigned to the company under the agreement of 1781, a pearl fishery was held in 1784 and it was carried on departmentally. An annual chank fishery was also conducted.¹

In 1785 Tuticorin was restored to the Dutch and in the following year a provisional treaty was drawn up between the Nawab and the Dutch whereby the Nawab got fifty per cent of the proceeds of the pearl fishery; but no mention was made of the Ceylon pearl fishery and the entire proceeds of the Tuticorin chank fishery was ceded as an exclusive

1. Hornell, "The Sacred Chank of India", p. 6.

right to the Dutch. The fisheries were to be rented out to the highest bidder. This treaty was never ratified by the Nawab who was deprived of all participation both in the Ceylon pearl fishery and in the Tuticorin chank fishery. Pressed by the Madras Government, the Nawab in 1788 made another treaty with the Dutch whereby it was stipulated that "the pearl and chank fisheries of Tuticorin shall be equally divided between the high contracting parties. The chank fishery shall, as usual, be let out to the highest bidder and the net produce equally divided." ¹ Thirtysix 'dhonies' were allowed to the Nawab of the Carnatic to partake in the pearl fisheries off the Ceylon coast. ² Since by another treaty the Nawab gave the monopoly of the cloth trade at Madura to the Dutch, the English Company vetoed the treaties. But in the 1791 fishery at Tuticorin, the treaty was followed when the net produce was divided between the Dutch and the Madras Government who had then assumed the revenues of the Nawab of the Carnatic. In 1795 the Madras Government had again to take possession of Tuticorin from the Dutch to whom it was restored only in 1818. ³ Practically speaking, there was no pearl fishery held for the Dutch off Tuticorin after the 1796 fishery, since the English Government took possession of all the settlements of the Dutch in India in 1825.

1. Ibid, p. 7.

2. Ibid, p. 7.

3. Ibid, p. 8.

In the pearl fisheries off Tuticorin held in 1787 and 1792, the English Government in Madras abided by the treaty arrived at between the Dutch and the Nawab of the Carnatic. But for this the treaty was never acted upon and the Dutch lost their monopoly in the trade in cloth at Madura and also the pearl fishery to the English in 1796.

On the Ceylon coast, after 1768 when the Nawab of the Carnatic and the bad weather contributed to the premature end of the fishery, there was no fishery held till the British took over the island from the Dutch.

All through this period of the Dutch possession of the coast regions of Tirunelveli district, the chank fishery was very thriving. Exclusive right to fish for the chanks, was let out to a single renter for a fixed amount. The account of Father Martin (1700 A. D.) bears evidence to the great profit the Dutch got from the chank fishery. Alexander Hamilton (1744 A. D.) refers to the chanks and the flourishing trade in them with Bengal, where they were made into bracelets.¹ Raynad (1770 A. D.) talks of the chank and the chank fishery off Tuticorin.² There used to be an annual chank fishery in the seas off the coast of Ceylon and the districts of Tirunelveli and Ramnad. The Dutch East India Company began to think as a result of the frequent failures of the

1. Alexander Hamilton, op. cit. Volume I, p. 131.

2. Henry Yule, "**Hobson Jobson**", Chank.

pearl fisheries whether it was only more glitter than gold as it shined uncommonly with no real worth. The chank fishery seems to have given them more revenue than the pearl fishery if taken together for a number of years. Mr. Steuart says that the Dutch had the chank fishery within the same limits as the pearl fishery and the chank fishery gave them a considerable profit.¹

To sum up the contents of this chapter, we have noticed that the Dutch continued the privileges to the Nayak of Madura and the Sethupathi. But when in 1746 they farmed out the pearl fishery for a fixed amount to an individual, they cancelled the privileges granted to the Nayak and the Sethupathi since there was no more permission needed for the pearl divers and merchants to travel from the Kingdom of Madura or Ramnad to the site of the pearl fishery. But the Nawab of the Carnatic who had, by then, conquered the territories of the Nayak of Madura, who was powerful on land and sea and who was an ally of the English, stoutly opposed this cancellation. Hence the Dutch allowed him some free divers. When the Nawab began to demand the same privileges in the Ceylon fishery also, the Dutch suspended the fishery in 1768 until some agreement was reached with the Nawab. When the Dutch came to terms with the Nawab, the British vetoed it. When the English took possession of the Nawab's

1. Steuart. "The Manual of Tinnevely" p. 45.

territories and the pearl fisheries from the Dutch, there were no more of these quarrels. In this period the chank fishery was very prosperous and there was an annual chank fishery rented out to the highest bidder. The chank fishery, if taken for the whole period of Dutch occupation, would have given them more revenue than the pearl fisheries taken together. The [territories] of the Nawab of the Carnatic and the pearl fisheries of the Tamil coast passed on to the English East India Company by the close of the eighteenth century A. D.

Chapter VIII.

The History of the Pearl Fishery in the Nineteenth Century, A. D.

Tuticorin with the pearl and the chank fisheries conducted from that place were the last to be taken by the British in South India. The conquest of the district of Tirunelveli was completed by the closing years of the eighteenth century A. D. Acting on behalf of the Nawab of the Carnatic; the British took possession of Tuticorin and the pearl fishery therein in the year 1782 and held the same for three years. In this period there was a pearl fishery conducted by the British in 1783. As the Dutch concluded a provisional treaty with the Nawab of the Carnatic, Tuticorin was returned to the Dutch in 1785 only to be taken back in 1796 when the British became masters of all that belonged to the Nawab of the Carnatic. This time the British held it for twentytwo years and in 1818 the harbour of Tuticorin was restored to the Dutch. In the all India policy of annexation of the Dutch settlements in India, Tuticorin and the sovereignty over the pearl and the chank fisheries passed over to the British in 1825. In all practical purposes, we may take it that the pearl fishery off Tuticorin passed to the British in 1796 itself as there was no pearl fishery held at Tuticorin in the period between 1818 and 1825.

In this chapter, we shall deal with the history of the pearl and the chank fisheries of the

Tamil coast in the nineteenth century under the British. We shall conclude our history with 1900 A. D. since it is very convenient to do so. The pearl fisheries of the Tamil coast deteriorated by this time, 1900 A. D. and there was practically no successful fishery after 1901 A. D. There were two fisheries at Tuticorin in 1908 and 1914 A. D. while there was an annual fishery for four years on the Ceylon coast between 1903 and 1907 A. D. But they did not bring any revenue of consideration. After 1914 A. D., the pearl fisheries were completely abandoned.

The pearl fishery on the Ceylon coast also passed to the British by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The power of the Nawab of the Carnatic vanished and the British became masters of the whole of South India. With the putting down of the Polyagars of Tirunelveli district led by the Polyagar of Panjalankurichi in 1801 A. D., the British power on the Tirunelveli coast was secure. As such the privileged stones and other privileges were more or less abolished. This system of remuneration was continued to be observed on the Indian coast and, that too, only in the case of the 'Jatitalavan' of the Parawas. He was a person of some importance, resided at Tuticorin and had much influence over the people of his caste. He was looked to by the Government to furnish divers for the pearl and the chank fisheries.¹

1. Stuart, *op. cit.* p. 158.

On the Ceylon coast this privilege of free stones was finally abolished in 1863 A. D.¹ 'Jatitalavan' at Tuticorin still² continued to help the British in inspecting the pearl banks and collecting the divers required for the fishery. His duties consisted in accompanying the Inspector of the Pearl Banks on his periodical visits to the banks which inspection itself was formerly conducted by the headman, in furnishing guards to the banks to be fished, in supplying the Government with the information of any accidental finds of oysters by the fishermen and in acting as an intermediary between the Government and his caste with a view, by the exercise of his influence, to ensure the attendance at the fishery of an adequate supply of boats and divers.³

In the nineteenth century, there were thirteen pearl fisheries and yearly chank fisheries conducted on the Tirunelveli coast. The total proceeds that the Madras Government got from the pearl fisheries of the nineteenth century, was 16 lakhs of rupees. There were frequent intermissions on the Tuticorin coast. After the fishery of 1830, there was no fishery for thirty years till 1860. Again after the fishery of 1862, there was an intermission for twenty-seven years, the next fishery being held in 1889. There was no fishery between 1890 and

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1. Hornell, "The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay", p. 42.
 2. 1900 A. D.
 3. Ibid, p. 43.

1900. After 1889, the pearl fishery off Tuticorin deteriorated very much. The fishery held in 1889 gave the Madras Government a revenue of nearly one and half lakhs of rupees whereas the fisheries of 1890 and 1900 gave respectively Rs. 9,000 and Rs. 11,000. We may note it for information that the fisheries held in 1908 and 1914 gave only Rs. 7282 and Rs. 2497 respectively. ¹

On the Ceylon coast, however, it was not so bad as it was on the Indian coast. There were frequent fisheries there and the revenue derived from them was no doubt, considerable. On the Ceylon coast there was an intermission for eighteen years between 1837 and 1855. Likewise there was no fishery in the eleven years between 1863 and 1874, and in the twelve years between 1891 and 1903. After 1903 A. D., there were annual fisheries till 1907 A. D. when the pearl fishery was abandoned. ²

In October, 1835 the Inspector of the Pearl Fishery of the Ceylon coast moored a buoy near the most valuable oyster bed intended to be fished in the following March; but when the season came round, the buoy was missing and the lesson which was given, was not remembered so that a wrong bed was operated upon, young oysters disturbed, and the older ones died from not being taken when mature. The Inspection of October,

1. Ibid, pp. 47—48.

2. Ibid. pp. 47—48.

1836 discovered this error and the subsequent fishing in 1837 was on a very small scale. This mistake had been very fatal to the fisheries for some years, till 1855. ¹

In 1842 the inspection of the pearl banks off the island of Ceylon showed that there was no deposit of oysters in both Arippe and Calpantyn beds. The inspection of the year 1844 also showed no progress. In 1847 also there was an inspection which was not successful. In that year the Inspector, Mr. Steuart, said that the banks would yield in 1852 if properly protected ². But the pearl banks of Ceylon did not yield a fishery, till 1855.

Commissioner Colebrooke recommended that "under the superintendence of a resident officer, the pearl banks might become a constant rather than an occasional source of revenue. When the oysters on the bank are found to be mature, a fishery might be carried on without delay, if the season be favourable, by which means the loss of pearl might sometimes be avoided. The renewal of small fisheries at intervals might render fewer preparations necessary." ³ But the remarks of Colebrooke never came true as the pearl banks continued to deteriorate and consequently in the

1. Lee, op. cit. p. 252.

2. Ibid, p. 252.

3. Ibid, p. 252.

beginning of the present century, the pearl fishery was completely abandoned.

When we pursue the list of the fisheries held on both the sides of the Gulf of Mannar, a noteworthy feature strikes us very much. The fisheries held on the Tuticorin banks coincide with blank years on the Ceylon banks. We may also notice the following two features of the fisheries :—

(i) Usually, Indian pearl fishery was preceded at a distance of from two to three years by a Ceylon fishery.

(ii) In the same way each Indian fishery was followed at a similar interval by one on the Ceylon banks.

This may be due to the beds on the opposite sides of the Gulf conferring reciprocal benefits upon one another. This may also be due to the prevalence of strong under-water currents preventing formation of the pearl banks on one or the other side. Ocean currents change their course and when the currents happened to be strong on the Indian side, the pearl banks accumulated on the Ceylon side. When the currents happened to be strong on the Ceylon side, the pearl banks accumulated on the Indian side. It is also said that the pearl oysters are capable of voluntary movement and this may also account for this phenomenon.

Bennett who wrote about the natural history and the wealth of Ceylon in the year 1843, gives details of the pearl and the chank fisheries. He says that at the time of the pearl fishery Kondatche where the pearl fishery was held became the general rendezvous of all the boats employed and of adventurers, traders, jugglers, and thieves. The Government gazettes of the several Presidencies previously gave six months notice of it throughout their extensive circulation and there was scarcely a nation or caste of the immense continent of India especially the Parsee and Arabian traders whom the thirst of gain allured to this grand field of speculation. ¹

After explaining the process of inspection conducted, Bennett says that it had happened on more than one occasion that the over-anxiety on the part of the colonial Governor to make a favourable report of the revenue derived from the pearl fishery, had placed the pearl banks in jeopardy by overfishing them. In April 1820 the Madragam paar (near Arippe) was found to be the only bank where the oysters had attained sufficient maturity. It was then fished on account of Government and the oysters were sold in lots upon the beach. ²

Bennett gives the very interesting news of the persons that frequented the pearl fisheries.

1. Bennett, op. cit. Chapter 25.

2. Ibid.

“All the persons frequenting the pearl fishery are privileged from arrests upon the civil process ; but the powers of the Supreme Court in criminal matters are not affected ; and justice is administered summarily in disputes arising from matters connected with the fishery.”¹

The pearl banks off Aripipo were protected by the low, narrow and crooked patches of Cardiva (Black Island) or Nalladive which protects the banks from the injurious effects of the South-west monsoon. The banks were further protected from the effects of the North-east monsoon by the mainland of Ceylon. Bennett says that this protection had been congenial to the growth of the pearl oysters.

Bennett talks of the shark-charmers also. He says that their services were indispensable to give confidence to the superstitious divers who followed their submarine occupation fearlessly only on their assurances. That the sharks' mouths had been closed at their command divested the divers of all fears. Even the Roman Catholic priests imposed the similar farce upon the divers of their faith as not one of them would descend without a charm composed of brief extracts from Scripture, fastened round the arm, which he was told, would protect him from danger. This shark charming trade was a lucrative one because, apart from the stipend from the Government,

1. Ibid.

they got the additional daily thithe of ten or twelve oysters from each boat. ¹

From the very early times as the 9th century A. D., the divers of the pearl fishery in the Persian Gulf used, according to Masudi, the Geographer, cotton steeped in oil to fill the ears and a piece of tortoise-shell to compress the nostrils. But the divers in the Indian and Ceylon fisheries of even the modern times reject all these expedients. The native skill of the Indian divers do not allow them to use the artificial means either to descend or to protect there ears and nostrils from water getting in. They continue to dive as their forefathers did many millenniums ago. The only protection they ask and without which they will not dive is that of the shark charmers or 'Kadal-kattis' as they are called in Tamil. Tennent says that only the black skin, and not the shark-charming, protects the divers of the Indian pearl fisheries from accidents from the sharks. ² Whatever the reason may be, the demand for the sharkcharmers was great in the Gulf of Mannar when the fisheries were conducted there.

The chanks were, according to Bennett, taken from "on the east side of the" Northern extremity of Calpantyn island. The exclusive right to the fishing was usually sold to the highest bidder for a term of two years. Tennent says that

1. Ibid.

2. Tennent, *op. cit.* Volume II, p. 560.

the farming was abandoned later in the second half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the Government had the chank fishery directly controlled by them. Tennent says that the shores of Mannar afforded favourable portions for the fishery of the chanks. ¹

According to Tennent the pearl banks between 1837 and 1854 were an annual charge instead of producing annual income. ² We have already noticed that after the fatal results of the wrong fishing in 1837, there was no fishery till 1855. So the reference to the annual charge referred to by Tennent should be with regard to the expenses incurred in examining the pearl banks. We have also noticed earlier in this chapter that there were frequent inspections of the pearl banks till 1854 when it was decided to hold a fishery in March 1855 after an interval of 18 years. Tennent further informs us that the pearl fishery was suspended for a long time from 1855 to 1870. But James Hornell accounts for the pearl fisheries in 1855, 1857, 1859, 1860 and 1863. He says that he had been supplied with these statistics regarding the pearl fisheries and the revenue derived from them, by the Government of Ceylon when he was the Inspector of the pearl banks there in the closing years of the nineteenth century A. D. ³ According to Hornell,

1. Ibid. Volume II, p. 556.

2. Ibid Volume II, p. 560.

3. Hornell, "The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay," pp. 47-48.

the fisheries were suspended only for eleven years from 1863 to 1874 ¹. These failures were attributed to the unusual currents in the Gulf of Mannar. This had been refuted immediately and Dr. Kelaart; appointed to enquire into this disappearance of oysters, reported that the pearl oysters were capable of voluntary movement and this solved the mystery of disappearance. ²

Edgar Turston who inspected the pearl banks and the chank beds in the year 1869 has left full details of the pearl and the chank fisheries conducted that year in the Gulf of Mannar.

The Tuticorin pearl fishery of 1869 was conducted from an impoverished village erected on the barren sandy shore of Salapatturai, two miles north of the town. This fishery commenced under a combination of adverse conditions which seriously affected the revenue, viz. the presence of the pearl bank at a distance of ten miles from the shore and in ten fathoms of water, and the co-existence of a fishery on the Ceylon coast where the oysters were to be obtained at a distance of about five miles from the shore and at a depth of five to seven fathoms. The natural result was that the natives, keenly alive to their own interests, went off with their boats from the Madras seaport towns of Pamban and Kilakarai to

1. Ibid, p. 48.

2. Tennent, op. cit. Volume II, p. 560.

the Ceylon fishery where they could earn their money easily and with less discomfort than at Tuticorin, leaving the Tuticorin bank to be fished by a meagre fleet of about forty boats. The largest number of oysters collected as the result of a single day's fishery by the fortyone boats employed at this fishery of 1869 was 2,41,000 a very small quantity compared with the results of the Ceylon fishery in 1857 when the daily yield varied from one to one and a half million oysters, some boats bringing loads of thirty or forty thousands each.¹

As soon as the days fishing was over, the oysters were brought to the Government "Kottus" where the divers took their share and exhibited them for sale on the beach. The two-thirds of the oysters which became the property of the Government remained in the "kottu" and were counted by the coolies engaged for the purpose. At about 6 P. M. the Government oysters are sold by public auction, duly announced by tom-tom, being put up in lots of thousand each. Of this auction, Thurston says that the purchaser could, subject to the consent of the auctioneer, take a certain number of thousands at the same rate as his winning bid. Occasionally a combination was organised among the merchants who were buying in large scale, and they came to the auction determined not to bid more than a very small fixed sum per thousand. A strug-

1. Edgar Thurston, "The Pearl and Chank Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar," Chapter I.

gle then took place between the auctioneer and the merchant, the former refusing to sell and the latter refusing to raise the price, and the struggle invariably ended in the collapse of the merchants when they found that their supply of oysters were cut off. No credit was allowed, and the buyers, as soon as they paid their money, removed their oysters to the washing 'kottus' or sent them away up country by railway.¹

Thurston gives the interesting information that it was from the Cheval paar, near Arippe in Ceylon, that in 1888, about 150 millions of oysters, ripe for fishing, disappeared in the space of two months, between November and February. This disappearance en masse was attributed by the natives to a vast shoal of rays which is said to eat up the oyster shells. The Inspector of the Pearl Banks attributed the disaster to the influence of a strong under-water current which was running for some days in December.²

The Ceylon Government had derived during the years of 1865 and 1890 a handsome profit from its pearl banks which had been profitably fished on nine occasions; while during the same period the banks belonging to the Madras Government near Tuticorin, had yielded only a single fishery, not because the oysters ceased to settle, when young, on the banks, but because they had failed, owing a combination of

1. Ibid. Chapter I.

2. Ibid, Chapter VII.

physical and other unfavourable conditions, to reach maturity there.¹

Thurston gives an account of the chank fishery at Tuticorin also. He gives the following account of how the chanks were taken from the sea.

“The chank fishery is conducted from Tuticorin and the shells are found in the vicinity of the pearl banks, in about seven to ten fathoms, either buried in the sand, lying on the sea bottom, or in sandy crevices between blocks of coral rock. The fishery goes on during the north-east monsoon from October to May, and is worked by native divers, who putting their foot on a stone to which a long rope is attached, are let down to the bottom, carrying a net round the waist, in which they place the chanks as they collect them. The shells of the chank are all scattered about, and not aggregated together in clusters like those of the pearl oysters, so that the divers have to move about from place to place in search of them. The divers usually stay beneath the surface from forty to fifty seconds. The largest dive which I have witnessed was fiftyfour seconds, and on that occasion the diver on his return to the surface, innocently inquired how many minutes he had been under water. A single case is on record of a native diver being drowned from overloading his net, so that he was unable to rise to the surface. I can find no record of death, in recent years, of the divers at the hands

1. Ibid, Chapter VII.

of the shark ; but dread of sharks still clings to the divers and I read in the ' Times of Ceylon ' during the recent pearl fishery that ' at present there are said to be 150 boats with their full compliment of men, all waiting at Kilakarai in readiness to proceed to Dutch Bay, but they will not leave until after some festivities which occur on the 15th instant, when it is customary for them to pray for protection from sharks etc., while engaged in diving.' Tennent says that the only precaution to which the Ceylon diver devotedly resorts, is the mystic ceremony of the shark-charming exorcism as an indispensable preliminary to every fishery."¹

Thurston further says that the chanks were tested with a wooden gauge having a hole of $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches in diameter. Those shells that passed through the hole, were discarded as being too small and returned to the sea on the chance that the animal might revive and continue to grow. In the month of July the shells were sold by auction in one lot to the highest bidder. The chank with its opening on the right was valued high at even a lakh of rupees.²

The chank fishery, as we had seen in the last chapter, was rented out to the highest bidder by the Dutch. This system was followed by the British also till 1876 when this system was abandoned in favour of direct Government management. The Government continued to give the divers Rs. 20/- for every

1. Ibid, Chapter III.

2. Ibid. Chapter III.

thousand shells taken by them, the same as was given by the renters. This worked till 1901 A. D. when the divers struck work for an increase in the wages. Accordingly the wage was increased to Rs. 31-4-0 per thousand shells, that is to say, half an anna per chank taken by the diver.¹

In the nineteenth century, the chank fishery of the Tirunelveli coast yielded a large revenue to the British. Ordinarily there was an annual chank fishery on this coast. Compared with the revenue derived from the pearl fishery of the Tirunelveli coast we find that the chank fishery, if taken for the whole century, gave as much as what the pearl fishery for the hundred years gave them. The total net profit derived from the chank fishery of the Tirunelveli coast, in the nineteenth century was Rs. 1,526,336 as against Rs. 1,564,071. derived from the pearl fishery of Tuticorin which was exploited thirteen times in the nineteenth century.²

In summing up the history of the pearl fishery of the Tamil coast in the nineteenth century, we may notice the continued deterioration of the pearl banks which resulted in the complete abandonment of the pearl fishery in the beginning years of the present century. In this period there were many intermissions on the fisheries of Tuticorin as well as of Ceylon. The revenue from the pearl fishery was not so large

1. Hornell, "The Sacred Chank of India", p. 14.

2. Ibid, p 12

as it was the case under the Pandyas and the Portuguese. The chank fisheries were annually operated upon and collectively speaking the revenue derived from the chank fishery in the nineteenth century, was equal to that of the pearl fishery, especially on the Tuticorin coast. On the Ceylon coast, however, the pearl fishery gave considerable revenue though there were intermissions between 1837 and 1855 and at the close of the century. The Ceylon pearl fishery was finally abandoned in 1907. A.D.

Chapter IX.

Conclusion.

While concluding this thesis on the history of the pearl and the chank fisheries of the Tamil coast from the very earliest times to 1900 A. D., we may notice the situation of the fisheries on the Tamil coast at the beginning of the present century.

The pearl fishery off the Ceylon coast was abandoned in 1907, since it was found that the pearl banks had completely deteriorated. The fishery off the coast of the island of Mannar became impoverished in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century the pearl fishery in Ceylon was situated at Marichikkadde.

On the Indian coast, the pearl banks, called 'paars' were situated in three divisions, namely Northern or Kilakarai Division, Central or Tuticorin Division and Southern or Comorin Division. Of these, the Central Division corresponds both in latitude and extent with the productive pearl bank region on the opposite coast of Ceylon, Manappad point coinciding with the latitude of the Ceylon Muttuvarattu Par while Tolayiram Par off Tuticorin similarly coinciding in latitude as well as in great relative extent with the Cheval Par, the bank of the largest area and the greatest productive importance on the Ceylon side.¹

1. Hornell, "The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay", p. 53.

Five distinct chank fisheries were carried on by the beginning of this century. They were the fisheries of Tirunelveli, usually called Tuticorin fishery, Ramnad, the Carnatic coast, consisting of Tanjore and South Arcot districts, Travancore and Ceylon, the northern part of Ceylon.

In all the places the chank fishery was considered to be a royal prerogative, the monopoly of the Government. In Tirunelveli, the Madras Government worked the fishery departmentally through an officer of the Fisheries Department styled as "the Superintendent of the Pearl and Chank Fisheries". On the Carnatic coast the chanks were either (as in Tanjore) bought at fixed rates from the fishermen by the Customs Department on behalf of the Fisheries Department or else (as in South Arcot) the exclusive right to collect the chanks was farmed out to a renter for a term of years. In Ceylon the renting system was in force till 1890 when it was abandoned in favour of an export duty, a method of securing for the Government the revenue from this source, which had continued ever since. In Travancore the dues of the Government were collected in the same manner as it prevailed in Ceylon, namely, by imposing an export tax.¹

In the pages of this thesis we have taken the condition of the pearl fisheries into consideration and we have not looked into the conditions of the

1. Hornell, "The Sacred Chank of India". p. 3.

various chank fisheries of the Tamil coast. As such we may sketch in brief, the condition and the working of the chank beds.

The Tirunelveli chank fishery was the only one that was carried on systematically and with a definite organisation. Tuticorin chanks were noted for their solidity, weight and hardness. The season's catch was advertised and sold yearly by tender to the highest bidder. Here the chank beds were classified into two categories. 'Piral' which was fine sands admixed with a certain amount of mud and 'chankunilam' or chankbreeding places, were those two categories. Usually the 'pirals' yielded large catches of the shells as the chanks appeared to congregate there to feed upon the tube worms which gave the 'piral' sands the name 'puchimanal' or worm-sands.¹

The chank fishery at Ramnad was enjoyed by the Rajah of Ramnad, formerly Sethupathi. Unlike the Tirunelveli shells, the chanks of Ramnad varied considerably and fell into three classes according as they were fished, namely (i) off the mainland north and south of Kilakarai, (ii) between the north of Rameswaram island and Kachehetiva midway to the Jaffna islands in Ceylon, and (iii) off the mainland of Ramnad to the north of Mandapam. The first named shells were very scarce but fetched a very high price on account of their exceptionally long size and fine quality. Only seven thousands were said to be

1. Ibid, p. 28.

fished in an ordinary season. The Rameswaram shells were very similar to the Tuticorin shells. The third kind was inferior in size, shape and colour. The Sivaganga fishery was of little importance, its lease seldom realising more than Rs. 100 or Rs. 200 per annum. Originally this was a portion of the Ramnad fishery but when Ramnad was divided between the two claimants to the Ramnad gadi, this went with the Rajah of Sivaganga.¹

The chank fishery of the Tanjore District was worked as follows. The fishermen brought the shells from time to time as they collected them, to the Custom houses at Nagapattinam, Tranquebar and Tirumulavasal. Formerly this was enjoyed by the Maharajah of Tanjore who farmed it out to the highest bidder. When the British took over this fishery along with the annexation of Tanjore in 1800 A. D., they also followed the farming system. Later on this was changed to that explained above.²

The South Arcot chank fishery was farmed out to an individual. As in Tanjore the fishermen along the South Arcot coast caught considerable numbers of the chanks when using the catamaram frawl. The proximity of the French territory of Pondicherry was conducive to smuggling since the chanks might fetch a somewhat higher price there than

1. Ibid, pp. 31 & 33.

2. Ibid, pp. 34—36

in the British coastal villages. The quality of the shells of Tanjore and South Arcot were the same.¹

The Travancore fishery was carried on in the same way as that of Ceylon, an export duty being the means taken by the Government to collect the revenue due from this industry. Any one might engage in this fishery without any payment of special dues other than this export tax. The fishery was a small one producing not more than hundred bags of shells per annum.²

The Ceylon chank fishery was the largest producer of the chanks at the beginning of the present century. In the former days it was the object of much solicitude on the part of the Dutch and the British rulers of Ceylon. It continued to be a source of revenue but its value to the Government had dwindled to small proportions and was represented by the produce of an export tax bringing in some 5000 or 6000 rupees per annum.³

The Ceylon chanks fell into two categories, live chanks and dead chanks. The former was fished in the same manner as the chanks were fished in the other fisheries, and the latter which was carried on in the Jaffna lagoon, were fished with a rod and hook. The divers for the former were especially Labbais of Kilakarai reinforced by

1. Ibid, p 36.

2. Ibid, p. 36.

3. Ibid, p, 36.

a large number of Arab divers who settled on the coast after attending the pearl fisheries.¹

Generally speaking, we may conclude that the pearl and the chank fisheries originated long ago. Topographically speaking, we are told that man made his appearance first in a tropical climate. Once the regions covered by the Indian Ocean between Madagascar island near Africa and South India are said to be lands above the sea and the first man made his appearance there. Lending evidence to this are the accounts given in the Tamil and the Buddhist literature. 'Silappadikaram' speaks of the lands beyond the Cape of Comorin, called in Tamil 'Kumari', being taken by the sea many centuries before that time. The passage² states that the people of that time (circa first century A. D.) had heard from their ancestors that in former days the land had extended further south and that a mountain called 'Kumarikkodu' and a large tract of land watered by the river Paharuli had existed south of Cape Kumari, and in the time not very long before, in the reign of the Pandyan King Jayamakirthi alias Nilantharuthiruvir Pandya, the sea had torn through the land destroying the mountain 'Kumarikkodu' and submerging the whole of the country through which the river Pahruli flowed. The tradition of this part of south India, especially of Madura, point

1. Ibid, pp. 39-40.

2. 'Silappadhikaram' — Canto 3.

to the fact that the Pandyas had their capital first at Kapatapuram referred in the Ramayana of Valmiki. It is further said that when the sea claimed the lands round and about Kapatapuram where the first and second Tamil Sangams were flourishing, the Pandyas took to Madura. Though this may be dismissed by the historians as a myth, one is tempted to infer that the Tamil country once covered larger tracts of land than now and these tracts were taken by the sea in a violent irruption.

Lending corroborative evidence to this legend are the stories of similar irruptions of the sea on the south-west coast of Ceylon recorded in the Buddhist annals of that country. Even now these stories are current among the Sinhalese of the South, who point to the outlying rocks, known as Basses, as the remnant of this lost land which, they say, was a land of wealth abounding in towns and palaces. ¹

In this connection, we have to note the significant fact of the reported presence of a large accumulation of oyster shells overlaid by soil at Muttam, about two miles north-east of Cape Comorin. This was revealed to Mr. James Hornell, the Inspector of the Pearl and Chank Fisheries of the Government of Madras, in 1904 A. D. by the

1. Hornell, "The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay," p. 55.

'Jatitalavan' from his personal knowledge.¹ This presence of an old fishery camp within two miles of the Cape, lends further support to the theory of a great extension southwards of the pearl fishery region and, while not conclusive as evidence, add greatly to the physiographical probabilities of such a hypothesis.

The pearl banks of the Gulf of Mannar would have derived much protection from the south-west monsoon in those days when the southern extremity of India extended further to the south. Whereas the land was lost to the sea in the early period in the history of South India, now the land is claiming on the sea by the deltaic formations at the mouths of rivers Cauvery, Tamraparni and others.

Speaking with regard to the Tirunelveli coast the rivers Tamraparni, Vaippar and Vembar bring down to the sea considerable quantities of mud and sand. We have seen in the pages of this thesis that due to the accumulation of silt at the mouth of river Tamraparni, first Korkai and then Kayal, both very prospering trade centres and important ports, became useless and were finally abandoned. They are nothing more than very small villages now.

1. Ibid. p. 55.

We may conclude that even when the southern extremity of India extended further to the south of Cape Comorin, the pearl and the chank fisheries were there. Since they are referred to as the products of south India in our ancient literature, the Vedas, the Ramayana, and Mahabharata, we may conclude that the pearl fishery of the Tamil coast existed many centuries before the Christian era.

Appendix A.

The Role of Chank in the Indian Life.

Having dealt with the history of the pearl and the chank fisheries of the Tamil coast at length, it would be incomplete if we do not take note of the importance of the chank in the life of the Indians. The chank had been in use long before the Christian era. There was a wide use of the chank in India, in the early days of her history, as we find frequent references to it in the ancient literature of the land. The chank was used in the religious and social life of India. It has been considered sacred by the Indians from time immemorial.

The chanks fall into two categories, the right-whorled or 'Valampuri' and the ordinary or 'Edampuri' chanks. The right-whorled chank has its opening from the left to the right and it is very rarely found, whereas the ordinary chank which has its opening from the right to the left, is available in plenty. 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 'abhishekam' purposes. The Brahmins worship this in their houses. It is very costly, and it costs sometimes tens of thousands of rupees. The Indian who comes across it, will never be prepared to part with it.

The Aryans do not seem to have used the chank in the early days of their civilisation, before they actually came across the Dravidians. There is every probability that the Dravidians who occupied the coastal territories of South India and Kathiawar, used this chank as an ornament, instrument of music, etc. These Dravidians were highly civilised unlike the uncivilised barbarians who occupied the central and northern India when the Aryans descended on the Indo-Gangetic plains. It may be noted that the chanks were had only from the Tamil coast and Kathiawar and from no where else.

The Aryans who conquered the Dravidians, began to mingle with them and as a consequence of this, they also adopted the chank as an instrument of music and sounded the same when they met their enemies, and when they worshipped their Gods. Hence we find God Vishnu, one of the Aryan Trinity, carrying a right-whorled chank in one of His arms. It is quite immaterial for us to go into a controversial question whether God Vishnu was an Aryan or a Dravidian God. Vishnu was a God of the Hindus and Hinduism embraced both the Aryan and the Dravidian races.

There are many stories told as to how the chank was associated with God Vishnu. One story says that when once this God was pursued by a sea-demon, he hid himself in a chank. This

story has its origin in the Greek and Latin writers of the early period. Another story says that Lord Krishna, an incarnation of God Vishnu, killed a marine demon called Panchajana, who hid himself in a chank, and Krishna took the chank as a trophy of victory. Vishnu derives the name 'Chankapani' from His association with the chank. Nemi or Neminath, the twenty-second Thirthankar of the Jains, has a chank in one of his arms. These go to show that the Indians of all the religions revered the chank as to identify it with God.

References to the chank and its uses, occur to a limited extent in the Vedic literature and the Ramayana, whereas in the Mahabharata there are many references to it. Its use consisted mainly in its employment as a battle signal. For example, in the Bhagavad Gita¹ we get many references to the blowing of the chanks. Every warrior of note had a chank with which he blew. As Krishna's chank was called 'Panchajanya' from the name of the demon Panchajana whom he killed, when he was hiding himself in it, when pursued, the chanks of the other warriors were also called by special names. The chank of Arjuna was called 'Devadattam'. 'Poundram' was Bhima's chank. The chank of Yudhishtira was called 'Anantavijayam' and those of Nakula and Sahadeva were respectively called "Sugho-sham" and "Manipushpakam". Like the five

1. Bhagavad Gita, Chapter II, Slokas 15-17

brothers, other warriors too had their chanks. With the Pandavas blowing their chanks and the hundred brothers responding to it, there was a great noise in the battle-field of Kurukshetra.

According to the Hindu Codes, the King invading the country of his enemy, should follow certain formalities. He should give due warning of his raid or invasion so that the innocent may take shelter in safe places. The chank was used to convey this warning. Ancient Tamil and Rajput poems descriptive of battles and raids, refer to the clamour of the chank as the opposing parties approached each other.

In the days of old, the chank was blown to call the people to prayers. It was also used to invoke the attention of the Gods to the ceremonies to be performed. In the early days, the chank was blown in the early morning so that the people might rise up and attend to their prayers. It seems that the Tamil proverb meaning 'Let the chank be blown at any time, but the day dawns as usual' came to be widely used since the chank was blown before sun-rise.

The chank is sacred to the Saivaitas too. Lord 'Siva' is said to be blowing on the conch and dancing with the demons. The Saivaites who do 'pooja' at their homes, blow on the chanks. In the Hindu temples, the chank is blown when the 'abhi-

1. "ஊதுகிற சங்கை ஊதினால் விடிகிறபொழுதுதானே விடிகிறது"

shekam' and 'aradhana' take place. Some Muslims also have the chanks in their houses since they share the belief that the possession of the chank of the right-whorled type will do good to the possessor and his family.

Every marriage conducted in Bengal according to the Hindu ceremonials, includes the placing of the chank bangles upon the bride's wrists. No marriage celebrated without placing the chank bangle on the bride's arms, is considered valid there. This practice ought to have originated in the place of the production of the chank and spread all over India at a very early time. The finds of the chank cut into cores at Arikamedu, near Pondicherry, which was a flourishing emporium of Indo-Roman trade in the first and second centuries A. D. ¹ and the evidences found in the Tamil literature of the Sangam Age reveal that the chank bangles were widely used in the Tamil country also. There were chank bangle workshop at Korkai ² and North Ceylon ³ at the beginning of the Christian era. 'Maduraikanci' describes the Parawas as a people who dived for the pearls and the chanks. It further says that the city of Korkai was the chief town of Parawas and the seat of the pearl fishery with a population consisting of pearl divers and chank cutters. ⁴

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1. "Ancient India", Bulletin of the Archaeological survey of India. July 1946, p. 105.
 2. "Maduraikanci".
 3. Rasanayagam, op. cit, p. 137.
 4. 'Maduraikanci', ll. 133-138.

The Tamil literature reveals the position of the chank bangle industry in the two verses exchanged between Irayanar, a Poet who is said to be God Siva Himself, and Nakkirar, the President of the third Tamil Sangam. When Irayanar's composition was turned down by Poet Nakkirar as a verse with flaw, Irayanar became very angry and sent the following verse to the presiding Poet of the Sangam. ¹

“அங்கங்குலை யரிவாளினெயப்பூசிப்
பங்கம்படவிரண்டு கால்பரப்பிச் — சங்கதனை
கீர்கீரெனவறுக்குங்கீரனுவென்கவியை
யாராயமுள த்தவன்”

Here in this verse, Irayanar has put in a nutshell the work in a chank bangle workshop. Nakkirar is said to belong to a chank cutter's family. Irayanar, in ridiculing the greatest Poet of the time, has given us a glimpse of the chank bangle workshop, a man sitting with a saw before a small table and cutting the chank into bangles with the inevitable sound “kirkir”.

No Parawas are now engaged in the chank bangle industry though they still fish for the chanks. In the early days, before 500 A. D., the Tamil country would have sent the chanks cut into bangles to the other parts of India. But after that period, they sent only the raw chanks. The reason for this might have been the little or no demand for the

2. Hornell, ‘The chank Bangle Industry’-Memoirs of Asiatic Society - February, 1913.

chank bangles in south India. We are not able to ascertain why the use of the chank bangles began to disappear in South India. It seems probable that the introduction of glass bangles dealt a heavy blow to the employment of chank bangles as a feminine ornament since the glass bangles were put on sale at a fraction of the cost of the comparatively expensive chank ones which required the expenditure of much labour and time to render them attractive.

A verse in 'Muthollayiram' clearly reveals the use of the chank in two ways, namely, as an instrument of music and as a bangle.¹ The girls and the ladies used to wear the chank bangles and it was indeed a great thing to keep the bangles safe on the arms since a fall would break them. A girl in korkai falls in love with the Pandyan monarch. She is waiting on the balcony of her house to see the king coming in state. The king does not turn up at the scheduled time. The girl is disappointed and from disappointment arose moroseness. She does not take care to see that her bangles are safe on her arms. The chank bangles are about to fall down when she hears the chank blown on the street. It is a signal for the arrival of the king in state. The girl recoups and seeing the condition of the chank bangles on her arms, sets them right. The Poet

1. "Muthollayiram", Stanza 46.

“வரிவளைநின் றன வையையார்கோமன்
புரிவளைபோந்து இயம்பக்கேட்டு.”

remarks that the chank helps the chank in that the blowing of the chank saves the chank bangles from falling down and breaking.

The instances given above will go to reveal that the chank bangles were widely used not only in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam but also in the Tamil country. It is but natural that the use of the chank bangles should have originated in the place where the chanks were found and though they were not used for long in the place of their production, they were continued to be used in those parts of the country, namely, Greater Bengal and Assam, where their use had spread. When the chank cutting industry in South India vanished, Bengal began to have her own factories for making the chank bangles.

The Indian sources do not give us any information about the traffic in the chank shells that should have been brisk for 3000 years or more, between the fisheries in the Gulf of Mannar and the inland nations of Deccan and Hindustan. From the sixth century A. D., we hear of the trade in the chanks that South India had with North, especially Bengal. Although there are evidences to show that the practice of the wearing of the chank bangles existed, more or less, throughout India, this custom continues to be widely observed at the present day only in Bengal, the hill regions to the West, East and North of it and in a few Tamil speaking districts in

the extreme south of India and is of notable importance. In Bengal and wherever, in the adjoining districts of Bihar, Assam and Orissa, the Bengalee elements are found, every married woman of all castes which are thoroughly Hinduised, is bound to possess a pair of the chank bangles lacquered in vermillion as one of the tokens of her married life.

There had been many finds of chank cut into cores from the various parts of India¹ to show that the chank bangle industry existed at those places. They are Tirunelveli, Kathiawar and Southern Deccan. The sources of supply of raw chanks to these chank bangle industry centres should be next considered. The Tirunelveli chank bangle industry had its own fishery in the Gulf of Mannar. The chank shells for the Deccan bangle workshop might have come from the Tanjore coast, this being the nearest source of supply. This fishery of the Carnatic coast appears to have been fairly lucrative down to the middle of the nineteenth century when economic changes caused a collapse of the industry. Tirumulavasal, at the mouth of river Coleroon, a northern branch of river Cauvery, was the centre of the chank fishing on this part of the coast. There had existed a direct communication between Northwest Ceylon, now the seat of the most productive chank fishery in the world, and the port of Masulipatam, the eastern seagate of Deccan for many centuries, by means of a large native craft. Kathi-

1. Hornell "The Chank Bangle Industry "

awar had the supply of the chanks from the fishery off the coast nearby. The disappearance of the chank bangle industry from the Deccan and Kathi-awar should be looked for in the constant strife which kept India in a welter of blood through the six centuries of Muslim dominance in the land.

Cosmos, an Egyptian monk, who travelled in India in the sixth century A. D. and the Arab Abu Zayeed who wrote in 851 A. D. refer to the production and the export of the chank shells from the Tamil coast to Bengal. Barbosa who was in India in about 1500 A. D. speaks about the trade carried at Kayal. From him we learn that Kayal was then still an important seaport where many ships from the various parts of India including Bengal resorted every year to trade with the wealthy Hindu and Moorish merchants living there,¹ a definite statement which goes to show that there was, even then, no difficulty in forwarding the supply of the chanks direct by sea to the Decca workshops. Garcia de Orta, in 1563, and Boccaro, in 1644, speak of the trade in the chank shells with Bengal where they were made into bangles for the arms. In 1700, Father Martin says that the Dutch derived a considerable profit from the trade in chanks. The shells were bought for a trifle by the Dutch, and then despatched to Bengal where they were sold at a great profit. The British also derived much profit from the trade in the chanks and even now the chanks

1. Hornell. "The Sacred Chank of India", p. 127.

are exported to Bengal.¹ In the very recent East Bengal riots, chank bangle workshops were the targets for arson and loot and the Hindu ladies were deprived of their chank-bangles which are continued to be regarded as a symbol of chastity and married life.

The chank is one of the eight lucky signs recognised by the Buddhists of the Northern cult. It figures prominently among the musical instruments employed to lend eclat to the periodic procession of the tooth-relic at Kandy in Ceylon.

There is a tradition at Tirukkazhukunram, near Chingleput, where there is a holy tank called 'Chanku Thirtham'. Once in every twelve years, a chank is said to come out of the tank. At the specified date people throng round the tank and when the chank is sighted, they take it with all ceremonials to the temple where a 'pooja' is performed to it. The legend attached to the tradition, is this: Once Markandeya, a great sage of the Hindu religion, came to this holy place for worshipping the idol there. When he finished his bath and sat down for the 'pooja', he found that he did not bring the chank which was necessary for conducting the 'pooja'. Thereupon he prayed to God for a chank to appear from the tank and his prayer was immediately granted by Him. He finished his 'pooja' with

1. The writers referred to in this para have already been cited in the earlier chapters of this thesis.

that chank. He again prayed that a chank should come out from the tank daily and so it does come out even to this day. It is said that one day for the 'Maharishi' is equal to twelve years for the ordinary mortals. This story goes to prove the indispensable position occupied by the chank in offering 'pooja' to God.

The right whorled chank ("valampuri") whenever possessed by a temple, is usually mounted in a handsomely decorated golden settings and is used as the libation vessel. The ordinary chanks are sounded at the time of the 'pooja' and the 'aradhana' in the temples. In Tibet, the chanks are used for all purposes of assemblage.

Mendicants, beggars and dasaris of the Vaishnavite religion use the chank, the last named to announce their arrival. Branding of 'mudras' on the body of Sri-Vaishnavites and Madwas are very common and the mudras are of the chank and the 'chakra' (the wheel of God Vishnu). The chanks are dedicated to the temples and special libations to God with 108 chanks are very common in the temples. As it is the case at Tirukkadayur, a place of worship near Tranquebar, even 1008 chanks are used in giving libation to the Gods and this is called 'chankabhishekam'. In Malabar, the ploughing of the lands is inaugurated by rites with the chank music.

The chanks are used in the social functions of the Indians also. The chank has important but variable functions to perform at the weddings among all Hindu non-Brahmin castes in the South Indian districts where the chank is blown by the barber particularly at or immediately after the tying of the 'tali' on the bride's neck. In Bengal this custom of the chank blowing is even more general than in South India. Sometimes the women of the family perform this chank blowing duty. Even the Brahmins in Bengal employ the chank during the marriage. In Bengal the association of the chank is more intimate and deeper than elsewhere. As we have noticed earlier in this chapter, no Bengali lady is properly or legally married unless the chank bangles are placed on her wrists. In the Madras Province only Vellalas and Idayas use the chank bangles. In the early times the chank was directly connected with the 'tali' in the Tamil land. 'Chanku ali' is common among four castes widely separated, both geographically and in status and civilisation. They are the 'chanku tali' Vellalas, Idayas of Tamilnad immigrated into Travancore, Thandan Pulayas of South Malabar and the Parawas of the Tirunelveli coast. Though the Parawas had become Christians, long ago, they still persist in calling their marriages 'chanku tali' marriages.

The chank is sounded when a dead body is taken to the funeral pyre or burial ground. In Tamilnad this practice is followed by a section of

the non-Brahmins. In Tibet also the chank is sounded when the dead body of a monk or nun is taken to the cremation ground from the place where the death has occurred. As in India the chank has been invariably used for all purposes in Tibet. It is blown as a signal of battle, as an invitation to attend the religious rites and sacrifices and so on.

The chank has a wide use as an amulet against the evil eyes. Animals are protected from the evil views by a small chank shell tied round their neck. Finger-rings are made of the chanks and they are used in Tamilnad, Malabar and cochin as an amulet against the evil spirits. The Muslims also affect this custom. Even the Roman Catholic parawas are great believers of these chank amulets. The chank-bead necklaces are used by the children of the poor Chettis and Vanians. Korawans use chank-beads, chank bangles and rings. The trade in the chank-rings is of considerable dimensions. While a festival is going on in a town, one may see these rings and other ornaments made of the chank, selling for hundreds of rupees.

Dises cut from the chank shells to ornament caps and headdresses are mentioned by Tavernier in his "Travels in India". In Dacca, Tavernier saw Bhutan merchants buying large quantities of round and square pieces of the shell. All the people of the North suspend small pieces of the chank shells from their hair or ears.

The chanks were used as the currency by the semi-civilised and uncivilised tribes of India and especially of Assam. In the currencies of Travancore and Cochin the chank of the 'Valampuri' type is found depicted on one side of the coin. When the Maharajah of Travancore celebrates a coronation ceremony called 'Thulabaram' wherein he weighs himself in scales against gold, special gold coins, called 'thulabarakasu' are issued. On the one side of the coin, a figure of a chank appears and on the other the legend of Sri Padmanabha in Malayalam characters. These coins are distributed among the Brahmins after the ceremony

In the coastal districts of Madras and in those localities in Bengal where the bangle factories exist, the chank is put to a minor use, to calcine in kilns. The lime so produced is esteemed as of the best quality obtainable in India fully equal to if not better than, that obtained by burning the pearl oyster shells. When new-built temples, shrines and fine houses have to be white-washed, chank-lime is greatly sought after in the Tamil districts. The chanks are used to prepare medicines. The chank ointment is used and the chank powder is taken in for certain diseases. Powdered chank-shell is one of the Ayurvedic cures for tuberculosis. They are also used as incense stick-holders.

That the chanks were exported to Bengal is instanced by the following proverb in Tamil, 'mea-

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1. "சங்கு ஆயிரம்கொண்டு வங்காளம் போனால் பொன் பூளும்வந்தாலும் வந்தது மண்பூளும் வந்தாலும்வந்தது"

ning "you take thousands of chanks to Bengal but you cannot be sure whether you get gold bars or nothing". This speaks of the uncertainty of the trade in the chanks with Bengal. Perhaps this proverb arose when Bengal was invaded by the Muslims, a fact strengthened by what Garcia de Orta says in 1563. Garcia says that the chank trade with Bengal declined owing to the unrest caused by the Muslim invaders in that country.

To conclude it may be noted that the chank is held in high esteem by the Indians and it is put to much use in India.

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6.	25.	prosperous.	prosperout.
6.	26.	But.	Bus.
7.	19.	century.	centuary.
10.	5.	pearls	the pearls.
10.	9.	pearls.	the pearls.
16	13.	Pandyas.	Prndyas
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19.	5.	Sea "	Sea.
19.	Foot note 1.	சிப்பி.	சிப்பி.
25.	Foot note 1.	சிப்பிக்கண்.	சிற்றிக்கண்.
25.	Foot note 2.	Muthollayiram	Muthallayiram.
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26.	14.	,	.
43.	8.	West Coast.	west coast.
46.	2.	the	thel
48.	6.	very.	wery.
52.	23.	pearls.	the pearls.
67.	3.	.	,
67.	4.	,	.
67.	7.	India.	Indin.
69.	Foot note 2.		
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70.	18.	wonder.	wouder.
73.	22.	,	.
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80.	14.	change.	charge.

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95.	14.	enough	enongh.
96.	1.	country.	eountry.
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128.	5.	fishery.	fiishery.
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145.	15.	So.	so.
157.	28.	Shark.	Chark.
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161.	12.	day's	days.
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176.	Head line.	Indian.	the Indian.
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188.	20.	tali.	ali.
188.	21.	both	tboth.
190.	3.	Travancore.	Trvancore.
190.	7.	ceremony.	ceremoney.
190.	13.	ceremony.	ceremoney.
191.	3.	trade.	trado.