

# ECONOMIC IDEAS OF ANCIENT MAN – EVOLUTION FROM HUNTERS TO ECONOMIC INTELLECTUALS

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## **Abstract**

Man looked down to earth for gathering what fell from tree. He was not always successful in finding large meal for himself nor for his group. Then this scarcity forced him to hunt for more food. He as an individual was content with the small bits of food and berries what he managed to forage from the forest. Here the system was very simple and where does this start getting complex, is when he had a group to feed and there was not enough food. Scarcity is the starting point where a gatherer becomes a hunter. This hunted animal had to be shared among all in such a way that the rationing was acceptable to all. Here he became a distributor. This gets interesting from here, as the man has also to ensure there is consistent supply of food. He has to now make provisions for tomorrow by hunting extra, thus introducing buffer stock. Early man did know everything, but for giving names to each concept. The group life he had, the responsibilities assigned to each member, are typical examples of an economy. There was a guard to watch over food/meat so that the rival group doesn't steal it away. Whenever there was plenty of meat and no fruits or vegetables, then he went on to exchange it. Traded the goods, shared it, kept for future providence. Ancient man was far better an economist than what we could imagine. This paper aims to study the practices and the evolution from a simple hunter gatherer life to a sophisticated civilization which can propound development and growth models.

**Keywords:** Economic activities, primary consumer, agents of economic activity.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Economic activities can be viewed simply as buying and selling trade or a commerce activity not involving much of systematic planning or rules and regulations. This was the case with ancient economy, people were simple traders who exchanged commodities and believed it to be beneficial to both sides. A consumer of those days was a simple man who knew no legal nuanced about purchasing a commodity or rights of his consumer act. A seller, for that reason was also a meek and unpretentious economic agent who just wanted something decent in return for his produce. No unions, no cartels and no such trade arrangement are mentioned. Things were relatively simpler and easier compared to what they are today. Still there were some incidents where people have used faulty weighing scales to cheat the buyers and this was seen as something very lowly. Politics when aligned economy into statecraft, things started changing where everyone was bound by law and had to practice what was told by law. In this article I would wish to bring out the evolution of economy in small rural villages of India to a cashless and smart economy.

## **RURAL ECONOMY:**

An economy of a village or much simpler administrative unit is seen as rural economy. Primary consumers and Primary producers, not much outside intervention and mostly family-based occupations are the major characteristics of a rural economy. The economy partakers are mostly farmers and cultivators, or agriculture-based activists. They depend on the farming and all activities associated with farming. Threshing, grinding, sheathing, basket making, mat weaving and pottery are some to cite. There usually is a weekly or fortnightly fair which people organize in an open grounds. Cattle and livestock sellers, poultry and fish sellers, artisans and craftsmen, fruits and vegetable producers and grains and pulses producers gather here. The price is usually shouted out along with the quantity for example., MOONU PATHUPANAM, (which translates in to tamizh as 3 items for 10 money), ETHEDUTHAALUM ANJU PANAM, (take whatever item you will, just 5 money), KOORU MOONU PANAM (small unit 3 money). These sounds and shouts can be heard everywhere in village and town fairs. In fact they sing it out in a tune that it no more sounds like a chaos or noise but people in fact stand and watch the selling skills and style of the sellers.

The above said strategy is for all items that are perishable like, fish, vegetables and fruits and also agriculture based consumables like mat, basket, pots and hand fans.

When it comes to cattle and livestock the selling price is not announced loudly or publicly as it might give an idea to the competitor and he may attract all the potential buyers with a lesser price. They use a different and unique strategy of holding the fingers of the buyers and covering the hands of both buyer and seller under a towel. Fingers represent the money here, One finger represent the least amount possible and as the number goes higher

the seller and buyer reached an agreed price and the business is settled. This way the settled price is kept secret and the seller can save his future prospects of a higher profit.

The fairs were called as SANTHAI, and they were generally of two types:

- VAARA SANTHAI – weekly fair,
- THINGAL SANTHAI – monthly fair.

People from across various villages used to come in bullock carts and stay in a local make shift tents for thus fair. It was a carnival not merely a market. Many people gathered as family and made purchases for 6 months and they bought in large scale. Food items were also sold and they mostly were home made items sold in the market like:

- KIZHANGU – sweet potato, tapioca
- KOOZH - Porridge
- MORE- Buttermilk
- KADALAI – Boiled peanuts
- CHOLAM- Corn
- PANIYARAM- Sweet patties
- PANAGARAM- Sweet juice
- PADHANI- Palmyra drink
- KOZHUKATTAI – Sweet steamed dough

All these edible items were sold in palm baskets and banana leaves and local small clay glasses.

The fairs usually lasted for one week and the first two days happened to be real gala while the last day obviously was not so crowded as all thing mostly would have sold out or spilt by then. These arrangements never needed state intervention and they existed before governments came in to practice and they will get along fine even if there are no government. The main reason for the success of such fairs across ages and them thriving till date is their simplicity. Every seller only looks to buy some good stuff at a cheap price and every buyer only wishes to sell his produce. There was no competition, no adulteration and definitely no legal complications. The market structure was simple and short lived. It was a temporary fair and not much was permanent about this structure.

#### **URBAN ECONOMY**

The key players were associations and guilds. The markets were mostly fixed in one place, a particular street in the city. It was called KADAI THERU translating to Shop Street. The shops were classified and arranged in the order of the or depending on the commodities.

A street was entirely devoted to spices, whole and ground. There was a street where flowers were sold, both individual flowers weighed and garlands. There where also meat and poultry shops. Street full of eatable and snacks was also established. There were jewellery maker or gold smith street. Iron or copper smith street and metal utensils street. Clothes and textile streets were also very active. There were also streets where foreign traded commodities were also sold. Trade and foreign commerce goods and commodities were usually traded after being taxed and approved by government. The city or urban economy was buzzing and very crowded and there were many incidents of correction activities and government intervention. The products put up for sale in the market were both local and foreign as they were either brought in to the country by native traders who went overseas trade or foreign traders who had come to the local place for trade. Usually jewelleryes and valuable items like fur, silk and brocade where such famous items.

THIRUKKURAL Aa beautiful tamil book clearly puts up that a good governance is one that earns money, and invests the earned money and also safeguards the earned money.

The city economy was usually governed and monitored by government officials who made sure the state law was implemented and followed by individual partakers. Taxes were levied and subscription was collected from the shop keepers who operated under state guilds. This assured their protection by the state and also them being bound by the state law. Some times the village sellers came to city markets to exhibit and sell their produce. Since they were not entitled to permanent shop now, they had to sell it in street corners or call out movingly.

#### **DISTICT FEATURES OF ANCIENT RURAL ECONOMY:**

There are few stand out traits that makes Indian rural and urban economy a special one from the rest of the world. Following are the features that can be cited as special characteristics of ancient Tamil Nadu or Indian economy.

1. Rural economy or village was mostly characterized by temporary markets
2. Rural Economy or village economies were not much bound by city laws.
3. Variety of products were comparatively less.
4. The prices were usually paid in kind, mostly barter system.
5. The products were mostly hand made and local, fresh and natural.
6. The partakers were mostly farmers and artisans with their families.

#### **CHARACTERS OF URBAN ECONOMY**

1. Shops and counters were mostly fixed and permanent
2. The goods were subject to tolls and taxes
3. There were variety of commodities and several grades of it as well
4. The presence of foreign and goods from outside the region made the market more vibrant

## CONCLUSION

Despite having very little to trade with and establish commerce, there were very less chances for unfair trade practices. Fear of rigid state law, punishment in public and acquainted buyers discouraged the sellers from entering in to any wrong business or trade activities, The concept of dumping was completely never was in know. Foreign traders were also very honest and even have historical proof that some of them even went on to become the local favourites.

A clearer understanding of one's past will help us to know our future better. Or in some cases can give us remedy for current and existing problems. The advent of modern technology and new ideas will never allow us to get back to past but we certainly can use them as yardsticks.