

**A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL SHIFT AMONG THE
KUSAVAS OF MALAPPURAM DISTRICT IN KERALA.**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

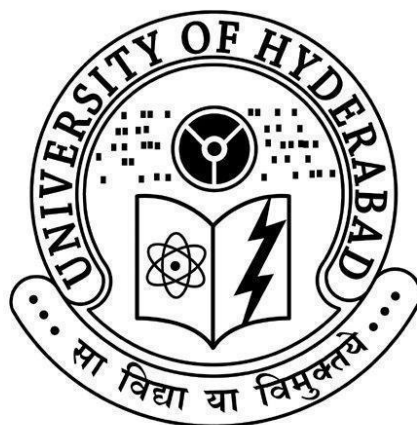
IN

ANTHROPOLOGY

By

PRANAV K

(17SAHL07)



DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD- 500 046

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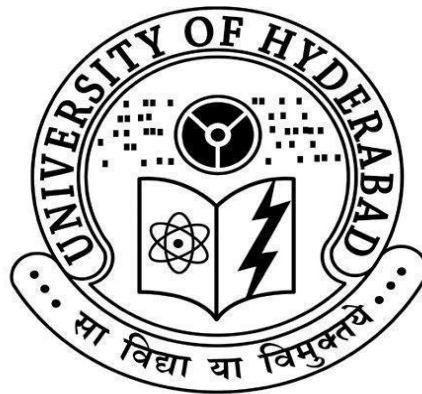
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DECLARATION

I, **PRANAV K**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**A Study of Occupational Shift Among the Kusavas of Malappuram District in Kerala.**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Professor **B V. SHARMA**, is a bonafide work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/ INFLIBNET.

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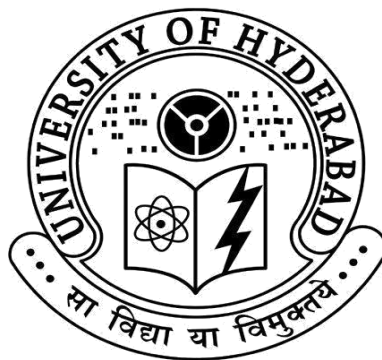
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Regards

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1- Introduction.....	1
1.1 Caste and Occupation: Continuity and Change.....	1
1.2 Jajmani System and Caste Occupations.....	2
1.3 Occupational Change / Shift.....	3
1.4 Pottery and the Kushavas /Kumbarans.....	4
1.5 Review of Literature.....	6
1.5.1 Changes in the Caste.....	8
1.5.2 Occupation and the Process of Occupational Change.....	8
1.5.3 Studies on the Potters.....	9
1.6 Objectives of the Study.....	13
1.7 Fieldwork and Techniques of Data Collection.....	13
1.7.1 Selection of Study Village.....	13
1.7.2 Fieldwork.....	14
1.7.3 Rapport Building and Selection of Key Informants.....	14
1.7.4 Techniques Employed for Data Collection.....	15
1.8 Chapterisation.....	16
CHAPTER 2-The Study Village and Brief Ethnographic Account of Kusavas	21
2.1 Profile of the Village.....	22
2.2 Utilisation of the Infrastructural Facilities by Kusavas.....	23
2.3 Caste Composition of Study Village.....	25
2.4 Settlement Pattern	28
2.5 Kusava Housing Pattern.....	28
2.6 Inter and Intra Caste Relations.....	29
2.7 Cultural Identity and Social Institutions Among the Kusavas.....	30

2.7.1 Family.....	30
2.7.2 Marriage.....	31
2.7.3 Kinship.....	32
2.7.4 Life Cycle Rituals.....	34
2.8 Kusuvas: Pottery as Traditional Occupation.....	36
CHAPTER3-Social and Economic Aspects of Pottery as Practiced by Kusavas	39
3.1 Pottery Making.....	39
3.2. Raw Materials Required for the Production.....	39
3.2.1 Clay (Kalasamunnu).....	40
3.2.2 Sand (Iska).....	40
3.2.3 Firewood (Katlu/Motlu).....	41
3.2.4 Coconut Husk (Cheri) and Coconut Shells (Chippa).....	41
3.2.5 Soil (Munnu).....	41
3.2.6 Paddy Straw (Kasuva).....	41
3.3 Acquisition of Raw Materials.....	42
3.4 Organisation of Work.....	44
3.4.1. Division of Labour.....	45
3.4.2. Leadership.....	45
3.4.3. The Process of Production.....	46
3.5. Changes in Equipment/Process and the Difficulties Faced.....	48
3.6. Rituals Relating to Pottery.....	49
3.7. Production: Quantity and Production Costs.....	49
3.8 Crisis in the Pottery.....	50
3.8.1 Scarcity of Raw Materials.....	50
3.9 Impact of the Scarcity.....	53
3.9.1 Increased Labour Force	53
3.9.2 Increased Investments on Raw Materials.....	53

3.9.3 Challenges with Regards to Cash Payments.....	54
3.9.4 Challenges with regard to forming and sustaining new ties of relationships	54
3.10 Marketing Challenges.....	54
3.10.1. Decreased Demand.....	55
3.10.2. Break up of Traditional Marketing Arrangements.....	55
3.10.3. Transportation Problems and Transport Customs.....	57
3.10.4. No Skills of Negotiations- not Professionals.....	58
3.10.5. Inability to Attract Through Innovative Designs.....	58
3.11. Impact on the Community.....	58
CHAPTER 4- Occupational Shifts and Changes in the Kusava Community	63
4.1 Occupational Shifts.....	63
4.1.1 Inter-Generational and Intra-Generational Shifts.....	63
4.2 Occupational Shift in the Study Community.....	64
4.2.1 Occupational Choices.....	65
4.3 Reasons for shift in Occupation and Changes.....	68
4.3.1 Changes at Household and Family Level.....	68
4.3.2 Dwindling Influence of Kinship and Kinship Obligations.....	70
4.3.3 Marriage and Choice of Marriage Partners.....	70
4.3.4 Jajmani Relations; Decreased Importance to Reciprocity of Services...	71
4.3.5 Changes at Household Economy: Economic Status; Distribution of Family Income; Savings and Consumption Patterns.....	72
4.3.6 Occupational Shifts and Changes in the Religion and Lifecycle Rituals.	72
4.3.7 Occupational Shifts and Inter-Ethnic Relationships.....	73
4.3.8 Occupational Shift and Education.....	73
4.4 Hunting as an Alternative	74
CHAPTER 5- Current Intra and Interethnic Relationships in Cheruvayur	76
5.1 Kusavas and Their Relations.....	76

5.2 Kusavas at Present.....	79
5.3 Kusavas and Perumannan	80
5.4 Kusuavas and Muslims.....	80
CHAPTER 6- Summary and Conclusion	82
Bibliography	89

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Caste Composition of the Study Village	25
Table 2.2 Gotra Exogamy as Followed by Kusavas.....	32
Table 2.3 Kinship Terminology of Kusavas.....	33
Table 4.1: Generational wise shift in the traditional occupation.....	65

List of Maps

Map 1 India.....	18
Map 2 Kerala	18
Map 3 Malappuram.....	19
Map 4 Vazhakkad.....	19
Map 5 Village Map.....	20
Map 6 Genealogical map of the study community.....	38

List of Plates

3.1 KalasaMunnu	60
3.2 Mixed KalasaMunnu.....	60
3.3 Grinding of KalasaMunnu.....	60
3.4 Production in machine wheel.....	61
3.5 Traditional wheel.....	61
3.6 Prepared pots.....	61
3.7 Painting the pot.....	62
3.8 Old Chula.....	62
3.9 New Chula.....	62

ABBREVIATIONS

AMUPS	Aided <i>Mappila</i> Upper Primary school
EMI	Equated Monthly Installment
HH	House Hold
KKS	Kerala Kumbara Sabha
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NSS	National Social Service
OBC	Other Backward Caste
PHC	Public Health Centre
RCC	Reinforced Cement Concrete
SC	Scheduled Caste
SHG	Self Help Group
ST	Scheduled Tribe

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is on Kusava community which is associated with traditional pottery in Kerala state of India. Since the study focused on issues relating to caste identity along with occupational shift in this community and the associated changes, it is attempted here first to briefly deal with the concepts and theories relating to caste in India. Caste has been one of the primary objects of study, not only in anthropology, but in the domain of social science in India in general. It has been studied both in terms of its continuity when faced with the structural changes in the realm of economy and polity and its association with those changes. Studies have also been done analysing how caste as a system has undergone transformations thanks to the structural changes. In this regard it is not out of context first to have a look at how caste has been conceptualised so far by various scholars in Indian social science field.

Caste is a system of social stratification, which remain as the basis of the social structure of most social groups in India. Caste system is thus an order and composition of social conduct in which individuals and social groups are controlled by a prescribed set of norms, values and sanctions (Adams & Woltemade, 1970). The individuals and groups occupy certain statuses within and in relation to others. According to this system, individuals are born into a particular caste by which they attain the role and status which is associated with that caste identity (Desai & Dubey, 2012). Caste identity is associated with the role and status of the individuals Caste or '*jati*' (indigenous term). Caste is an endogamous and hereditary practice which is usually localised. It has a conventional linkage with an occupation and a specific ranking in the regional hierarchy of castes. Caste system is mainly sustained by its hallmark feature of endogamy or marriage within one's own caste or sub-caste group, which remains as the practice which persists the caste system (Karve, 1959).

1.1 Caste and Occupation: Continuity and Change

The association of occupation with one's ascribed caste status used to be a very striking feature of the caste system. It was the quintessential feature of the caste system of that few of the scholars have even argued that caste is nothing more than

this institutionalisation of occupational differentiation. It can be argued to the extent that caste was a system, which ensured everyone with an occupation, and therefore it was a tool to check the competition between different social groups in the economic sphere (Deshpande, 2011). However, we can find that caste restrictions are not as rigidly observed in India in recent times as they were in the past.

The occupational changes were observed from pre-independence era and then it was anticipated caste wise division of labour would break down all over India (Srinivas 2003). One of the features of caste system is that a hierarchy which is believed to be existing in the diet, occupation doesn't often coincide with the observed caste hierarchy in some places of India. Another logical inconsistency between caste occupation and ritual ranking is that activities like sweeping, washing, cleaning is done by everyone. But when the same work is assigned to members of a particular caste as their traditional occupation, then the same are considered to be polluting and the castes who are engaged in such work are given low status. In other words, it is the traditional association of a caste with an occupation is what determines its rank in the local caste hierarchy (Deshpande, 2010).

1.2 Jajmani System and Caste Occupations:

Villages in India were food producing units, where the relation among service or craft castes and one or more land owning-farmer castes prevailed to mutually help on the basis of goods and services between different castes. This system known as *Jajmani* System (Wiser, 1936) is prevalent in rural India that has made each caste capable of having a near monopoly over their hereditary occupation (Deshpande, 2010). Each caste was also placed in the higher or lower ranking on the foundation of the ritual purity or pollution of their related occupations (Srinivas, 2003).

Jajmani system traditionally used to form the important part in the social structure of Indian agriculture. It reflects inter-caste relationship between the *jajmans* and the working caste, *kameens*. *Jajmani* system is the association of caste structure, where lower caste performed labour for higher caste as their hereditary occupation, where it forms the framework. “*Jajmani* system is a system of traditional occupational obligations” (Nagar & Dangwal, 2018).

The *jajmani* system is a practice of social and economic relationship between different caste groups in the villages. According to this system some are patron castes while others are service castes. The service castes or the lower castes, who provide their services to the upper and intermediate castes who owns the land and in turn, they receive both in cash and kind. Depending on the political, social and economic standing of the patron castes, they differ from one caste to the other (Tandon, 1997). The relationships in service reveal that the priest, accountant, goldsmith, florist Vegetable grower, bard, etc., are served by all the other castes. These are the Jajmans of the other castes. Reciprocally, these castes have a form of service to perform for others. Each has their own clientele comprising members of other castes, the interrelated structure is call the *Jajmani* system (Wiser, 1936).

Caste and traditional occupations are the backbone of the *jajmani* system. These days, caste system has started to lose its cohesion because of various factors like, religion which give strength to the caste system are weakening due to many factors like modernisation, secularisation, etc., land reforms brought changes in the land ownership and therefore the *jajmani* system has been affected. Along with these basic changes, there are other factors that influenced the change in *jajmani* system, such as changes in the village structure-control of elder were reduced in village councils and in decision-making process. Industrialisation and its impact on quality and surplus of production and services, impact of education, migration from rural to urban settings for various aspects, better job opportunities relaxed practices of caste system. These are the factors which lead to the decline of the *jajmani* system and it no longer exist in many villages. The breakdown of the *jajmani* relationships and the decline of it made the *kamins* to take up many other occupations rather than their traditional occupation. Because of many such reasons, People are least leaned towards their traditional occupations for their living (Nagar & Dangwal, 2018).

1.3 Occupational Change / Shift

In the pre-modern society where the technological development is at poor rate, most of the population depended upon primary sector to earn their living and to meet their subsistence. Presently, the situation has changed. The uneven economic and social development of urban and rural areas, along with a large number of surplus labours have forced a great chunk of the rural workforce to move to towns and cities.

Currently, a key feature of industrial societies is that a majority of the employed population are working in secondary and tertiary sectors rather than primary. Majority of people are living in towns and cities, where most of the jobs are available and new job opportunities are created (Sharma, 1961). Traditions have gradually weakened in the hands of modernity. The members of all castes have seized the opportunities for higher achieved status and comparatively downplayed the ascribed status. This has resulted in occupational shifts in case of all communities.

Change in one's traditional occupation has always led to some kind of social mobility. It is a shifting from one type of occupation to another by an individual or a group. Marked incidence of vertical mobility, diversification and open stratification of occupational is noticed in Indian community too as in the case of industrial societies because of the progress of education and increased rate of specialisation (Beteille, 1992).

In the modern era, owing to its character of urbanism, the stratification of society has undergone radical change regarding caste status and traditional occupation in the country. This change marked a shift from closed system of stratification, and resulted in grouping and regrouping of individuals and families (Lerche, 1993). Change in occupation takes place owing to various factors including economic aspirations, possibility of higher social status and also redundancy of some. But change definitely implicates reconciliation and adaptation to the new norms of occupation which modify tradition and caste mentality. The speed of this long process is dependent upon multiple factors and forces at work in a given place or region (Shah et al, 2017).

1.4 Pottery and the Kushavas /Kumbarans

The expression of art is always adored by the humankind from the beginning of times. Different kinds of art developed over the period of time have been celebrated and some of those have caused a change of face of the whole world. The invention of potter's wheel marked a significant point in the course of the development of human society. The art of pottery is considered to be one of the ancient handicrafts which tell volumes about a civilization. It carries great traditions and histories of a particular culture. Pottery was developed in search of the fulfilment of human being's basic necessities. Being one of the oldest crafts – more than 10000 years old – the man has expressed his feelings and his aesthetic sense in clay i.e., in the form of primitive

deities on various vessels made for the storage of water and grain and in toys (Singh, 1979).

The origin of pottery in India is unknown. However, tracing the history of pottery in India is closely connected with Indus Valley Civilization (2500BC). Archaeological excavations have unearthed the remains of a well matured pottery culture from *Harappan-Mohenjo daro* sites. This indicates the age-old existence of pottery in Indian soil. Kusavas, one caste in Kerala state in India is associated with pottery and has a long history.

The origin of *Kumbharan* community which is acknowledged for their blessed hands to effectuate the art of pottery is still a matter of uncertainty despite few myths believed by this community. Many of them associate their origins with the incident described in Hindu scriptures. They trace their ancestry to *Kumbharan* in Andhra Pradesh. The members of *Kumbharan* community of Andhra Pradesh first migrated to Tamil Nadu as the state has a lot of temples, for which pots were a need. Later some of them migrated to Kerala too and settled in various districts of the state such as Malappuram, Palakkad, Thrissur, Kozhikode, Wayanad etc. They settled near rivers and paddy fields which gave them the required raw material i.e. clay. Those *Khumbharan* living in the Mallapuram district of Kerala are however known as Kusavas as well as *Kumbharans*. *Kumbharan* speak a stained Telugu language which has no script. As a result of the migration, their language has been influenced by Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam. *Kumbharan* are divided into five *Illams* (descent groups) and so follow rules of *Illams* exogamy as far as marriage is concerned. It is a patriarchal society and women generally have a low status.

Modern time has brought about many changes among traditional communities, especially with regard to their traditional occupation. Pottery making has also undergone certain changes over the past 20 years. Functional alternatives that give advantages of cost, durability, convenience of handling, space, aesthetics etc., are available and hence are preferred. These changes in the material cultures of the people and the conception of status symbols resulted in disadvantages to certain caste occupations like pottery (Sumathi &, Sujadevi, 2016). The values of modernity pressurise for innovative idea, novelty, creativity and progress in all areas including pottery. Modernity stands against past, obscurantism, stagnation, backwardness, being

old and non-development. Thus, the profession of pottery too undergoes the stress under the desire for modernity.

The concept of self-identity is a decisive matter of concern in the present time. *Kumbharan* community also possesses a self-identity in regard to their traditional occupation and unique culture. A self-pride is felt among *Kumbharan* as they identify themselves with their uniqueness in the larger system of society. However, the *Kumbharan* community is encountering challenges in regard to continuity of their traditional occupations and hence the identity based on that occupation. Nowadays the number of potters who can make a living out of their occupation has decreased drastically. At the same time, the self-identity of this community is still with pottery. It is in this context that the current study is located and pursued.

1.5 Review of Literature

Many scholars have studied caste system, *jajmani* system and occupational changes. The mobility in the caste and occupation too particularly attracted the attention of scholars. Some of the significant studies in these areas are reviewed here to research gaps in the area and for identifying a community for appropriate understand of issues relating to occupational shift. The review will also help the readers to locate the study in the anthropology of caste studies. Scholars who worked on Indian society clarified the concept of caste from different perspectives. Adams and Woltemade (1970) in “Village Economy in Traditional India: A Simplified Model” defines *jati* as the endogamous occupational group in Indian villages which is associated with a particular occupation in the social division of labour. The hereditary occupations followed by particular *jatis* are regarded as monopolies to be defended. *Jatis* are related to each other by *jajmani* system wherein a social division of labour is followed. This division of labour guides the distribution of the food grown, other village products and services.

Harper (1959) in his work “Two Systems of Economic Exchange in Village India” gives detailed study of *Jajmani* and Malnad systems- two types of economic exchange in Indian villages. In the study author draws basic underlying principles of *Jajmani* system. According to the him most members of the Indian village have assigned occupational roles which enable them to exchange the product or service they control. *Jajmnai* relations exist among families not among castes but are controlled and

maintained through caste systems. Payments for goods and services are made mostly in kind in forms of their goods and services, grain, rent-free land, or other nonmonetary benefits.

Benson (1976) in her article “A South Indian *Jajmani* System” gives a detailed description of *jajmani* system of a village in Medak district of Telangana region. She studied about types of relationship among different caste groups, their economic relation and modes of payment among them by considering the dynamics with locality. Paper emphasizes on the economic aspect of the *jajmani* system and found that mode of payment is mostly in contractual basis.

Gould (1958) in his work “The Hindu *Jajmani* system: a case of economic particularism” gives a detailed picture of economic relationship in the form of *jajmani* existing in one north Indian village. There exist superordinate-subordinate relations between *jajmans* (patrons) and their *purjans* or *kam karnewalas*(service castes). Families of the clean castes (Twice Born), the one who owns land wealth and power are the patrons (*Jajmans*) while the *purjans*(providers of services) are Sudra and Untouchable.

Tandon (1997) in the article “*Jajmani* system” talks about the relations existing between different caste groups in the Hindu and Muslim communities of Punjab. He talks about the change in the role of brahmins in the society especially where the presence of temples were really low. The Hindu services castes were mainly artisan castes of Sonars, the goldsmiths; Tarkhans, the woodworkers; Jhewars or Mehrahs the cooks, charrs and water carriers whereas among Muslim community service castes were mainly barbers mirasis, Bhandas, Bazigars, Saperas, Madaris and Behr. The trades in services of weavers, tailors, washer men, blacksmiths, potters, oil pressers and vegetable growers were also practiced only by Muslims. Introduction of machinery by British brought changes in the occupational relations of trades blacksmiths and weavers but the services of potters, oil pressers and vegetable growers remained the same. According to the author under the system society remained as a multi-unit with each caste with their assigned roles without oppression from high caste.

1.5.1 Changes in the Caste

Srinivas (1957) in the paper caste in modern India brought out the new fields of activity taken up by the institution of caste in the last century. The transfer of power to Indians from British and the constitutional rights for S.C, S.T and O.B.C have given political and new forms of life to caste. He also points out that the introduction of railways, postage, telegraph printing helped the caste based groups to organize easily. Though economic mobility helped to have improved social mobility, the process of sanskritisation did not allow it to be a revolution he writes “Caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those who are most vocal in condemning it, that it is everywhere the unit of social action”.

Wilson (2004) in “Understanding the Dynamics of Socio-Economic Mobility: Tales from Two Indian Villages” studies two villages of Madhya Pradesh to understand the changes in socio economic conditions of different communities through the linkage with wider economy. It is found that links to external markets have significantly improved business and migration opportunities. Economic growth of certain communities was because of land redistribution policy, the implementation of modern farming techniques and cash cropping, the development of internal markets, the adaptation of traditional caste occupations and increased rural-urban linkages, in particular for trade and labour migration. But communities like artisans suffered due to this process as the taste and preference for their products got shifted to cheap goods.

Nagar and Dangwal (2018) in the ‘Changing patterns of caste system in *jajmani* system: a sociological study’ brings out the factors responsible for changes in the *jajmani* system over the years. Authors found factors like industrialisation, spread of education among all castes, social and cultural awareness, migration to the cities, land reforms, advanced technologies and governments’ development policies. They opined that new inter caste relations are emerging with the decline of *jajmani* system.

1.5.2 Occupation and the Process of Occupational Change

An important relationship between caste status and occupation status may be historically established. Because most of the castes are traditionally associated with occupation. Therefore, it is a caste-based class that a person needs to follow. Gist (1954), in his work Occupational Differentiation in South India, says that “the original caste system of India was the strongest force determining the occupation of the

individual, that a particular caste closely coincided with a given occupation, or at least a family of closely related occupations”. These occupational relations controlled by caste are changing due to urbanisation and the process of migration.

Desai (1971) in the work ‘Understanding Occupational Change in India’ explained that in the early 19th century, the occupational roles assigned to village artisans were based on caste and they passed on such skills from generation to generation. Occupational relations were maintained by *Jajmani* system. According to him occupational change is observed by the increase and decrease in the distribution of activities carried out for their livelihood in the socio-economic structure of the society. The emergence of labour as a free commodity has affected the occupational relations and structure in India. Migration with the spread of transport and communication has also facilitated for the change in occupational relations

Sarkar (1984), in “Caste, Occupation and Change”, has explained that the shift in caste based hereditary occupation depends upon the economic benefits from the same. It is encouraged or discouraged based on their profitability. While a non-profitable economic return urges a caste to shift from his caste bound occupation. The shift to new occupation is mainly guided by the factors like social values, social status etc.

Srinivas (2003) in his article ‘An obituary on caste as a system’ pointed out that it is the combination of technological innovations, institutions based on new principles, new ideologies like democracy, equality, idea of human dignity and self-respect that have helped in the uproot of caste based division of labour rather than the movements like bhakti movement. He also brings out the role of caste based division of labour in upholding the caste system together for ages. The ideological attack on caste system ignoring the social mode of production is inadequate in destruction of caste system in India. Though various forces are helping in the demolition of caste based division of labour at local level like villages, individual castes are competing with each other for access to secular benefits.

1.5.3 Studies on the Potters:

Thurston & Rangachari (1909) “Castes and Tribes of Southern India” has noted from the Gazetteer of the Madurai district that *Kulalar* is the descent of *Kulan’s* (son of Lord Brahma). *Kulalar* have later become *Kumbharan*. He quotes from Monier

Williams and Dr Jagar about *Kumbharan's* traditional occupation and techniques.

Jaitly (1997), in her work *Organising the Unorganised in Kerala: Case Studies of Aruvacode and Kodungallur* has given detailed case study of traditional potters in Nilambur. These potters are assumed to be nomadic in nature and originally belonged to Andhra Pradesh who came in search of good quality clay to Nilambur. They were finally invited by the local feudal landlord known as *Nilambur Kovilakam* to settle here and serve them as potters. They speak a language of their own which is a mix of Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam even though they are well versed in the regional language. This often isolates them from the local population. Four clans in their order of importance Patakadan, Selvana, Pullinthalum and Soudiri conducts their marriages and funerals. They strictly follow their traditional rites and rituals and expel those who do not abide by them. The potter's wheel and kiln are the common and important items found near their homes.

Ansari (1963) in his work "A Potter at work" gives detailed description of each stage of production of traditional pot making to understand the difficulty at each stage. It begins with the preparation of clay to post firing treatments. Each stage should be carried out with utmost care and it is fully manually controlled and produced. Some special techniques of pottery making are surface treatments, Decorations and firing. He observes that traditional potters produced the quality products with high durability without any mechanisation. He gives the example of ancient pots used which survived to this day in spite of lying under several feet thick habitational deposits for centuries without affecting the shape, colour etc.

Saraswati (1978) has noticed that there is shift in the way of exchange of services among traditional potters (*Kumbharans*). They have shifted from *jajmani* system to market selling. He has also observed the shift from their traditional occupation of pot making to agriculture and masonry work.

Lalithambika (2015) in a survey on the living and working conditions of the traditional potter communities of Kerala studied the socio economic status and the technical aspect of pot making of traditional potters in Kerala. The study shows that educational status of the potter community was very poor. Almost half of them were school dropouts, Economic status also didn't show a different picture. Most of the population earned less than Rs. 2000 per month. The study shows that the nature of

their occupation has significantly contributed to their social and educational backwardness. Lack of land, poor quality of clay, lack of scientific method to test the quality of raw material, lack of space for pot making all adds to their production problems. Traditional potters still follow the traditional style of pot making without the help of machines.

Another study done by Scrase (2001) proposes that globalisation has intensified the unstable existence of artisan communities due to increasing global competition and mass-production of craft goods. It can be considered as an impact of globalisation where this will gradually change the whole face of *Kumbharan* community.

A book named Pottery Analysis, Second Edition: A Sourcebook by Rice (2015) also found similar findings in terms of changes brought in by the process of modernisation and industrial capitalism. The traditional crafts and services had a major setback with introduction of new machineries and alternatives for their products. Plastic and metal utensils which form the cheap alternative for earthen utensils have taken over the market.

Sini (2016) in her study Challenges of livelihood security of craftsmen: A case study, gives a case study of *Anthur Nairs* who are the traditional pot makers of Kerala. They are called by different names such as Kumbaran, Velan, Odan, Kulalan, Andra Nair, Mannu Nair, Velar etc., but are generally referred as Kusavan and kulalan. Even today these pot maker's world and their culture revolves around their traditional way of pot making. Most of them still use traditional technology for the manufacture of their pots and struggle to continue with traditional occupation owing to many difficulties.

The study carried out by Sumathi and Sujadevi (2016) mentions that the demand for traditional pottery products continues to be significant in Kerala. The use of earthenware has not altogether given up. Whether it is a town or a village, rich or poor, Brahmin or non-Brahmin, Hindus or Muslims, the ritual pots are essentially earthen. The use of pottery in the kitchen is quite popular. There are certain pottery articles which are directly connected with the addiction of an individual. The demand for some pottery articles has increased ever since an improvement was brought about in their forms. The ornamental water jars are high in demand in all Indian small and big towns and cities

Their work brings the evidences in terms of intergenerational occupational mobility, occupational mobility among workers of traditional pot making community in Kerala. Regular income and improved status are the two important reasons found for the occupational mobility among the community. Globalisation and technological revolution has further complimented the process of occupational mobility. Mobility from traditional occupation to other jobs have helped in reducing caste based discrimination.

Haloi (2017) in the work “Potters, Profession and their Livelihood Opportunity under Rural Industrialisation: A Quantitative Analysis” studies the socio economic conditions of traditional potters called Hiras in Assam and found that their conditions are worsening. The income received from the pot making is not enough for their survival and therefore they resort to other types of employment for their survival. Analysis shows that problems like unorganized business, competition with advanced technologies, absence of market intelligence, and a poor institutional framework are the reasons for their poor socio economic condition.

The brief review presented above on caste, occupational shifts of caste groups, the socio-economic consequences of such occupational shift and other issues reveal that the studies have largely focussed on traditional *jajmani* relations. The continuity of traditional occupation has not been so much focussed. The present study is an attempt to understand the cause and consequences of crisis and occupational shift, its nature of persistence and continuity, and inter community variation in response to the crisis. It is an attempt to understand the occupational shift and its impact on their socio-economic life and its influence on their cultural and social identity. The study may help to tackle the problems of the occupational shift among the Kusavas and also to lead their life by retaining their cultural traits.

Though there are some studies on the potters in Kerala, they are not in depth in regard to social impact of occupational shift at the household and community level in terms of interethnic relationships. The studies are general in nature and lack specific data on quantum of shift, nature of shift and changes in institutional arrangements. Thus, the current research is aimed to focus on some research gaps and for a more comprehensive understanding of issues relating to traditional occupation of Kusavas.

1.6 Objectives of the Study-

1. To understand the traditional occupation of Kusavas and their practices.
2. To understand the patterns in the occupational shift with focus on the intra and intergenerational shift and the reasons for choice of the new occupations and the factors that favoured their choice.
3. To study the impact of the occupational shift in the intra and inter family relationships within their caste group
4. To describe the socio-economic changes in their inter-ethnic relationships on account of occupational shifts.

1.7 Fieldwork and Techniques of Data Collection

1.7.1 Selection of Study Village:

For the purpose of meeting the objectives of the study, the researcher was convinced that intensive study in one village would be better than any survey type of research. The intensive research was attempted through anthropological research tools and techniques. The first requirement for this was the selection of suitable village for study. The secondary data was used to map the Kusava community in the state of Kerala. The work of Lalithambika (2015), “Techno-socio-economic survey on the living and working conditions of the traditional potter communities of Kerala” It helped the researcher to find the feasible places as well as least studied places. *Aruvakkod* in *Nilambur* region of Malappuram districts is the most populated hamlets of Kusava community while other places have relatively low population compared with the *Aruvakkod*.

The research involved mainly collecting primary data on different aspects of present and past occupations of the Kusava. The researcher is thus aware that collection of valid and reliable data is possible if he engages in their day to day activities and conduct participant observation as much as possible. The study of course did not ignore the important secondary data that is relevant. Sources for such secondary data were mainly books and some other published materials, unpublished documents and other reports like Census reports.

The researcher participated in an NSS camp that was organized in the study village while studying class 12. It was the primary connecting link of the researcher with the Kusava community. As part of the camp the researcher had spent some time closely with members of the village and also observed some unique aspects of the Kusavas. It was thought selection of the same village will help establishment of rapport relatively easily.

1.7.2 Fieldwork

The extensive field work in the selected village was conducted after a pilot study in the month of March 2018. The purpose of pilot study was to ascertain the availability of sufficient sample households in the select village and also the possible cooperation from them for an extensive field work. It also helped in budgeting the time available for the field work more realistically taking into consideration the possible constraints in the collection of data.

The field work was undertaken in phases during the months of April, May 2018 and February 2019. The duration of each phase lasted about 20-25 days. The long stay among the village covering all the four seasons in the village helped the researcher to meet and interact with a large number of members belonging to Kusava as well as others that facilitated cross verification of data. The mother tongue of researcher is Malayalam. The Kusavas speak Malayalam and also Malayalam mixing with other south Indian languages as noted earlier. The long stay in the village helped to pick up the language of the Kusava to some extent and so to understand the statements and conversations with them without much communication gap.

1.7.3 Rapport Building and Selection of Key Informants

Acceptance into an unknown community even if they are close to your area was an uncertain situation that is faced by the researcher. For the study of this kind, intensive rapport with the informants is a prerequisite. Hence, the initial phase of field work covering about 10 days was almost entirely devoted to this. Subsequently too till the end of field work the effort for more and more rapport was never ignored. Since the Kusava observed some social distance based on caste identities, they were also hesitant to interact with me prior to ascertaining my caste identity.

In the very early stages of fieldwork, researcher got an impression that the village members are politically active and that if researcher could have access to some important leaders, it would help me quite a bit. Researcher succeeded in getting introduced to one of the active member of the community Mr. Mani through some political leader of some other village. Subsequently, researcher used the contacts of friends and relatives too to get introduced to other informants. Regular visits to their home and work places and interactions at their convenient times helped explain the purpose of my research in greater detail. This in turn helped in overcoming the hesitation they had about my stay in their village and about the information that researcher was interested in.

Researcher's two principal informants in the early stages of field work were Kunajappu and Unni. One of the elected ward members, Mrs. Sheeba helped to collect the related secondary data from the *Panchayath* office and other places. By the end of the fieldwork the researcher was able to have a good relation with many of the members of the community and got the access to visit their home at any time.

1.7.4 Techniques Employed for Data Collection:

Observation is the most important anthropological tool of data collection. The researcher found that this was particularly profitable in the case of data relating to production of pots. The informants were not able to give certain minute details as they took for granted that they are known to me. The researcher has spent long hours during the time of mixing of clay, moulding the pots, shaping, painting and baking. The observations helped in knowing the gap between what people say and what people do in regard to many things like gender roles, time invested on different works, expenditure and consumption patterns etc.

1.7.4.1 Interviews

The researcher had to depend on the both formal interviews and sometimes on informal conversations for data not obtainable through other techniques. Interview guides were prepared based many informal conversations in the early stages of field work for a more formal interview with select respondents on aspects like inter and intra community relationships, issues relating to production and sale of products. The structured schedule was used to find the household details of the community.

1.7.4.2 Case Studies

Case study method is thought to be useful in getting data on intra and intergenerational shift in the occupations. Six case studies were collected for validating and giving strength to the areas of changes and the pros and cons of occupational mobility among the study community. Three more case studies are taken specifically focussing on changes among the Kusavas with reference to interethnic relations. The details provided by the elders of the community explained not only the occupations to which the Kusava diversified but also the circumstances under which that shift was favoured.

1.7.4.3 Audio-Visual Techniques

Audio-visual techniques play a major role in documentation of information from the field. The researcher could use the photographs for visual documentation of technological changes that happened with the equipment of production. The time and situation were not always supporting to write/ note down everything in the field, because working hours of Kusavas are not fixed. In such situations, recordings of the interviews and discussions helped the researcher to record and document it later after the field work.

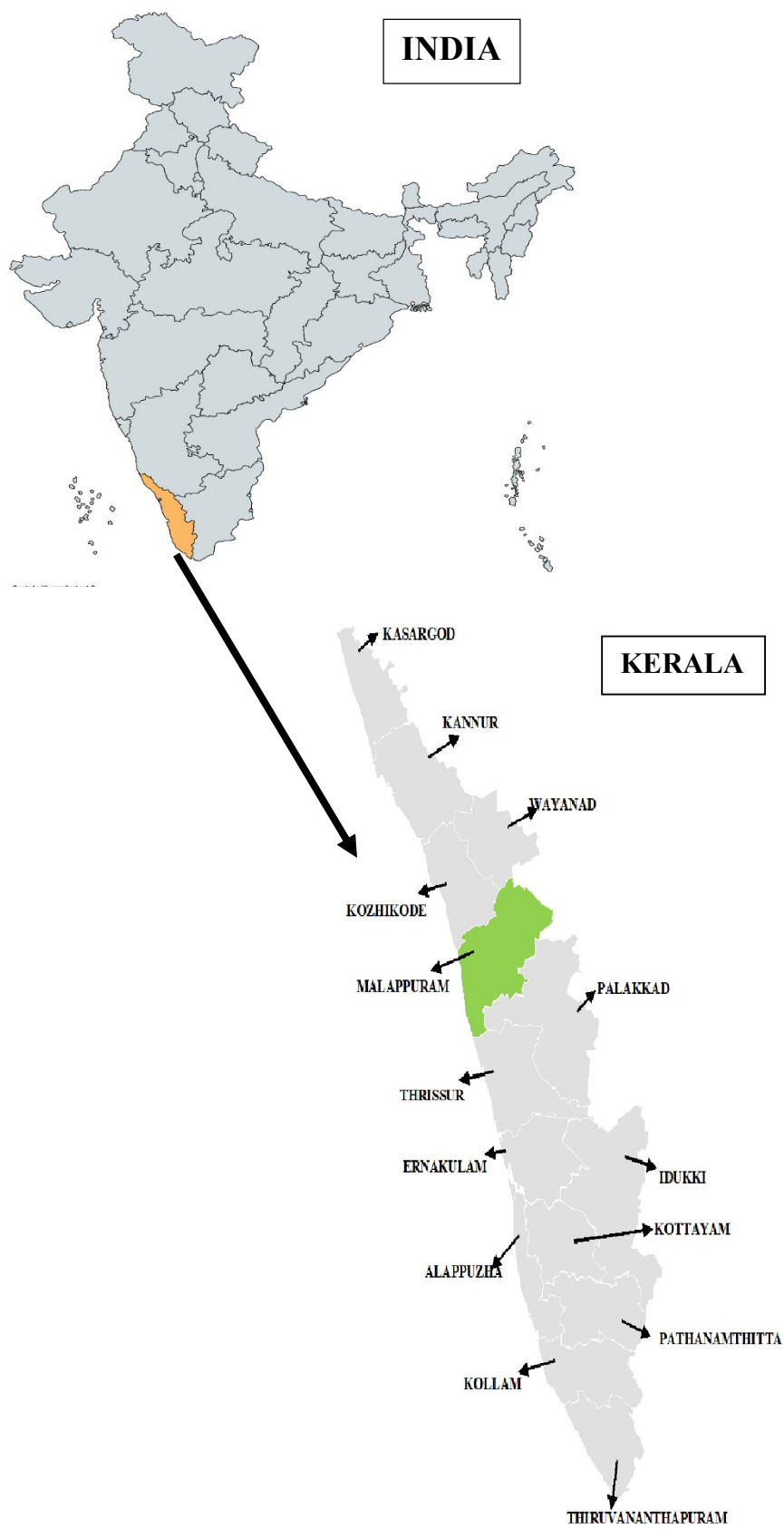
1.7.4.4 Genealogical Timeline.

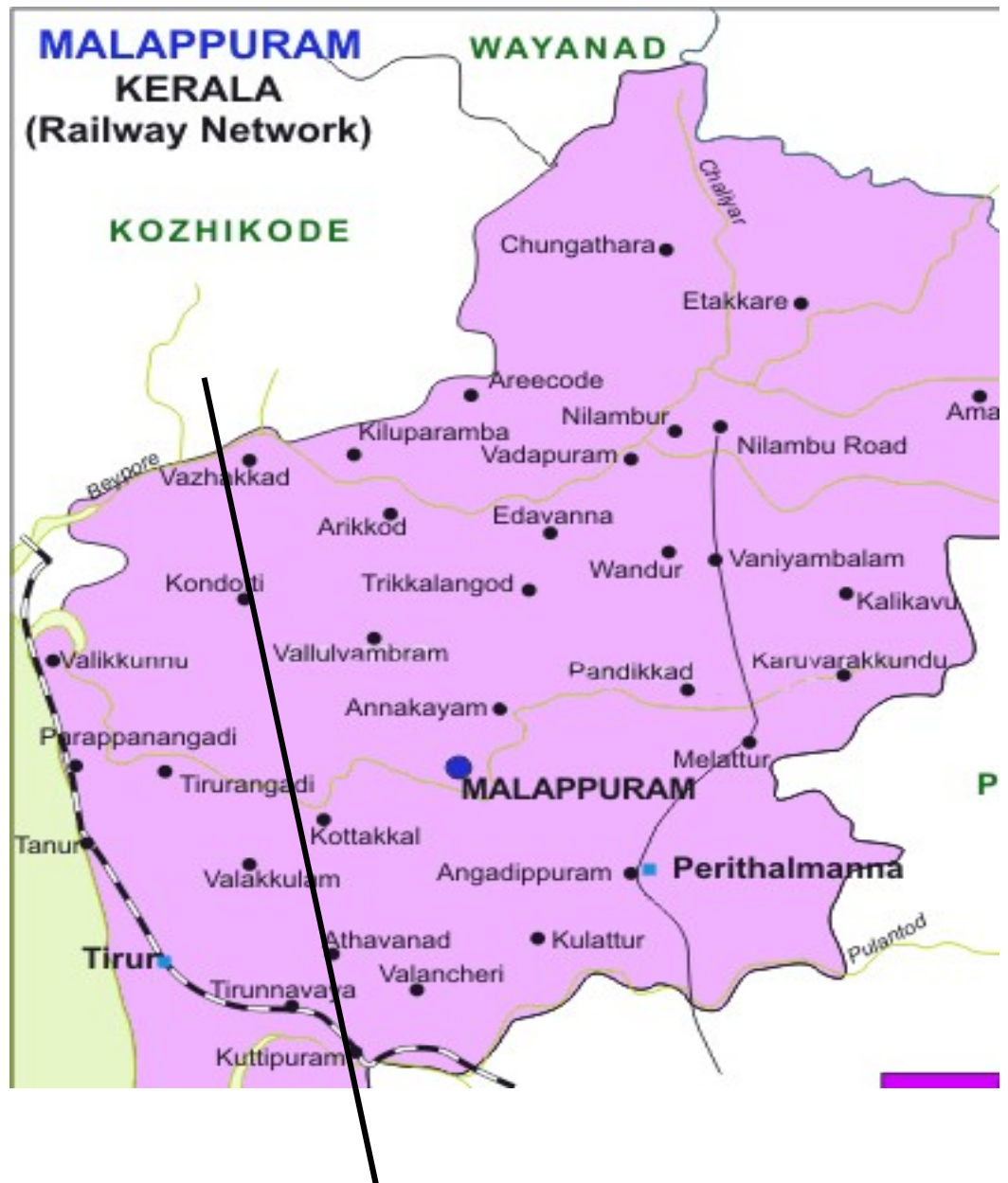
Genealogical timeline help the researcher to trace the great-grandfather and great-great grandfather of the communities which the researchers study. In this study such data was collected to understand the migration of Kusava to the study village. Similarly, the genealogical timeline was adopted to explore the intra and inter-personal occupational mobility of the community.

1.8 Chapterisation

In the *Introduction*, we had a look at the theories on caste system and caste occupation in the society. We also discussed about the history and changes in the pottery occupation through time. The existing studies about various aspects relating to occupational changes, social changes and economical changes of various communities and some particular studies which focused on the problem of potters and the impact of crisis and shift in traditional occupation on the social life were presented. It also discussed the tools and techniques that were used in the research. The second chapter

The study village and brief ethnographic account of kusavas discusses the topography and demography of the village and district, settlement pattern, family, marriage, kinship, religion, social organisation, division of labour etc. Third chapter *Social and economic aspects of pottery as practiced by kusavas* discusses the existing crisis in the production and cause and consequences of that crisis in the industry. It also traces the basic reasons which lead to the occupational change among the *kusavas*. Fourth chapter *Occupational shifts and changes in the kusava community* discusses the occupational change in the pottery from their traditional occupation. It focuses on various aspects that stimulate the change, indicators of change, extent of changes in traditional occupation. The fifth chapter, *Current intra and interethnic relationships in cheruvayur* analyses the relationship between social and economic life of Kusavas and how the social and economic life influenced their relation with other caste people. It also discusses the changes in socio-economic relationship between others after the occupational shift and changes in the community. Chapter six presents the summary of findings and conclusion of the study.





CHAPTER 2

THE STUDY VILLAGE AND BRIEF ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF KUSAVAS

Given the fact that the *jati* division of society is viewed in the realm of cultural relations, viz, inter-dining, inter-marriage, purity-pollution, and other such customary behavior and perception, (Mukherjee,1999) the culture of each *jati*/caste is distinct and depends upon the way of life of its members and their position in the ladder of stratification. According to their caste and sub-caste statuses and divisions, each caste has some or many cultural specialities on different behaviours. The life style and culture of each caste constitutes the social practice of their group. As Chauhan (1996) explained in his work, the shift of the status/culture of any caste is not possible at an individual level. It should have happened as a group activity. In case the initiative took place by an individual, the person should have a marriage relation with other caste individual, meaning, the person should follow hypergamy. In this chapter, an attempt is made to present an outline of the sub-culture of the study community after a brief description of the study village.

In Kerala, the traditional pot makers are known by different names in various districts. In Kannur and Kozhikode districts, they are called as *Anthur Nairs*. In Palakkad they are known as *Kumbaran* and as *Velan* in Thiruvananthapuram district. *Odan*, *Kulalan*, *Andra Nair*, *Mannu Nair*, *Velar etc.*, are the other names. Generally, the terms *Kusavan* and *Kulalan* are used by the villagers to denote the pot makers of Kerala. In Malappuram district, they are known as both *kumbaran* and *Kusavan* (Sini, 2016). However, they are referred to as *Kusavan* or *Chettiyar* in Vazhkkad revenue village, which is the study village. *Cheruvayur* is a village (also referred to as Ward) in Vazhkkad revenue village. *Kusavas* of Vazhkkad are a very small community with 21 families in *Cheruvayur*. It was stated that there were 32 families earlier and out of them 11 families subsequently migrated to nearby villages where they had members of their *tharavadu* (lineage). It was also said that *Kusavas* of *Cheruvayur* had their settlement in *Kusavathodi*, which is a plain area. *Kusavathodi* is located 500-meters south towards the *Vazhakkad* to *Cheruvayur* road. There is a myth saying that during their stay in *Kusavathodi*, they had a fight with upper caste people for a parrot. Accidently a pet parrot of an upper caste family who were the owners of the

kusavathodi, died in the hands of Kusavas. The fear of being beaten up by upper caste people forced them to shift their settlement to another place called *Kusavankunnu*.

2.1 Profile of the Village

The study village *Cheruvayur* is a part of *Vazhakkad* Panchayat located in *Kondoty* taluk of Malappuram district. This area was a part of *Eranad* taluk till 2013; on 23rd December 2013 *Eranad* taluk got bifurcated and from that *Kondoty* taluk has become the seventh taluk in Malappuram district. The district *Malappuram* is located in the latitudes 11°2'28.5072"N and the longitude 76°4'44.7672"E. The study village *Cheruvayur* is located between the latitude 11°14'22.722"N and the longitude of 75°57'31.4424"E.

The climatic conditions of Malappuram district is tropical climate, which is similar to that of nearby districts. The tropical climate of the district is also marked by significant rainfall for most months and a short dry season, from December to February. Summers are experienced in the months of March to May and the Southwest monsoon strikes the district from October to November. This period receives the highest annual rainfall in Kerala, about 75%.

With a total population of 4,112,920 (Census 2011), Malappuram district has about 1,960,328 males and 2,152,592 females. The sex ratio of the district is 1,098. The sex ratio in the urban areas is 1,101 and in the rural area, it is 1,096. Children of age 0-6 years is 5,74,041, which is about 14% of the population. It is evident from 2011 census that the total geographic area of the district is 3,554 km² and it is the third largest district in terms of area of the state. It has a population density of 1,157 persons per km. According to the census of 2011, 44.2% of the population in this district lives in the urban area while 55.8% lives in the rural areas. The literacy rate of the district in urban area is 94.2% and in the rural area, it is 93.1%. The total literacy rate of the district is 93.57% and the male literacy is 81.4%, while that of the female is 79.62%. and that the child sex ratio is 965, which is less than the sex ratio of the district (1098).

The *Vazhakkad Gram Panchayat* has a population of 35,774, out of which 17,280 are males and 18,494 are females (Census, 2011). The population of children in the age group of 0-6 in this Panchayat is 5,044, which is 14.10% of the total population of the village. The average sex ratio of the Panchayat is 1070. Child sex ratio is reported at

980, which is higher than that of Kerala, which has a sex ratio of 964. The village also has higher literacy rate as compared to other parts of Kerala. The male literacy is 97.33%, while the female literacy is about 93.61%. (<https://www.censusindia.co.in/>)

Cheakod, a nearby Panchayth from where the Kusavas moved to their current location, i.e Charuavazhur. When the raw materials (clay, sand and firewood) required for their traditional occupation became scarce in Cheakod, the Kusuva families' migrated to their present habitat since it is located on the bank of *Chaliyar* river. The sand, *Kalasamunnu* and water are easily available here as the river *Chaliyar* provides these materials. The nearest town is *Edavannappara* which is three kilometers away from the study area of Kusavas. Kozhikode is the nearest city and it is approximately 28 kilometers away from the study village.

2.2 Utilisation of the Infrastructural Facilities by Kusavas:

The village has reasonably developed infrastructure for communications. The village is well connected by road with district and taluk headquarters where many government offices are located. The only impediment the Kusavas face is that there is no proper road to their colony. The situation is not only makes the transportation of raw materials for pot making difficult but also affects early medical aid in case of emergency. Kusavas are well equipped with the knowledge about modern communication facilities. Minimum of two mobile phones are owned by all families. All the working men in the community have at least one smart phone.

The village provides same education facilities to all of its members. A Muslim *Madresa* is the only institution, which restricts the admission for Non-Muslims. Literacy rate is very low among the Kusavas of the village owing to the demand to involve in work right from childhood and also due to poor economic status. The division of labour by age and sex for the pottery constraints the schooling of the members of the community.

There is an *Anganwadi* (is a type of rural child care centers) in the village, which is accessible for the Kusavas and it is 1.5 K.M away from their colony. Having to take the children to the school and back to home is a big ordeal for them and thus, they tend to use that time for marketing or production, instead of 'wasting' time in commuting. Those who send their child to *Anganwadi*, do so only for two benefits-

one, there would be no disturbance of the child during their work hours and two, they give free mid-day meal and evening snacks to the children. The village has two upper primary schools, which are situated in an equal distance away from their colony (*Cheruvayur Mina AMUPS, Vazhakkad Mina AMUPS*). Even though both are in the equal distance, they prefer to go to *Cheruvayur Mina AMUPS*. The midday meal program or any other scholarship could not attract their children to school after second or third class. They had to help the parents in pot making. Two high schools and a higher secondary school near to their village opened up the opportunity for higher education. The current generation of the community is however, receiving better basic education compared to the previous generations. Parents are well aware and working hard to give better education for their children

The *Vazhakkad panchayath* has a Primary Health Centre, one private hospital and many clinics that are accessible to the villagers. Kusavas prefer to visit the PHC where they get both consultation and medicine free of cost. They need to pay two rupees as a registration fee; some of them visit the private hospitals for better treatment of the illness suffered by them. Apart from the joint pains, they hardly get any diseases from practicing their traditional occupation. All the families are part of National Health Insurance Programme (*Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana*) of the government. The aged and members suffering from chronic diseases are entitled to free treatment for Pain & Palliative Care centers in the village itself. The volunteers and doctors come to the colony and treat the patients.

Lack of availability of sufficient drinking water is always a problem for the Kusavas. Their settlement pattern and the place that they have chosen for housing exacerbate the problem. They cannot dig own wells to access the water, because in hilly area they have to dig deep to get water and huge amount of money needs to be invested to dig own well which the Kusavas cannot afford. The Vazhakkad Panchayath had sanctioned a common community well for entire colony (*Panchayath Kinar*) from where they access the drinking water. Now under the programme “*Panchayath Jalanidhi*” the pipe water comes to the colony. They have to store the water for daily activities. It comes at fixed timings in the morning and evening. They have to for the water every month.

Kusavas claim that they accord high priority for cleanliness of self and surroundings though the outside appearance of them never gives such an impression to others. They practiced open-air defecation because they could not build the toilets due to low income. The practice of open-air defecation has been largely given up as the panchayats have supported them in construction of toilets.

2.3 Caste Composition of Study Village:

The study village *Cheruvayur* comprises of people belonging to various castes of Hindu religion, besides a sizable Muslim population. It is informed that despite the heterogeneity with regard to social composition and numerical dominance of Muslims in the village, caste conflicts have not been witnessed any time in the village. The different caste groups in the village are listed below according to their social position in the village along with the approximate percent of their households.

Table 2.1 Caste Composition of the Study Village

Caste group	Approximate % of HH	Caste group	Approximate % of HH
Namboothiris	10.0	Nayars	10.0
Thiyyas	18.0	Aashari	12.0
Thattan	03.0	Perukollan	01.0
Kusavan	04.0	Cheruman	04.0
Mannan	01.0	Patta Kanakkan	04.0
Pala Kanakkan	04.0	Ambattan	01.0
Panikkan	01.0	Muslim	27.0

The *Namboothiris*, a Malayali Brahmin caste, native to Kerala of the village are accorded the highest status in caste hierarchy. They were the owners of the entire wet and dry land in the village at once. Later, other social situations caused alienation of their land to others belonging to different castes and to Muslims of the village. Among

all, Kusava maintain a distinct culture and lifestyle in the village. Sometimes other caste people refer Kusavas as scheduled Tribe in view of such distinctiveness with regard to their culture and behavior. The language they speak and their attitude of being socially isolated from others are the main reasons for people to believe that they are different or peculiar. The Kusavas are numerically less and in the social and economic hierarchy too they occupy the last position. But at the same time the features of political vibrancy and economic stability are apparent in their community in this village.

The Kusavas are considered as equal or of lesser status to other artisan communities like weavers, blacksmiths and carpenters within the Kerala society, even though both the State and Central Governments granted them OBC status. However, they practiced the lifestyle of the *Namboothiris*, and claimed themselves as a higher social status within the village. They practiced the notion of untouchability, purity and pollution in the village. Other artisan communities as well as others contest Kusava's claim for a superior status next to Brahmins. At the same time, Kusavas are conscious of the benefits of the OBC status given to them. In fact, there is a feeling amongst them that their economic status is no better than the S.Cs, and hence they feel that they are eligible for all the benefits which the S.Cs. These internal contradictions within the Kusavas and the contestations of other caste communities with the Kusavas as far as the social and economic status is concerned, leads to the day-to-day interactions and relationships between the different communities in the study village.

Members of many households in the village identify themselves as Muslims belonging either to the sects of *Shias* or to *Sunnis*. The absence of households of Christian religion is the glaring feature of this village as this is unlike other villages in Kerala. *Namboothiris* are the Brahmins and are the traditional feudal elite that owned the agricultural land in the village. Currently too, in *Cheruvayur* village, a few households of *Namboothiris* own sizable extent of land in the village. There are significant changes in the land ownership pattern over the years due to various reasons. In the recent past, the Muslim population has increased in the village. The Muslims have also prospered economically by taking employment in the gulf. The members of second and third generation within the *Namboothiris* in the recent years migrated out for employment. The preference of *Namboothiris* for settling in towns owing to their employment and the desire of the economically prosperous Muslims to acquire landed

properties within the village resulted in land getting transferred to Muslim families from the *Namboothiris*.

Nayar caste members claim the second position in the ladder of hierarchy in the study village and as it happens, even all over the state of Kerala. However, their number is small in the village. These *Nayar* families who lived in the village maintained a good relationship with *Namboothiris* of the village and they were the caretakers of land. If *Namboothiris* gave land to others under terms and conditions of tenancy, and they managed to collect the rent amount of the land. *Nayars* had no restrictions of entry into the *illams* (the houses) of *Namboothiri* families. The *Nayar* community faced less restriction in the form of untouchability from *Namboothiris* as against other castes. *Ezhava* (*Ezhavas* are also known as *Thiyas*, *Tiyyas* and *Theeyas* in the Malabar region of the state) come next to *Nayars* in the social hierarchy of the village. They also own a good share of land in the village.

The village consists of a good number of artisans along with potters. They are *Aasari* (carpenter), *Perumkollan* (blacksmith), *Thattan* (goldsmith). In the hierarchy, the artisans come next to *thiyya* caste. *Kusavas*, because they practice the idea of purity and pollution, are never entertained by the other castes to enter their settlement areas. If some of them wants to sell their land, it is strictly sold within their community. Selling to an outsider will happen only if their community members cannot afford the money. They give equal significance to Shiva and Vishnu in their religious faith and the myths that are related to their traditional occupation are connected to both Shiva and Vishnu.

The S.Cs live little away from the main settlement. *Cheruman kanakkan* and *Perumannan* are the Scheduled Caste communities in the village. Each of them have been living in separate colonies for decades. *Kusavas* take the services of *Perumannan* (washer men) during some of their life cycle rituals such as puberty (*Samartham Pelli*), delivery and death ceremonies, they give the ritual bath and wash the ‘polluted’ clothes and accept payment for the same. The *Kanakkan*’s are divided into *Patta kanakkan* and *Pala kanakkan*. *Panikkans*, who are the S.Ts, are very few in number. Muslims form the numerically predominant community in the village. The social composition of the village thus presents a complex picture of interethnic relations,

reciprocal exchange of services and goods, and a continuous competition for political power and constant struggle for social mobility.

2.4 Settlement Pattern

The village has no specific settlement pattern to follow these days. Earlier most of the scheduled castes lived in a separate colony away from others. Inter mingling of different communities in settlement was very less. Now a day, purchase of land, wherever it was available by members of different caste groups and religious communities, changed the earlier settlement pattern. Such situation paved the path for all caste and religious people to 'live together'.

KusavanKunnu is the place where the Kusavas live in the study village. It is a hilly slope starting from *Vazhakkad* to *Cheruvayur* road and located opposite to *Kusavathodi*. Due to the earlier fights with the upper caste, they had moved to *KusavanKunnu* from *Kusuvathodi*. Kusavas has to buy the land in *Kusavankunnu* when they shifted from *Kushavathodi*. The Kusavas who had necessary financial resources bought the land nearer to the roadside and the poorer families purchased land away from the road. The settlement of Kusavas here thus shows some class hierarchy. The poor live on the top of the *KusavanKunnu* and the rich live on the roadside. Three (03) Kusava families of the village who could not get land near *Kusavankunnu* then, bought land little away, about 500 meters away from the *Kusavankunnu* colony.

2.5 Kusava Housing Pattern

Houses in the village portray the financial status of a family. The village consists of pucca houses more than the kutchu houses. However, the facilities such as well and pond are only available to families those who are affluent. Majority of Kusavas of *Cheruvayur* too live in pucca houses. There are 20 households in the study village, out of 20, seven (07) are tile roofed and ten are concrete. Two houses of concrete roofed are duplex. There are three kutchu houses in the colony. They are half tiled and other half is roofed by the dry leaves. The families who are currently living in such houses too have plans to construct/ buy pucca houses.

2.6 Inter and Intra Caste Relations

The Kusavas maintain a harmonious and working relation with others these days despite being conscious of their caste identity. Kusavas tend to practice and take their cultural practices very strictly. They prefer to follow all the cultural traits every day. The forms of untouchability, purity and pollution are major traits among all those. This prevents them from having to interact closely with members of all other caste groups. They maintain good relation with the *Namboothiris*, *Nayars* and *Thiyyas* of the village who are upper caste people. They accept food and services from them and provide all services to them. They however, do not maintain similar relationship with lower caste people because of their claims of purity over them by virtue of food taboos and menstrual taboos followed by them. They maintain same social distance with Muslims as well.

On the other hand, members of other castes, particularly the others classified as OBCs, forward castes and Muslims treat Kusava indifferently. Members of the Kusava community have the habit of chewing the locally made *paan* (a preparation combining betel leaf with areca nut) continuously. That turns their tongue into red colour and causes stains in their mouth. Along with this, they are also seen with soiled clothes (due to their pot making occupation). Members of other castes thus feel that Kusava are ‘abnormal’ and unhygienic accordingly, they are treated indifferently and inferior in the village.

The Kusavas maintained a strong sense of caste solidarity earlier. But, there are some differences amongst themselves now. These differences are owing to the fact that the richer families, which bought land earlier on the roadside did not agree to sell small extents of their land to others who desired to shift to roadside. They have also disagreed to give land for laying road to the houses built on the hill slopes away from the road. The rich and the poor Kusavas thus have some differences.

The Kusavas play an important role in the politics at the level of Gram Panchayat. The village falls under the *Vazhakkad panchayath* which has 19 wards. Since decades Kusavas have been the decision makers in the *panchayath* elections. According to the statistics of *Vazhakkad panchayath*, the winning margin of ward 16 *Kannathumpara* is around 50 votes. The voters from the Kusava community in any election are more than 50. Kusavas never show inclination towards any political party completely. They

do not openly support any candidate. The members of the community know that they are the deciding factor in the ward elections and they use this opportunity for their benefit. For instance, they supported a candidate conditionally that he should help them to build a road in order to reduce the burden of carrying the clay to their work places.

2.7 Cultural Identity and Social Institutions Among the Kusavas:

Unlike other backward communities in Kerala, Kusavas maintain a unique culture. The language they speak is one among the unique aspects. Their language distinguishes them from all the other communities. Their lineage is from Andhra Pradesh, which made them the influence of Telugu language as one of the prominent contributors in their daily language that they use. Kusava community uses this language for communication, which does not have any script and is an orally transmitted language that was passed across generations. This language has a mix of vocabulary from Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit. The discussions and conversation within the Kusava community happens only through this language. They use the regional language Malayalam to talk to with other communities of the village. The young children are taught Malayalam to communicate with the other communities. Along with this, they also learn their regional language for communication within the community along with the aim of preserving their language.

2.7.1 Family

The Kusavas follows the patterns of patriarchy and patrilocal residence. All the members living in the colony trace some kinship relationships too with other members of the community. The Kusavas lived in extended nuclear families. The current generation of the community however preferred nuclear families. Only three extended nuclear families were identified out of the 20 families living in the village. Earlier Pottery used to be the primary occupation for every family and the division of labour was on the lines of sex, and age, but now it got the less importance. The extended nuclear families suited to their traditional occupation.

2.7.2 Marriage

Marriage as a social institution holds unique identity among the Kusavas. The Kusavas marriages are completely different from the marriage practices of other castes in the village. Earlier it happened with the consent of the natal families of bride and bridegroom. The bride and groom used to meet only on the day of marriage. Parents were hardly taking the permission and consent of their children for marriage. The Kusava community has five (05) *Illams* (linages) namely *Pattakkale*, *Selevini*, *Saudri*, *Pulinthalam* and *Jogam*; and the marriage rituals are carried out with participation of families belonging to all five *Illams* in the villages.

They practice strict *gotra* exogamy and the marriages take place in the bridegroom's residence. They never accept dowry, rather they have to give bride price to the girl's family. Those traditional marriages begin in the evening and continue till next sun rise. They are called as *patha pelli* (*ratri kalyanams* (old marriage practice)). *Pattakale gotra* handle major role in those types of marriages. These *illam* members handle the role of priest in the marriages. The bride and groom tie the *tali* in presence of sun in the early morning. Kusavas sacrifice a goat in the marriage as part of the ritual. Traditional marriages are very rare these days. All Kusava families prefer to have *Mala Kalyanalam*, which is a modern marriage practice exercised by other castes, such marriages consume very less time to finish all the rituals. It happens in the presence of a Brahmin priest or the elder member of the community. Exchange of garland, ring, bouquet, circumambulation in front of *Nilavilakku* (traditional lamp), *tali* tying are some of the rituals in this marriage.

Table 2.2 Gotra Exogamy as Followed by Kusavas

Gotra Exogamy			
Pattakale	Selevini	Selevini	Pattakkale
	Pulinthalam		Jogam
	Saudri		Pulinthalam
Saudri	Pattakkale	Pulinthalam	Saudri
	Jogam		Pattakkale
	Pulinthalam		Saudri
	Selevini		Selevini
Jogam	Selevini, Saudri		

2.7.3 Kinship

Kinship plays a very important role in the activities of Kusavas in the village. The pot making activity take plays with other family members and due to this cooperative activity, kinship bonds play a major role. The extended kin group has no role in the day-to-day activities of the community. They however have an emotional attachment to them. The head of the house takes the suggestion of elder members on planning of any major event like marriage or other rituals. While the close kin members tend to play a significant role in all economic activities, the extended kin members play a significant role in the political affairs of their community.

The Kusavas of village claim their lineage from first settlers who came to the village decades back. The entire Kusavas claim a consanguineous relation with each other because of common decent. Three (03) out of five (05) *Illams* that the Kusava community comprises are found in the village. They are namely, *Pattakkale*, *Selevini*, *Saudri* and *Pulinthalam*. Except ‘*pattakkale*’ (first settlers), the rest all came to the village because of the marriage alliances.

There are some significant differences with the Malayalam language, in the kinship terminologies that they use in their language. Some of the close and extended kinship terminologies are, as following:

Table 2.3 Kinship Terminology of Kusavas

S. No.	Relation	Kusava language	In Malayalam
1	Father	<i>Appa</i>	<i>Achan</i>
2	Mother	<i>Amma</i>	<i>Amma</i>
3	Daughter	<i>Podusu</i>	<i>Makal</i>
4	Son	<i>Podu (Bidda)</i>	<i>Makan</i>
5	Brother	<i>Anna</i>	<i>Chettan, Eattan</i>
6	Younger Brother	<i>Thammudu</i>	<i>Aniyan</i>
7	Elder sister	<i>Peddathodaputu</i>	<i>Chichi, chettathi, eatti</i>
8	Younger sister	<i>Chinnathodaputu</i>	<i>Aniyathi</i>
9	Grand mother	<i>Ava</i>	<i>Achamma/Ammamma</i>
10	Grand father	<i>Thatha</i>	<i>Achachan/Ammachan</i>
11	Father's Younger Brother	<i>Senappan</i>	<i>Cheriyachan, pappan</i>
12	Father's Elder Brother	<i>Peyyappa</i>	<i>Valiyachan</i>
13	Father's Younger Brother's Wife	<i>Senamma</i>	<i>Mema, Cheriyamma</i>
14	Father's Elder Brother's Wife	<i>Peddamma/Peyyamma</i>	<i>Valyamma</i>
15	Father's Younger Sister	<i>Sennamma</i>	<i>Ammayi</i>
16	Father's Elder Sister	<i>Peyyatha/Peyyath</i>	<i>Valyammayi</i>
17	Father's Younger Sister's Husband	<i>Senappan</i>	<i>Maman</i>
18	Father's Elder Sister's Husband	<i>Peyymama</i>	<i>Valiyachan</i>
19	Mother's Younger Brother	<i>Thodaputlu</i>	<i>Cheriyamamn</i>
20	Mother's Elder Brother	<i>Peyyanna</i>	<i>Valiyamamn</i>
21	Mother's Younger Brother's Wife	<i>Mardali/Sinnavedina</i>	<i>Mema/Mami</i>
22	Mother's Elder Brother's Wife	<i>Vedina/peddavedina</i>	<i>Mema/Mami</i>
23	Mother's Younger Sister	<i>Senama</i>	<i>Cheriyamma/Mema</i>
24	Mother's Elder Sister	<i>Peyyama</i>	<i>Valiyamma</i>
25	Mother's Younger Sister's Husband	<i>Senapedu</i>	<i>Pappan/Cheriyachan</i>
26	Mother's Elder Sister's Husband	<i>Peyyapedu</i>	<i>Valiyachan</i>
27	Son in law	<i>Allude</i>	<i>Marumakan</i>
28	Daughter in Law	<i>Kodalu</i>	<i>Marumakal</i>

Kusavas follow beliefs of both *Saivisam* and *Vaishnavism* sects of Hindu religion. The local deity *Marriyamma* is part of their religious belief. Kusavas follow the

Malayalam calendar to practice all the rituals. *Vrischika masam* is known as the fasting period among them and this period is considered as an important time for them. In fact, it is during this period that many of the festivals of the temple are carried out in Kerala. *Vrischika masam* begins from mid- November and goes until mid-December. Some of the famous festivals of the temple include the *Aiyappa dheeksha* of Sabarimala, *Ekadashi* of *Guruvayur* etc., are celebrated in this month. *Karkidaka Sankranthi* (the day when the sun transits to the *karka rashi* (Cancer, an English zodiac) from *mithuna rashi* (the Gemini zodiac) is a noted ritual performed as a part of their faith.

They follow certain beliefs as part of their religious faith. The community has to rigidly follow it as a part of their belief. Puberty and menstruation taboo is the foremost among them. Entering into the house, touching any material around, contact with others is restricted. They follow 15 days of *pula* (“The happy occasion of the birth of a child and the sad event of the death of a person are accompanied by the observance of what is commonly called 'Pula' which is a form of physical pollution or defilement. The degree of defilement varies depending on several factors (ex: closeness of relationship), and are, well codified, though confusing as discussed here. In the case of a birth, defilement may be a token of sympathy with the mother for all her sufferings, while with death; it could be the formalisation of a mourning period.” (<https://www.namboothiri.com/articles/pula.htm>) On three (03) occasions: after death, birth and during puberty time.

During the *pula* time, they never light the *Nilavilakku* (traditional lamp used commonly in Kerala) at home for 15 days. If some of their first kin dies, they never practice their traditional occupation for 15 days. The *Bali Karmam* (*Bali* is a ritual performed on the death anniversary of a person. This ritual is practiced in the hope that the soul of the departed beloved will attain salvation and be free of any worldly bonds that might not give eternal rest.), which has offered to the soul, should be in the presence of *Pattakkale*, *Selevini*, *Saudri* and *Pulinthalam*.

2.7.4 Life Cycle Rituals

Among the Kusavas, life cycle rituals start with the birth. They celebrate tying of black thread to the child as the first ceremony. Normally they celebrate this on the 7th day after birth. The father has to do this in the presence of the elders of the family.

Kusavas follow 15 days *Pula* after the birth of the new baby. Next celebrated ritual is feeding rice to the child, the time and place for this ritual changes according to the circumstances. Kusavas normally prefer to do this after six (06) months of birth. They do this during the village religious festival, in front of the goddesses *Mariamman*. If they do not perform any such festival even after six (06) months of birth of the baby, they perform it at home in front of the idol or photo of the Gods. They mix cow dung with water and paint the floor. This is because they believe that cow dung will purify all the dirt from any substance. They boil the rice in the newly made pot, it will be served on the floor, and the child has to eat it by himself/herself from the floor that is how the first eating of rice happens in the community.

First birthday is not celebrated widely among the Kusavas. For many families, it is a normal day, which just passes by. But, recently, it has become a mandatory celebration among the Kusavas due to the contact with the other caste people, where it is celebrated grandly. Puberty is the other important ritual celebrated among Kusavas and it has known as *Samartham Pelli* (puberty ritual) in the community. When the girl reaches the puberty, she is taught how to live in menstruation days in every month. After seven days she has to take bath with the help of *Perumannan* (washer man caste) caste women, pujas are performed as part of it and *Perumannan* women gives a new cloth to the parents of the girls, which she has to wear on that day.

Marriage among the Kusavas takes place mostly at the bridegroom's side. Only with some reasons such as lack of space and other physical or social hurdle, it can be shifted to the house of bride. After pregnancy, they go through two (02) ceremonies. First one takes place at the seventh month- taking girl to her maternal home from in laws house, it is known as *Bddagenappu koochinechethi* in Kusavas language. Second one takes place on the ninth month- in this ceremony, husband's relatives go to see her. This is known as *thommithinellu keneni pochethi*. The delivery known as *ittundi bidda kenethi* in their language. A *Mannan* women (*saharal*) is appointed to take care of newborn and the mother to make them bath and other activities.

The death ceremony is managed by the elder of the community. He leads the ceremonies of the cremation. During the *Bali karmam* all the four *gotra* members have to be part of it how they did during the cremation. (*Pattakkale, Selevini, Saudri and Pulinthalam*).

2.8 Kusuvas: Pottery as Traditional Occupation

Pot making has been the primary source of income for the Kusavas since many years. In the recent past, they had of course found alternative sources of livelihood like daily wage labour, driving of auto rickshaw etc. Many people have also migrated to Gulf to work as unskilled labour. These days, their traditional occupation has become a supplementary source of income for many Kusava households.

Hunting was part of their life not as leisure time activity but as an important economic activity. Both pottery and hunting were practiced collectively, thus leading to an increased community bonding within them. Their choice of economic activities helped to maintain some sort of exclusiveness and social isolation. They were not seen as competitors for any resource. Their restricted interactions with others and pursuance of economic activities which did not interfere with others probably helped not to have any sustained ill feelings by others in the village.

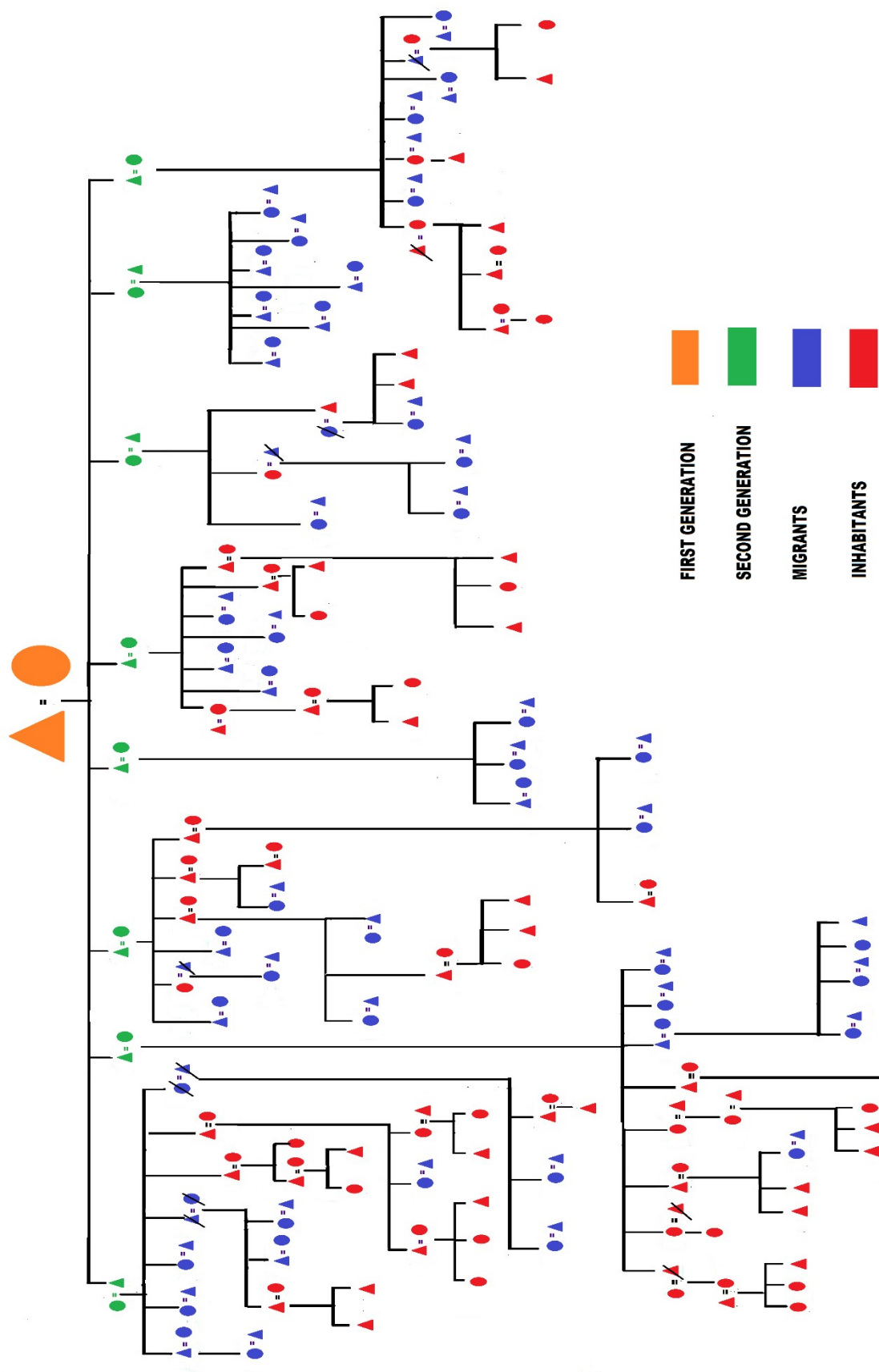
Family is the unit of traditional occupation. Kusavas had extended nuclear families in the past. Every member in the family was considered as an asset for their potential contribution to the pot making. The numerical size of Kusava households has decreased due to various reasons including the preference for small families. At the same time, they do not take the support from others by way of employing for their traditional pot making work. They rather brought down the quantum of work for themselves. The head of the family distributes the work to the members of the household. Members are involved in work right from their childhood. Children start working when they are ten years old. The production goes through different stages before the final preparation of the pot. There is division of labour at each stage of the production process. They take the help of children, women, and elderly persons and distribute the work into different stages such as transportation of raw material, preparation of mixture, molding of pots, painting, baking the pots and marketing the pots. According to the interest, involvement of the members and skill requirements the work is distributed among the various family members.

The male members concentrate on working with pottery wheel. The women of the family are not allowed to work on the wheel. Pots are made with the help of pre-prepared models. Those are called handmade pots. Women handle the shaping and modeling of the pot and they colour the pots red before baking it. Men perform more

works that demand more muscle power. Works that do not require much strain or effort are given to the children. Transporting small amount of clay, mixing, drying the pots, arranging colours to paint the pots, and works related to kiln are taught to them gradually as part of their socialisation and learning of skills and knowledge required for their traditional occupation. Every woman of the family has to be part of the production process and this is deemed mandatory. It helps the male member to make more pots and speedup the production.

Kusavas practiced direct marketing in earlier days. Women take part in marketing the pots by selling them door to door, which provided them some money on a daily basis. They would also sell pots in bulk to the shops and take orders for such bulk sale on advance payments. Earlier each small town had a weekly market called *Chanda*, where the Kusavas used to sell their pots in these *chandas*. Gradually the increased competition due to availability of alternatives to clay pots affected the traditional livelihood of Kusava. Even though the competition has increased, the need for pottery still exists in the market, due to this, the shop owners of the market started sales through middle men on commission basis. This made the Kusavas to produce pots according to the number of orders that they get from the middle men.

The material culture of Kusavas is unique as it primarily consists of their pottery instruments and equipment. They need different equipment at each stage of the pot production. They used all handmade material for the production. Wheel, mixing and slicing traditional tools of Kusavas are getting replaced with advanced tools.



Map 6: Genealogical Map of the Study Community

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF POTTERY AS PRACTICED BY KUSAVAS

Pottery is known as the art of handling clay. Deities, home utilities, toys and pots are some of their products. They are made from lumps of clay, moulded by hand, into specific shapes. Mastery of the art takes time and is probably one of the earliest skills adopted by humans. All of them act as the gradients for the growth of a civilisation. Their artefacts, crafts and others too equally contributed to the progress of civilisation. Similarly, their work gives solid form to their feelings and expressions. Ecology has a huge role to play in the development and emergence of an artisan group. This stands true for potters as well. Distinct occupational and artistic groups are determined by the nature of the soil, water resources and climate.

3.1 Pottery Making

Pottery is the most basic occupation of the Kusava community. Kusavas managed to earn their livelihood from their traditional occupation. The production process depends on many raw materials; each one among those plays its own role. The replacement of each raw material in the small production units is very hard and not even possible in many occasions. The production of pot is considered as part of the handcraft industry where it needs more workforce compared to other artisan works. Traditional pottery production cannot be managed by a single individual. Among the Kusavas it is to be considered more as a social institution and not merely as an economic activity.

3.2. Raw Materials Required for the Production

Raw materials play a key role in the production process of an item to be produced. The current scenario is not proving to be favorable to the local production of pots due to lack of enough raw materials. The handcrafts and art related works need more material, which is closely associated with the natural environment. The artisan activity, pottery production needs various raw materials to complete the process. Those are completely natural such as Clay (*Kalasamunnu*), Sand (*Iska*), Firewood (*Katlu/Motlu*), Coconut husk (*Cheri*), and Coconut shells (*Chippa*), Soil (*Munnu*), and Paddy straw (*Kasuva*).

3.2.1 Clay (*Kalasamunnu*)

Clay is also known as *Kalimunnu* in Malayalam and *Kalasamunnu* in their own language. *Kalasamunnu* is the main and important raw material of the pot production. The entire production depends on the availability of the same, which varies with time. The Kusavas classify *Kalasamunnu* into four (04) types based on its colour. They appear in the colours of black, yellow, white and light blue which also contain even lighter black mix too. All these are known by other names in Kusavas language. Black clay is known as *Nalla mannu*, the yellow one is *Manja*, the white one is *thella mannu* and the blue one is known as the *neelamannu*. The usage is based on the quality of each of these varieties. Based on the quality, they mix one or two of the varieties proportionally to produce pots. *Manja Mannu* (yellow) and *thella munnu* (white) are the two varieties that are popularly used in the study village.

In the study village, production entirely from a single type of *Kalasamunnu* is not possible, because it would not be strong enough to give the complete shape until the final stage of production. Suppose if they want to make a big two-liter pot with a single *Kalasamunnu*, it will shrink into a one-liter pot after drying out in the sunlight. It will become very small by the time it is taken out of the *Chula*(kiln). They will refer such clay as '*Moopukuranjamannu*', which means a very weak clay. So, in this such situations, they mix more than one and make it stronger. Sometimes according to the availability, they mix all four and produce the pots. They add black clay in all the mixtures since it is considered as the strongest variety. The Kusavas use the *Manja* (yellow clay) for colouring the pot before baking it.

3.2.2 Sand (*Iska*)

Sand is also known as *Manal/Puzhi* in Malayalam language and *Iska* in their own language. The raw material should be collected from the river itself. Even though sand can be taken from small canals and ditches in the village, they strictly use the sand from rivers. They collect the sand which is very fine and small in nature. These days they use bigger size sand for mixing with clay, thanks to the introduction of grinding machines, with the help of these machines the bigger sand will grinded and it will mix with the clay.

3.2.3 Firewood (*Katlu/Motlu*)

Firewood is also known as *Viraku* in Malayalam language and *Katlu* in their own language. The entire process of baking depends on the quality of the firewood, which they use. They use alternative material to fire only when the firewood cannot give enough heat in the *chula*(kiln). The hardwood is always preferred over the soft wood, which gives the heat for longer time and turns into ashes slowly. *Kanjaram*, *Dhooham*, *Neradi* and *Parangimangu* are the main categories of wood, which they mainly use.

3.2.4 Coconut Husk (*Cheri*) and Coconut Shells (*Chippa*)

Coconut husk is known as *chakiri* in Malayalam and *cheri* in Kusava language. *Chiratta* is the malayalam name for coconut shells and *chippa* in their own language. Coconut husk is still widely used as firing material in the baking process. In the past, due to the availability of different woods, they used less amount of coconut husk. Now the lack of availability of wood forced them to prefer coconut husk for baking purposes. The coconut shells are used only during the firing process to give more heat by placing in front of the *chula*.

3.2.5 Soil (*Munnu*)

Soil is also known as *Mannu* in Malayalam language and *Munnu* in their own language. Normally, soil collection happens in the form of the clay. Rest of the soils are used for other additional purposes such as colouring the pots, to cover the kiln and to construct it. Kusavas use clay *manja* (yellow) for colouring along with normal red soil. For covering the kiln, they prefer to use soils, which are sticky. *Cheedimannu*, the soil collected from the hilly regions are considered for these purposes.

3.2.6 Paddy Straw (*Kasuva*)

Paddy straw is also known as *vaikkol* in Malayalam and *Kasuva* in their own language. The paddy straw is used for covering the *chula* before applying soil paste. Paddy straws are used to pack the pots inside the *chula*. During the scarcity of paddy straw, they use other leaves to pack the pots. Clothes and leaves of areca palms are used to cover the top of the kiln before pasting the soil mix to cover it, as well as packing the pots inside the kiln.

3.3 Acquisition of Raw Materials.

Collection of raw materials takes place in different ways according to availability and demand. Six items mentioned in previous section 3.2 are the important raw materials which are related to pottery production. Identifying each one and taking them to the place of work is a difficult task. The entire family and kinship ties are employed for the same. Each one contributes their own part to get the raw materials. The collection is a family activity for them. One specialty of each Kusava settlement is that they are located nearer to the places where raw materials are available.

Clay (*Kalasamunnu*) is the basic raw material that is needed for production of pots. Availability of *Kalasamunnu* is the primary factor for selecting settlement area. This helped them to transport the clay easily as head loads. Kusavas are landless people and they use to live in the lands of the upper caste people or the Muslim community in the village. A form of exchange system can be observed in the village. They give pots as a return for the raw material that has to be collected from a land of the landlord. The exchange system was got encouraged mainly because of a few reasons. Kusavas used to collect limited quantity of *Kalasamunnu* for one or two *chulas* from the owners of the land. During the collection, they would not pay the money to the owner. They used to settle the payment only after the production.

The smaller amount of clay collection helps them to transport the head loads from the field to home. Use of any vehicle for the transport requires more investment and they cannot use vehicles either to reach the collection area or to their settlement. Collection of clay demands more labour. In the process of collecting the *Kalasamunnu*, first they need to remove the top layers of the land to get *Kalasamunnu* from the bottom, the same process is followed in many sites. If that is not covered by any other layers of soils they can collect and store the raw material directly. The collected *Kalasamunnu* is stored in the form of rounded balls. Then it is to be transported to their homes.

Now the system has got changed that the Kusavas rarely get clay from their surroundings and they were being forced to go in neighbouring districts in search of it. They pay cash and get the clay to home from the other districts. Digging and loading will be done by other wageworkers and the Kusavas need to put very less effort compared to the traditional collection of clay. Family involvement has reduced in the

collection of *Kalasamunnu* at present. The family labours are used only to transport the clay from road to *panishala/kotle* by the head load.

Sand (*Iska*) is added with *Kalasamunnu* while mixing. This is a compulsory raw material for the production, which cannot be replaced with any other. They add *Iska* to strengthen the *Kalasamunnu* and give strength to the pots. The final paste is made by adding the *Iska* in it. The Kusavas collect this raw material from the nearby river *Chaliyar*. Earlier they were free to collect any amount of *Iska*. They followed the same process, they go with some bags and collect two-three bags of sand and come to the colony. Gradually the rules related to the sand mining have been tightened by the government officials and police raids have become common. Slowly, they had to take the permission of union workers who manage the mining process nearby *Kadavu* (the place where they collect the sand). Paying some amount or by bribing them, they could get it from the river. Regular police intervention also troubled them always in the collection process.

Apart from this, they used to collect the *Iska* from roadsides. Normally, many households unload the sand on the roadsides and during the rainy season, some amount of it washes away with the flowing water. The rainwater flows deposit such sand in its way to ditches and canals. Kusavas collect the sand from the stagnated areas. Another illegal way is mining it from the river itself without the knowledge of anyone during the night time. The police seized many lorries carrying sand in raids and the sand lorries got dumped near the police station. So, the Kusavas took the opportunity of collecting sand from those lorries with and without permission from the police. Evenings are selected as a suitable time for such collections.

Firewood (*Katlu/Motlu*) is the material used for the baking of pots in the *chula*. Continuous and stable heat is required for baking the pots. They use different types of woods for the same. The preference goes to the wood which gives more heat for longer durations; such woods give least ashes. The collection normally takes place from the hills near the area. The collection by paying is not preferred. Most of the time, they visit the areas and collect whatever they want for the *chula* for baking. Simultaneously, they collect the firewood for household usage also. Whenever the owners of the land notice the collection of firewood, Kusavas offer some pots. They agree with the landlords to collect the firewood in exchange of pots.

Coconut husk (*cheri*) and coconut shells (*chippa*) are two other raw materials which they use in the production. *Cheri* is preferred more among these two items. It is used to fill the gaps inside the *chula*. Kusavas need to buy *cheri* from the owners because they are stored in a good place after removing from the coconuts; the case is different with respect to firewood. The agreement for this is made with both money and pots. Based on the availability and demand of the owner, they finalise it. Earlier they used palm leaves instead of the *cheri* (Coconut husk). The same purposes were fulfilled with *cheri*. Along with this, they used small barks and pieces of firewood inside the *chula*. Coconut shells (*chippa*) are mainly used at the time of initiating fire to light the *chula* and to maintain the fire for long. These also give immediate heat for the basement of the *chula*.

Soil (*Munnu*) is collected for different purposes during production. A good quantity is needed during the covering stage of the *chula*. After arranging the pots in the *chula* they need to cover it to maintain the heat. The above-discussed *cheri* along with Paddy Straw (*kasuva*) is used to cover the top. On top of it, they apply the mixed paste of the *munnu*. The *Cheedi mannu*, soil from hilly areas, is preferred to use for this process because it is too sticky. Locally, people believe such soils contain stickiness (*pasharma*).

Paddy Straw (*kasuva*) is used to cover the top of *chula* before applying the normal soil mix to stop the air circulation. They need to buy such things from the landlords who produce paddy. The barter system is entertained here according to the demand, or else they have to pay in cash to get the raw materials. Sometimes, if scarcity hits them, they use long grass which is collected from the hilly areas to fill the top and pack the pots. Cotton and other waste cloths can also replace such materials during the covering process. These are the main raw materials and the ways Kusavas collect. The demand for each raw material has increased enormously. The availability of the materials is the main concern in such a situation. The same way, many raw materials got replaced by alternative ones when compared to the past and present scenario of the production.

3.4 Organisation of Work

Kusavas try all possible ways to collect the raw materials and get all those to home. Many families are still following this process to continue their traditional occupation.

Pottery is not only occupation for them, but it is a part of life and culture, so they have to manage many hurdles to continue the traditional occupation. The process of production is a great challenge and art in the community. The well-planned distribution of work, proper supervision over the work and artistically designed work process are ensured and are distributed only among the family and kin.

3.4.1. Division of Labour

As stated earlier, (under Family in Chapter 2) the family is the unit of production as well as distribution (marketing) of pottery. The entire process of pot production is well distributed among the family members of the community. They have been following this distribution of work since centuries; only a modest change is entertained in the form of replacement of individuals in each position. The work starts with the collection of clay from the field, the entire family including small children are supposed to go for the collection of clay. Depending on their capacity to carry on the work, they have to bring the clay to the colony. Earlier they use to collect the clay in the nearby areas, but nowadays the collection takes place very rarely in the nearby areas and they getting it from various districts, which are far away from their places, the elder male members are supposed to go and get the clay from the other districts.

The production of pots needs more manual power, which is distributed among the male members of the family. The other pot making activities such as mixing, slicing of the clay, shaping on a wheel, and baking are mainly done by the male members of the family. Women of the family will do the colouring the pots. They colour the pots before taking them to the *chula* for baking. Marketing is the other part, which is delegated to women members of the family. They practice door-to-door marketing to sell their pots. Women members are more into such marketing compared to the male members of the family as males are engaged in production activities and sometimes the male members of the family go for marketing. During the pot production women is not allowed near to the *chula* due to their menstrual impurity and they are not supposed to be part of it at any point of time. The setting of the pot, covering, closing and opening of *chula* is completely done by the men of the family.

3.4.2. Leadership

The eldest male member of the family or kin group takes the lead in the production process. That senior supervises the entire pot making activity. Work division is takes

place based on the age and gender in his presence and he makes sure that everyone performs their role perfectly with full commitment. All the financial and social matters related to their work and the same person in the community monitors relationship. A senior member does arranging finance, talking about the deal for sale of pots and the collection of raw materials. It is considered his duty to run the family and occupation in all good and bad situations.

3.4.3. The Process of Production

The production process starts when the *Kalasamunnu* reaches home. They always keep the *Kalasamunnu* in a round shape. Even while transporting or storing, the shape is intact. The process starts by crushing it in the initial stage. It comes with lots of waste materials like other small stones and the clay sometimes would become hard by lying under the sunlight, so it need to be properly cleaned. The entire *Kalasamunnu* has to be made into one whole mixture. It is not brought in the form of a mixture from the land. This is achieved by crushing or mixing it. Adding the raw material *Iska* with the *Kalasamunnu* takes place in the initial stages. For the process of mixing *Iska* with the *Kalasamunnu*, they need to crush and mix it manually, by using both legs. These days it has to be done with the help of machinery as well. At the same time, they should make sure that the proper amount of water is poured and in the right proportion. The raw material *Iska* is added with the *Kalasamunnu* to get the strength to the pots during the production.

After the mixture of the both raw materials, they make the mixture into a big roll/ball. Later, they slice it with a specially designed knife. This process may not help in removing all the waste materials from it at the first time of slicing. So, they repeat it for more than one time according to the cleanliness of the *Kalasamunnu*. This helps to remove more waste materials. It is a traditional method of removing impurities. Many families have adapted to the mechanised forms to remove these waste materials. It reduced manual labour by a lot. Quality of the pots assed based upon the quality of the raw materials, if the *Kalasamunnu* is not good they will add more than one type of *Kalasamunnu* before it is mixing with *Iska*. Furthermore, some people informed that these mechanised forms may crush the waste material, and impurities stay with the *Kalasamunnu* and this is visible at the time of shaping the pots. After this process, they make it into a size of medium balls and store for two days. During this storage process, they pour water on it to keep it humid/ to hold the wetness.

This shape has to be kept until the next day to take it to the next stage of production. After completion of the initial stages, the *Kalasamunnu* is ready to be made into the product as it is destined to be. Next stage of the process is the preparation of the design. Based on the requirement, they make the products among them utensils are the preferred products. Variety of models is customised on demand basis and order from the middleman. To make the pot, they keep the ball-shaped *Kalasamunnu* on the pottery wheel and start making the product according to the decided design. Different models of the wheels are used nowadays. According to the feasibility and investment, the models are changed. Mechanised wheels are also widely used these days. Bullock cartwheel model is the traditional pottery wheel. They take only a few minutes to make the models or pots. After preparing it, they keep it aside under the shade for a day or more; they may sometimes keep it under mild sunlight. This process is taken up to dry the product. After that, they can go to the other stage called Shaping.

Shaping is the process where the product is given the final shape. They use personally and professionally designed tools to do this. Shaping is one of the technical and careful jobs. It needs a lot of concentration and patience. The pot is taken from the wheel with an open bottom. They need to attach the bottom without any damage. A wooden bat and a round stone are the two main tools. They keep the stone inside or under the pot and beat it using the wooden bat. This process gives complete shape to the pot. They call this as '*Meduku*' meaning, 'beating'. All the pitfalls and imperfections are identified at this stage. A proper detailed examination is carried out to remove all the imperfections. They search for holes and waste materials on the pot at the end of the shaping and the pointed knives are used to remove those things from the *Kalasamunnu*. The extra decoration on the models is also added during the shaping process.

The women do colouring of the pots and it can be done only after proper drying. Pots are kept until the next day so that it dries up enough to colour it. Colouring is done manually. Women of the community are preferred for this job. They make the colour by mixing thick red soil with water. They use the cloth as a brush to apply the colour on pots. After this process, they keep it for complete drying. It may take days depending on the sunlight or speed in which the product dries.

Preparation of *chula* will take place along with the colouring process. That can be made mainly by men. *Chula* is a furnace, which is used for the baking process of the pots. It is also the final stage of pot production. *chula* preparation is a long process. The routine is- the place needs to be cleaned and filled with firewood and other firing materials. The temperature should be controlled and given priority in the entire process. This is a very important part of the process of pottery making. A small mistake or carelessness can damage the entire product. By keeping that in mind, they manage the *chula*. They are treated as sacred among the Kusava community. Women and outsiders are not allowed to visit or stand near the *chula* during the baking process. It is believed that their presence will pollute and damage the entire set of pots. After this, they take the pots into the market.

3.5. Changes in Equipment/Process and the Difficulties Faced

Modernisation and technological advancements have made many changes in their traditional occupation. Influence of these has brought both advantages and disadvantages to the community. People want to reduce manual labour and save time by doing so. Introducing machines into the pottery brought the same results. Kusavas initiated the process of introducing machines in the production process. Mostly, they use it in two stages of pot production one is for slicing and making the paste of *kalasamunnu* and other machine is attached to the wheel. Slicing and mixing of *kalasamunnu* takes a minimum of two to three days in normal conditions. By introducing the machines into these stages, Kusavas save a minimum of two days in the entire production process. In addition, this reduces a lot of manual labour. However, the machines are very costly due to this reason many people back off from the idea of installing machines. The minimum expenditure of a normal machine is between Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 25,000. Due to the high amount for installing this machine, sometimes two brothers share a common machine to make the pots. The final stage of production happens on the wheel. There are machines, which can be installed on the normal wheel, and machines, which can completely replace the traditional wheel. Both were observed during the study. Here, the machine replaced the effort that they normally put to rotate the wheel. The speed of the production and number of pots produced usually depended on the movement of the wheel. Installation of the machine increased the production compared to the traditional wheel.

Mani, an informant said that after starting to work on the mechanised wheel he could not work properly on the traditional wheel. He uses the machine wheel and not motor installed on the traditional wheel. Both have size differences. The standing and bending postures are practised according to the size of the wheel. Mani's machine wheel is comparatively smaller than the traditional wheel. The size and height vary for both the wheels. Therefore, Mani faced the problem because of the size differences. Another disadvantage that he faces is that he can work only in the presence of electricity. Motor attached wheels can function even without the power. When they face power failure, they can detach the machine and run it manually.

The advantage of the mixing machine is that they help in crushing the bigger stones in clay and the bigger parts of *Iska*. If they do the traditional slicing process, they have to filter the *Iska* to remove all the big parts, if not; such particles damage the mixture of clay and pot. While using the machine they need not worry about such small particles they get crushed by itself during the mixing process. All these can be used to reduce the manual labour, time and effort they put in this stage. They get mixed experiences from mechanising the stages of production. So, according to the circumstances they go for the process.

3.6. Rituals Relating to Pottery

Kusavas perform a *puja* (*Puja* is the act of showing reverence to a god, a spirit, or another aspect of the divine through invocations, prayers, songs, and rituals) for their goddess '*Mariamamma*' before setting the fire in the *chula*. This is the act of devoting the entire process of baking to her and requesting her to take care of proper baking. Slight changes in the heat of fire spoil the pots in *chula*. So, they pray for it not to happen. The women of the family are not supposed to have contact with the *chula*. The women are restricted to have any contact with the *chula*. It is considered that their contact pollutes the *chula*. They have to maintain strict menstrual restrictions in the family and community. It was explained in the ethnographic chapter under lifecycle ritual in detail.

3.7. Production: Quantity and Production Costs

The number of pots during the production is not fixed; it varies according to the model and requirement. A normal sized *chula* can bake 200-300 pots at a time. The size of the post varies according to the size. It is not compulsory that they have to fire the

chula only after completely filling it. With any minimum number, they can do the baking process. Occasionally, the Kusavas receive the order of urgent pots with less quantity. In such situations, they never wait for the *chula* to be filled with more pots. They set the ordered pots to be baked. The production cost varies according to the size of each pot. If the size increases, they consume more efforts and *Kalasamunnu*, due to this they are priced high. The designed pots and other products, which take lots of time for the artistic works also, charged more, based on the labour they put.

3.8 Crisis in the Pottery

The crisis is continuing with the traditional occupation for the Kusavas. The crisis is mainly rooted in two factors: a) Scarcity of raw materials and b) Challenges of marketing. These two main aspects lead to other interlinked problems, which are faced by the potters of the study village.

3.8.1 Scarcity of Raw Materials

The current situation in pottery brings all the difficulties for them to continue their traditional occupation. Scarcity of the raw material is the biggest challenge. The basic raw materials like *Kalasamunnu* cannot be replaced with any other. The experiment can be tried with alternative raw materials.

Kalasamunnu:- Clay/*Kalasamunnu* is the basic raw material for pot production. Scarcity of the raw material begins with this. They are usually collected from the paddy fields. Paddy fields are reported to have good quality material of the clay. In fact, their settlement in the area is highly dependent on the availability of raw materials, mainly the *Kalasamunnu*. This need for settling down near the available resources, from the belief that to collect the raw materials only from a known source that they know traditionally. Earlier, it was possible to collect the clay from even the neighbouring fields, which is not possible these days. The Kusavas were not able to fulfil the demands of the landowners from where they take the *Kalasamunnu*.

The landowners of the surroundings put forward many demands before collecting the *Kalasamunnu* such as the need to pay for the *Kalasamunnu* in huge amounts compared to the previous years. The rates of *Kalasamunnu* hiked because of the increased demand for land, and the regular complaint from the owners is if they collect the *Kalasamunnu* from the land, it turns useless. Putting forth these arguments, they demand more money. However, now they are expected to pay a price to the

landowners if they need *Kalasamunnu*. Apart from paying money for the clay, these artisans are also expected to supply pots free of cost to the landowners.

The Kusavas were never landowners; they own only a piece of land to build their hut and *Chula*. Even these small sects, many Kusavas got these after the land reformation act, which was imposed in the State. They used to stay in the lands of landowners for free without having the ownership and they were being thrown out from there at any point in time. These days, collecting *Kalasamunnu* from own land became a mere dream. So, they paid a huge amount and bought it from the neighbouring districts. Kusavas from Kozhikode and Malappuram districts normally used to collect clay from Waynad district. State geology department acts, and other governmental permissions equally trouble them to get it from other districts. It costs a minimum of Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 25,000 to get a load of *Kalasamunnu* from Wayanad district. Apart from manual labour, they also invest in collection and transportation. At present, even after paying money, they are not able to get the *Kalasamunnu* due to strict rules and regulations by the state.

Iska/Sand: This raw material is not required in huge quantity like *Kalasamunnu*. They use sand to mix with *Kalasamunnu* to give strength to the pots. They need it in small quantities only. Sand is a high demand material in Kerala and costly too. To collect a sack of sand Kusavas need to pay a minimum of Rs. 200 to Rs. 300. Kerala is a state where very strict rules of mining have been imposed by the Geology department. Prevalence of sand mafia has made the police and the other departments to tighten their rules. Indirectly, it has affected the Kusavas in collecting sand for their pot production. After taking proper bills, they need to pay more than Rs. 6000 for one load of sand. It also increases the total cost of production. Earlier they used to mine/collect a small amount of sand from the rivers for their work. These days that does not happen. It leads to unnecessary police interrogations. Even if they do manage to have the money to buy the sand, the place needed to store it for a year or more would be another challenge for them.

Firewood: Firewood would be considered as an important material like *Kalasamunnu* in the Pot production. It is used in *Chula* to give the required temperature for baking the pots. If they cannot provide the appropriate temperature, the pots, which are there in the *chula* will get damaged. To avoid this, they have to maintain the same

temperature for two days. They store sufficient firewood for the same. Today, like other raw materials they have to buy firewood as well. Earlier Kusavas used to collect firewood from the areas near their settlements. They also got it from the lands of *Nayar*, *Namboothiri* or Muslim communities of nearby areas (they hold more lands). Kusavas normally collect firewood from the hills or other wastelands, free of cost and or sometimes the owners charge a little amount.

Different cropping pattern, environmental problems, deforestation, mining, etc. has become part of development in Kerala. Rural areas focus more on paddy cultivation, banana plants, coconuts, areca plantation etc. The hilly areas were the least untouched and the cashew plants were the only plantation we could see a few years back in rural areas. At those times, availability of firewood and collection of it was an easy task and it was very cost effective. After the year 2000, rubber plantation had become a trend village and surrounding areas. All the hilly areas were deforested and shaved off of its natural form of trees and rubber trees were planted. The rest of the place was taken for bricks mining from the laterite regions. In the name of development, the natural blessing and disguise of nature were destroyed. Indirectly, it leads to the scarcity of firewood and other materials for the Kusavas. Ultimately, they had to pay and buy those raw materials.

Coconut husk and coconut shells are the other items they normally use for firing in the *Chula*. Both items were gathered for free and cost-effectively in earlier times. Demand has increased for these items these days. They are used by the oil mills to dry the coconuts for oil production. So, the merchant who collects the coconut husks and shells hardly sells it outside; rather he uses it for himself. In such cases, a Kusava needs to pay money to buy these materials. These items are hard to get even if money is paid.

To build their home, *chula*, and build roads, the Kusavas need land. This is costlier in Kerala. The community is settled in the hill slope of *Vazhakkad panchayath*, *Charuvazhur* area. They do not have any proper road facility to their colony. They were struggling for proper transportation. To build a road they were asked to buy the land, which they could not afford financially. Though the struggle for roads still persists, it is partially got settled with the help of the ward member and other panchayat officials.

Earlier Kusavas lived as joint families but recently, the family institution patterns are changing. From joint family to nuclear-extended family and to nuclear family, transformation is seen as a natural phenomenon. As a result of this transformation, they need more land to the house to accommodate each family. They were not able to afford new land to build new homes. So, they built houses near the existing ones. The trend of constructing big houses forced them to reduce the size of their *chula*. The size of the house occupied more land.

3.9 Impact of the Scarcity

Scarcity has troubled the life of Kusavas and still continues to. The scarcity of raw material is considered to be the main trouble creator in the community. Each situation where they lack the raw material has forced them to choose other alternatives in the occupation. Some situations arise where they cannot replace the raw material and have to run the production. So, they have to go through all the hurdles to finish the production process and run the life, some effects of the scarcity are explained below.

3.9.1 Increased Labour Force

Scarcity has troubled the Kusavas in the form of an increase in the labour force. They were habituated to collect the raw materials from nearby fields, hilly areas and houses. The high demand and lack of availability had changed the scenario. Kusavas are forced to go to nearby areas such as districts and villages; the farthest places they had to go for the *Kalasamunnu* in search of raw materials. As mentioned earlier, the potters from Malappuram districts have to depend on *Wayand* and Palakkad districts for the *Kalasamunnu*. This indirectly increased labour force in the form of loading, unloading and digging labours. Earlier this work was shared by the family and kinship members when it was taken from the nearest places. The male member cannot take the family as labour here. So, he has to pay and take the labour from outside. Same was the case with firewood and coconut husk. All these had to be bought from distant places which further increased the labour.

3.9.2 Increased Investments on Raw Materials

The informants had explained the past processes of collection of the raw material. When they had to collect it from the nearby areas, they never collected the materials for a long term. They just collected the *Kalasamunnu*, firewood and coconut husks for one or two full *chula*; it hardly lasted for one or two months. Now, the collection from

distant places forced them to collect the materials for a minimum of 10-12 months, and they need to pay in a huge amount at a time (around Rs. 15000 to Rs. 25000). Likewise, with the other raw materials too.

3.9.3 Challenges with Regards to Cash Payments

Earlier Kusavas relied on the exchange system for the raw materials with pots. The current purchase never helped them to practice pot exchange as a return for the raw material. The situation got them many difficulties. They had to pay in cash, which normally they keep as a savings or take loans from *Kudumbasree's* (SHG) from the community.

3.9.4 Challenges with regard to forming and sustaining new ties of relationships

The collection of raw materials was not only a mere act of business it is a strong social relationship between Kusavas and landowners. The Kusavas are known for their culture, which forces them to stay at home. The only time they come into contact with other society members is during the marketing of pots and purchasing of raw materials. The relationships they maintained for raw materials were age-old ones, which they are continuing since a long time. The reason is, the same set of people owning the land in the village. Those situations would help them to take goods on credit. They find more freedom in that compared to the new one. Recently, the relations are completely based on money. The relations became materialistic; they start by the payment of money and ends after receiving the services. Further, it never helps to make social bonds and hardly have they received any benefits / advantages in the forms of credit and cashless delivery.

3.10 Marketing Challenges

Marketing is the final and key step in the pottery. Whatever products they make; they will get a satisfactory ending when they find an appropriate market. Earlier the Kusavas never faced any difficulties for selling their products because the pots were dominated in the kitchens. Now other material utensils substituted the pots up to a large extent. At present, they have to come across a lot of struggles to sell the pots. Lack of demand, loss of market places, increased service charges and lack of skills in marketing by youngsters are some of the main factors among these. A brief description of that was given below:

3.10.1. Decreased Demand

The production completely depends on the demand for the product in the market. The demand varies due to market fluctuations. The pots had a high demand in the market in earlier days, but it has reduced a lot these days because of the high competition with other utensils. The small entrepreneurs like Kusavas could not compete with the corporates. The utensil markets are dominated by aluminium, ceramics, and non-stick cookware products. The discussion with the neighbours of the Kusava's was explained with the question- why they didn't prefer to buy pots as utensils even if they could buy the utensils from them at a very low price than market. They replied that not only them but also many households do not prefer those because of its lack of durability. The longevity is very less for every pot utensil; we cannot guarantee the life of it. So, only a handful of people prefer it. Along with this, the difficulties of handling them also troubled them. So, slowly the preference for pots in the kitchen has reduced.

The cost-effectiveness and durability of other material utensils, which entered the market, took control over the entire kitchen market. Those utensils have good longevity compared to pot utensils, and also come in various designs, models and options. Easy replacement, handling and repair options are some of the advantages provided by other utensils. Less priority towards pot utensils made by the households is the main reason for the decrease of demand for pot utensils in the market of the study village.

3.10.2. Break up of Traditional Marketing Arrangements

The Kusavas maintained a good relationship with their traditional marketing strategies. The practice of the exchange system was one of the highlights among all marketing means. Both parties exchanged their goods and services for the return of goods and services. The Kusavas practiced the same with the *Namboothiris* and Muslims of the village (the landowners). The landowners are given raw materials and rice or other food items in return for their pot products. They have continued this till recently. The decline of exchange system of pots with food items, which normally help them to survive during the rainy seasons, where no other means of income was available for them in the past, was completely absent in present days.

General agricultural pattern changes were also becoming evil here. In farming, people shifted from paddy cultivation to banana plantation, tapioca, and other vegetable items

in *Vazhakkad* area. It reaped them more profits compared to the paddy cultivation. High expenditure and less income are the reasons for this change in the farming sector. So, the chances of getting the grains as a payment for the pots also ceased.

Chanthas (the weekly markets) was the other marketing option for them. The Kusavas used to take the pots to nearby village *chanthas* on every week. So, they could find a good number of customers there and the products get sold easily. This gave them better profit with minimum effort. The nearby towns like *Vazhakkad*, *Edavannappara*, *Areekkod* and *Kondotty* had the weekly *chanthas*, but now the developments in these small towns have cleared the scope for *chanthas*. The increased shops, supermarkets have brought everything at one place by increasing convenience in these towns. So, the weekly *chanthas* have vanished and Kusavas lost the option of marketing in such places.

Door to door, delivery was the method they practiced along with the traditional exchange system. Since the beginning, they prioritized this type of sale. This brings them income in the form of money. This method also gave them more income than other marketing strategies. They carried the pots in a bamboo basket specially designed for this purpose. Women are assigned for this job of the door to door selling.

Informant Shanta of 55 aged women shared her twenty years of pot marketing experience: they used to walk around 10 to 15 km every day to sell their pots. They start early in the morning from their homes and they prepare and carry food and water with them. Two or three of them start together from the colony, split in between, and take new routes to sell it. They will return home by dusk. Except for small children, all the girls of the community are preferred for selling the produce. But now, the aged women are the only ones doing it. Younger kids and women deny coming along with them these days. Some of them find it shameful or deem it an inferior job to do it door-to-door. In addition, many of their peer group people started teasing them in schools and other public places. By stating this as a reason, they even stopped going to school. So, to get minimum basic education for their children they also did not force them to come along with them to sell the pot utensils”.

The researcher could also experience it during the fieldwork. Women from decently educated families, newly married women, girls who go to schools or college did not go to sell the pots. They are very conscious of their status in society. They consider

pot selling as a job of lower status. Even today, some of the aged women go for selling it. Apart from door-to-door marketing, they also sell the pots to the local shops. This is not a profited exchange for them, because those shop owners never give the full amount in hand. They give half of the amount when they unload the pots and give the rest after selling it. They give fewer amounts to Kusavas because even the shop owners also need to draw their profit from it. This gives an advantage to the Kusavas as well. They can buy food materials on a credit basis from the same shop. It helps them to run their life in difficult times. After purchasing all the groceries, they are left with no cash, from selling the pots. This negatively affects them from saving no money to buy the raw materials for the next time.

Another way of marketing was taking an order from middlemen. By involving middlemen in the sale, the middlemen give them an order for a particular type or model and number. The Kusavas have to make it and give him the ordered pot utensils. They are paid for each pot with less amount. We could see big exploitation in this marketing, particularly when a middleman is involved. He tries to make more profit by paying them less for the pots. Normally, this middleman comes from Nilamboor or Kozhikode (the neighbouring cities). The middleman pays them in advance for the products to buy raw materials. Before the deadline, the Kusavas have to give them the products and get the rest of the money. The Kusavas accept orders from the middleman even if they exploit them because it gives them proper work throughout the year. They had to face some problems here such as the lack of manpower and necessary raw materials. The middlemen sometimes bring in big orders where they cannot finish before the deadline because there are not many families involved in the process of making one.

3.10.3. Transportation Problems and Transport Customs

Transportation has become a major problem these days for marketing. Earlier the mark for the pots was near to their settlement. When they had a good market for the pots, they could sell their pots in and around 10 km radius. But these days, the lack of demand has forced them to go for long distance to sell their products. They had to depend on transport to reach distant places. They used to sell the pots to nearby shops, now they had to rely on the shops in other towns for the sale. Further, in both cases, marketing needs additional transport facilities to deliver the pots to the shops and customers. It has increased the cost even more and reduced the profit from the pots.

The lack of availability of small vehicles is also a problem during this delivery process. Therefore, they had to depend on the bigger vehicles for transportation by paying large amounts of money.

3.10.4. No Skills of Negotiations- not Professionals

Negotiations play a key role in all the marketing of pots. All the means of marketing need the talents to get good returns for their work because there is no fixed rate for any pot they make. According to the raw material, time and effort they can alter the final rates. The youth is not experienced in the art of negotiation, which brings down the value for their products. This can be seen more in door-to-door sale where women who are new in the group may not have expertise in the act of negotiation and they get very less profit out of it. Therefore, lack of negotiation skills also became a hurdle for the Kusavas.

3.10.5. Inability to Attract Through Innovative Designs

Artisan activity is known for its innovative ideas and works. There are huge opportunities for them to be a part of the sculpture and other artistic production. The new inventions and varieties of pots itself can grab the good market. The people of the study area are least aware of innovative creations. They could not calculate the general demand as well. Due to the inability to attract, the market through innovative designs is also a problem. Therefore, the technical problems involved in the marketing of pottery products are many. Ever since the introduction of plastics and other metals, many households, especially the urban population prefer plastic and other metals, over handcrafted pottery utensils. The general hazard of using plastic and other heavy metals has been ignored, despite several warnings. The Government, however, has tried to revive this pottery industry, by offering various incentives and other awareness programmes like fairs and seminars, to improve the health status directly and also revive the pottery business indirectly. Fairs and seminars are one of the best way to exhibit the skilled labour. Despite these attempts, there has however been no major improvement.

3.11. Impact on the Community

Social factors such as consciousness about their occupational status, social acceptance, status have played a major role. Unlike earlier, the members of the community started mingling with the other people very frequently, the SHGs like *Kudumbasree* made the women members be part of the inter-caste groups. The discussions and gossips in

those groups started influencing their social consciousness. Students who started going to the schools started getting the feeling of differences from other students. So, they themselves started feeling excluded from others. A type of caste or general identity feeling began emerging among and within them. Even we could see this consciousness in the door-to-door marketing of pots. The new generation was not ready to become part of it. Feelings of inferiority or subordination play a major role in this activity. Along with other factors, it is also responsible for the decline in the pot production.



3.1: Kalasa Munnu



3.2: Mixed Kalasa Munnu



3.3: Grinding of Kalasa Munnu



3.4:Production in machine wheel



3.5:Traditional wheel

3.6:Prepared pots



3.7:Painting the pot



3.8:Old *Chula*



3.9:New *Chula*



CHAPTER 4

OCCUPATIONAL SHIFTS AND CHANGES IN THE KUSAVA COMMUNITY

4.1 Occupational Shifts

The extent of occupational mobility is indicated by the number of workers who change occupations over a given period of time. Occupational mobility can be upward or downward, depending on whether a worker moves to a higher paying, higher status occupation, or vice versa. "Occupational change has been largely understood as a change in the activities of the members of a society to earn their livelihood. The change is observed by the increase and decrease in the distribution of these activities in the socio-economic structure of a society" (Desai 1971). Occupations that have been practiced by generations are generally hailed as traditional occupations. Tradition and modern are two terms that have their essence embedded in values, ideologies, levels of mechanisation, knowledge systems and the capitalist modes of production (Shah et al, 2017). Traditional occupations are deeply embedded in practices and customs and they completely relied upon a subsistence economy, prior to the industrial revolution. With the economic, ecological and technological changes, the occupational preferences have changed for members of all communities including the communities in India in spite of caste still being the dominant principle of social organisation. In this chapter, the issues relating to occupational shifts, more particularly the extent of occupational shift and the social and economic impact of it on Kusava families in the study village is examined.

4.1.1 Inter-Generational and Intra-Generational Shifts

Occupational mobility is movement of labour from one job to another. The process can happen in various ways and we could find different types of the motivation behind mobility. An inter-generational and intra-generational shift of the Kusavas needs a special attention. Inter-generational mobility is a shift, which occurs from one generation to another generation, in terms of social status and economic status. We see these shifts in the occupations of father/mother to their sons and daughters. The changes in occupations that are examined for the persons of the same generation and during his/her life course is categorized as intra-generational shift. The achievement of higher economic capital, higher education and motivations, perceptions and attitudes

of members with regard to status, security, opportunities for growth etc. provide for changes in achieved status of members of the community. The members thrive for status crystallization by choosing occupations that give them higher status than before in the society. In such a scenario, the inter-generational shifts are more frequent. But, one needs to bear in mind that mobility can be both upward and downward. Negative intra generational shifts and inter-generational shifts may happen in certain families due to their class positions or under some compelling circumstances. In case of Caste communities with association of specific occupations like in the case of Kusava, familial bonds and family prestige affect the choice of occupation they newly take up therefore the occupational shift of course cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, some have to carry on with their father's occupation while others may opt for higher occupation. Few members even opt for lower occupation as it can benefit the overall social prestige of the family (Kaistha, 1987). Mobility in occupation is not only a shift in occupation but also a change in their culture and identity, which is clearly visible among the Kusavas.

4.2 Occupational Shift in the Study Community

The livelihood of human beings initially relied on hunting and gathering and then it took decades to shift to nomadic herding or pastoral nomadism. It has taken centuries for this mode of shifting and changing places to come to an end. Sedentary life began with the advent of agriculture. Agriculture also brought in surplus as far as food is concerned and so paved way for pursuing other occupations on full time. The major modes at that time for earning livelihood can be categorised as Agricultural and Non-agricultural sectors. In the non-agricultural sector, the role of artisans was remarkable during the earlier days. They helped the agricultural sector by giving the tools and other materials, which were helpful for cultivation. They were also produced some household products which are very helpful in their day-to-day life. Gradually, members of all communities started a settled life and along with it greater occupational specialisation. However, in many communities, members were given social status according to the occupation they practiced.

The researcher could collect data on occupations of members of five generations of Kusava families in the study village. Here, it was observed that inter-generational shift is significantly higher in the third and fourth generation in the community. Intra-generational change is observed to be common only in the case of members of the

fourth generation. The fifth generation of the community have poor knowledge about their traditional occupation; the community pressure on them has considerably eroded and they showed less interest to learn their traditional occupation. The inter-generational shifts are more frequent in case of families with parents practicing pottery as a part-time occupation.

The researcher has also collected the data from three generations of people with regard to their knowledge and practice of pottery. The data was not obtained as members belonging to the senior generations were no more engaged in any work owing to their old age or they are dead. It was learnt that all the members of these generations practiced only pottery. The occupational shift has thus begun to occur only from the last three generations of the Kusava of the study community. The third generation sustained pottery in spite of some difficult situations as their children belonging to 4th and 5th generations of their families shifted to other occupations to supplement family incomes. The fifth generation of the families mostly comprised of children and they showed the least interest to learn the occupation.

Table 4.1: Generational wise shift in the traditional occupation

Generation		Traditional occupation	Traditional occupation+ some other Occupation	Exclusively different occupation	Total
2 st	Male	04	--	--	04
	Female	02	--	--	02
3 rd	Male	10	04	--	14
	Female	06	04	--	10
4 th	Male	02	06	09	17
	Female	--	03	08	11
Total					58

4.2.1 Occupational Choices

Kusavas put a lot of efforts and hopes in every stage of pot making and these days they are least satisfied with the returns they get from pot making. So, the state of getting less income even after struggling hard made them choose other occupations. The illiterate male members of the Kusava community can easily go for construction and related daily wage works. The construction sector offers them a lot of opportunities. These days, daily wage works pay good money and it has increased enormously. Currently, minimum wages have crossed Rs. 500 in all the sectors. Wage

is very high than the daily income they earn from the pot making when the expenses of raw materials are excluded. Thus, wage labour has turned pottery to part-time occupation in case of many families.

Skilled work such as driving has also been opted by some school dropouts amongst them in recent years. Self-employment has emerged as a preferred choice to them as they feel that it gives better dignity, flexibility of working hours and security with regard to income. The illiterate male members with some skills like carpentry, masonry etc., in recent times (5-6 years) also found opportunity to migrate to Gulf countries to work and earn better incomes. The women of Kusava community do not take up daily wage works except under the MGNREGA scheme to get guaranteed wages. The works under the MGNREGA scheme are said to be 'lighter works with reduced working hours and so these works suit them.

The deplorable condition of pottery is pressurising them to leave the occupation permanently. Less income is the basic problem and they cannot earn money on a daily basis. Marketing of their goods has become more cumbersome. Only the middle men's orders give them advances to buy raw materials. If they sell it in the retail shops, he/she returns the amount in instalments, which is of great disadvantage to them. Daily wage jobs give them cash instantaneously. Pot making is seen to leading to financial crisis eventually. Daily wages in construction work are very attractive due to demand for such service in the area currently. Practice of pottery means investment on capital goods and the financial status of Kusava does not allow for such investments. The alternative sources of income are being considered as less stressful financially or otherwise than the traditional pot making.

Two of the Kusava community of the study village run their own auto rickshaw in the route from *Vazhakkad* to *Cheruvayur*. They find themselves more comfortable in this work. They are not answerable to anyone. They can skip the work any time and return to pot making in case of any bulk order with appropriate terms and conditions. This gives them more freedom with regard to their work while also assuring better returns. The individual is able to earn a minimum amount of Rs. 500 after deducting the maintenance charges of the auto rickshaw. Owning an auto also helps in transportation of raw materials and finished products for marketing. Sometimes it is also helpful in the door-to-door delivery.

The migration to the Arab countries is a normal phenomenon among people of all the communities. The living with Muslims helped them to know about this opportunity. The family of an early Kusava migrant (Narayanan, who arranged the visa through one of the Muslim) abandoned pot making long ago. The family of Narayanan is now a well-settled family in the village. Recently one more Kusava from the community has gone to the gulf. After his migration, the part-time practice of the pottery was also paused as there is no other male member in their family.

Case 1:

Mani, a 40 years aged man, one of the key informant is a good pot maker and also the priest in *Kavu* (temple of village deities). He undertakes religious performances in the temple during festivals and ceremonies. He, being a '*Komaram*' from the community gets invitations to perform the same traditional festivals of other communities, which takes place in their *Kavu*. He informs that he needs good physical and mental health to perform the role of *Komaram*.

Mani also engages in shamanism for diagnosis of illness due to supernatural or human agents. Due to increased demand for his religious and magical skills, he is now learning the chanting of mantras and other procedures of the religious performance. He considers his new roles as an alternative livelihood source. As such, he now takes up pottery as a secondary source of income.

It is observed that, when it comes to giving up or taking up the traditional occupation as a part-time one, the third and fourth generation members follow it first. The age, experience, belief in the culture and tradition made the second generation compel to stick to the traditional occupation. Good income, high socio-economic status or poverty and discrimination have not influenced the second generation to think about other occupation while practicing the traditional occupation. "National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 later renamed as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, MGNREGA is Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'". This scheme provided an alternative livelihood for Kusava women ever since its implementation. A total of 24 out of 30 women in the working-age in the community have informed to be taking advantage of this scheme regularly. The three women who did not register belonged to the well-off families in the community. The other three among them are engaged in

other work: one works in a school as a kitchen helper, second one works in a mall as saleswomen and the other works in the private institute as a peon. It guarantees 100 days of job and assured money. They get Rs270 daily.

4.3 Reasons for shift in Occupation and Changes

Traditional occupation played key role in the case of Kusavas in *Cheruvayur*. Change in the occupation brought changes in their community life and culture. The globalisation has brought the world under one umbrella. It has helped the free flow of products across countries and for fulfilling the demands cost-effectively. The traditional occupation of Kusavas got influenced and is affected by the globalisation in India. The study helped to identify the reasons for the occupational mobility among the Kusavas. As it was discussed in the previous chapter, crisis in the traditional occupation is primarily due to unavailability of raw material and difficulties of marketing. The forced as well as free choice of them to shift their occupation however, affected their entire life and culture. Mobility affected their social institution, social relations and social bonds. These issues of occupational shift have been dealt below:

4.3.1 Changes at Household and Family Level

A brief description of the family among the Kusava has already been presented earlier. The families of the study village are largely of nuclear family type. Only three out of twenty fall under extended nuclear family pattern. The informants of the community revealed in the interviews that in the past (i.e. till about two to three decades ago) Kusuva families were largely either patrilineal extended or nuclear extended families. Such a numerical and genealogical composition of families helped them to practice their traditional occupation providing scope for appropriate division of labour based on gender constructions and other criteria. Gradually the change/mobility affected the family structure as well as organisation of family in terms of terms of interpersonal relationships, authority, childcare, financial management and other issues.

The distribution of work in case of pot making has undergone considerable change as the households take up pot making only as subsidiary occupation now. Males primarily handle all the tasks relating to pot making only. The collection of *Kalasamunnu*, transportation, colouring, mixing/slicing and marketing are the works in which the female members used to participate more. The role of women has now reduced as they go to other works to supplement the family incomes. The scarcity of

raw materials in the nearby places necessitates collection from other districts. So, the women of the family are not able to take up such works now. Further, an all-weather road facility to the colony enables transporting raw materials in larger quantities using goods vehicles. Likewise, the availability of machines for mixing also helped to relieve women from this task. Marketing now requires covering long distances and larger area. It is feared that if the women have to travel such long distances they would lose their dignity and respect. The door-to-door marketing by women is no more preferred now. So, marketing is also managed by the male members of the family these days with different sources.

Case-1.

Narayanan, 38-year-old man and the head of a nuclear family has migrated to the Gulf for employment. His family includes his wife, Shobha and three children. Narayanan was a skilled and highly talented potter before his migration to the Gulf. Besides that, he had skills in carpentry. Higher income and opportunity for a better life made him to shift to other occupation. His father and the elder brothers were employed in *Gwalior Rayons Silk Marketing Company Ltd* in Mavoor, Kozhikode. The contacts of them helped him to get a visa to the gulf. He went to the gulf as a carpenter; it resulted in no one practicing in the traditional occupation at his home. From his earnings, he also constructed a new house in the village. He hasn't given provision for construction of the *chula* required for pottery in his newly built house too. This indicates that it is a case of complete inter-generational occupational mobility.

Case-2.

Kunjappu, a 60-year-old man and Velayudhan (late) are the other company workers from the colony. The company work has given them a good life over the years. The proper and on time income was the main reason for them to live better. They were practicing the traditional occupation along with their company's work. The good income from the company helped them to build good RCC houses near the road, which is a symbol of their changed social status. Velayudhan could provide a good education to his children. He has three sons and all have been well qualified. Two are graduates among them and his third son Shaiju is defence personnel. After his death none of his children practiced the traditional occupation.

Kusavas do not see any problem in regard to ‘compromising with their family values’ these days. They are keen on grabbing the new opportunities that come to them due to education, better economic status and the developmental activities in the area in order for improving their social status as well as quality of living. Thus, the occupational shift in many cases is a free choice and in some cases, it is also a forced choice.

4.3.2 Dwindling Influence of Kinship and Kinship Obligations

Kusavas exhibited a great sense of kin unity and follow the kin obligations strictly in different ways and on different occasions. These kinship networks influence the celebrations and functions, both at the level of household and community. Kin plays a significant role in the match selection, organisation of ceremonies related to birth, death, marriage, religious etc., The fulfilment of kin obligations helps in the organisation of their work and also in the learning of their skill. All the kinship relations have a great connection with the pottery. Relationship with parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins etc. are maintained in terms of practicing pottery.

Kusavas always maintained a good relationship with each other in the community. But at present, the unity in the community got disturbed. It is clearly visible in all celebrations and functions. The occupational shift and income from other sources have changed economic status of each family in the colony. Whereas, earlier the decision was used to be taken collectively by all kin members in regard to celebration of festivals and organisation of ceremonies, today all started taking decisions independently on all the occasions. The economic differences are responsible for the conflict for developing a road, which is an on-going problem in the community; it has played a big role in breaking the relations among the Kusavas. The conflicts are mainly between the families of the ex-factory workers (rich in the community) and others in the colony.

4.3.3 Marriage and Choice of Marriage Partners

The marriages were completely under the control of the parents in earlier times. The bride and grooms used to meet each other only at the time of marriage. The Kusavas were following only the *Pathapelli*, which takes place for the whole night. The economic freedom that came with occupational mobility influenced the mate selection. The individuals have great freedom and both are given the choice for

selecting their partners. There are cases, which explain the rejection from the girl's side only because of the groom was still practicing the traditional occupation.

Case-1

One informant Kunjappu, 60 years old man has explained his experience while finding a bride for his son. He was one of the best potters in the community. On an urgent basis, he goes and helps his relatives in making pots. When his son attained the age of marriage, he started searching for a suitable bride for him. He was avoided and all the families whom he approached for marriage negotiations rejected his son. The marriage brokers were also not able to find girls for him. The reason was that the families did not want their daughter to be married to a boy who practices only their traditional occupation. They felt that traditional occupation would not help to take care of their daughter well. Same was the case with two others too. They insisted their sons to take up another job to get married. One among them has bought an auto rickshaw for his son.

Case-2

The financial and occupational security today plays a major role in marriage alliances. Recently the community witnessed an inter-caste marriage. A Kusava girl got married to *Thiyya (Ezhav)* boy. The girl was physically challenged and got married to a differently abled boy from another district. For many a Kusava, it is compromising with their societal norms. Under normal circumstances, the family has to choose the *pathapelli* for the marriage. Since it was an inter-caste marriage, the families choose *malakalyanam* for marriage.

4.3.4 Jajmani Relations; Decreased Importance to Reciprocity of Services

The Kusavas were the part of the *Jajmani* system in the village. The Kusavas were maintaining a better occupational relationship with *Namboothiris*, *Nayars* and Muslims who were landlords of the village. The occupational mobility had made changes in the relationship between landlords and Kusavas. Earlier, the Kusavas used to collect the raw materials from these landlords of the village. They have practiced traditional exchange system for the collection of the materials and payments.

These days, accessibility and availability of the *Kalasamunnu* from their lands is very less. The landowners used to give the land on conditions of tenancy for years. Both landlords and tenants cultivated paddy in their fields. The production of paddy has

reduced tremendously in these days. The tenants who have taken it preferred more plantains over paddy in the fields. All these changes reduced the amount of grain with the landlords. So, they had to pay money for the pots. But, Kusavas did not get either grains or money for the pots from the landlords. So slowly that exchange has reduced, and they preferred other customers over landlords where they get proper payment for their products.

4.3.5 Changes at Household Economy: Economic Status; Distribution of Family Income; Savings and Consumption Patterns

Standard of living can be measured based on many criteria such as Housing, the dress they use, the availability of home appliances and food habits they follow etc. Traditionally Kusavas lived in *Kutcha* houses. It was very helpful for them to shift their place of living easily because they were shifting from one place to another in the past frequently. When they came to *Kusavankunnu* from *Kusavanthodi* they have settled in the *Kutcha* houses. Gradually, the development in neighbouring areas and the government policies for their wellbeing helped them to build new *Pakka* houses.

They are well equipped with advanced modern home appliances in their houses. The household items such as TV, Refrigerator, Air Conditioner, cable connection or dish TV, bike, mobile phones, gas stoves etc., have become part of their life. They procured them either by down payment or by payment in weekly instalment. They prefer to buy in EMIs from the shop or the distributor who comes to their colony.

Interaction with advanced technologies has improved their social and economic life. The experiences from new jobs helped them to have a better relationship with neighbours and others. They started not to be tradition-bound. Their networks of relationships have increased, this paved way for improving their social capital. The improved incomes helped to change their saving practices too. Some of the members have opted to save their surplus in chit fund companies. Some women of Kusavas show interest in saving money in *Kudumbashrees*, an SHG.

4.3.6 Occupational Shifts and Changes in the Religion and Lifecycle Rituals

Occupational mobility could not bring many changes in the religious belief of the Kusavas. They are still continuing the traditional practices related to their beliefs. The community follows all the religious rituals in the same way as they used to do those before. The Kusavas, however, are changing the ways in which rituals they perform

the rituals. As we discussed earlier, the biggest change that took place is in the marriage practices. The changing lifestyles and economic development have forced them to prefer *malapelli* over *pathapelli*.

Kusavas have started celebrating the first birthday of the kids. The occupational change has caused interaction with outsiders while practicing other occupation, which has influenced them to consider the first birthday and other birthdays as significant events. Celebration of birthdays is now considered as a status symbol in the society.

The participation of the outsiders in their village/deity festivals is a notable change after the occupational shifts. As part of *puja* performances, sacrificing goats and cocks is an important ritual. After the sacrifice of animal or bird, Kusavas cook curry and rice, which is served to all the people who attend the festival. Any religious functions in the past have restricted the entry of non-Kusavas. Since they have close interaction with other caste people during the daily wage work, they cannot help but invite their fellow co-workers for their celebrations.

4.3.7 Occupational Shifts and Inter-Ethnic Relationships

Kusavas used to follow purity and pollution strictly. They maintain many restrictions when it comes to interaction with outsiders. Over a period of time, this has gotten diluted and the restrictions have softened. Occupational change has played its key role in this change. When they engage in other jobs, they cannot keep any restrictions on interactions with others. The construction workers and others maintain a good relationship with members of all the castes. Hence, such relations helped them to come out of caste-based hindrances and to have free interaction with all.

4.3.8 Occupational Shift and Education

Getting educated and learning new skills are the main means for Kusavas to cope up with the changes in society. Education empowers them besides helping to get some employment. Pot making, being a family-oriented occupation provided little scope for encouraging their children for a good education. Earlier generations never thought about their future, they were least bothered about changes in society and occupation. Those conditions made the life of Kusavas static.

Gwalior rayon and silk company in *Mavoor* provided opportunities for private salaried employment. The employment in those companies also helped them to see life in a

different way. Later, the employed Kusavas tried to give good education to their children. There is only one central government employee from the community. Shiaju serves in the Indian army. He is the one among the three graduates from the community. His employment and social status served to motivate members of younger generation to perform well in education. The young children are highly motivated to have a good education and financially secured job in society.

Case 1

Vinesh, a 28 years aged man had expressed his concern on occupational shift. During his childhood his parents were practicing the pottery without machinery. They demanded more manual labour in those days. Family members are the only participants as manual labourers. He and his brother were the main helpers to his father to finish the orders in time. Spending more time and energy on work dragged them from getting a proper education. In such a situation, higher education was only a dream. They had to leave their education in half way without finishing their matriculation. Now they have no other option than doing daily wage work. They are left with no options to do any other type of white-collar jobs. Keeping in mind, all the religious and community values his parents could not give them either proper education or good socio-economic status. They do not want to make the same mistake and trouble their children. They want to provide a good education and life for their children. They wish to follow the norms and values of their community, but it has been difficult for them to live in the current society with values and norms. Further, this condition forced them to opt for alternatives. Practicing other occupation along with pot making never threw them into poverty. They are now satisfying the demands of family and children in a better way when compared to the olden days. The higher income that they get from other daily wages has changed their way of life and they are more comfortable these days. They started believing that better life and lifestyle could be witnessed if they go for the jobs, which gives daily wages.

4.4 Hunting as an Alternative

As discussed earlier, Kusavas cannot earn their bread from the traditional occupation only, and they need to depend on other resources to get their livelihood. Earlier, their elders of the community practice hunting as a parallel food obtaining method. Kusavas have been practicing hunting for centuries. They consider this as a leisure

and parallel activity to earn their livelihood. They never practice hunting for marketing purposes. It is done only to satisfy their needs for food. Hunting is a group activity, which includes more members from the community, whereas pot making is mostly restricted to the family. This activity strengthens their community feeling of togetherness. They go in groups for hunting. People of all ages are involved in it. Usually, the participation of women is minimal in hunting activities.

Kusavas of *Cheruvayur* go for hunting in nearby hilly areas. They hunt small birds and animals that are available to them. An informant Unni narrated his experiences of going for hunting with his maternal relatives. He lives near to the forest areas of *Areakkod* and *Nilabur*. The Kusavas in this place hunt big animals like wild bores, deers etcetera. Kusavas hunt with indigenous technologies such as bow and arrows, spears, knives with the help of trained dogs. He also contrasted the differences in hunting practices of this region with that of the study area *Cheruvayur*. *Cheruvayur* does not have the big forest areas but only small hills and plains and hence they almost never find big animals. Therefore, they prefer to hunt small animals and birds such as mongoose, wild rabbit, porcupine, giant rats, bandicoot, pigeons, bush quail etcetera. They prefer to hunt pigeons in the months of August and September (Malayalam calendar *Chinga Masam*).

Trained dogs are one of the main attractions in hunting. At home, they raise and train a number of dogs for this sole purpose. In earlier days, the number of dogs they raise denoted the status of each Kusava family. The people who go for regular hunting maintain more dogs whose number may go up to ten. The strict wildlife rules and regular intervention of forest officials in their colonies have affected the hunting activity to a large extent. Hunting, one of the alternative food collection activities has started to disappear now. For the past ten years, they have not been able to go for any type of hunting from *Cheruvayur* village. They gave up this activity and focused more on traditional and other occupations to earn a livelihood.

CHAPTER 5

CURRENT INTRA AND INTERETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS IN CHERUVAYUR

5.1 Kusavas and Their Relations

Kusavas were unique about their sub-culture and were also very conscious of their caste identity in the village. They used to spend their leisure time in the company of members of their group. The family and community organised the life cycle rituals or other ceremonies where they hardly invite non-Kusavas to the celebrations. As discussed in the second chapter, any member of Kusava community would consider himself/herself as belonging to one of the five *illams* into which their society is divided. The *illams* are *Pattakkale*, *Selevini*, *Saudri*, *Pulinthalam*, and *Jogam*. However, the presence of members of all these five *illams* in all the religious and other festivals is compulsory among the Kusavas. Members belonging to each *illam* have a unique role to play in any life cycle ritual. The functions will complete only when these four/five *illams* fulfill their part in the celebrations. Reciprocity of services was frequent in Kusavas celebration even today. When members of their community participated in any economic activity, they offered good food and alcohol as reciprocation. These norms made them function as a bounded group within the village. The opportunity for the fulfillment of social and psychological needs of individuals within their networks of kinsmen discouraged members from forming close-knit ties with members of other castes and religion living in their village. Their relationships with others were claimed to be purely working relationships.

Changes have swept in the villages in Kerala. The occupational shifts, migrations, social mobility of groups, etc., have brought in significant changes in the interethnic relationships in the villages. The study village is no exception to these changes. The social and economic mobility and the migrations consequent to this mobility reduced the numerical strength of Kusavas in the villages. This reduction in the size of the group has many consequences for them. It not only forced them to extend their networks beyond their community but also weakened the community sentiments amongst them.

The Kusavas of study village practiced an extended nuclear family system, but these days they prefer a nuclear family. Migration for the sake of occupation played its crucial role in this shift. Such shifts not only changed the structure of the family numerically but also changed the intra-familial relationship between the family and other kin members of the community. Age of the individuals was an essential consideration for respect and advice in any matter relating to the family. The elders of the family have authority and they were the guardians of the traditions and morals of the Kusavas. The elders, both men and women, played an essential role in decision making – be it economic matters or non-economic matters. The characterisation of relationships between the siblings was by a strong sense of unity. The relationship of the women with their in-laws was one of extreme respect and authority-subordination.

The nature of relationships between the members of the family appears to have changed. The economic independence of the grown-up members of the family was said to be one reason for the 'different kind' of relationship now between the adult sons and their parents. When the unmarried sons contribute substantial income to the family, the parents expressed a feeling of dependency on their sons. The elders do not make unilateral decisions now but involve their grown-up sons and daughters in decision making. The diminishing role of parents in family decisions is due to the changing nature of consumption patterns. The women fold of the family enjoyed greater freedom in many matters. The shift to nuclear family naturally strengthened the conjugal bonds.

In Kusava community, the availability of all five *illams* at one place/colony to perform the ritual is not possible. The members of missing *illams* are to be invited from another village now. When such an invitation is extended to members of missing *illams*, they need to bear their travel expenses and also take care of some exclusive hospitality. These activities increased the costs of the celebration of their rituals and ceremonies. The study village consists of only three *illams* currently, they are Pattakkale, Selevini, Saudri. The absence of *Pulinthalam illam* members in the village is especially felt by *Kusava* of the study village as they are required for some 'purification' rituals. The members of this *illam* sprinkle water before the life cycle rituals are commenced to make the place and materials used for rituals sacred and pure. In case of death rituals too, the members of this *illam* are required for

conducting the ceremony of *adiandram* (fifteenth day ritual after the death along with bali) which is essential to drive back the negative forces that are presumed to occupy the places where the death has taken place. These purification rituals by them are also crucial for the dead to join the other dead ancestors.

The members of *Pulinthalam illam* are now present in the neighboring villages namely Areekode at a distance of 10 km. Some families of the study village invite the *Pulinthalam illam members* living in Areekode whenever they need their assistance as they are also related to them. Some families in the study village depend on the members residing in *Mavoor* village located at a distance of about 20 km.

The people of study village also go for the rituals conducted by the families of other villages where members of their *illams* are not present. Others invite the *Saudries* of this village for example as they are the ones who have a central role in marriage rituals as this *illam* is considered as ‘leaders’ of Kusuva and occupy a higher ritual status within the Kusava community. *Selevini* is considered as Assistants to *Saudries*. *Pattakkale illam* members play the role of priests in marriage ceremonies.

Interestingly, the absence of all five *illams* in one village and the need for members of all *illams* in the organisation of many rituals now lead to a situation of ‘commercial relations’ as many of the members of Kusava community particularly those of older generation put it. Invited members are from other villages; the hosts are expected to meet all their expenditure and also expected to pay more considerable attention to them. The members of the study village informed that many members now make the demand for a payment of more than Rs.1000 for each function.

The settlement area of Kusavas is located in the village along with the areas where the families of *Thiyyas*, *Cheruman*, *Kanakka* and Muslims are living. Earlier Kusavas were not inviting others to their marriages and religious festivals and they avoided others' functions too, because of the restrictions they followed regarding commensality. Only the Kusavas who are close friends of members of other castes/religion used to get invitations and they were attending the functions based on their equations. After returning from visiting any such functions, such members were required to take a bath before entering into the houses. Such a practice was more rigidly used to be followed when the grandparents were living with their parents.

There is significant change now regarding the attendance of members of Kusava community to the marriages of members of another caste in the village. The participation in weddings of Muslim friends has also increased. However, if the food served consists of beef, they either choose not to attend that marriage or they will skip the lunch/dinner. Kusavas are also inviting members of other castes and Muslims to their functions more often now. However, if the marriage is conducted traditionally, the invitation is extended only to the reception.

The changes in Kusavas occupation have played a crucial role to relax this social rigidity among them. The shift to unskilled and semiskilled construction works is necessitating them to visit the household of other castes and religions. Moreover, the provision of food is one component of wages paid for such tasks, and they are also accepting to eat food provided by the house owners at the workplace.

5.2 Kusavas at Present

Kusavas maintained social rigidity for a long time in the village due to their claims of ritual purity relative to many Hindu castes and Muslims. For example, (in marketing), the women of the community were mostly involved in selling the pots by visiting door to door and while they visit the houses, they restrained themselves from entering the homes of other caste members who were considered lower to their status. Further, during their marketing, all types of bargaining and sale used to take place in the courtyards of the houses. Also, Kusavas never accepted the food and water offered by customers, they preferred to carry their food and water along with the pots and if the water gets over, they fill the bottles from nearby wells on their own. However, in rare cases, the food is accepted only in raw form from outsiders.

At present, women who practice marketing are very few in numbers. The ones who go for door-to-door marketing have started accepting the food and compromised with the above-discussed restrictions. The severe conditions faced by them could not help them to carry the food with them these days. The fact that men have started consuming whatever food they get during the workplace, they gradually decided to compromise on such restrictions.

In case, if an outsider comes for bulk ordering or if the middleman comes to give the order for pots, they are expected to sit only in the courtyard and talk to them. They would not allow any outsider into their houses. Due to the significance of mediators in

the traditional economy of Kusavas, keeping middleman happy is a necessity during these times. If they practice social distance, the middleman will not come to the colony. So, Kusavas started treating them like guests and all hospitality is extended to them. The specific changes that have been observed regarding the relationship of Kusavas with *Perumannan* and the Muslims in the study village are also outlined below.

5.3 Kusavas and Perumannan

Perumannans are the washerman community in the village. This caste has a special relationship with the Kusava because of the role in all Kusavas' functions and life-cycle rituals, from birth to death of an individual. *Perumannans* supply a *Dhoti* which the significant members of the family conducting the ceremony are expected to wear for performing the ritual. For example, they supply a *saree* to the girl who has attained puberty and also to her parents. At the time of marriage, they similarly provide *saree/dhoti* to the bride/groom and her/his parents. The clothes supplied by them can be new clothes or used ones but washed and ironed. In return, they collect some cash and some pots from the family performing the ritual. Earlier, the members of *Perumannan* used to visit the colony of Kusavas to supply these clothes on getting the information about the rituals in Kusava families. Now, both caste groups have gone through social and occupational mobility. *Perumannans* have entirely left their traditional occupation and are no more interested in visiting the Kusavas to take part in their rituals. However, since the Kusavas have not given up their usual rituals, they now visit *Perumannans* family in the village and receive the clothes at their residence in exchange of pots and some cash.

5.4 Kusavas and Muslims

The Muslims of the study village has increased their numerical strength and economic status than before. Earlier, the dependency of Kusavas was less on Muslims because the Nambootiris of the village was more powerful and wealthier than them. So, for the raw materials and other needs, they depended on the Namboothiri. Gradually the Namboothiris became weak in the village, the members from the family migrated to other towns and the land which owned was sold to the Muslims and other communities for their economic need. So, this situation has forced the Kusavas to change their dependency on Muslims. Now such dependence helps them to grab more

occupational opportunities and market for their products. The current situation of Kusavas demand more monetary support from the outsiders. Here, somehow, Muslims showed an economic helping hand to Kusavas by lending money for their daily expenses and other needs.

The role of education and social awareness played a crucial role in overall changes among the Kusavas. The educated youth who continually in contact with others in the village are well aware of the changes that took place in other caste relationships. The neighbors and other village people criticised Kusavas for maintaining social distance with other caste people in the name of purity and pollution.

The Kusavas of the study village has compromised many of their cultural features which they were practicing for centuries. The Kusavas have adapted to the changes that took place as part of their occupational change. The changes which took place have not affected them severely. During the discussions with elders, they always caution about the changes which may result in adverse consequences. Elders suppose that youth are hurting their religious beliefs, which they kept on the gods, and the changes will gradually become a practice for coming generations and hence forget the history. Such situations may lead to non-practicing of some important rituals on essential occasions in the community. So, the elders remind the current generation about the need for teaching the history and myths to their younger generation and the future generations of the community.

The changes regarding inter-ethnic relations exhibit a shift to village identity for the Kusava, though they are not undermining the 'Kusava' identity. This village identity is vital for them for sustaining the livelihoods that they have chosen now and also to expand their networks outside the village for fuller utilisation of livelihood opportunities for them.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The unique feature of Indian society is the existence of the caste system. Every caste of the society is associated with a specific occupation, which is known as the traditional occupation for that respective caste. In each caste, occupation and positions are fixed and set at birth and are transmitted from father to child through rigid schemes, which have little space for innovation. The system of traditional occupation has certain advantageous qualities such as occupational security. Every caste ensured a particular occupation to its members. This is known as ascribed occupation and not necessarily chosen occupation to the individual. This is a kind of division of labour in Indian society. But it was criticised as division of labourers due to its emergence as a major indicator to understand the disparities between caste groups.

Indian society is witnessing a phenomenon that various communities are moving from their traditional occupation in search of a better occupation to ensure a better livelihood for their future generation. The change is more in case of crisis-prone occupations due to breakthrough technologies with innovative processes, which made consumers not to look for products of traditional occupations. The activity of pottery and the communities who are practicing the occupation is an example for this. The members of Kusava caste community in *Cheruvayur*, the study village located in Kerala state of India experienced and are still experiencing the crisis. There are also factors which affect the cost of production that hinder to continue with traditional occupation. The changes in aspirations and the opportunities provided to achieve the aspirations pave way for a free choice of new occupations. Thus there are both push and pull factors operating with varying degrees in case of different members of the community in regard to occupational shifts. Kusava are surely finding new ways to move out from their traditional occupation.

Pottery is one of the important crafts for which India is known for. There are specific villages/centers in almost every state with sizable population of potters. The principal factors that influence the location of the industry are the availability of essential raw materials, like clay and fire wood. Availability of water and transportation facilities is also important considerations. The potters were producing goods by and large to cater

to the local population only. The household served as the unit of production and distribution.

The industry of pottery however provides the ancillary employment opportunities such as quarrying, collection and supply of firewood, transportation of pots etc. It had a very interesting beginning in India. The goods, which are produced by the potters were given suitable rewards and social status for their services. But now socio-economic conditions of the traditional potters are far from satisfactory.

Potters are known by various names in India. They are called Kusavas and *Chettiyan*s in the village *Cheruvayur*. The Potters of *Cheruvayur* settled there a century ago. The existing people could not trace the year of their ancestors' arrival to the village. They were the migrants to this village from the neighboring village, *Vettathur*. The trace of the migration mostly ends in Andhra Pradesh. The Kusava's migration to the state has started from Andhra Pradesh, through Karnataka and Tamil Nadu they reached Malabar region of Kerala. Due to the vast migration covering many topographies helped the Kusavas to possess a unique culture in all over Kerala. The culture and occupation have become their identity in the society. The current study focused on these issues of Kusava and on their relationship with other castes with socio-cultural changes in them consequent to occupational shifts. The distinct socio-cultural characteristics of Kusava as observed in the study village are as follows:

Kusavankunnu refers to the settlement place of the Kusavas in the village. All the houses of Kusavas are located at one place. This is because when they migrated from a nearby village, *Kusavathodi*, they had to buy the land at their place of destination i.e., *Cheruvayur*. The land value was high in that region. The land of course was offered for less price on the hill top, and land that is away from the main road. The land towards hill top was acquired only by the Kusavas owing to their poor economic status. But the rich among them could buy the land little nearer to the road. Others had less choice and they had to buy land according to their financial capacity. This settlement pattern affected their interactions and relationships with other communities. The geographical access limited the interactions of Kusavas and the others. Members of other communities living in the village were able to access only the Kusava houses near to the road, in comparison with the houses towards the top.

Some sort of social isolation of Kusava in the village for other than physical access was also revealed in the study. First of all, Kusavas never encourage others visit to their houses because of their strict practice of purity and pollution. Kusavas are still practicing this in nominal way as part of their life. The Kusava have achieved some social and occupational mobility by following the practices of the upper castes like vegetarianism and menstrual taboos. In order to safe guard this higher status of them they prefer lesser interaction with other caste groups particularly those not enjoying similar ritual status as Kusava. Further, it is believed that maintenance of some social distance with others is advantageous for them in effectively socializing their children for success in pottery profession.

Pottery as an artisan activity, hardly finds its stable market in this competitive world. So many factors have influenced for being in such condition in the market. The self-imposed restrictions of the Kusava community for marketing their products in a larger geographical area, inadequate facilities for safe transportation of their products as well as the declining demand for their products is not only causing crisis to their families but also affecting their culture and identity as a community, since their occupation is associated to that culture. Pottery as a production need many supporting environments and raw materials for completion of the work. Kusava of *Cheruvayur* strongly feel that they lack all these support currently.

Raw material is the backbone of any producing activity in the world. The Kusavas need many raw materials to produce a pot, it starts from the *Kalasamannu*, *puzhi/manl*, land and firewood. Scarcity and high demand for the land plays a crucial role in the pottery. They are unable to procure clay at reasonable price. If they have to procure raw materials form far off places, the transporting costs are increasing. The traditional division of labour is also affected if the raw materials have to be procured from longer distances as the women cannot undertake those works.

The division of labour among the Kusavas for pot making is based on age and sex. The family was the main source of labour for production. The children too participated in the work earlier. However, due to value placed on formal education now, the participation of children in traditional occupation has disappeared. The parents will fully not allot any work to the children. They want their children to settle well in their life with a white-collar job. To compensate the loss of labour on the one

hand and to improve the working conditions, they were forced to install machines for mixing and slicing the *kalasamannu*. This has two important consequences: 1. the exclusion of children from pot making work means the socialisation of them into this work is affected; 2. they are forced to invest more money for pottery due to the option of mechanisation.

Raw material is the main crisis and its scarcity is troubling them a lot. *Kalasamannu* is the basic raw material for the production. The scarcity is faced mainly for this. This not only increased their physical effort, but also monetary investment to bring a load of *Kalasamannu* into the village. Firewood, *Iska*, and other materials pushed them into difficulty with the lack of availability and high demand.

It is interesting to note that in spite of difficulties that they are facing for continuation of traditional occupation, they still invest money on the material and work to hold their culture by practicing the traditional occupation. The government agencies could not help them to procure the raw material at subsidised rates because the materials were under the private ownership. The community also failed to form any type of cooperative system/ society to address such issues. They have an organisation called Kerala *Kumbara Sabha* (KKS), which functions for the wellbeing of *Kumbara* community in Kerala. Their unit in the village is not functioning properly.

Kusavas of *Cheruvayur* were independent potters who work according to their convenience and choice. The type of pots they made was completely up to their choice and according to the demand from the customers. They were receiving the indents from the people while they go for door to door marketing or when they market their product in weekly markets. Villagers and people from other villages used to come to them and give bulk orders directly when they wanted more number of pots for any festivals or functions. Such orders mostly would come at the time of village temple festivals. Kusavas were able to supply the products in time.

It is with the scarcity of the raw materials, things got changed. If the Kusava families desire to produce larger quantities, the marketing is real problem. The transportation costs have increased for marketing. The need for coverage of large geographical area for selling the products has become inevitable. Due to these changes, family is no more the unit of production and distribution in many cases. The need for middle men has come now. The dependency on these middlemen has gradually increased. Many

families have to wait for the middle men to place the order. They take partial payments from them and make the pots and the final payment will be received when the said order is fulfilled. The delayed payments and also the demands now made on them for substance of relationships with the middlemen is seen as a pain by many Kusava.

Pottery is the traditional occupation of the Kusavas. This is not prevalent among the Kusavas as it was before. Kusavas started prioritizing the occupation depending on their needs. To do their traditional job and uphold it they are struggling a lot. The culture of Kusava has emerged in connection with their traditional occupation. Their 'sacred activity of pot making' is also associated with observance of 'purity' and 'pollution' in their day to day life and also in their interactions with members of other castes and religions. But the circumstances under which they are living have forced them to 'dilute' their beliefs and to readjust their social relationships with other sub-groups and ethnic communities in their village and outside.

The market of Kusavas has reduced because of high competitions with manufacturers of similar products. The main marketing strategy of Kusavas is door to door sale, *chanda* sale, bulk sale, sale in the shop and marketing through middle man. *Chandas* in the nearby villages vanished many years ago. People did not promote or save *chandas* and the option for Kusavas to sell the items in the weekly market has gone. Bulk sale and orders do not come to the Kusavas directly, but only through the middle man. This reduced their profit margins. The insufficient incomes forced them to go for the practice of taking advance from middlemen in anticipation of future orders from them. This reduced the profit margins even further as the middlemen were able to control the sale price even more. Reduced margins lead to debt traps.

The issue of social prestige and status has stopped members, particularly women of the community from engaging in marketing. Door to door marketing was the way to collect money for daily expenses. The younger generation is particularly hesitant to send the women folk for the door to door marketing of pots. The educated women also resist such an assignment to them by their family members.

Thus, none of the marketing strategies appear to have worked to their advantage so much now. They could find downfall in the demand for clay pots. The difficulty to

cope with the marketing made them think about the alternatives. This situation has taken the Kusavas to a stage where they cannot depend only on pottery to earn the bread for the family. They had to adopt other occupations too for daily earnings. On or two members from each family from the 3rd and 4th generations slowly started practicing other occupation. The youth of the 4th generation more or less completely shifted to other occupations.

While looking for alternative sources of livelihoods, the Kusava however, choose every occupation that came in their way due to notions of purity and pollution they were practicing since ages. The social distance they prefer to maintain even reduced their opportunities to work as construction labour in some cases.

Eating the beef, taboos regarding puberty and menstruation were the main social barriers for the Kusavas in regard to maintenance of 'profitable' inter-ethnic relations. Kusavas do not enter houses of other castes that they claim to be inferior to them and also houses of Muslims. They accepted tea/meals from shops run by members of *Nayar* community only in their village. Such rigid social norms reduced their chances for other occupations. However, these norms are gradually being deviated by the Kusavas owing to their educational attainments and social circumstances now.

Kusavas practice multiple occupations for their livelihood. They are learning different skills to pursue other occupations now. The tendency towards completely giving up of traditional occupation is at the same time not totally encouraged in the community. Till the 4th generation, members knew the traditional occupation. Even the educated men and women are not totally opposed the traditional occupation.

The occupation shift has brought some changes in their culture. The declining concern for practices relating to untouchability, purity and pollution is one. Traditional marriage is a symbol of community togetherness. They followed *rathri kalyanam* which helped binding the kin relations. Kusavas hardly practice this because of many reasons. As part of occupational shift this is also given up and they started practicing the *mala kalyanam*.

With the possibility of choosing other occupations that gave them regular income, they are no more interested in following or retaining the hereditary occupation. They consider it as only a part-time job or an occupation to retain their separate identity. By

shifting from the traditional occupation, they expect to achieve some economic stability and give education to their children. Most of them felt that there is sufficient income from their present occupations. All the respondents felt that the occupational status has improved with diversification of their livelihoods.

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