

Agrarian Change and Identity Formation: Caste Mobilizations among the Nadars of Tamil Nadu

A Thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad
for the Award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology



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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled '***Agrarian Change and Identity Formation: Caste Mobilizations among the Nadars of Tamil Nadu***' has been carried out by me and supervised by Dr. Surinder Singh Jodhka in the Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad. This work has not been submitted for a degree or diploma at any other University.


Muthuraman P.

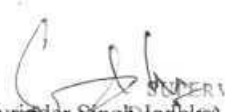
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CERTIFICATE

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled '*Agrarian Change and Identity Formation: Caste Mobilizations among the Nadars of Tamil Nadu*', submitted by Mr. Muthuraman P. for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, is a record of bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

This dissertation has not been submitted either in part or in full to any other university or institution for the award of any other degree.


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Chapter-I

Introduction

Social Scientists working on India have extensively documented the structures and processes of agrarian transformations in India since independence. Their concerns have ranged from village studies, community studies, peasant and farmers movements, pattern of rural power structure and authority, social framework of agricultural production, assessment of various developmental programs and emerging nature of social relations of production in various regions of the country.

Notwithstanding the significant continuities, the agrarian studies carried out in India by native as well as foreign scholars after independence could be divided broadly into three phases. The first phase was from 1950 to mid-sixties. The main focus of researches in this period were the examinations of developmental programs such as Community Development Program (CDP). Cooperative movement. Panchayati Raj system, land reforms and their impact.¹ The second phase was between mid sixties to mid seventies. Scholars working during this period dealt with questions such as changing modes of production, assessment of green revolution, indebtedness, commercialization of agriculture, agrarian tensions, labor relations and peasant movements.² The third phase was between late seventies to mid eighties, when studies on agrarian social structure and change were mostly concerned with specific issues relating to rural transformation, agricultural entrepreneurship, bondage and labor migration, changing class structure in agrarian sectors etc.³

The decade of eighties of the last century saw the emergence of a new phenomenon in the history of Indian agriculture, viz., a strong farmers' movements in all those regions where green revolution had been successful. Movements like Shetkari Sanghatana, Bharathiya Kisan Union, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Tamil Nadu Agriculturists Association were locally important and powerful movements, which focused on the issues like remunerative prices for agricultural products, subsidy on agricultural inputs, (such as electricity, irrigation) and opposed any kind of the taxation on agriculture. Besides, non-payment and waiving of loans borrowed from nationalized banks and state agencies also became important issues during this period. The mobilizing ideologies generally used by these movements were anti-state, anti-urban, and anti-capitalistic. But in reality these movements were led by a section of affluent farmers. Politically these movements were conservative in nature and sought to reinforce the existing property rights and consolidate a broad based and diversified rural capitalism. In nutshell these movements represented the economic power of emerging agrarian rich whose business activities straddled rural -urban divide. In both political and economic terms, the new farmers movements represented an extension of "Bharat" into 'India'.

Green revolution and other development programs launched during the post independence period have brought about significant changes in the social relationship and cultural life in at least some regions of the country.⁴ The traditional isolated 'peasant way of life' has given way to an open structure where agricultural production process has been increasingly getting integrated into the national and global markets. Socially and culturally also the village has been integrated into the broader regional and national social

life. This has significantly transformed the relationships among various groups and categories of the rural society.

Under the impact of numerous measures adopted by the government of independent India the functions and significance of castes have undergone profound changes in rural India. While the position of some of the traditional upper castes such as Brahmin, Rajput, Thakur, Kayasths has become weaker, certain intermediate castes, directly connected with agriculture, have become much stronger in the rural and regional political set up. For instance, Marathas in Maharashtra, Pattidars in Gujarat, Jats, Ahirs, Gujjars. Bhumihars in Northern states and Reddys, Nairs, Vokkaligas in Southern states, emerged as dominant castes as a result of agrarian transformation, partly resulting from various policies and programmes initiated after independence. Among these castes too, it should be noted, only a small segment has become prosperous and vast bulk of their members have remained poor. By using castes sentiments and mobilizing caste identities the dominant sections of these intermediate castes have been able to extend their hold over local institutions and regional power centers for education and jobs in the administrative hierarchy.

In case of Tamil Nadu, among all the communities, the Nadars have reaped maximum benefits of agrarian change during the post-independence period. Considered by the caste Hindus in the 19th century as among the most defiling and degraded of all castes, the Nadars, as toddy tappers, climbers of the palmyra palm suffered severe social disabilities and were one of the most economically depressed communities of the region. Because of their response to social and economic changes of the last century, the Nadars have today become one of the most economically and politically successful communities

in the south. Majority of them have become successful farmers and businessmen in the emerging rural scenario. Today no more than two to four percent of them would be still engaged in their traditional occupation of toddy tapping. A large majority of them are now associated with occupations such as farming, agricultural trade, cottage industries and urban business. Being socially less dependent on high castes, their occupational mobility has perhaps been one of the highest. The ability of Nadars to free themselves from their hereditary occupation and their increasing domination in agriculture could be seen as an important example of social mobility of a caste group in contemporary history of India. The experience of Nadars has important implications for understanding the changing nature of Indian society and the dynamics of agrarian social structure.

The Specificity of South Tamil Nadu

Unlike some other states of India, there is no single dominant caste in Tamil Nadu. The status of dominance is region specific. While Vanniars are dominant in the north, Gounders are in the west, and Thevars and Nadars in the south. The region lying south of Madurai is known as south Tamil Nadu. Within this region, the important castes are Maravar, Kallar and Agamudaiyar (together they are known as Mukkulathor or Thevar). Nadars and dalits. Among dalits, Pallars outnumber Paraiyans and Chakkilians. The districts of tvladurai, Sivagangai and Ramnad are completely dominated by the Thevars and Pallans, whereas, the Nadars are in commendable position in the districts of Virudhunagar, Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari. Therefore, the development in south Tamil Nadu entirely rests in the hands of Nadars, at least in four important districts. Compared to any other caste in Tamil Nadu in general, and in south Tamil Nadu in

particular the Nadars have come up progressively in all fields within a span of seventy-five years.

Significance of this study

Although quite a good number of studies on various aspects of agrarian transformation in Tamil Nadu have been carried out by scholars over the past six decades viz., political economy of agriculture in Tamil Nadu (Pandian: 1990, Bandhopadhyay: 1992), transformation of agrarian economy (Sivakumar and Sivakumar: 1979), capitalism and peasant farming (Harris: 1982), agrarian structure (Beteille: 1974, Mencher: 1978, Athreya et.al. 1990), caste and the agrarian structure, (Kumar: 1965, Frykenberg: 1969, Haruka,.: 1989, Sundari: 1991, Yanagisawa: 1996, Karuppaiah: 1998)), agrarian tension (Alexander: 1976), peasant survival strategies (Irschick: 1982), land and class, (Murton,.: 1977), peasant movements (Balasubramanian,.: 1984 Gurusami: 1988), peasant history (Ludden: 1985). social structure of villages (Gough: 1955), land tenures and land reforms (Sonachalam: 1970). agricultural land transfers (Thangaraj: 1988). farmers association (Thekkamalai: 1987), agricultural systems (Komaguchi: 1986), dynamics of rural transformation (Kurien: 1980). and kisan movement (Saraswati: 1979), etc.

However, none of these studies touch upon the new developments adequately. For instance, the question of agrarian transformation and the emergence of new identities has been largely neglected by these scholars. Most of these studies were carried out in Tanjore, North and South Arcot, Trichirapalli and Chingelpet and the caste groups covered in these studies were the Brahmins Padayachis, Mudhaliars. Agamudaians and low caste Paraiyans. Except, for the works of Ludden and Pandian, agrarian studies

looking at the question of caste and agrarian change have ignored the south Tamil Nadu region.

Studies on Nadars

The studies on Nadars of Tamil Nadu started during the colonial time itself. Robert Caldwell (1849) was the first one to write about Nadars, his book *Tinnevelly Shanars* portrayed the living conditions of the caste, its religious practices etc. It is more like an ethnographic sketch of Nadar caste. Again his work about *A History of Tinnevelly* (1881) spared some pages for the changes of Nadars' life in Tinnevelly. Thurston's *Tribes and Caste of South India* (1906) and H.R. Pate's *Tinnevelly Gazetteer* (1917) also provide an account of Nadar culture and society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The research works by Marry (1963) about the *History of early Christian settlements in Tirunelveli* district and Raj Hilda's work (1959) *Persistence of Caste in South India: An analytical study of Hindu and Christian Nadars* focused on how Christianity as a religion influenced Nadar caste, mass conversions, benefits accrued by Nadars out of Christianity, social and cultural relationship between Hindu and Christian Nadars, and the nature of caste sentiments among the two religious groups of the same caste.

Rudolph and Rudolph (1960) showed how the caste association (*Nadar Mahajana Sangam*) functioned as a *para* community to achieve mobility, political power, and economic development for the community as a whole.

Robert Hardgrave (1969) studied the political culture of Nadar community at four levels i.e., village, town, district, and the capital city. The study concluded that the varieties of political cultures of Nadars were based on the reflection of economic change

and geographical expansion. They reflected on three different kinds of political change in political behavior. First, the parochial, second, the integrated and the third, differentiation along a continuum from traditional to modern. All these changes were based on the growing well-being and geographical expansion of the caste community.

Tharabhai's study (1987) on *Changing patterns of caste and class relations in South India* says that with the advent of independence, the Nadars have taken up economically remunerative business and other occupations. Their improved economic status has also brought about a change in their social and political status. Her study reveals that the solidarity of Nadars increased when they gained control over material and cultural resources. As and when their solidarity declined, inter and intra group conflicts increased.

Rajadurai's work (1983) on *Nadars Uravinmnrai* threw some light on the historical evolution and structure and functioning patterns of the local association in Nadar settlements. It is a historical study, which analyzed the pattern of *uravinmura*is as a peculiar and innovative institution used for the caste's development. The study was entirely based on historical literature and in-depth interviews.

Rajadurai's another work (1991) about *W.P.A. Soundra Pandian's tenure in Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly* as a member vividly explains the role played by the caste leader, and efforts taken by him on various deliberations at the legislative assembly in support of the deprived castes in general and Nadars in particular.

Rajadurai's thesis (1992) on *The contribution of Nadars to Self -Respect Movement* made an attempt to discuss the life and conditions of the Nadars before the beginning of the Self-Respect movement, their relationship with the justice party,

services rendered by W.P.A Soundra Pandian and other Nadar leaders to the cause of self-respect movement, social change that occurred in the community due to the self-respect movement and revival and progress of the Nadar community as a whole.

Sarada Devi's work (1985) on *The History of Nadars* presents an in-depth analysis about the Nadar community, its origin, hoary past, the caste traditions, customs and manners, the steps taken by the community for its progress, material and cultural change various stages of Nadars progress and their contribution to the economic development in Tamil Nadu. Using the available historical sources and both primary and secondary data, she described the decisive role played by the community in shaping the history' of South India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular.

Templeman's work (1996), *The Northern Nadars of Tamil Nadu* reveals the process of change within the northern Nadars' settlements. This work analyzed two types of change i.e.. caste mobility and social evolution and the networks of town and village level caste associations, how they achieved their cohesiveness and effectiveness and the reason for their present and weakened state.

In his study Immanuel (2002) has critiqued Robert Hardgrave's work on Nadars. According to the author, Nadars were one of the original and very ancient people who were responsible for the spread of culture in Tamil Nadu in the remote past. By citing exhaustive sources and historical records, the author identifies the Nadars with the Kshatriya tribes of early history' and also discussed their cultural heritage and social values in the backdrop of hoary tradition or glorious past.

The historical researches carried out by the historian such as Samy (1980), Aiya (1906), Rajayyan (1974), Stein (1980). Ponniah (1978), Pillai (1970). Selvaraj (1979),

Raman (1977), focus mainly on the origin and history of the community, various stages of its development, the economic transition and the Nadars settlement pattern. Apart from professional historians, colonial administrators, and popular writers from within and outside the community, have also produced a great deal of literature on Nadars.

None of the above-mentioned studies of Nadars or on the agrarian change in Tamil Nadu, has focused on aspects of agrarian transformation in relation to identity formation by castes and communities in general and Nadars in particular. The present study aspires to look at the questions of Nadar identity by relating it to the process of agrarian change in southern Tamil Nadu and the consequent social mobility experienced by the Nadars over the last century or so. The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To describe the nature of agrarian transformation among the Southern Nadars with special reference to different agro-ecosystems.
2. To analyze the nature of caste mobility among Nadars, spatial, educational, occupational, and religious.
3. To historically examine the process of identity formation and the making of caste symbols among the Nadars and
4. To explore how some specific individuals (viz . a caste leader) or an institution (such as a Bank) could become the symbols of caste identity and play a critical role in consolidation of caste solidarity.

Chapter Scheme

Having introduced the subject with an overview of the existing literature on Nadars. and the specific focus of the present study. I move on to the second chapter, which concerns

with the research methods applied during the fieldwork, the archival sources used for data collection, and categories used for analysis of field data.

Chapter three provides profile of study villages, existing castes and their relationship with each other and the land, the development of agriculture and other infrastructural facilities in the villages, dominant caste and power relationships, the functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions and the socio-economic background of the respondents.

Chapter four narrates an ethnographic account of the caste - Nadars. The topics covered in this are history of the caste, origin, myths and legends, theories about original home, the role of Christian missionaries, classification and spatial distribution, sub-castes and sub-castes hierarchy, family, marriage and kinship, clan and lineage, life cycle ceremonies, migration and migratory routes, Nadar organization, contemporary groupings. Nadars view about themselves and how other castes view the Nadars.

Chapter five deals with the agrarian transformation in south Tamil Nadu with reference to Nadars. Second part of this chapter analyzes the production forces and production relations in the sample villages and the third part focuses on the nature of agrarian change in the three villages.

Chapter six describes different mobility strategies adopted by Nadars, the four distinctive areas of mobility across four generations have been discussed with the support of historical and empirical data.

Seventh chapter focuses on the identity formation of the caste over a period of time. The historical mooring of the construction of caste identity, the past and present

symbols of the caste identity and how did the respondents identify themselves in the day-to-day context.

Chapter eight throw some light on how an individual Nadar and a specific institution (a bank) became the markers of identity for the community.

The ninth chapter sums up the study and identifies some questions for future research on Nadar.

Notes

1. The studies by P.C. Joshi, Daniel Thorner, S.C Dube, Joan Mencher, Andre Beteille, P.S Appu, Raj Krishna, L.C.Jain, Ramaksrihna Mukherjee, Doughlas Ensminger, and F.G.Bailey, were significant during the first phase.
2. The prominent scholars who carried out their research of this phase were Alice Thorner, Jan Breman. Utsa Patnaik, John Harris, Amit Bhaduri, G.Parthasarathy, Tom Brass, D.N.Dhanagare, Djurfeldt and Lindberg, Gail Omvedt, K.C. Alexander etc.
3. The prominent scholars who contributed in the third phase were Rudra. Bardhan Mario Rutten, Udhay Metha, B.C. Metha, T.J Byres, Dhanagre, John Harris etc.
4. See, the works of S.R. Ahlawat, T.J. Byres, Ladejenski, F. Frankel, B.H. Farmer, J.Harris, B. Abbi abd Kesan Singh and H. Singh.

Chapter-II

Methodology and Research Procedure

I

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sociologists and social anthropologists have not done much work on questions of caste identity by relating it to the processes of agrarian change. Hence, the design of research of this study had to be primarily exploratory-cum-descriptive. However, while exploring the facts, care was taken to be as systematic as possible.

The data required for such a study has to be both qualitative as well quantitative. In order to have a proper understanding of an issue like changing identities over a period of time of a particular caste, information of qualitative nature is perhaps more important. For this, the case study method was preferred. In order to collect detail information, the case studies were supplemented by other methods like interview and participant observation. Wherever needed, the information was quantified, though quantitative rigor as such was not the objective. Apart from the primary data, secondary sources of data were also used, particularly to reconstruct a historical outline of the transformation process of agriculture and the changes that had occurred over time. Thus the method followed for the study was primarily historical and qualitative.

Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari districts of Tamil Nadu were chosen for the empirical study. Since the study focuses on southern Nadars, these three districts have Nadar population as the dominant caste,¹ professing agriculture as their main

occupation, and they have made tremendous progress over the years. After a preliminary survey of the district census and field visit to different Nadar dominated villages, three villages, i.e. one from each district were selected for the field study. The selection of the villages was purposive. Predominance of Nadar population, practice of agriculture, and the degree of development over the years were the criteria for selecting these villages. All the three villages were of a medium size and were located in three different agro ecosystems viz., wet, dry and garden lands.

The ecological setting of Indian agriculture is highly variable in nature. There are areas of heavy rainfall and areas with hardly any rainfall, irrigated and unirrigated areas, flat deltaic areas and areas of undulating topography. All these factors have a direct bearing, not only on agricultural front, but also on the social and cultural front. Scholars working on south Indian agriculture have repeatedly pointed to the crucial role that ecology could play in shaping agrarian relations (Beteille: 1974, Baker: 1984, Ludden: 1984 and Athreya et.al: 1990) Since differences in ecological conditions influence agrarian relations and could lead to different kinds of development within a single caste group a due consideration was given to ecological factors.

In this study, the main reason for selecting one caste in three different ecosystems was to know how the variation in relation of production is ecologically grounded and if so, what was the role of ecology as determinant of the relations of production. The other were how the irrigation pattern and cropping systems were influencing the transformation process, how the variations in relations of production led to different set of social formation especially in building new caste identities. An analysis of the Nadars could help us to understand how the caste is influenced by environmental factors and various

aspects of its development. Hence, Nadar dominated villages located in three different districts and ecosystems i.e., wetland village (in Kanyakumari district), dryland village (in Tuticorin district) and gardenland village (in Tirunelveli district) were selected.

The Fieldwork

A total of one hundred and eighty (180) case studies were conducted among all categories of agricultural population belonging to the Nadar community. Sixty respondents from each village were selected. Attempt was made to cover all possible sub-categories of farmers and landless laborers. Initial aim was to cover all the categories proportionately, by giving equal representation. But, field visit to the wetland village located in Kanyakumari district revealed that the average size of operational holding was much smaller in the wetland village when compared with the other two villages. Therefore, a minor change was made at the last moment i.e., twelve farmers from the first three categories were selected from each village by random method. Overall thirty-six from each village viz., 12 landless agricultural laborers, 12 marginal and 12 small farmers by sequential sampling. In a similar way, eight farmers from the last three categories from each village were selected viz., 8 middle farmers, 8 big and 8 very big farmers. The total sample from each village worked out to be 60. The sample chosen from all the three ecosystem (village) had each 20 per cent of agricultural laborers, marginal and small farmers, 13.3 per cent in the categories of middle, big and very big farmers. Apart from the case studies, few interviews were also carried out with the Nadar notables viz., caste leaders, secretary of caste association, leader of a political party, touring agent of caste association etc..

Two separate interview schedules were prepared for case studies. One for farmers and the other for laborers. For other interviews, interview guides were used. The fieldwork was carried out in two phases. First during August to October 1996, and second from Jan -July 1997. A total period of around nine months was spent in the field. Since the interview schedule was lengthy, the conventional method of interviewing was not used. The interviews were generally started with general discussion and led to the questions framed for this study. The interviews were conducted mostly during the evening times for the convenience of the respondents. The researcher visited each respondent's farm or house for interviewing.

The interview schedule started with some personal characteristics of the household and, then moved on to a family history, which helped in establishing rapport with respondents. Having established the rapport, the interview probed about land, assets owned, production forces like livestock, size of land holding, farm machinery, sources of family income, cropping pattern, agricultural credit, savings and details of labor relations etc.

The interview schedule prepared to collect the information consisted of three parts.

Part-I: About the characteristics of the respondents household, demographic composition, family history, land ownership and land tenure, assets owned, production forces owned, cropping pattern followed, agricultural credit, labor force available, urban property owned, consumer durable and financial assets, employment and income, were covered in this part.

Part-II: Aspiration and social mobility process of the respondent family, changes in **occupation** over time, educational status of children, migration particulars, investment behavior, educational, occupational, spatial and religious mobility from grand father time onwards, caste solidarity, factors that strengthen and weaken caste solidarity, particulars about caste association, membership in caste association, achievements made by caste association were the variables in this part.

Community connections in social, economic and political contexts, social transformation among the Nadars, Perceptions on caste association work, strength and weakness of the community, caste and religion, perception about the traditional and pre-dominant occupation of the caste, caste symbols, significance of caste titles, importance of *jati panchayats* were incorporated in the interview schedule.

After the collection of data, an elaborate code design was prepared based on the data gathered from the field. The quantitative information from case studies were coded after the required editing of the schedules. The data processing work was done with the help of a personal computer and the data were tabulated as per the requirements.

II

Class Analysis of Agrarian Social Structure

Classifying the agrarian social structure has always posed many theoretical and operational difficulties to researchers. The existing conceptual frameworks were developed in specific historical situations, with specific purpose in mind. They might not be applicable easily to the contemporary Indian conditions. The agrarian scene in India is also marked by heterogeneities and variations in the levels of development and

specificities of historical evolution of agrarian relations. The models developed for studying one region or one problem may not always be applicable to other situations.

There are some scholars who oppose any attempt to classify the rural populations into different classes or categories. Their main argument is that the rural society as a whole should be compared or studied in relation to the urban society as a whole. They argue that the principal class conflict in the developing countries is mainly between the urban people on the one side and the rural people on the other. The power being in the hands of the urbanites, they attempt to divert a major share of available resources towards the urban centres.²

However, such a populist perspective has not been found very useful by the social scientists. The generally followed method has been to classify the agrarian population on the basis of the ownership of land or the size of the operational landholding. In addition to the official surveys sponsored by the state and central governments, this method has also been used extensively by the social scientists in general and economists in particular.³ Generally, the agrarian population is divided into five or six 'classes' according to the ownership of land or net operational land holding size. The most popularly used categories have been those of i) agricultural laborers, ii) marginal farmers, iii) small farmers, iv) middle farmers, v) rich farmers and vi) landlords. The dividing point between different categories is almost always arbitrary.

However, this method has been widely criticized for its being 'statistical' rather than 'relational'.⁴ Alternatively, relational classifications have been suggested. However, when it comes to actual practice, many go back to the holding size.⁵

Marxist approach to class analysis of peasants

It is well known that Marx had written very little on the peasantry and more specifically on class differentiation among the peasantry. It was Engels, who wrote more on this subject, and later both Lenin and Mao Tse Tung independently developed their schemes of analysis on the basis of their experience in Russia and China respectively.

Engels⁶ divided the peasantry into three classes, the small peasants, the middle peasants and the big peasants. By small peasants he meant 'the owner or tenant - particularly the former- of a patch of land no longer bigger, as a rule, than he and his family can till, and no smaller than can sustain the family'.⁷ By middle and big peasants he meant generally those who owned more land than small peasants and where operation of 'farm' required generally, the help of male and female servants'.⁸ By small peasants Engels referred to the self sufficient peasant class, in which, we shall see, Lenin and Mao differed with him.

Lenin defined poor peasants as those who are 'cultivating little land, who cannot cover their needs with their income from farming' and due to this "resort to the sale of their labor power".¹⁰ In another place, he categorizes this class as "semi-proletarians or peasants who till tiny plots of land i.e., those who obtain their livelihood partly as wage laborer and partly by working their own or rented plots of land, which provide their families only with part of their means of subsistence".¹¹ Mao Tse Tung, in a similar fashion, describes poor peasants as those "who own part of their land and have a few odd farm implements, others own no land at all, but only a few odd farm implements'. Mao divides poor peasants into 'two categories according to their economic status. One

category has comparatively adequate farm implements and some funds. As for the latter, they have neither adequate farm implements nor funds nor enough manure, their crops are poor, ... they have even greater need to sell part of their labor power'.¹² From this, one can find that according to Mao poor peasants are tenants also, but Lenin keeps this criterion open. But, both are of the opinion that poor peasants are those who own very little land or no lands at all. The land they work on is inadequate for their subsistence and they hire out themselves.

Middle peasants as defined by Lenin are those 'who cover their average expenditure by income from land'¹³ and he, further, clarifies that they are those who "either as owners or as tenants hold small plots of land which enable them to satisfy the needs of their families and their farms, and do not hire outside labour".¹⁴ Mao defines middle peasants in a similar fashion. He writes, "many middle peasants own land, some own only part of their land and rent the rest. Others own no land of their own at all and rent their land. All of them have a fair number of farm implements. A middle peasant derives his income wholly or mainly from his own labor. As a rule he does not exploit others But generally he does not sell his labor power".¹⁵ That is, a middle peasant, in general, neither exploits others, nor is he exploited, though he some times employs casual laborers in peak seasons; but, his livelihood does not depend mainly on the exploitation of others. As Mao put it, "in general, a middle peasant does not need to sell his labor power. This is the principal criterion for distinguishing between middle and a poor peasant".¹⁶ The major difference between middle and poor peasants pointed out by both Lenin and Mao is that middle peasants own adequate farm implements and some cattle also.

The rich peasants have several characteristics. As Lenin pointed out, 'the areas cultivated by well to do peasants exceed the family labor norm (i.e., the amount of land that a family can cultivate by its own labor), and compel them to resort to the hiring of workers,' their income is more than their expenditure,¹⁷ 'the spare cash obtained by these peasants in the shape of net income is either directed towards commercial operations and

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usury, Or is invested in the purchase of land, farm improvements, etc. This is true of Mao, a rich peasant's main form of exploitation is the hiring of labour (long term laborers).¹⁹ In addition, he may lend money or engage in industry and commerce'. He has more and better instruments of production and more liquid capital and exploits others by means of land rent, loan interest or in some other ways. A rich peasant usually engages himself in labor in part of his land and. thus, he is differentiated from a landlord who does not engage in labor himself. Collections of rent, interest on money loaned, etc., are his main forms of exploitation.

The workers, agricultural laborers, or as they are known by various names like agricultural proletariat, peasant proletariat, etc have been described as landless wage laborers who obtain their livelihood by working for hire, and selling their labor power. But, according to Mao. 'the worker as a rule owns no land or farm implements, though some do own very small amount of land and very few farm implements.'" The second part of the definition is little confusing as these criteria also refer to poor peasants.

As pointed out by Ossowski. the peasants classes as described by both Lenin and Mao, are formed by combination of three dichotomous divisions based on different criteria, '(a) those who possess and those who do not possess means of production, (b) those who work and those who do not work, (c) those who employ hired labour and those

who do not'.²¹ The differentiation of classes based on these criteria gives one a much better insight into the nature and composition of respective classes, than ranking based on simple or synthetic gradation, or the dichotomies of one-sided dependence like dominating-dominated, working-idle, etc. These criteria take into account the relations of production, means of production, instruments of production. The limitation of differentiation of 'classes' in academic sociology based on simple linear scale, becomes clear when one tries to relate it to broad societal reality instead of answering a few *ad hoc* problems. But, one thing should be clearly kept in mind: differentiation of peasantry by Lenin and Mao was based on their study and understanding of concrete social reality that obtained in Russia and China, and it will be erroneous to apply these schemes in *toto* to other settings without taking into account the cultural, historical and structural variants of the setting.

Peasant Classification by Indian Researchers

Attempts have been made to further develop these models for their applications to the Indian contexts.²² Thorner, for example suggests that on the basis of (i) form of income from the soil, (ii) the type of right in the soil, and (iii) the form of actual field work done, it is possible to divide the Indian agrarian population into three groups: *maliks* (proprietors), *kisan* (working peasants) and *mazdoor* (laborers).

Utsa Patnaik suggests a single criterion, which she calls "labor exploitation criterion" for classifying individual cultivators into different classes. On the basis of "the degree and type of labor exploitation relative to self employment" (Patnaik. 1987: 51), she identifies six possible agrarian classes - landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants, and landless laborers. Similarly, Bardhan suggests, five-class model of

rural classes in terms of self-employment, labor-hired-in and labor hired-out. They are: capitalist landlords, rich farmers, poor peasants, and landless laborers. In the middle of this class gradation are 'family farmers' or 'middle peasants' who neither hire-in nor hire-out labor and serve as a dividing line between rich peasants on the one hand and landless laborers on the other, who have to depend on hiring-out labor for their livelihood, on the other (Bardhan: 1984).

Though these relational models are theoretically more meaningful, they create many difficulties at the level of operationalisation in the contemporary Indian situation. As earlier, pointed out, 'there is hardly a class of cultivators in rural India today which still operates exclusively on the basis of self-employment (Nadkarni, 1987: 29). Similarly there are cultural factors that inhibit labor employment. Even a marginal farmer in some caste groups would resist working as a laborer within the village due to socio-cultural factors specific to the Indian agrarian society where the values of caste or status still influence the economic behavior of individuals. (Bardhan. 1984:39)

Ashok Rudra argued for a different kind of Marxist's framework for analyzing the agrarian class structure. According to Rudra, 'the classes are defined by class contradiction' therefore, in Indian agriculture one can identify only two classes: a class of big landowners and a class of agricultural laborers. In this framework, the so-called middle farmers, who do not belong to either of the classes, do not constitute any class or classes. This is based on the recognition of the fact that under Indian conditions, "it would be futile to look for middle farmer-a social group which neither hires-out nor hires-in any labor'. And thus, he rejects the conventional Marxist-model of five or six classes (Rudra: 1978).

In his study of the Farmers Movements, Nadkarni, used 'net marketable surplus' as the criterion for classifying the farmers. And on this basis, he classified them into two classes - those who have marketable surplus and those who do not have. This he finds, 'particularly relevant for a study of farmers movement on price and related issues, for those who having a marketable surplus to sell also have a direct stake in agricultural prices' (Nadkarni, 1987: 30). However, such a classification is hardly of any relevance for understanding and analyzing the internal structure of the agrarian relations in rural society.

Classification of the agrarian population is rather a complex issue. Most of the existing models seem to be arbitrary (see the Table No.2.1) In most cases, they were developed by the individual scholars according to their specific interests and the issues they were studying. There is hardly any proper theoretical basis for classifying agrarian societies. The relational models that seem to be more meaningful, particularly for a sociological study, cannot be operationalized easily at the empirical level. As an alternative, landownership, specifically in a region where modern technology has been almost universally adopted, seems to be a more relevant indicator of one's economic position. For a study, which focuses on issues like agrarian transformation and identity formation, the starting point for going into the relations has to be the relationship individual households have with land. To a great extent, the size of land holding determines the tempo of transformation process at the household level.

Thus, for the present study, the respondent farmers were categorized on the basis of the land owned in standard acres. Land ownership, in standard acres, seems to be a more relevant variable than the net operational holding of a farmer. Tenancy and

sharecropping have become a temporary arrangement, and may not provide the actual picture of the land owned by the farmers. On the basis of the quality of the land, availability of irrigation facility and productivity, the lands owned by the farmers were given differential weightage. In order to arrive at the status of a respondent farmer, the land was then standardized. The arid land, which is entirely depending on the monsoon rains and suitable for cultivating only the millet crops and *udai shrubs* was given weightage of 0.25. The second category of land, which was cultivated with well and tank water and produced one or two garden crops, was assigned weightage of 0.5. The land which produced two crops, but, the productivity of which was atleast 25 per cent lesser than the average yield of the major crops, was given 0.75 weightage. Good quality land produces two crops (mostly irrigated rice) or three crops (rice-rice-pulse rotation) was considered standard land. According to this classification, the land of the dryland village mostly fell under the first category, and the land in the garden land villages came under the first, second and third categories and the land in the wet land village comes mostly in the last category.

The respondents, of the study were categorized into the following categories for analyzing the data.

i). Agricultural laborers: Those who worked as regular casual laborers, attached laborers and partly self-employed seasonal laborers were categorized as agricultural laborers. The sharecroppers who derived maximum livelihood by selling their labour power were included in this category. Agricultural laborers were divided into two categories - attached and casual. Those who worked with farmers on annual contract basis were considered as attached laborers and the rest were categorized as casual laborers.

- ii). Marginal farmers: The respondent farmers who owned less than 2.5 acres were placed in this category. This category of farmers used to sell their labour power during the lean season in order to sustain their livelihood.
- iii). Small farmers: The respondent farmers who owned more than 2.5 acres, but, less than 5.0 acres were included in this category. Like the marginal farmers this category of farmers also used to sell their labor power when there is no work in their field.
- iv. Middle farmers: The respondents who owned five or more, but less than ten standard acres of land, were included in this category. This category of farmers generally do not sell their labor power. They mostly depend on hired laborers to carry out agricultural operations.
- v). Big farmers: Those farmers who owned ten or more, but less than twenty-five standard acres of land were included in this category. The big farmers owned adequate farm implements and cattle, practise money lending which serves as a steady source of income.
- vi). Very big farmers: The farmers who owned twenty-five or more standard acres of land were categorized as very big farmers. Since there were no big landowners who were "absentees" or 'rentiers' the category "landlord" seemed to be misleading. The very big farmers generally do not engage in essential labor, but, would completely depend on hired laborers. Sometimes, they take part as supervisor)' labor. They also exploit others by money lending besides taking high rents from the tenants.

Sources of Information

The study is largely based on primary data collected from the one hundred and eighty Nadar households having farming as the primary **occupation**. However, given the nature of questions

being studied, an exploration into the historical process of change becomes imperative. Thus, in addition to the primary data, data were collected from the secondary sources like the archival repositories in the south. The secondary sources of data include government documents and records, missionary reports, judicial consultations, the findings of the court and special commission's reports, the native news paper reports, census reports, the district manuals, the annual reports of the backward classes commission, biographies of Nadar caste leaders, dissertations submitted to the universities on Nadars, the news paper reports about Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited shares investor's forum from time to time and local *uravimurais* registers maintained at the village level.

The government documents and records kept and preserved by English mention early history of Nadars. their political vicissitudes following the dynastic changes and also their condition on the eve of the English acquisition of the Madras presidency. The missionary reports collected by Caldwell. Paul Appasamy and others remain as the principal sources to write about the Christian movements among the Nadars.

The documents available in the English Records, Secretariat. Thiruvananthapuram throw light on the struggle of the Nadars for identity and achievements of Nadars in the social progress, which was followed by further struggle for resurgence in Tamil Nadu. The social disabilities and sufferings, that Nadars underwent and their attempts to claim social dignity. Tamil Nadu state archives. Chennai was also consulted. These facts are substantiated by the reports of the missionaries and also the works of Muthukutty Samy viz., *Ahilathirattit Ammanai* and *Arulnool*.

The Judicial G.O.s from Tamil Nadu state archives are very useful to reconstruct the history of the Nadars" especially the social uprisings in claiming equal rights in the society

amidst severe opposition from other castes. The judgment of court cases and the reports submitted by the special commissioners helped in exploring some new dimensions of Nadars mobility.

The administrative reports and census reports throw light on the sub-divisions, sects and titles of the Nadars which prevailed in the early twentieth century - who they are, and from where they could have come from, are discussed in the administrative reports. The census reports also portray Nadars strong desire for their upward social mobility.

The annual reports of the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam*, the letters and memoranda sent to the government reveal the political, social, economic and cultural life of the Nadars in the twentieth century. The reports of the backward classes commission and the sources collected from the Nadars settlements, give information about the customs, manners, traditions occupations, migration, mode of worship and the functioning of *Uravinmurais*, *Mahimai* system and other activities of the Nadars.

The government records such as District Gazetteers and District manuals serve as corroborative evidence to authenticate the evidence gathered through interviews. The gazetteers and manuals mostly depend on the accounts furnished by Bishop R.Caldwell. Among these, the Travancore state Manual by Nagam Aiya and Tinnevely Gazetteers by H.R. Pate are of immense help.

Other than the Gazetteers and manuals, a few published books are available on the history of Nadars have also being used. G.S. Ghurye's *Caste and Race hi India*, Robert Hardgrave's *TMM Nadars of Tamil Nadu*; Edgar Thursrton's *Caste and Tribes of Southern India*, Caldwell's *The Tinnevelly Shanars* and lectures on the *Tinnevelly Mission* and Thomas Turnbull's *Geography and Statistical memoirs of Tinnevelly* are some of the important books

which furnish details concerning the position and history of the Nadars during the nineteenth Century.

The books written by the English missionaries such as Agur, Samuel Mateer, Caldwell and the local scholars such as Paul Appasamy furnish succinct accounts of the Nadars and their conversion to Christianity. The biographies of K. Kamaraj, W.P.A Soundrapandian, V.V.S. Ramasami and Chi. Pa Aditanar help us understand the attempts made by the individuals to build the community identity over a period of time. The periodicals published by the Nadars such as *Nadar Kula Mitra*, *Kshatriya Mitran*, *Pandya Deepam* and *Nadar Kula Nanban* are also useful resources for understanding some other dimensions of Nadars life.

Table No. 2.1 Classification of Agrarian categories by various scholars

S. No	Authors(s)	Year	Criteria Adopted	Number of categories
1	Agril. Census by Govt. of India	1980-81	Land holding size	1. Very big farmers 2. Big farmers 3. Medium farmers 4. Small farmers 5. Marginal farmers 6. Landless laborers
2	Agril Labour Enquiry Commission	1954	Landholding size and source of Income	1. Land owners 2. Tenants 3. Agril. Laborers
3.	Alavi. H	1973	Land use pattern and labour services. Self-cultivating. Middle Peasants	1. Non-cultivating rentiers 2. Landlords 3. Capitalist farmers
4	Alexander, K.C	1975	Forms of Tenancy	1. Landlords 2. Owner- cultivators 3. Tenant - cultivators 4. Free-Agril. laborers 5. Tied-Agril. laborers
5	All India Rural credit survey	1969	Landholding size	1. Big farmers 2. Large farmers 3. Medium farmers 4. Small cultivators 5. Agril. laborers

6.	Ashok Mitra	1977	Land ownership	1. Agricultural laborers 2. Small peasants 3. Surplus raising farmers
7.	Athreya V. et al	1986	Landholding size	1. Big farmers 2. Large farmers 3. Medium farmers 4. Small cultivators 5. Agril. Laborers
8.	Banaji, J	1977	Landholding size, labour use pattern and surplus value	1. Big peasantry 2. Small peasantry 3. Independent middle peasantry 4. Depressed and dependent middle peasantry 5. Semi-wage labour peasantry
9.	Bardhan, P	1972 1984	Self employment labour hired- in labour hired - out	1. Capitalist landlords 2. Rice farmers 3. Family farmers 4. Poor peasants 5. Landless laborers
10.	Bell	1942	Labour participation	1. Class-I land owners (Rich farmers) 2. Class-II land owners (Self-sufficient peasants) 3. Class-III (Share croppers) 4. Agril. laborers
11.	Beteille, A	1974	Production relations and Forms of tenancy	1. Landlords 2. Big farmers 3. Owners cultivators 4. Tenants 5. Share-croppers 6. Agril. laborers
12.	Bhaduri. A	1973	Mode of production	1. Landlords 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4. Small peasants 5. Landless agril. laborers
13.	Bhardwaj. K. and Dass	1975	Mode of production	1. Landlords 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4. Small peasants 5. Landless agril. laborers
14.	Bhardwaj K.	1980	Mode of production	1. Landlords 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4. Small peasants 5. Landless Agril. laborers

15.	Biswas. D	1998	Landholding size	1.Big Farmers 2. Small farmers 3. Marginal farmers 4.Landless laborers
16.	Bose, P	1984	Mode of production and level of class consciousness	1. Landlords 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4.Poor peasants 5. Peasants proletariat
17.	Breman. J	1979	Land ownership pattern	1.Land owners 2. Small farmers 3. Agril. Laborers
18.	Calvert	1950	Land ownership pattern	1.Class of owners 2. Class of tenants
19.	Chakravarti, A	2001	Land ownership pattern	Principal classes 1.Malik 2. Grihast 3. Tenant cultivator 4.Petty cultivator 5.Landless laborer Residual categories 1.Petty rentier 2. Family farmer
20.	Damle. C.B	1993	Landownership	1 .Large fanners 2. Medium fanners 3. Semi-medium fanners 4.Small farmers 5.Marginal farmers 6. Landless laborers
21.	Dandekar, V.M.	1978	Labour exploitation	1 Peasants 2. Aaril. laborers
22.	Darling	1947	Land ownership	1. Proprietors 2. Occupancy Tenants 3. Tenants at will 4. Farm servants
23.	Dhanagre. D.N	1983	Land Rent paid	1.Land lords 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4.Poor peasants 5.Landless laborers
24.	Djurfeldt and Lindberg	1975	Farm size	1.Rich farmers 2. Big middle farmers 3. Small middle farmers 4.Poor fanners 5. Landless laborers
25.	Dutta	1968	Landholding size	1.Cultivating owners 2. Cultivating tenants 3. Cultivating owners & tenants 4.Cultivating owners & rent receivers 5.Rent receiver 6. Agril. Laborers

26.	Engels		Landholding size	1.The small peasants 2.The middle peasants 3.The big peasants
27.	Govl. of India Census	1951	Landownership	1. Cultivators of land wholly owned (owners) 2. Cultivators of land mainly un-owned (tenants) 3. Cultivating laborers 4. Non-cultivating owners of land (rent receivers)
28.	Gupta, S.P.	1986	Agrarian Trade	1 .Superior right holders 2. Peasants proprietors 3. Non-resident cultivators 4. Laborers
29.	Gough. K	1955	Landholding size & Mode of production	1 .Big Bourgeoisie 2. Medium Bourgeoisie 3. Independent entrepreneurs 4. Semi-proletariat 5. Tenants b) Laborers with some leased land c) Laborers with some own land d) Landless laborers
30.	Harriss. J	1980	Landholding size	1 .Big farmers/capitalist fanners 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4. Poor peasants 5.Landless laborers
31.	Havami. Y and Kikuchi	1981	Land ownership pattern	1 .Large capitalist farmers 2. Landless proletariat
33.	Jodhka. S.S.	1990	Landholding size	1.Very big fanners 2. Big farmers 3. Middle farmers 4. Small & Marginal farmers 5. Agril. Laborers
34.	Karanth. G.K.	1994	Landholding size	1 .Very big farmers 2. Big farmers 3. Medium farmers 4. Small farmers 5.Marginal farmers 6.Landless laborers
35.	Khan	1983	Land owned(LO) Land Rented- in (LR) Hired in labour (HL1) Land Rented-out (LRO) Hired out labour (HLO) Self-employment (SE)	1.Landlords 2. Capitalist farmers (Rich peasants) 3. Family fanners (middle or poor peasants) 4. Share croppers 5. Wage workers

36.	Curien, C.T	1981	Land holding size	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marginal farmer (below 1 ha.) 2. Small farmer (between 1 & 2 ha) 3. Semi-medium farmer (between 2 & 4 ha) 4. Medium farmer (between 4 and 10 ha) 5. Large farmers (10 ha. and above)
37.	Penin I	1961	Landholding Labour Exploitation and possession of means of production	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Big landowners 2. Big peasants or capitalist entrepreneurs 3. Middle peasants 4. Small peasants 5. Semi-proletariats 6. Agricultural Proletariats or wage - laborers
38.	Madiman, S.G.	1970	Land ownership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non cultivators (Landowners, Money lenders Traders) 2. Big cultivation (Using hired laborers) 3. Medium sized cultivators (Using hired laborers) 4. Medium sized cultivation (using only family labour) 5. Small cultivators (Owner-cum Tenants) 6. Tenants (landless) 7. Agricultural laborers (landless) 8. Village artisans and other non-Cultivators.
39.	Manabendu Chattopadhyay and Parthanath Mukherjee	1980	Landholding size and labour participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Land rentier (lease out their land to sharecroppers) 2. Farmers (cultivating land through hired laborers) 3. Cultivators (self cultivation) 4. Share croppers (tilling others land on crop sharing basis. & own instruments of production) 5. Agril. laborers (receive wages and do not possess instruments of production) 6. Artisans (not concern with agriculture) 7. Traders (not concern with agriculture) 8. Service holders (not concern with agriculture) 9. Others (not concern with agriculture)

40.	Mao	1930	Landholding, Possession of means of production, Labour Hiring, Meeting subsistence requirement	1. Landlords 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4. Poor peasants 5. Workers
41.	Mencher , J.	1974	Actual household ownership of land	1. Traditional landlords 2. Capitalist farmers 3. Rich farmers 4. Middle peasants 5. Poor peasants 6. Landless laborers
42.	Mukherjee	1957	Labour participation	1. Landed gentry 2. Self-sufficiency peasantry 3. Occupational group a) Artisans b) Traders 4. Share croppers 5. Agril. laborers
43.	Mukherjee, R.K.	1971	Landholding size and income level	1. Jotedar 2. Rich farmer 3. Ryots 4. Non-cultivating owners 5. Ryot - bargadar
44.	Nadkarni. M.V.	1987	Net marketable surplus	1. Farmers with marketable surplus 2. Farmers without marketable surplus
45.	Naidu, N.S	1946	Land ownership	1. Big landowners 2. Medium landholders 3. Small holders 4. Tenants 5. Landless laborers
46.	National sample survey	1972	Nature of land right	1. Proprietors 2. Tenure holder 3. Ryots 4. Under ryots 5. Share croppers 6. Laborers
47.	Olsen W.K	1996	Main source of income Ownership of land Labour relations	1. Landless worker 2. Landed worker 3. Petty commodity producing farmer 4. Capitalist farming landlord 5. Merchant 6. Artisan and others 7. Salaried
48.	Oommen T.K	1977	Landholding size and source of income	1. Landlords 2. Rich farmers 3. Middle peasants 4. Poor peasants 5. Landless Agril. laborers
49.	Omvedt. G.	1981	Mode of production	1. Capitalist farmers 2. Middle peasants 3. Poor peasants 4. Laborers

50.	Patnaik, U	1976 1986	Labour Exploitation criteria (Primarily Exploiting labour of others)	1. Landlords 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4. Self-employed 5. Small peasants 6. Exploited by others 7. Poor peasant 8. Landless laborers
51.	Pathy, J	1981	Landholding size means of production (Mao model)	1. Landlord 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4. Small peasants 5. Laborers
52.	Pillai. P.P	1982	Landholding size Type of commodity produced	1. Cultivating landowners 2. Cultivators of Special products 3. Cultivating tenants 4. Agricultural laborers
53.	Prasad, P.H.	1979	Mode of production	1. Landlord 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4. Small peasants 5. Laborers
54.	Radhakrishna. P.	1983	Land ownership Rights	1. Landlords 2. Tenants 3. Laborers
55.	Rahman A.	1986	Landholding pattern	1. Rich farmers 2. Middle farmers 3. Poor farmers 4. Landless laborers
56.	Rao. V.M	1981	Landholding size	1. Large capitalist farmers 2. Medium cultivators 3. Small cultivators 4. Landless workers
57.	Rudra, A.	1978	Means of production and class contradictions	1. Class of big land owners 2. Class of Agril. Laborers
58.	Rudolph & Rudolph	1987	Operational landholding size	1. Quasi-feudal landlords (Tractor capitalists) 2. Small peasants (Bullock capitalists) 3. Laborers
59.	Rural Labour Enquiry Commission	1974	Mode of production + land holding size	1. Capitalist farmer 2. Middle peasants 3. Semi-proletarianised poor peasants 4. Landless laborers
60.	Ranjit Sau	1979	Family labour participation. Labour use pattern. Type of tenancy	1. Landlords 2. Rural bourgeoisies 3. Rural petty bourgeoisies 4. Poor peasants 5. Rural proletariat

61.	Saith, A, and Tankha, A	1972	Land ownership	1.Owner cultivators 2. Largely owner cultivators 3. Tenant cultivators 4. Largely Tenant cultivators 5. Total poor peasants
62.	Satish, C	1986	Land ownership and labour participation	1.Privileged classes 2.Cultivating classes 3. Service classes
63.	Sivakumar	1978	Land ownership and labour use pattern	1 .Landlords (Resident Absented) 2. Big farmers 3. Medium farmers 4. Petty farmers 5. Landless peasants
64.	Sundari, T.K.	1991	Land control	1 .Large farmers 2. Small farmers 3. Agril. wage labour
65.	Sundanya, P.	1976	Participation in Agricultural operation	1.Landlords 2. Rich peasants 3. Middle peasants 4. Poor peasants 5. Agril. laborers
66.	Swami. D.	1976	Ownership of land and means of production	1 .Well-to-do peasants 2. Small peasants 3. Poor peasants
67.	Singh. D.K.	1995	Landholding size	1.Big land owners 2. Middle size land owners 3. Small land owners 4. Landless laborers
68.	Singh. P.C	1992	Landholding size	1. Large fanners 2. Medium farmers 3. Semi-medium farmers 4. Small farmers 5. Marginal farmers 6. Landless laborers
69.	Shall. G	1985	Land ownership and nature of occupation	1 .Rich cultivators 2. Middle cultivators 3. Poor cultivators 4. Agril. laborers
70.	Shah. S.A.	1965	Livelihood pattern	1.Landlords 2. Rich peasants 3. Poor peasants 4. Agricultural laborers
71.	Shah S.M.	1960	Landownership	1. Owner 2. Owner-cum-tenant 3. Tenant

72.	Thorner, D	1956 1962	Type of income obtained from the soil, the nature of land rights and the extent of field work	1. Maliks a) Big landlords b) Rich land owners 2. Kisans a) Small land owners b) Substantial Tenants 3. Mazdoors a) Poor Tenants b) Share croppers c) Landless laborers
73.	Upadhyay, C	1988	Land ownership	1. Agricultural labour (no land) 2. Marginal/small farmer (upto 5 acres) 3. Medium-small farmer (5-9 acres) 4. Medium farmer (10-19 acres) 5. Large farmer (20-49 acres) 6. Very large (50-99, 100+ above acres)

Notes

1. The criteria used by M.N. Srinivas is used here to define the dominant caste in the Sample villages. See M.N. Srinivas (1966) Social change in Modern India
2. See. for example. Lipton in Harris. 1982: 66-81
3. Bhalla. 1977; Bhalla. 1974; Chadha. 1986; Kurian, 1977
4. Beteille, 1974; Mencher. 1974; Patnaiki. 1987; Nadkarni. 1987
5. For example, see Mencher. 1974; Nadkarni. 1987
6. F. Engels. The Peasant Questions in France and German}-; in Karl Marx and F. Engels. selected works. Pp. 633 - 650
7. *Ibid.* P.635
8. *Ibid.* P.647
9. V.I. Lenin. The Development of Capitalism in Russia. Collected Works, Vol. III. P.71
10. *Ibid.* P. 72
- 11 • V.I. Lenin .Preliminary Draft Thesis on Agrarian Question. Collected works.. Vol. III P.71

12. Mao Tse Tung., Analysis of classes in Chinese Society. Pp 6 - 7
13. V.I. Lenin Development of Capitalism in Russia, P. 71
14. V.I. Lenin, Preliminary Draft Thesis on Agrarian Question, op. cit. P. 154
15. Mao Tse Tung, How to differentiate the classes in the Rural areas. P. 436
16. *Ibid*, P. 437
17. *Ibid*.,P.\5\
18. *Ibid*, P. 177
19. Mao Tse Tung,' How to Differentiate the classes in the Rural Areas, op.cit., P. 436
20. *Ibid*, P. 437
21. S. Ossowski P. 42
22. Thorner, 1956; Patnaik, 1976; 1987; Bardhan, 1984

Chapter -III

Profile of Study Villages and the Respondents

The reasons for selecting the three villages from three districts and ecosystems for field study have already been mentioned in the first chapter. Before proceeding to the presentation of the empirical findings and discussion on agrarian transformation, caste mobilization process which led to new identity formation in all the three villages it will be logical to provide a brief description of the setting i.e., the three study villages. The socio-economic profile includes a brief outline of social structure, changing pattern of agricultural development, labor relations and labor employment patterns in the studied villages and a brief profile of the main respondents selected for the study.

All the three villages selected for the study were of middle size with Nadars as the dominant caste.¹ The village I is comparatively smaller (both in terms of area and population), than village II and village III, which were of medium size. Table No. 3.1 provides information about the population in the three villages as per in 1991 census.

Table No. 3.1

Population in the studied villages

S. No	Type of village	Total population (1991 census)	Total Nadar population	Percentage of Nadars in Total Population
I	Wetland village	4898	2851	58.2%
2	Dryland village	6647	4589	69.0%
3	Gardenland village	5208	2432	46.7%

Source: 1991 Decennial census record from the village administrative officer of the sampled villages.

The household particulars maintained by the local *uravinmura*s I caste association.

As in most of India, caste is one of the basic institutions of social organization in these villages. As evident from the table above in all the three villages, the dominant caste is the caste of 'Nadars'. The influence of Brahmanical religion and the Sanskritic values is rather weak in the first village due to the new religious movement started by Ayya Vaikuntar. Similarly, Nadars conversion to Christianity in the second village weakened the hold of caste hierarchy. In the third village also, traditional caste values were weak because of the overall dominance of Nadars in the village. However, there existed a clear distinction among various castes, but the villagers did not have too many restrictions while interacting with each other. The relationship between caste and land ownership seemed to be more relevant factor in determining the status of a caste group rather than its position in the ritual hierarchy.

In Village I. the wetland village. Nadars are the dominant caste, the other caste groups are barbers (15 families), Chettiar (02 families), Vannan (06 families), Muslims (03 families). Brahmins (01 family). Pallan (05 families), Parayan (04 families) and Chakkilian (02 families). Of the three hundred Nadar families 186 were cultivators. The maximum size of land holding in the village was 32 acres and the minimum was 0.25 acres. Being the dominant caste, Nadars were dominant in agriculture, business, education, economy and politics.

Of the fifteen barber families, only three were having land, which was less than an acre. The remaining families, the main source of income was their hereditary occupation, which they are doing, not only in the village, but, also in the nearby towns like Agastheeswaram and Nagercoil. The two Chettiar families were doing petty business and did not own any land. Same was the case with Muslim families. One person from a

Muslim family was working as a clerk in the Panchayat board office; the other two were winning their bread by working in a nearby coir industry and salt refinery. The head of the household of the single Brahmin family was working as a sub-post master in the local post office. Unlike the other south Indian villages, the Brahmins and other forward caste people did not command much respect, because of a subaltern religious movement, popularly known as 'Ayyavali movement' started by Muthukutti Swamikal *alias* Ayya Vaikuntar, a Nadar social reformer, way back in 18th century. This religious movement condemned the Brahmins and caste Hindu superiority. All the 300 Nadar households are the followers of this prototype Hindu movement. The salient features of this movement are vegetarianism, non-idol worship, disapproval of caste differences, principle of righteousness, against political oppression, economic exploitation, religious ritualism, blood sacrifice, idol worship, and Brahmin hegemony.

The ideology of this movement has percolated down to most Nadars settlement in South Tamil Nadu. (Details of this movement are given in the Appendix). There were eleven dalit families in this village and they were eking out their livelihood by doing menial jobs for the Nadars. Their main occupations were agricultural labor, shoe making and construction work. Of the five Pallan families, two had their members in Government jobs, one as attender and the other as a clerk. The Parayan and Chakkilian families were living at the mercy of the Nadar landowners. Some of them also worked in the nearby salt refinery and coir industries.

A special feature of Nadars in this village was the professional carpenters, which is usually the hereditary occupation of Kammalan caste in all over Tamil Nadu. Out of the total of 60 respondents, 22 families had one or two members working in carpentry,

either on full time or as part-time workers. Surprisingly, one Nadar was also working as a gold smith.

Because of assured irrigation and fertility of the land, the agriculture here was in good shape. The major crops cultivated here were rice, banana, coconut, tapioca, vegetables, rose and jasmine. There was a visible trend among the farmers towards switching over to the value added commercial crops like coconut and plantain. The reason being the frequent cyclones, which destroyed the rice crop. Moreover, returns on traditional food grain crops was also lesser. They required more labor input and were more susceptible to pests and diseases. Banana, gave them more money (usually the unripened one used for chips). Similarly from tender coconut they could make good money. The demand for tender coconuts was good in the nearby Kanyakumari market, where around seven to ten thousand tourists visit every day. The coconuts were never allowed to ripen because of the market demand for tender coconuts in Kanyakumari. Each tender coconut was sold for rupees 7 to 8 depending upon the season and tourist rush. It is clearly evident from the fieldwork that most of the paddy farmers were converting their fertile paddy fields into coconut groves and banana gardens.

The predominant varieties of rice cultivated by the farmers were *ponmani* (150 days duration, fine variety), *Ambai -16* (120 days medium size grain). *Parima* (110 days, medium size grain), *Ottu samba*, (110 days, cross bred, medium size grain), *Tirupathisaram I & II* (115 days, fine variety, and the traditional variety *Cheradi* (140 days duration, fine grain). The traditional variety cultivated by the farmers were mostly for domestic consumption. In banana, the ruling varieties, in this village were *palayangottan*, *Rasa Kathali*, *Ethanpalam* (specially meant for chips), *Poovan*, *Vellai*

tholuvan, Mondan, Robousta and Matti. In coconut also, farmers were opting for a short duration variety *Nakkuvvari* ready for harvest within 3 - 4 years, sometimes less than that depending upon the soil fertility.

This village had a branch post office, one elementary school and one middle school, a primary agricultural credit co-operative society and two fertilizers and seed depot. This village was well connected by road and rail transport system.

The second village was a dryland village, located in Tiruchendur Taluk of Tuticorin district. This village is fully dominated by Nadars with a family name •Adityan'. According to 1991 census the total population of the village was 6647. Among the Southern Nadars, the Adityans were very powerful because of their economic dominance. Local history and the land settlement report revealed the aristocratic characteristics of the Adityans. During the early 19th century, the Adityans had 9000 acres of cultivable land and, from their village "Kayamoli," they can reach Tiruchendur (the seat of the holy shrine Murugan) without trespassing into anyone's land.² The Adityans claimed that they belonged to *swyavamsam* i.e. descent of the sun god. The prominent Adityans were Dhanuskodi Adityan (former Union Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs in the Deva Gowda Government). Sivanthi Adityan (former Chairman of Indian Olympic Committee, Proprietor of Daily Thanthi (Tamil Morninging), Malai Murasu and a number of Tamil weeklies and fortnightly. His brother Ramachandra Adityan also owned a number of Tamil news papers and magazines. At the time of this study, he was the Chairman for Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Investors Forum. The Adityans were highly feudalistic in nature. They never allowed the downtrodden to go against **their feudalistic attitude**. The Adityans never man within, between and among

them. The reason cited by them is that all Adityan boys and girls have only brother-sister relationship. In order to maintain their racial purity, their marriage alliances were confined to select Nadar settlements within the 'ten-region' (Sandy dune) of Tiruchendur taluk. Interviews with elderly Adityans revealed that their marriage transactional villages were *Cuttam*, *Padukkapathu*, and *Terikudiyeruppu*. Kayamoli Adityans had strong faith in Hinduism and had strong patriarchal and traditional values. They also thought of themselves as straightforward, honest and politically conscious. With great wealth and power, Adityans commanded deference of those beneath them. The other two Nadar groups of Kayamoli, Mekkandar and Servaikaran (the climbers), totally depended on the Adityans for their livelihood. While approaching the Adityans, they had to come with their arms folded across and their *dhoties* tied above the knees as a mark of inferiority. The Adityans usually hired the services of pallars and pariahs to work in their fields (Hardgrave: 1969: 29). In the 19th century, Adityan rode horses, and their women used to go in covered palanquins. The Adityan women observed strict *gosha* (veil), revealing themselves only to the men of their own household. The Kayamoli Adityans built temples and met the cost of ceremonies and festival expenses. The Adityans constructed one of the Pavilions of the Tiruchendur Murugan temple and met the cost of various ceremonies. They donated the huge wooden car to the temple and, in return were given the privilege to be the first one to touch the rope while car pulling through the streets at the time of festival. A local folk song would ask the question and also give the answer about the Adityans privilege. "After whose hands touch the Tiruchendur car starts running"? Answer in the next stanza is that "it requires the touch of Kayamoli Adityans."³

Thus, the caste structure of Kayamoli was completely dominated by Nadar with the family name of Adityans (154), Mukkandar (23) and Servaikaran (18). Although all these three groups belonged to Nadar caste, the Adityans treated the other two as inferior to them, hence, there was no marriage transaction among them in Kayamoli. Out of the sixty respondents selected from this village, the very big, big and middle farmers belonged to the Adityan group, whereas the small and marginal farmers and the landless agricultural laborers were exclusively from the other two categories. Other than Nadars, the castes living in this village were Pillai (12), Kammalan (08), Vannar (05), Navithar (04), Pallan (08), Paraian (06), and Chakkilian (07). There were also 85 Muslim families living in the village. Except the Muslims and Pillai, all the other castes in Kayamozhi were the service castes. These service castes obviously played subservient role to the Adityans and other Nadars. Jajmani system continues to be practiced in the village even today. The land owning pattern of the service castes were economically not significant and most of the lands were donated to them by the Adityans as a gesture of good will.

Regarding the Muslim families, local history (oral history) says that nearly 125 Muslim families came to the village around eighteenth century and settled in the village. During the study period, only the old age people and women were living in the houses. The active workers were mostly in Ceylon, Middle East and South-East Asian countries. Kayamoli Muslims were well known for their business talents. Generally once in two years they would visit Kayamoli to invest their earning in land and other ventures. The Pillai families traditionally worked as village accountants (*Karnam*) or worked as managers of the Adityan firms. Over the years, most of them had migrated to cities and were working in the Adityan brothers owned newspaper industries. The Kammalan,

Navithar and the Vannar were engaged in their caste occupation viz., carpentry, blacksmith, goldsmith, barber and washerman work respectively. Like in other villages of Tamil Nadu, the dalits belong to Pallar, (mostly agricultural laborers), Paraiar (agricultural laborers and menial servants) and the Chakkilians (cobblers) were winning their bread by doing agricultural labor and also their traditional caste occupations. There was only one brahmin family, brought by the Adityans to look after their temple (*Muppurarri Amman Temple*) fully owned by the Adityans. The Brahmin priest would get his salary and other benefits from the Adityans.

Most of the adult male from Adityan families were also out of village, employed in various firms and organizations being run by the Adityan brothers in all over Tamil Nadu and in the neighboring states. Some of the respondents told that the Adityans generally prefer working either as government servants or in the Adityans' firm. 'If they would go to other caste people business establishment, the self-respect of Adityans would be in question', they asserted. At the same time, a few Adityans said during the interviews that 'the two brothers (both Sivanthi Adityan and his brother Ramachandra Adityan) had colonized the entire Adityan families of Kayamoli, which had checked their progress in life. When we are in the Adityans firms, we can't even think of starting our own business, only we have to cajole them with hymns', they lamented.

The Adityans working in the newspaper industries had constructed houses in their native village Kayamoli, generally with financial help extended by the Adityan firms. This kind of help was similar to the government house-building advance and the loan was advanced on nominal interest rate. If an employee had put up more than twenty years of service he could get a loan of more than one lakh rupees for his house construction. It

was an unwritten norm that the beneficiary had to name his house after his employer's name. At the time of fieldwork in Kayamoli, I could see more than twenty houses bearing the name of Sivanthi Adityan in village. The houses were named as *Sivanthi Nilayan*, *Sivanthi Villa*, *Sivanthi Cottage*, *Sivanthi Kudil*, *Sivanthi Bhavan*, *Sivanthi Bam*, *Sivanthi Nivas*, *Sivanthi Vilasam*, *Sivanthi Bunglow*, *Sivanthi Hall*, *Chinnaiah Kudil*, *Chinnaiah cottage* etc. (Sivanthi Adityan is popularly known as *Chinnaiah* also among the Kayamoli Adityans). When I asked about the house names from an elderly Adityan, the reply was 'this is one way of showing loyalty to their employers and the employers also like it though without expressing it outwardly'. He further said, 'it is one such existing example that proves the mean mentality and feudalistic attitude of the Adityans'.⁵

The Adityan brothers also patronize educational activities in the area. They were running a dozen educational institutions in Tiruchendur and its environs. The Chi.Pa. Aditanar Arts College, Kovindammal Aditanar Women's College, Kovindammal-Aditanar Polytechnique, Aditanar College of Physical education, Sivanthi Aditanar Engineering College are a few to name them.⁶ In Kayamoli village also the elementary school, middle School and two higher secondary schools were named after late Chi.Pa. Aditanar and his wife Govindammal. The Adityan brothers were reported to be involved with a number of philanthropic activities in order to gain popularity. All their donations, gifts, or participation in any function were given wide publicity through their own newspapers and magazines. At the time of fieldwork, Shri Sivanthi Adityan had gifted a young elephant to the Gomathi Ambal Temple in Sankaran Kovil. This was published in all editions of his newspapers *Daily Thanthi* and *Malai Murasu*.

In this arid land, no agricultural activity was being pursued on regular basis. Farmers were not cultivating any cereal crop because of lack of water and poor nutritive value of the soil. The entire region was covered with palmyra tree and thorny tree called *udai*. The *Udai* trees were generally purchased by the Adityan brothers as a raw material for their Sun paper mills. The *Udai* is used for paper pulp, which is high quality in nature. The *Udai* crop is ready for harvest in around 5-6 years and did not require any fertilizer, ceding or plant protection measures. That is one reason why all type of farmers from marginal to very big landlord preferred *udai* cultivation. The crop can withstand any stress. The agrarian transformation took place because of the industrial use of *udai* trees. The cost of one-acre dryland in this village was reported to be equal to one-acre wetland of the first village. The reason for this higher land price was the *udai* crop. All the farmers irrespective of their operational landholding size, cited that an acre of arid land would fetch three to five lakh rupees once in five years by cultivating the *udai* trees.

Village-III, the garden land village (Sendamaram), is located in Sankaran kovil Taluk of Tirunelveli district. There are a total of 432 households in this village. Nadars dominate agriculture, political, educational and all other fields. According to 1991 census, the village population was 5208. Next to Nadars were the Thevars with 44 households. The political rivalry between these two castes was clearly visible. The *Thevars* own one-fifth of the village lands and economically they are next to Nadars. The *Vysya chettiars* were 28 households and most of them were doing petty business to cater the needs of this village and the nearby forty hamlets. Thirty households of *Muppanar* were also living in this village and most of them were working in the state government service as clerks and teachers. Some of them were also agriculturalist or had petty

businesses. A weaving community by the name *Illathupillai* also had twelve households, earning their livelihood through their hereditary occupation of weaving. There were also thirty-nine *Asari* families, also known as *Kammalan*. Most of them still followed their hereditary occupations such as carpentry, blacksmith, and gold smith. Around fifty dalit families consisted of *pallan* (28), *Paraian* (12) and *Chakkilian* (10). They were employed in menial jobs and depended on the landowning communities. The younger generations of dalits had moved to cities. Some of them had acquired education and were employed in government services. As in other parts of Tamil Nadu most of the family members of the *Pallan* caste were found working as agricultural laborers in the village. The failure of monsoon in the mid 1970s led most of them to migrate to the neighboring Kerala state and had employment in plantation industry as laborers. The regular employment opportunities, reasonably good wages, lack of native labour force in Kerala. (A large number of people from Kerala migrate to gulf countries), short distance from native place (less than hundred Kilometers to reach Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts of Kerala) resulted in these interstate migrations. Interviews with some laborers in this village revealed that the failure of monsoon from 1992 to 1996 led to large-scale migration to Kerala. Surprisingly, most of the marginal, small and middle level farmers had also joined the laborers in migrating to Kerala for labor jobs. The migrants were reported to be involved with agricultural labor and construction work. Those who had some education went to far-off places like Bombay, Surat and Veraval in Gujarat. Migrants also sent money back to their native village. As the village postman informed 'approximately five thousand rupees come to this village every week in the form of money-orders from the migrants'. Further, 'if there is good rain, the remittances come down as the migrant return

and resume their agricultural work in the native village'.⁷ There was a fast growing land market in this village. Farmers were disposing off their land and investing in trade and other activities where the income was more regular and returns on investments higher. The Keralites were buying land in this village because of the close proximity, and converting their newly acquired land into cashew nut garden and mango orchards. (See detailed discussion in Chapter Five)

Mostly cash crops were cultivated in this village viz., cotton, chillies, groundnut, and vegetables and to some extent, millets and rice. Rice was cultivated only during the *khariif* season, that too depending upon the mercy of southeast monsoon. The main sources of irrigation were well, tank and seasonal rain. Well irrigation was reported to be very popular in this garden land village and the Nadars were well known for their expertise in digging wells and exploitation of ground water (discussed in detail in Chapter Four). After 1960, with the spread of rural electrification and the popularization of electric pumpsets, the number of open wells increased by ten fold, which has come to be known as pump set revolution in Tamil Nadu (C.T. Kurien 1989). There were three main types of land in this village viz.. *nanjei* (wetland), *punjei* (dryland) and garden land (*thottakkal* or *eravai*). *Eravai* literally means lifting the well water for irrigation. There was a special classification known as *nanjei-mel-pimjei* (dryland crops cultivated on wetland).

Developed commercial agriculture had become quite common in this village because of the good quality of land, water availability, enterprising Nadar farmers, and a strong agricultural market for the crops like chillies, groundnut, cotton and vegetables.

In terms of infrastructural facilities, the village had a branch of a nationalized bank, post office, police station, electricity board office, a primary health centre, one elementary, middle and higher secondary school. For agricultural development, the village had Primary Agricultural Credit Co-operative Society (PACS), Cooperative Dairy Society, Agricultural Seed Depot, Veterinary Hospital, three private seed, fertilizers and Pesticides shops, four mechanic shops to repair the tractor, electric motor pumps, sprayers etc. The institutions concerned with agricultural production and non-agriculture were not only catering the needs of this village but also the forty neighboring hamlets. This village was well connected with the taluk and district head quarters. A total of 129 buses passed through this village every day.

Dominant Caste and power Relations in the villages

Prior to the introduction of universal adult franchise and the system of elected panchayats, the power relations in the villages were mechanically correlated with the dominant caste and agrarian structure. The system at the time of this study was locally known as *Ur Kutlam* and the leader was known as *Nattanmai*. *Ur kuttam* literally means the village congregation (*ur* means village and *kuttam* means congregation). Although there were many caste panchayats (jati panchayats) in the villages, the Nadar caste panchayat was found to be very powerful because of its dominant nature in all aspects viz., numerical strength, control over land, and domination in local politics. Any problem pertaining to the village was generally discussed and resolved by the dominant caste with the support of other castes. The *nattanmai* or *ur thalaivar* represented the village whenever required and within village also he held power. The number of *nattanmai*

(leader) or *nattanmaikarar* (plural) in a village varied depending upon the size of the population.

In the dryland village, one Sri Desika Adityan was the *nattanmai*, he was also an ex-president of Kayamoli village panchayat. When asked about his power, he said he would always consult the people of his age to decide on anything. Since the Adityans were very powerful, other castes had very less say. They had to simply obey the Adityans' word. If disobeyed they made to pay the price. In the wetland village, the informal leaders came from one particular family. They were the inheritors of *Ayya Vaikunta Swami* (founder of the *Ayyavali* movement). There were six such families, each held the leadership as well as the temple administration for a period of three years on rotational basis. The eldest member of the family, Sri Ayyakutti Nadar was known as '*Pattalhu Ayya*', something equal to king's eldest son. Surprisingly, these family members were not having uniform wavelength. However, they were tactful to control even the elected president because of their family status, political and bureaucratic connections at the higher levels. In the third village (gardenland village), there were more than six *nattanmais*, each representing two to three streets of Nadars, and they always took decisions collectively. Generally, the meetings would take place in the Nadar *uravinmurai* building located in the main bazaar.

The informal leader, locally known as the *nattanmai*, *ur thalaivar*, and *patathu Aayya* was not democratically elected either by the village or by the caste. He always belonged to the village, hailing from a respectable family. In most cases, the *nattanmai* or *urthalaivar* in a Nadar settlement was a big landlord who himself bestowed the status on himself and could get acceptance from the fellow villagers on the basis of his family

status, economic strength and his elders' achievements during previous years. In this informal leadership system, landless menials, dalits and minorities had almost no place.

❖ The introduction of adult franchise and the Panchayati Raj brought about some changes in the gardenland village (Sendamaram), whereas in the wet and dryland villages these democratic institutions did not make much difference.

Table No. 3.2

PANCHAYAT PRESIDESHIP HELD BY THE NADARS OVER THE YEARS

Name of the Village	1965	1970	1986	1996
Wetland Village- V1	Nadar	Nadar	Nadar	Nadar
Gardenland Village- V2	Nadar	Non-Nadar	Nadar	Nadar*
Dryland Village- V3	Nadar	Nadar	Nadar	Nadar

indicates Woman Panchayat Leader was elected according to the 73 constitutional amendment.

The Panchayati Raj and adult franchise have given a new fillip to the caste in the village politics. To uphold their power structure, they would always unite and take collective decisions. The system of political reservation for the down trodden had not helped them much. In both the dry and wetland villages, the panchayat members belonging to dalit caste always received a step motherly treatment. Most of the time they did not even attend the meeting. Worst part was that they would be provided with separate seating arrangements. Expressing a cynical attitude, one dalit respondent of Kayamoli said, 'even if for half-an hour I could sit in the chair, at par with the Adityans and other members of the upper castes, it is neither going to change my position in the social ladder nor my caste as a whole'.⁹⁹

The table 3.2 shows that in all the panchayat elections held, in both wet and dryland villages, the Nadars did not allow others to dominate the village panchayats. But, in the gardenland village, Nadars could not sustain their position beyond a single term. In the second election (1970) the fight was between a Christian *Muppanar* and a Hindu *Thevar*, and all the Nadars uniformly supported the Christian candidate and got him elected as president. In the third election (1986) the fight was between a Hindu Nadar and a *Thevar* candidate (who lost the election in 1970 to the Muppanar candidate). The Hindu Nadars belonged to RSS and *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* had several times hurt the feelings of their Christian counter parts. Therefore, all the Christian Nadars (as per the instruction given by the parish priest) and the minority communities voted in favour of the *Thevar* candidate. It was a proven fact that the minority community always opposed the dominant caste hegemony, provided they could succeed in their plan, otherwise they would keep a very low profile during the election. The third election proved it in the garden land village. Whereas, in the last election, the presidentship was allotted to woman candidate. The dominant castes of the village (both the Nadars and thevars) devised a compromise formula. Unopposed village panchayat president was chosen from the Nadar caste, unopposed panchayat samiti candidate (again a woman) was chosen from the Thevar community. Although, the members of other castes could not do anything, they were angry with both the castes because they were not consulted.

With the exception of gardenland village, the presidents during the last thirty years in the other two villages had always been from the dominant Nadar caste. In the third village, Nadars lost it twice, once the Nadars backed the Muppanar candidate against the thevars, and second time they lost it because of the division in Nadar votes

due to the ideological crisis that between Hindu and Christian Nadars. This showed the internal group rivalries within the dominant caste could help the minorities or other castes.

Another important development, associated with the introduction of panchayati Raj was the growing significance of factions in the village politics. One of the respondents in the gardenland village termed it as '*Naarkali ChandaP*' literally meaning 'fight for chair'. These factions were quite visible in all the three villages. The factional leaders did not hesitate to say things that would sound like character assassination and mud slinging on the other. In the wetland village, the president of the village panchayat Mr. TR was a migrant Nadar and an activist of Janata Dal. He did not have any property worth mentioning, but had wider contact with all the politicians and bureaucrats. Even the Kanyakumari district collector asked other presidents to emulate him. He too had his opponents in the other two factions in the village, one of which was dominated by the ex-president of the village panchayat. The ex-president was an educated person with M.A, B.Ed, qualification and owned more than 50 lakhs worth of property. All his children were also well educated and well placed. This faction consists of all educated and property holders. They were unable to digest an outsider becoming their village president. The second faction was headed by a lawyer, who unsuccessfully contested in the last assembly election. His family members were only managing the temple of Vaikunta Swamy. Since the temple had more than 150 years of history in the village, they commanded more respect. This faction wanted even' decision of its choice, whereas, the others did not really care. A week before the fieldwork for this study was started, the first group faction stabbed the lawyer and a case was still in the Naeercoil district court. The third

faction was led by the president who was considered to be the weakest among all. Only a few Nadars and members of the minority communities supported his faction. The president himself claimed that his was 'one man army'. My interviews with the villagers revealed that the main motivation behind factional groups was to exercise control over the village panchayat office and have monopolistic control over the temple administration.

In the second village Kayamoli (dryland village), the factional politics among the Adityans was purely about leadership. But, here, the candidates for the position of village panchayat, state assembly, and parliament (Tiruchendur Constituency) were always dominated by the Kayamoli Adityans. Usually the press baron Sivanthi Adityan and his brother Ramachandra Adityan would decide who had to contest for what post. Without their patronage, no one could win at any of the three levels. The candidates had to rely on them for manpower, money and moral support. Therefore, the prominent Adityan brothers residing in Chennai would effectively control all the factions. During the course of discussion with the present and former panchayat leaders, one could sense their petty politics and factional rivalries. They both found faults with each other's administrative skills and private life. The Mukkandar and Servaikaran (sub-castes within Nadar caste) in this village did not have any voice, so was the case with the other castes, including dalits.

In the third village (gardenland village), the factional rivalry was changing very fast. In the first panchayat election, it was between the Christian Muppanar and other minorities on one side and the Nadars (both Christians and Hindus) on the other side, ultimately Nadars won the election. In the second election, the fight was between a Christian Muppanar and a Hindu Thevar. The Christian Muppanar won because of the

overwhelming support he received from dominant Nadar caste. In the third election (1986) the fight was between a Thevar and a Hindu Nadar and the Thevar candidate won with a slender margin (only 32 votes difference). The main reason for his victory was the communal divide between Hindu Nadars and Christian Nadars. The Christian Nadars and minorities voted for the Thevar candidate in *toto*. The fourth election (1995), were unanimous and the presidential post was reserved for a woman candidate. The archrivals viz.. Nadars and Thevars devised a compromising formula. Accordingly, the village panchayat was for a Nadar woman and the membership in panchayat samiti post was for Thevar women. Both were elected unanimously. This shows that the political permutation and combination changed in the past four elections very fast.

The discussion of leadership pattern in the study village indicates that the dominant caste always tries to suppress the minorities and the marginalized sections at the village politics. Within the dominant caste also, there could be factions and factional rivalries to occupy the position of power. When the dispute arises within the dominant caste, the sectarian issues like religion, migration status and property owned play vital role even at the local level.

Socio-economic profile of the Respondents

The basis of selection and the number of respondents in various categories, selected from the three study villages, has already been discussed in the second chapter. It may be relevant here to provide the profile of the respondents in more detail.

Age of the respondents

The respondents were from different age groups. Active earning life of an agricultural labor, marginal or small farmer begins much earlier than a middle, big and a very big

farmers. About 68 per cent of the sample respondents belonged to the age group of 46-65 or above. Three youngest respondents of this study were around 22 years old. They belonged to the agricultural labor and marginal farmer category. The oldest respondent, a very big farmer from the wetland village reported his age as eighty-eight years. The mean age of the respondents worked out to be 47.28 years.

TABLE NO. 3.3

AGE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Category	Age Groups					Total
	21-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	65+above	
Agril. Laborers	06 (16.7)	10 (27.8)	16 (44.4)	03 (8.3)	01 (2.8)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	04 (11.1)	08 (22.2)	17 (47.2)	05 (13.9)	02 (5.6)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	03 (8.3)	09 (25.0)	18 (50.0)	04 (11.1)	02 (5.6)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	03 (12.5)	04 (16.7)	08 (33.3)	07 (29.2)	02 (8.3)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	01 (4.2)	06 (25.0)	10 (41.6)	04 (16.7)	03 (12.5)	24 (100.0)
Very big fanners	02 (8.2)	04 (16.7)	13 (54.2)	03 (12.5)	02 (8.3)	24 (100.0)
Total	19 (10.6)	41 (22.2)	82 (45.6)	26 (14.4)	12 (6.6)	180 (100.0)

GENDER, RELIGION AND NATURE OF FAMILY OF RESPONDENTS

Gender

Out of the total 180 respondents, almost 97 percent were men. Surprisingly, there was no woman in the big and very big farmers categories. The agricultural laborers and small farmers categories had two female respondents, whereas, the marginal and middle farmers had one each. This shows that the household structure in agriculture is still male oriented and **almost** completely **patriarchal**.

Religion

Compared to other caste groups in Tamil Nadu, the influence of Christianity is more among the Nadars. This however was not reflected in the three study villages. Of the 180 respondents, only 8.9 percent identified themselves as Christian. They had converted to Christianity since their grand fathers' generation. Of the 16 Christian respondents, except for the middle farmers, all the remaining categories have minimum of two families. Most of the conversion took place in the mid 19th century. Although the Christian missionaries had spread their religion in Kanyakumari district, the sample village had not been influenced because of the local level reforms within Nadars by people like *Muthukutti swamigal* alias *Ayya Vaikuntar*. His followers have the faith known as 'Ayyavazhi movement' - an offshoot of Hinduism and close to the Vaishnavite culture. This movement was able to curtail the Nadar's conversion to Christianity. Although the entire princely state of Travancore reeled under Christianity, this village was an exception. This "Ayyavazhi Movement" emphasized the desanskritisation process as well as the Self-Respect movement in a different way (see the interview in appendix). In the dryland village, the affluent Adityans have not allowed the missionaries to enter their village. They are also patrons of the famous Subramania Swami temple at Tiruchendur. The missionary activities were more popular in places where the people lived in abject poverty. The garden land village is one such Nadar settlement. Christianity has been very popular among the Nadars in this village. This parish was established in 1872, and the church was constructed in 1886. The Hindu families worship various gods and goddesses. The most popular among them are. Mariamman (mother goddess). Lord Siva. Ayyanar (Nadars ancestral deity) and Ayya Vaikunta Swamigal.

TABLE NO. 3 . 4

**GENDER , RELIGION AND NATURE OF FAMILY OF THE
RESPONDENTS**

Category of farmers	Gender			Religion			Nature of family		Total
	Male	Female	Total	Hindu	Christian	Total	Nuclear family	Extended family	
Agril. laborers	34 (94.4)	02 (5.6)	36 (100.0)	32 (88.9)	04 (1.1)	36 (100.0)	14 (38.9)	22 (61.1)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	35 (97.2)	01 (2.8)	36 (100.0)	34 (94.4)	02 (5.6)	36 (100.0)	21 (58.3)	15 (41.7)	36 (100.0)
Small fanners	34 (94.4)	02 (5.6)	36 (100.0)	32 (88.9)	04 (1.1)	36 (100.0)	16 (44.4)	20 (55.6)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	23 (95.8)	01 (4.2)	24 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	0	24 (100.0)	15 (62.5)	09 (37.5)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	24 (100.0)	0	24 (100.0)	20 (83.3)	04 (16.7)	24 (100.0)	13 (54.2)	11 (45.8)	24 (100.0)
Very Big fanners	24 (100.0)	0	24 (100.0)	24 (91.7)	02 (8.3)	24 (100.0)	08 (33.3)	16 (66.7)	24 (100.0)
Total	174 (96.7)	06 (3.3)	180 (100.0)	164 (91.1)	16 (8.9)	180 (100.0)	87 (48.3)	93 (51.7)	180 (100.0)

Nature of family

The respondents were broadly divided into nuclear and extended families. Three respondents (two unmarried and one single person) were also kept in the category of nuclear family. Of the 180 respondents, 93 (51.7 %) lived in extended families and 87 (48.3%) in nuclear families. Generally, the extended family turns into a number of nuclear families once the partition of family property occurs. But in case of landless laborers they start living separately as soon as they get married.

Educational Level of the Respondents

Educational level could be a useful yardstick to measure the development. It is also considered a significant factor in motivating peasants to adopt improved agricultural practices and could lead to social mobility. Table No 3. 5 give an idea about the educational status of respondents and the size of operational holdings. The level of education is very low among the landless laborers followed by marginal and small farmers. The middle, big and very big farmers had better educational status. The graduate, post-graduate and technically qualified farmers were from these categories. The data further revealed that there is not even a single respondent from the agricultural laborers category having education more than higher secondary level. Again of the 19 (10.6%) of the respondents having qualification as graduation, post-graduation professional and technical education, 36 per cent are from the marginal, small, and middle level farmers categories. Baring a single respondent, there were no illiterates among the middle, big and very big farmers. Village wise analysis shows that the dryland village had more educated farmers and laborers than the wet and garden land villages. This is because the Adityans were running more than a dozen educational institutions, ranging from primary school to professional colleges. Close to the study villages, and residents from these villages were given preferences in admission. Land holding size, educational status of the parents, availability of educational institutions nearby and total family income were all the determinants of the level of education of the respondents.

TABLE NO. 3.5

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS

Category	Level of Education								Total
	Not rate	Primary/ Literate	Low school	High school	Higher Secondary	Graduation	Post graduation	Ph.D or Doctoral Qualification	
Aeril. Labourers	04 (11.1)	21 (58.3)	04 (11.1)	05 (13.5)	02 (5.6)	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Marginal fanners	0	12 (33.3)	10 (27.7)	09 (25.0)	01 (2.8)	0	02 (5.6)	02 (5.6)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	01 (2.8)	13 (36.1)	09 (25.0)	10 (27.6)	01 (2.8)	02 (5.6)	0	0	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	0	05 (20.8)	10 (41.7)	05 (20.8)	03 (12.5)	0	01 (4.2)	0	24 (100.0)
Big fanners	0	05 (20.8)	03 (12.5)	08 (33.3)	01 (4.2)	03 (12.5)	01 (4.2)	03 (12.5)	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	01 (4.2)	04 (16.7)	04 (16.7)	08 (33.3)	02 (8.3)	03 (12.5)	01 (4.2)	01 (4.2)	24 (100.0)
Total	06 (3.3)	60 (33.3)	40 (22.2)	45 (25.0)	10 (5.6)	08 (4.5)	05 (2.8)	06 (3.3)	180 (100.0)

Marital status of the Respondents

Regarding the Marital Status of the respondents. 86 percent of them were married, followed by 17 (9.4%) widowers. Age wise these farmers (widowers) were above 65 years. Five women farmers were in the category of widows. Except for one young woman whose husband died in the military service, remaining all were in the old age category. There were two unmarried young farmers and one was living alone.

TABLE NO. 3.6**MARITAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Category	Marital Status					Total
	Unmarried	Married	Widow	Widower	Single	
Agril. Labourers	0	31 (86.1)	02 (5.6)	03 (8.3)	0	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	02 (5.6)	28 (77.8)	01 (2.8)	04 (11.0)	01 (2.8)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	0	33 (91.6)	01 (2.8)	02 (5.6)	0	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	0	20 (83.3)	01 (4.2)	03 (12.5)	0	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	0	20 (83.3)	0	04 (16.7)	0	24 (100.0)
Very Big farmers	0	23 (95.8)	0	01 (4.2)	0	24 (100.0)
Total	02 (1.1)	155 (86.1)	05 (2.8)	17 (9.4)	01 (0.6)	180 (100.0)

Occupational Status of Respondents

The data presented in Table 3.7 show that the type of occupation followed by the respondents had a direct bearing on the size of their landholding. The more the land holding size, the less was the diversification and vice-versa. Besides, land holding size, their educational status, urban contact, assets in urban areas, and proximity to the city, entrepreneurial acumen played a vital role in diversifying their occupations. Among the landless agricultural laborers, only 6 were having animal husbandry as their second occupation. This diversification was due to the rural development schemes (poverty alleviation schemes) under which they got the milch animals. Rest of the laborers i.e., thirty families (83.3%) were strictly following the agricultural labor work. Of the 72 marginal and small farmers, 18 (25%) were following only agriculture as their main occupation, 3 (4.0%) of them were either retired or not active in life due to age factor. Nineteen farmers (11 marginal and 8 small farmers) have agriculture, along with animal

husbandry, as their occupation. Twelve farmers (16.7%) i.e., 6 farmers from two categories had business along with agriculture as their occupations. Other two marginal farmers were doing agriculture along with government service. One was working as a teacher, another as a peon in a primary agricultural cooperative society. There was one small farmer, who had combined agriculture, animal husbandry and a petty business to sustain himself. As everywhere in India, 17 (23.6%) farmers i.e., five marginal and 12 small farmers were selling their labor power mostly during the off-season because their income from agriculture alone was not sufficient.

About the middle, big and very big farmers category, the occupational pattern gives altogether a different picture. Of the 72 farmers in these categories, 13 (18.1%) were practising agriculture alone. Twenty-four farmers (33.3%) were having agriculture along with animal husbandry, 17 (23.6%) were doing business with agriculture and another three were in government service. Fourteen of them had diversified their occupation into agriculture, animal husbandry and business. There was one farmer from the very big farmers category who not active. He is 88 years old and lived the wetland village. Unlike the first three groups, nobody in the middle, big and very big farmers categories worked as farm laborer anywhere.

TABLE NO. 3.7

TYPE OF OCCUPATION FOLLOWED BY RESPONDENTS

Type of occupation	Category of farmers						Total
	Agricultural laborers	Marginal farmers	Small farmers	Middle farmers	Big farmers	Very big farmers	
^Agriculture alone	0	10 (27.7)	08 (22.2)	08 (33.3)	02 (8.3)	03 (12.5)	31 (17.2)
Agriculture + Animal husbandry	0	11 (30.5)	08 (22.2)	06 (25.2)	11 (45.9)	07 (29.1)	42 (23.2)
Agriculture + Business	0	06 (16.7)	06 (16.7)	03 (12.5)	06 (25.0)	08 (33.3)	29 (16.1)
Agriculture + Animal Husbandry' + Business	0	0	01 (2.8)	07 (29.2)	03 (12.5)	04 (16.7)	16 (8.9)
Agriculture + Government Service	0	02 (5.6)	0	0	02 (8.3)	01 (4.2)	05 (2.8)
Agriculture + Agricultural Labor	0	05 (13.9)	12 (33.3)	0	0	0	17 (9.5)
Agricultural Labor alone	30 (83.3)	0	0	0	0	0	30 (16.7)
Agricultural Labor + Animal Husbandry	06 (16.7)	0	0	0	0	0	06 (3.3)
Retired + Not active	0	02 (5.6)	01 (2.8)	0	0	01 (2.8)	04 (2.2)
Total	36 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	180 (100.0)

The village wise analysis shows that more occupational diversification is seen in the garden land and dryland villages. This was purely to cope up with the risk associated with agriculture. Educational status of respondents and their family members, ancestral property, family size, available labour force, urban contact, proximity to urban areas, availability of fodder, near by market facilities, existing cropping pattern and assured source of irrigation were among the factors that determined the farmers' decision in their occupational diversification.

TABLE NO. 3.8

TYPE OF HOUSE OWNED BY RESPONDENTS

Category	Type of house owned				Total
	Kutch House	Pucca House	Mixed House	Living in a rented house	
Agricultural laborers	16 (44.4)	09 (25.0)	05 (13.9)	06 (16.7)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	10 (27.8)	19 (52.8)	07 (19.4)	0	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	10 (27.8)	15 (41.7)	11 (30.5)	0	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	02 (8.3)	20 (83.4)	02 (8.3)	0	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	0	24 (100.0)	0	0	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	0	24 (100.0)	0	0	24 (100.0)
Total	38 (21.1)	111 (61.7)	25 (13.9)	06 (3.3)	180 (100.0)

Type of house owned by Respondents

The profit generated in agriculture often led to investment in construction of residential buildings. One hundred and eleven respondents (61.7%) were living in Pucca houses. These houses were constructed with cement and backed bricks with concrete roofs. Most of the farmers have renovated their ancestral house with modern facilities like attached bathroom and sanitary latrine. Investment in house building with modern amenities is always considered a status symbol among the Nadars. Some well to do big and very big farmers had houses in the nearby town also. These houses in urban areas were either dwelled by their sons or given on rent. The size of land holding and occupational diversification had a positive relationship with the type of house owned by the respondents. Among those who had kutch houses, the proportion of agriculture laborers were more followed by marginal and small farmers. Two middle farmers also had kutch

houses. Most of the kutchra houses were built with mud and the roofing was done with either palmyra leaves or tiles. Since most of the respondents owned palmyra trees, the renewing of roof once in three years was not a problem for them. Some of the houses were of mixed categories. Six agricultural laborers did not have their own house and were living as tenants in rented houses. All the big and very big farmers and most of the middle farmers were living in pucca houses. This shows the relationship between landholding size and the type of house owned by the respondents.

Types of Property Owned by Respondents in Urban Area

Instead of reinvesting it in agriculture, surplus income generated from agriculture has often been invested in urban areas. Urban investments attracted all categories of farmers because of their returns, cost appreciation, regular income (usually in the form of rent), lesser risk (unlike agriculture, which often fails due to erratic monsoon, pest and disease attack), less maintenance costs etc. Table 3.9 reveals that out of the total 180 respondents, 139 (77.2%) did not have any urban property. Only 41 (22.7%) respondents had urban property.

The type of urban property owned by the respondents shows that most of them have house sites i.e., 12 (6.7%). followed by 9 (5.0%) having shops. 9 (5.0%) having heavy vehicles, 8 (4.4%) having houses and 3 (1.7%) having business firms. The lone agricultural laborer who had a house site in a nearby town, was acquired as dowry. So was the case with a marginal farmer. The two small farmers got the house sites with the help of their family members' earnings. All the middle, big and very big farmers bought the house sites in the taluk or district or state capital out of their own profit from agriculture. Eight (4.4%) farmers had purchased a house by means of own savings, or

with financial assistance from government office or private firm where their sons were employed (like the Adityan News Paper industry). The big and very big farmers had the habit of either constructing a new house or buying a second hand house for their sons, who were in the government service and were working in the near by towns. Agricultural land was seen to be of no use to them.

The Nadars have the habit of constructing shops for rental purposes in the near by urban centers. Nine of the sample farmers were having shops in the urban area. In the early 90s, state government of Tamil Nadu granted license to the people to run local transport (mini bus, maxi cap, standard van) with 20 seaters, to cover the remote villages where government could not afford to run its buses. Nadars in south Tamil Nadu used the opportunity and invested in heavy vehicles. Of the 9 (50%) respondents having heavy vehicles, five were from the garden land village and two each from the wet and dryland villages. If a vehicle costs around 4 lakhs, the respondent had to spend only 1.5 lakhs from his pocket. The remaining would come from any nationalized or private Bank, or from the district industrial centre or Private finance like Tube Investment India Ltd. Ashok Leyland finance. Choramandalam finance etc. Surprisingly, most of the respondents availed bank loans from the Nadars owned Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited. This was due to lesser formalities, faster in disposal of loan application and lower interest rate. As an elderly man put it "the vehicle business is something like a golden egg laying goose. This is because, within a span of three years, we can clear off all the loans and the vehicle will be ours, we can run the vehicle for another 10 years. Then we can sell it for nearly 1.5 lakh. Over all, one can earn 5 to 7 lakhs with just 1.5 lakhs rupees investment'.

Since, the Nadars are known for their business acumen, well to do farmers were switching over to business in the near by town. Three of the sample farmers had business firm in the district head quarters of Tinunelveli and Nagarcoil. One fanner from the wetland village is running a wholesale coconut and banana shop. He had wider contact and used to lend loans to the farmers at the time of crisis. Indirectly he would hint that the harvested coconuts and bananas should be sold to him. Two very big farmers from the garden land village were having commission shops and deals with chillies, cotton, cereals and pulses.

TABLE NO. 3.9

TYPE OF PROPERTY RESPONDENT OWN IN URBAN AREA

Category	Type of property						Total
	House sites	House	Shop	Heavy Vehicles	Business firm	No property	
Agricultural labourers	01 (2.8)	0	0	0	0	35 (97.2)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	02 (5.5)	01 (2.8)	02 (5.5)	0	0	31 (86.1)	36 (100.0)
Small fanners	02 (5.5)	02 (5.5)	02 (5.5)	0	0	30 (83.5)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	03 (12.5)	01 (4.2)	02 (8.3)	03 (12.5)	0	15 (62.5)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	01 (4.2)	02 (8.3)	0	02 (8.3)	01 (4.2)	18 (75.0)	24 (100.0)
Very Big farmers	03 (12.5)	02 (8.3)	03 (12.5)	04 (16.7)	02 (12.5)	10 (41.7)	24 (100.0)
Total	12 (6.7)	08 (4.4)	09 (5.0)	09 (5.0)	03 (1.7)	139 (77.2)	180 (100.0)

Usually, the urban property and diversification of agriculture and occupation led to internal division of labour within the family. For e.g.. One Mr. Gopala Krishna Nadar of garden land village, belonging to the very big farmer category, had agriculture, a mini lorry, tractor, and travels (mini bus), clothe store, fertilizer dealership and a vegetable shop. He had given specific jobs to each of his sons. Of the total 6 sons, the first one

was responsible for agriculture, second had a tractor and a lorry, third one travelled with the lorry, fourth one had a cloth stores, fifth son had a fertilizer and pesticide shop, and the last one was educated and was working as a lawyer in the district court. The farmer himself was looking after the vegetable shop. Due to his old age and non-availability of adequate manpower, he is planning to wind-up the cloth store and the son working there would take up the vegetable shop. This type of internal division of labor is apparently visible in all the middle, big and very big farmers' families.

Total Income of the Respondents from all the Sources

Table No 3.10 shows the total family income of respondents from all the sources. The minimum annual income was Rs. 3000/- of a landless agricultural labor from the dryland village and the maximum-reported annual income was of Rs. 3.5 lakhs of very big farmer from the wetland village. The maximum annual income of the agricultural laborers and marginal farmers categories was Rs. 45000/-. Only 6 (3.3%) respondents had their income in this range. A majority of them 42 (23.3%) were within the income range of Rs. 5001 to 30,000/- per annum. The remaining 24 (13.3%) respondents of these first two categories had an annual income of less than Rs. 5000/- P.A. and nearly sixty percent of them were from dryland village. As many as 28 (15.6%) of the small farmers were in the annual income range of Rs. 15001 to 75000. and the remaining 8 (14.4%) were having a total annual income of Rs less than 15000/-. The middle farmers minimum income per annum started from Rs. 5001 and went upto Rs 75001 and above. A majority of i.e, 19 (10.6%) had their annual income in the range of Rs. 5001- 75000/-. The big and very big farmers were obviously richer. Their total annual income started from Rs 15001 and went upto Rs. 3.5 lakhs per annum.

The analysis of various sources of income per annum reveals that for the first three categories, prime sources of income were daily wages, agricultural income, income from animal husbandry and income earned by family members either from agriculture or from non-agricultural employment, like beedi rolling, coir industry, work in the salt pan and carpentry. A few of them from the low salary government jobs and the profit accrued from the petty business. However, in the last three categories, most of the annual income was from agriculture, animal husbandry, rent from the urban property, business profits, family members¹ earning from the government job, hiring out machinery (particularly tractors lorry, and carts) remittances made by their family members living in cities.

TABLE NO. 3. 10

TOTAL INCOME OF THE RESPONDENTS FROM ALL SOURCES (In Rs.)

Category	Total Income from all the sources							Total
	Less than 5000	5001 - 15000	15001 - 30000	30001 - 45000	45001 - 60000	60001 - 75000	75001 + above	
Agricultural laborers	15 (41.7)	12 (33.3)	07 (19.4)	02 (5.6)	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	09 (25.0)	14 (38.9)	09 (25.0)	04 (11.1)	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	03 (8.3)	05 (13.9)	16 (44.5)	08 (22.2)	03 (8.3)	01 (2.8)	0	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	0	03 (12.5)	07 (29.2)	04 (16.7)	03 (12.5)	02 (8.3)	05 (20.8)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	0	0	02 (8.3)	03 (12.5)	08 (33.4)	05 (20.8)	06 (25.0)	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	0	0	02 (8.3)	03 (12.5)	03 (12.5)	02 (8.3)	14 (58.4)	24 (100.0)
Total	27 (15.0)	34 (18.9)	43 (23.9)	24 (13.3)	17 (9.4)	10 (5.6)	25 (13.9)	180 (100.0)

The village wise analysis shows that the first three categories had reasonably good income both in the wet as well as in garden land villages. This was mainly due to good

wages, constant demand for agricultural labor, well-developed commercial agriculture and the availability of non-agriculture occupation during off-season. As far as the last three categories were concerned, they were getting more income from business, investments in urban properties, well developed commercial agriculture, favorable market conditions for industrial crops like cotton, oilseeds and sugarcane. In both the wet and dryland villages, the last three categories of farmers were not as well off as their garden land counterparts were. The main reason for the low annual income of all groups in the dryland village was the unique cropping pattern (only udai tree cultivation and minor millets). This needed very less labor force, and returns were also lesser. The middle, big and very big farmers of this village were always shuttling to the towns where their sons were employed in the Adityan firms. Again in the last three categories of farmers, 80 per cent belonged to the landed Adityans family, known for luxurious consumption and showed no interest in agriculture. As one elderly Adityan aptly puts it, 'agriculture at least these days won't make you rich. If one wants to be rich instead of agriculture, follow a business like chit fund, money lending, liquor shop or a good provisional store in city like Chennai. This can make you rich within a couple of years'.

Proportion of Agricultural Income in the total Income

The proportion of agricultural income in the total family income is a yardstick to measure how income from agriculture contributes to the total income of the family. Table 3.11 show that out of the 144 farmers representing all categories, none of the marginal and small farmers earned the entire income from agriculture alone. Similarly, none of the big and very big farmers earned all their incomes from agriculture alone. Put together,

88 (61.1 %) of the farmers were earning half or a little more than half of their income from agriculture alone.

Category wise, they were marginal farmers 17 (47.2%), small farmers 11 (30.6%), middle farmers 16 (66.7%), big farmers 22 (91.7%) and very big farmers 22 (91.7%). The marginal and small farmers and their family members were selling their labour power if there was no work to be done in their farm. The animal husbandry and petty business also helped them to overcome their financial burden during off-season. In the last three categories, 10 (6.9%) were getting their entire income from agriculture.

TABLE NO. 3.11
APPROPRIATE PROPORTION OF AGRICULTURAL INCOME TO
TOTAL INCOME

Category'	Proportion of Agricultural Income					Total
	Entire Income	Two -third income	Half-of the income	One-fourth income	Less than one-fourth income	
Marginal farmers	0	02 (5.5)	15 (41.7)	09 (25.0)	10 (27.8)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	0	04 (11.1)	07 (19.4)	13 (36.2)	12 (33.3)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	03 (12.5)	02 (8.3)	11 (45.9)	06 (25.0)	02 (8.3)	24 (100.0)
Big fanners	04 (16.7)	10 (41.7)	08 (33.3)	02 (8.3)	0	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	03 (12.5)	07 (29.2)	12 (50.0)	02 (8.3)	0	24 (100.0)
Total	10 (6.9)	25 (17.4)	53 (36.8)	32 (22.2)	24 (16.7)	144 (100.0)

The data further revealed that a total of 12 (8.3%) farmers representing middle, big and very big farmers, whose entire agricultural income was one-fourth or less, were having alternative sources of income from business, urban property or their sons

employed in Government service etc. Once the last three categories of farmers started getting permanent source of income from non-agricultural avenues, they started deviating from agriculture in a phased manner. The main reason of declining income from agriculture among Nadars were due to their urban migration and employment in government service and business activities. Over all, the data show that only 6.9% farmers were earning their entire income from agriculture, 17.4% earned upto two-third income from agriculture, 36.8% earned half and 22.2% earned only one-fourth of their income from land. Another 16.7% earned less than one-fourth of their total income from agriculture.

To conclude, the objective of the chapter is to provide a background of the study villages, the social institution of caste in the study villages, the type of occupation followed by different castes, the nature of power relations at the village level, and to give a brief sketch of the main respondents of this study. In the following chapters, attempt would be made to address the more specific questions relating to the social history, subject of agrarian change, social mobility and identity formations of the caste.

Notes

1. To the definition of Dominant Caste, see M.N. Srinivas Dominant caste and other Essays. P. 96
2. See Kayamoli Adityan Varalary by A. Dasarathan. 1997: 14
3. Hardgrave, 1969; 30 and A.Dasaratha, 1997: Preface p. viii
4. Interview with Sri Dasaratha Adityan of Kayamoli village.
5. Interview with T.V. Adityan of Kayamoli Village
6. See M.P. Gurusamfs book Aditanar- A Revolutionary in Tamil Journalism (*Tamil*). P. 83 - 84.
7. Researcher interview with M. Peter, the Postman of Sendamaram village
8. Explained by a dalit member of Kayamoli village Panchayat.

Chapter -IV

Nadars : An Ethnographic Account

History of the Caste

The Nadars or erstwhile Shanars have often been called as 'remarkable people' who moved from a position of being near the bottom of the caste hierarchy of their region to a position of substantial economic success, increased political power, and a significant degree of improved status and recognition from other communities of Tamil Nadu. The Nadars' success, in a way, suggests that the structure of caste hierarchy was not completely closed and could be challenged from within. It is perhaps for this reason that the Nadars of southern Tamil Nadu have attracted attention of a number of Scholars (Hardgrave: 1969, Rudolph and Rudolph: 1960, Templeman: 1976, Caldwell: 1849, Hilda: 1958, Thurston: 1909).

Status of the Nadars in 19th Century

The Nadars, who, till the beginning of the twentieth century, were known as 'Shanans' or 'Shanars', were originally based in the two southernmost districts of Tamil Nadu: Tirunelveli (mistranscribed as "Tinnevely" by the British Colonial authorities) and Kanyakumari. The earliest known book on the Nadars, *'The Tinneveli Shanars'* was written by the Reverend (Later. Bishop) Robert Caldwell and was published in 1849. This book was based on a study carried out to stimulate the missionary activities by projecting the deplorable aspects of the community as a whole. Caldwell's study presented much useful information about the social and cultural life of Nadars at that

time. Further, he provided a historical and detailed ethnography of Nadars in his *A History of Tinnevely* (1881). Other relatively early sources on the Nadars include in Thurston's *Tribes and Castes of South India* (1906: 363 - 78) and sections of H.R. Pate's *Tinnevely Gazetteer* (1917). All these works put together provided an account of Nadars' culture and society in the 19th and early 20th centuries, which can be used as a base material for understanding the later changes.

When Caldwell carried out his work on Nadars, little change had taken place among the Tirunelveli Shanars, and conditions were essentially the same as they experienced the migration towards northwards in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Greater changes began to take place farther north and later in the twentieth Century.

Prior to northward migration, the majority of the Shanar population was confined to the arid, sandy regions or *teris* of Tiruchendur in Tirunelveli district (Hardgrave 1969: 41-42). The Shanar economy centered on the Palmyra Palm, then the only commercially viable crop in the *teris*. The men climbed the Palmyra to tap it for its sap, some of which was fermented to make an alcoholic beverage, known in English as toddy. This association with alcohol was one of the primary reasons for the traditionally low social status of the Shanars. Most of the Palmyra sap was not allowed to ferment, but boiled down into raw sugar product known as jaggery. The hard, black jaggery cakes were often eaten as the midday meal by the tappers, but most of it was sold, either for low-grade sugar or for the distillation of arrack, the native 'gin'. The Palmyra yielded other products too, mats and baskets woven from its fronds and palmyra trunks were used as poles and roof-beams for houses.

The 'Palm poem', Tala Villasam, by Tamil Poet, Arunachalam of Kumbakonam, extols to Laxmi, the Goddess of prosperity, the super natural origin of the Palmyra and

eight hundred and one uses. According to the Hindu mythology, it was presumed as the *Kalpa* tree, the Hindu Tree of life and it was enthroned as one of the five trees of the Hindu Paradise. According to a Tamil proverb, 'the Palmyra lives for thousand years and lasts another thousand years when it dies'.¹

Origin, Myths and Legends

The arid land or the land of the *teris* around Tiruchendur was original homeland of Nadars,² where they started their life as tappers. The regions inhabited by the Nadars are "little better than a desert - sandy burnt up, barren and uninviting", but, wrote, Caldwell in 1850, 'these barren lands literally teem with a Shanar population'. It is here that the origins of the community were to be found. Even today, many Nadars claim beneath the *teris* lay the ruins of the once great cities of a Nadar Kingdom.³

The common Nadars, as observed during the study, rarely knew about the origins of the community. Only a few elderly Nadars narrated the story of the miraculous birth of the Nadars. Among the village elders, the oral traditions of the community appeared to be still alive; it was reportedly passed from one generation to another. During the fieldwork A.S. Arunachala Nadar of the gardenland village narrated the story to me. The main theme of the story tells of the seven celestial virgins (*Saptha Kanniyars*) while taking bath in a stream caught in the eye of God Indra. Collecting their saris', Indra sat down behind a bush to watch and wait for the virgins to emerge out of water. As they did so, Indra caught and consorted with each. The seven virgins uniformly gave birth to a male child, and returning to their celestial world, they abandoned their sons. The Goddess *Bhadrakali* took pity **upon them and brought them up as** her own sons. As the tale goes, one day the river Vaigai of Madurai breached, and as the city was threatened with flood, the Pandyan

King ordered, all the male citizens to carry earth in baskets upon their heads to rebuild the bund. The seven sons refused to obey the King's order in spite of being not rich. 'We were meant to carry crowns upon our heads, not baskets', the young men cried. The King was furious and ordered that one of the boys be buried in the sand up to his neck and that his head be kicked off by an elephant. The order was obeyed, and the head, as it was cast into the floodwaters, cried, 'I will not touch the basket'.⁴ In a rage, the King ordered that a second be treated likewise, and as the head floated away, it cried, (*Atthalaikku ithalai poitthalaiyo*) 'shall this head prove false to the other?'. The King was greatly frightened by these strange things and freed the remaining five sons from whom the Nadar caste came forth. To this day, the Nadars say, they will not touch the basket. But in actual practice the Nadar hawkers did carry baskets. When asked about the Nadar merchants carrying the basket on their heads, Arunachala Nadar sought back, that 'usually the Brahmins should not associate with the leather work but the Brahmins are running Bata shoe mart and what you will say for that'?

Historians do not agree on the exact land of Nadars' origin. Different Scholars have come up with different thesis. Some claim it was the Cauvery region of the Chola country, others think it was in Madurai or South Travancore. Robert Caldwell tried to establish that the Nadars were, in fact, 'emigrants from the northern coast of Ceylon'. He argued that there a caste bearing a grammatical form of the same name, Shandrar, of which, Shanar was an etymologically corruption. He further claimed that the Ezhavas and Tiyars, cultivator of coconut palm in Travancore, were descendents of shandrar colonists from Ceylon. According to Caldwell, Shanars originally came from the neighborhood of Jaffna in Ceylon. One group, those known as Nadans, entered Tinnevely by way of Ramanad, bringing palmyra regarded as 'the best in the east'. The Pandyan rulers gave

them the title over the sandy wastelands of *Manadu*, the area which was most suitable for the cultivation of the palmyra.

In a way, the thesis that Nadars came from Ceylon seems to be correct because when Cholas invaded Ceylon, the Nadars participated in the Chola invasions of Ceylon. A number of traditions link them to the island. *Manadu*, the desolate land of the *teris* seems more probably as their place of origin as well as the region of their greatest concentration. Here, among the palmyra with which the community has been traditionally associated are the family temples, sites of the ancestral villages of the Nadars. Even as the Nadars have left their homeland there are constant links with the land of their origin, and the family deity (*Ayyanar*) has bound them ultimately to the ancestral lands of *Manadu* (the *teris* around Tiruchendur).

Theories about Original Home

As mentioned above, there are different theories about the original home and subsequent migration of the Nadars. Caldwell's view that Nadars were emigrants from northern coast of Ceylon. Caldwell does not take into consideration the possibility of migration from Ramnad District to Jaffna. Generally, people would not migrate from fertile regions to dry areas, such as the areas in Ramnad and the *Uerf* regions of Tinnevely, except under compulsion.

Depending much on legends, Caldwell says that Mahodura, the Prime Minister of Ravana, was a Shanar and that the Shanars of today take pride in this. The Shanars of today rejoice in Rama's grief and Ravana's joy.⁵ From these hypotheses, he drew conclusion which was stated in form of a rhetorical question, viz., Does not this circumstance point both to the Singhalese origin of the Shanar caste and to the prevalence

amongst them in the early time of the anti-Brahminical zeal?⁶ But the circumstances as well as historical precedent do not necessarily prove this thesis.

Following R. Caldwell, R.S. Ellis also stated that the Shanars, who inhabited Tinnevely, came from the neighboring Jaffna. Velu Pillai, K., also supports the argument that Shanans migrated from Ceylon in the remote past.⁷

The account of Cornish W.R. sounds more balanced and less speculative. While dealing with the belief among the southern Shanars that they came from Ceylon, he pointed out that 'there, certainly, have been migrations to and from Ceylon of the Southern inhabitants, but, that this hardly settles the country of the origin of the palm cultivators'.⁸

According to Bryce Rayan, King Elara who migrated to Ceylon became the pioneer of the Nadars. Because of him, the region (Ceylon) acquired the name of '*Ham*'. He says "the popular origin story of the caste finds them descendants of Ceylon's Tamil King Elara's warriors, who presumably married among the Singhalese, their contemporary designation as 'Tamil' possibly attests the truth of the legend, but, at least as likely is their descent from an immigrant Tamil labour force'.⁹

Ramaswamy Sastry also opines like Bryce Rayan 'that the Nadars are the descendants of the Singhalese race, but perhaps belong to some ancient Tamil people, who colonized the north of Ceylon, at an early period of the Chola and Pandya reigns'. There is also a mention of the fact that the northern part of Ceylon was invaded and occupied by the races, who inhabited southern India, nearly before and after the Christian

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era.

It may be true that they were Elara's warriors, because Elara migrated from Tondainadu to Ceylon and the Nadars do believe that they were also once warriors. But, it would be wrong to conclude that those who went and settled in Ceylon came back to India. A group from this tribe would have accompanied Elara to Ceylon and the rest could have come to the south. So they resemble each other in talk and features. In the history of Tamil Nadu, one comes across the fact that only Tamil race went and settled in Ceylon and we do not hear of the Singhalese entering Tamil Nadu.¹¹ So, Bryce Rayan's and Ramaswamy Sastry's views that the Nadars were of Singhalese origin can be set aside, whereas the fact given by Ramaswamy Sastry that the northern part of Ceylon was invaded and occupied by the races, who inhabited southern India, nearly before and after Christian era could be plausible.

Anantha Krishna Iyer L.K.¹² v.-rites. 'a King of the Carnatic named Narasimhan married the Pandyan princess Alii and captured Ceylon and ruled it with the title of Ilaperumal. Then, they came back to their old country. His opinion was that Narasimhan belonged to the Nadar Caste'. As Anantha Krishna Iyer wrote on the basis of facts taken from Meckenzie collections, it may be accepted.

Prof. Chatterjee S.K.¹³ speaks of a Malaysian view; 'immigration via., Ceylon appears to have taken place long after the advent of the Dravidians. This wave brought coconut cultivation from Malay Archipelago". The Shanars and Ilavars of South India probably can trace their ancestry to those immigrants. One can agree with Chatterjee that the Ilavars of Kerala were the immigrants from Ceylon because the climatic conditions of both the places are the same. But it cannot be applied to the Shanars, as there is no connection between the Shanars and coconut cultivation.

ivloses Ponnaiah opines, ' Shanars of Tamil Nadu are the descendants of the Shan Tribe of Burma'.¹⁴ This conjecture is based on the similarity of the two terms 'Shan' and 'Shauar'. In fact, racially the Chinese and Burmese are Mangoloid and Shanars are Dravidian. He also expressed the view that the Shan tribe entered India through Bengal,¹⁵ and settled in the southern most end of India. But, the Mongoloid traits are not found among the Shanars. Hence, his view is not tenable.

There is another theory according to which Shanars might have come from Siberia. The religious ceremonies and worship of Shanars are similar to those of the Siberians. In Siberia, the system of demonolatry is called "Shamanism" 'Shaman' is a Persian word meaning an 'idolater'. The devil worship of the Shanars and Siberians are said to be identical. So, there is a possibility that Shanars might have come from the North of India.¹⁶ However, racially the Nadars cannot be compared in any way with the Siberians.

The Nadars are the descendants of the Chera rulers according to Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai.¹⁷ The argument given in support of this is that Nadars are still known as Villavans (wielders of bows), a title commonly associated with the Chera Kings. Further, the flowers of the palmyra tree with which the Nadars are associated at present, constituted the royal garland of the Cheras. Kavidi is the term applied to the barbers employed specifically by the Nadars today. This term was used to denote the barbers who served the kings of the ancient Tamil Country. Both funeral and wedding ceremonies were conducted by the barbers for the Nadars. Now a days, the barbers conduct only funeral ceremonies.

T.G. Seivraj, considers the Nadars to be Cheras,¹⁸ since the titles of Cheras such as. Malaian, Villavan, Perumal, Martar.dan, Chembukotti, formed the names of clans among the Nadars. As Cheran Perumal melted copper and sent it to Cholan Karikalan, he took the title of Chembukatti, which bears similarity to the name of the sect of Nadars

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called Chembukutty *Vagirah*. A copper plate inscription which granted kaval duties to the Nadars is in the possession of Chetirayar family in Chidhambarapuram near Nanguneri. The Kuttam Nadans use the title of Martanda Nadan. There is one Malain Cian living in Tenkasi. The Nadars who are living in Kasargode are called as Villavars. In Chettiapathu. there is a tradition that these 'samathies' must be those of Pancha Thiruvadis of Mullai Nad, who supported the Pandyas against the Nayaks. This version is, thus, based on the names of the clans.

Two thousand years ago, when the Jews came and settled in the Chera country, they received a grant (copper plate) from the five Chieftains" of that area. All the names given in that grant seem to be of Nadans. So, the}' could have been Chera Chieftains.

The traditions connected with some of the old Nadar families in Kerala show that their ancestors had been called into the country by some of the ancient kings of Travancore. N'agam Aiya states, 'there were eight families, known as Ettuveetu Nadakkals who were patronized by the ancient kings'. Based on this theory he concluded that the migration might have **taken** place from Tinnevely to south Travancore.

Tucker, is of the view that the Nadars were the sole proprietors of lands and also the lords of the soil having certain rights of seigniorage over the land and that had been sold, especially, the right of levying a small rent on all houses and a small fee at wedding.

In the absence of evidence to establish migration from outside the region, it may safely be presumed that the Nadars were among the early inhabitants of South India and that they could legitimately might be called 'the sons of the soil'.

Tondaimandalam as Ancient Home

In the light of these conflicting views, taking the relatively reliable sources, it can be concluded that the ancestors of the Nadars were the inhabitants of Ham, an area, in the north of the Chola region,²⁴ perhaps extending upto and beyond Kanchi. The Nadars worship as their tutelary deities 'Pedda Natchi Amman' and "Kamatchiamman", the goddess peculiar to Kanchipuram. Like many other Hindus, since they have a continuous tradition they carry' the name of their tutelary deity wherever they go and reside. Likewise the *mahamai* ²⁵ tax mentioned in an inscription of Nandivarman Pallavamala is an institution still maintained by t^ Nadar traders in Tamil Nadu. In the copper plate grant issued by the Nadars to the Brahmin Gurukkal, it is mentioned that they had come from Kanchipuram, and the 'Kappu Sheyul" of the inscription speaks about Kamatchiamman.²⁶ In the Kongu Vellalar Purana Varalaru.²⁷ the author says that Kongan came from Kanchi and settled in Kongu Desam. Kongu Shanan is mentioned as one among the eighteen tribes, which he brought from Kanchi.

It is believed that when Karikala Chola conquered Kanchi and employed the enslaved kings in the construction of the banks of the Kaveri, the ancestors of the Nadars refused to obey his orders to carry earth in baskets made of Bamboo or wicker. For this insubordination, Karikalan is said to have penalised them, and as a result of this the Nadars migrated to the Pandya region. This view is supported by the old saying that

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'Tondaimandalam is the abode of Sanror.

Elam is certainly associated with the 'Sanron' as found in the inscriptions and literature of the Cholas. The problem is the location of this Elam. Elam, the northern part of Chola country bordering on Tondaimandalam, is a more probable home of the ancient Nadars, than Ceylon, which is also called Elam. Ceylon acquired this name due to one Elara from Tondainadu. This has misled many scholars like Caldwell to think that the Nadars migrated from Ceylon. Caldwell finds a group in northern Ceylon still called 'Sanrar'. It is possible that the descendants of the group who were with Elara in ancient days live there in Ceylon maintaining their old name Sanror. It is known that many left Tamil Nadu and settled in Ceylon due to the oppression of Karikalan. Hence, it is to be believed that one group went to Ceylon and called their settlement as Elam.

The Christian converts on their part started constructing their own version about the origin of Nadar community. Seventy-five years after 1857, Sattampillai's

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publication against Caldwell pamphlet 'The Tinnevelly Shanars - A sketch of the religion and their moral conditions and characteristics as a caste' represented the Nadar caste as a self-conscious community. Sattampillai's Pamphlet against Caldwell appears to have been the first attempt by a Nadar to establish the claims of the community to a higher status through the mythological reconstruction of kingly past. The Bishop of Calcutta on his visit to Tinnevelly in 1865 commented on a 'strange notion' propagated by the Christian Nadars that they were 'a princely race like Rajputs, and their progenitors were Palmyra - climbing Kings'. The Bishop referred, that the 'Shanar cash' Venetian sequins frequently dug up in Tinnevelly, relics of the time when Tuticorin was a great trading port.

The works of Nadar caste historians viz.. Rev. H. Martyn Winfred (1871) book *Shandror Marapu* (Shandror Antiquity), S. Winfred work 11874) *Shandror Kula Marapu*

Kattala (to safeguard the customs of the Shanrors), Samuel Sargurar's work (1880) titled as *Dravida Kshatriyas*, all sought to establish the Nadars as the original descendents of the Pandyan Kings and having established their Noble status, exhorted all Nadars to assume the customs of the Kshatriya. Despite attempts of Nadar caste historians to associate the community with Kshatriyas through the work Shandror, the caste name of Shanar continued to carry a derogatory connotations and members of the community increasingly sought to abandon its use altogether in favor of the title Nadar, which had long been used by the landed aristocracy in the Tiruchendur region.

In his voluminous study on Nadar, T.V. Doraisami Gramani equates Nadar with Kshatriya, a former being equivalent of the Sanskrit work. 'Kshatriya comes from Kshetra meaning country. Nadar comes from nadu, meaning country'. Both are the same.³⁰ Having established the caste as Kshatriyas, Doraisami then drew a geneological chart, tracing the descent of the Nadar community through Chera and Pandya Kings. He further said, 'since the caste occupation of both Nadars and Gramanis is toddy tapping, the Nadars are of moon dynasty, the descendents of chandra and the gramanis are of the sun dynasty, the descendents of surya'. Just for the propagation of the Kshatriya argument, Doraisami founded a monthly journal named as *Kshatriya Mitran* and, through the journal he churned out a number of articles on the divine origin of the Nadar community and its Kingly tradition.³¹

The Nadar caste historians, claiming a grandiose mythology and such titles as *Valamkai Uyarkonda Iravikula Kshatriya* (Kshatriyas of the solar race belonging to the right-hand factions)³² explained the fallen state of community as a product of the Kaliyuga, the present age of decline in which the purity of the caste observances have

been subverted.³³ As an oral story goes, that in the *Satyayuga*, the Palmyra juice flowed as ambrosial nectar from the gods, and with the utterance of a Mantra, a sacred formula, the trees would bend their heads to the ground and the sap would pour freely into the awaiting pots. After some days, a wicked Kshatriya offended the Gods, who cursed the Mantras, and, ever since then, the trees have had to be climbed and they remained obstinately perpendicular.

In order to gain the Kshatriya status, the Nadars attempted to build several stories but all these stories were treated as futile exercises by Nadars. Despite the ridicule to which the stories were subjected by scholars such as Thuston, Pate, Caldwell and by other higher caste communities of Tamil Nadu, this new myth of Kshatriya status became increasingly a reality for the Nadar community*. As they advanced claims to Kshatriya status, they began to adopt Sanskritic customs and rituals that could help them pointing to claim a higher caste status. The new mythology of the caste histories was their authority, Sanskritic custom was their proof, and wealth and education were the catalysts to higher status.

Nadars and the Missionaries

The Nadars provided a rich field for missionary work. The missionaries who came to work among the Nadars brought varying degrees of sophistication. But, they mostly agreed, on what they viewed as the lamentable condition of Nadar character.

The Reverend William T. Ringeltaube, one of the first missionaries, affiliated to London Missionary Society (LMS), recorded his initial impression of the Nadar community in his journal on June 19, 1806: 'The Shanars are a set of people, more robust than other Indians, very dark in complexion, their features completely non-European,

their ears protracted to the shoulders by mighty ornaments of lead. They divide themselves into five families, one of which exclusively ascends the trees, from which practice their hands and feet acquire a peculiarly clumsy shape. Their religion is not Brahminical, but consists in the worship of one Madan, formerly a washer man. Their habits are extremely simple. They are quarrelsome, avaricious, and deceitful.³⁴

Another early missionary described the Nadars as 'usually very dirty, ignorant and of wild appearance, can be hardly set to have character. They live almost like the brute creation and every vice is common among them. They are not without abilities; but still seem to be a degree at least behind the *Sudras*. Their wants are very few, and their desires do not extend beyond the support of their bodies. Of course, their ideas and conversations reach no further than the employment in which they are engaged'.³⁵

Thus in the eyes of the missionaries the Nadars were a degraded community, long suffering, and in darkness. "The Shanars are, as a class", wrote a missionary "timid, deceitful and ignorant".³⁶

Classification and Spatial Distribution

The Nadars were traditionally referred to as a toddy-drawing caste occupying a social limbo somewhere between the *sudhras* and the outcaste untouchables. Caldwell described them as 'belonging to the highest division of the lowest classes or the lowest of the middle classes; poor but not paupers, rude and unlettered, but, by many degrees, removed from the savage state'.³⁷ Nadars were considered as 'half polluting' caste in villages where they numbered only a small minority. They lived in separate habitations,

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just outside the main village, though not in so remote a site as the untouchables *cheri*.

In some of the reports, Nadars are referred to as a backward caste people. The census

Report of 1871 had described them as toddy tappers and agricultural caste. When the categories of castes were created in 1935, the Nadars of Tamil Nadu (only Hindu Nadars) were included in the list of backward classes. In January 1957, the Madras government placed the Nadar community among the 'most backward classes' for educational concessions. In 1963, in supercession of all previous orders on the subjects, the government ordered that the community 'Nadar' be treated with the communities 'gramani' and 'shanan' and that all the three be treated 'as other backward classes', being eligible for scholarship.

Sub-castes and Sub-castes Hierarchy

The distinction between the tappers and the owners of the trees was the most basic difference in the Nadar community. Prestige, power, wealth and endogamy divided the group farther. Though considered by themselves as well by other castes to be of the same community as the climbers, the Nadars kept themselves socially aloof from the climbers and, while they accepted food from their hands, they would not exchange brides. The marriage ties of the Nadars (Adityans) were restricted to a limited range of

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villages. Communications within the Nadar community rarely extended beyond the limited geographic area in which brides were exchanged and even within the region of *teris*, homeland of Nadars, the extent of ties beyond the distance of a few miles was very minimal. The political divisions before British rule, together with geographic distance and an almost total lack of transport facilities and the narrow development of a wider range of contact with the caste itself divided the caste into a number of endogamous units.

Today, most of the Nadars express only the vaguest knowledge of sub-divisions within the caste. As the community was divided geographically, it was divided also within **the smaller** regions of interaction into sub-castes.

The legends of the origin of the Nadars tell about the birth of seven sons: with the death of two, the remaining five separated divisions of the community. Five is the most generally accepted enumeration of sub-castes, as in Pate's Tinnevely Gazetteers and Thurston's Caste and Tribes of Southern India. Thurston (1909: 376) lists *Karukku - Pattayar, Mel-nattar, Nattatti, Kodikkal* and *Kalla*, as the five divisions of the caste

a) Karukku - Pattayar : Pate suggests Karukku - Pattayar are the division of territorial origin. This subcaste otherwise known, as Manattan and this endogamous group is superior to the rest, numerically strong (atleast 80% of the entire community), originally inhabited the area around '*Manadu*', which literally means 'the great province' four miles from Tiruchendur. Their alternative title following Pate *Karukkumattaiyan* {*Karukku* - 'sharp edge', *mattai*, 'the leafstalk of the palmyra') is suggestive of their association with tree climbing. Because of its derogatory connotation and unpopularity, it was changed to the form generally given, *karukkupattiyam* {*pattaiyam*, "sword"), meaning "those of the sharp sword".⁴⁰ One of the Nadar caste historians branded to the subdivision as Mara Nadars and claimed for them descent from the pandyans.⁴¹ The sub caste includes the families of the Nadars - called *Nellaimaikkarars* - as well as the tappers {*Panaiyeri* or

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marameri) beneath them.

b) Mel-natar: The Mel-natars (*Menattans* in Pate) derive their name from *Melnadu*, 'the western country', and live traditionally in Southern Travancore and western Tirunelveli district. It is claimed that, after the fall of chera dynasty, the descendents of the chera

Kings, the Mel-natars or Kuda Nadars as they were called, came into the Pandya country and settled along the Western Ghats. Mel-natars are mostly found in Ambasamudram

Taluk, with less population in Tenkasi, Sankarankovil, Srivaikuntam and Nanguneri.⁴⁴

c) *Nattatti*: Concentrated around the village of *Nattatti*, near Sawyerpuram in Tirunelveli District, the *Nattatti* Nadars number only a few thousand and were traditionally involved with cultivation, trade and money lending. Because of their non-association with tapping, they claim superior status, whereas other groups look down upon them. Today they are predominantly Christian and have remained a distinct endogamous unit.

d) *Kodikkal*: Their name sometimes associates them with the betel leaf cultivation, sometimes with the standard-bearers of the fighting men. They are mostly concentrated in Ambasamudram and Tenkasi taluks. Tapping has been their hereditary occupation. Nadar historians say Kodikkal Nadars were the flag bearers of Pandyan Kings.⁴⁵

e) *Kalla*: The Kalla shanars, otherwise called as 'Pulukka' (cow dung), are from the lowest division of Nadar community. Often, their identity was considered as marginal, inferior, spurious, false and originally believed to have been the slaves and palanquin bearers of the Pandya Kings. Their traditional position in Nadar Community was as climbers, as menial servants or as slaves of the Nadan families. The name by which the Kalla Shanars are most commonly known is servai. Servai is synonymous with low Kalla

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ci Shanars.

Over the years, the *jati* divisions have mostly lost their value. Today, because of their business network, modern government job. the Nadars have become a

geographically mobile category, eager to take advantage of better economic opportunities whenever available.

The Family

The Traditionally preferred form of family among the Nadars is the joint or extended family. Mandelbaum defines a joint family as one in which two or more married men who are closely related as father and son, or as brothers - live together in one household with their wives, sons and unmarried daughters and who all share a common kitchen and a common purse (1970: 17.34).

A prosperous joint family's income comes from business and / or lands, which its members hold in common. If members of a joint family are employed separately, a share usually goes towards household expenses. In a complete joint family, the members share their income, their dwelling place and their kitchen. Heed will be paid to the authority of the family patriarch usually the father or the eldest brother. Even if one or more of these characteristics are not present, a joint family may still be said to exist in a partial sense. The members of the middle or upper class family may separate formally dividing their lands and business firms in order to avoid the internal family disputes. Usually, the division occurs soon after the last son's marriage. In some families, the cases of *de jure* partition, the joint family can and sometimes does continue to exist in a *de facto* sense, with its members living in a single household and sharing both the operation of their business and its income.⁴⁷

In the garden land village of this study, one Mr. M.G. had four sons and one of them was drunkard. So he divided the entire property into four divisions. The eldest son, however, continued looking after the property and their business even though property

had been formally divided. Each son was given the responsibility of specific business unit, with one trade. When I asked the old man, why don't you include your first son also in the joint property management, "if I give him any management, after some time the property will be in the hands of a liquor shop owner. Moreover, his wife is money minded, when they were in a joint family, she deposited almost one lakh rupees on her name", he lamented.

Usually, the *dejure* partition takes place while the father is still living. The ulterior motive of such partition is to forestall the enmity that usually develops between brothers when they divide their inheritance themselves. It is increasingly common for elderly Nadar men to arrange a legal partition of their properties among their sons, and also to take steps towards an actual physical partition. They settle their sons in different houses and have them take over the operation of different branches of family business. This happens most often in the wealthy families.

From my interviews with 180 households, it was easy to conclude that the joint families had declined and only extended families were popular among the Nadars today, and that too to a limited extent. The elders tend to divide property among the sons to avoid disputes within the family. The making of a formal will has also become common among the Nadars. Modern education, migration towards city, change in social and cultural values, market oriented economy, government job, emphasis on small family norm, have all been the important factors, that have brought about a decline of joint family system among the Nadars.

Kinship and Marriage

Members of the Nadar community belonged to a number of social units and categories. Within the broad category of Nadars there were territorial divisions, *jati* groups, clans,

lineages and families. Members of the territorial divisions and *jati* groups were determined both by birth and by the place of residence. The social structure of Nadars at the time of this study, differed in a number of respects among the Southern and Northern Nadars.

The Clan and Lineage

Nadars are traditionally divided into endogamous sub-castes. They are, within each such-

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caste, divided into exogamous clans, called *Kuttams*. There are more than a hundred of such divisions found in any Nadar settlement. But, astonishingly, in the sample villages, only one village the respondents could identify and name the *Kuttam* to which they belonged. The other two village people were unaware of the *Kuttam*. Each Nadar settlement may have twenty five to forty *Kuttams*. Each Nadar is a member of a *Kuttam* through patrilineal descent and since all members of the same *Kuttam* are believed to be related through common ancestor, a man is forbidden to take bride from his own *Kuttam*. He is not prohibited, as in some cases, however, from marrying into the *Kuttam* of his Mother. Indeed, the preferred choice is the cross cousin, i.e. the daughter of Mother's brother. The *Kuttam* or a Clan may recall a special characteristic of an ancestor, or the region from which the Clan originated, or a special ritual prerogative held by a Clan. Other names originated in incidents, which were supposed to have happened to an ancestor, although not necessarily to the founder of the clan. For example, one clan's name translates as "devil man" or "evil spirit" (*Peyadi Kuttam*). The most widely accepted account of the origin of this title was that they used to threaten the co-farmers while irrigating the field during nights, so that fellow farmers won't come to irrigate their field, and they can get more water from the village tank and complete their job fast. This would

also avoid quarrels and pickerings with their fellow farmers in sharing the water. (Templeman also reported similar stories from the villages he studied: 1996). Lately, some Nadars had begun to twist that they be identified only with the place of their origin.

The members of the same *Kuttam* share a family deity, usually the distant ancestor who founded the family, and who is worshipped at the *kuttam* temple in the ancestral village. Christian converts also recognized the *Kuttam* for the purpose of marriage. The clan as a functional unit is very fastly disappearing in Nadar settlements. Most of the respondents, from both the dryland village (Kayamoli) and wetland village (Swamithoppu), were unable to tell the name of their clan. The primary activity of the clan members is the worship of the Clan deity at a common shrine. All shrines were once located in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts. Those who lived in other places visited only once a year for a festival in honor of the clan deity. The Karkuvel Ayyanar and Arunjunai Katha Ayyarar are the two important clan deities located near Kayamozhi.⁴⁹ During my fieldwork in the month of June-1996. I observed that the Northern Nadars arrived in hundreds of vehicles to worship in these temples. When enquired, some of the pilgrims told that this was their family deity and even year in the month of June they came and performed religious rites."

As clans were losing their importance, Nadars lineages were becoming larger exogamous units. Generally, a lineage consisted of a number of men who were related through patrilineal descent to a known ancestor, together with wives and unmarried daughters. The members of same lineage were called as '*pangaligaY*' (among the southern Nadars) literally mean the partners or sharers. Lineage-mates addressed each other as *Pangali* or *Chokkaran*. The extent to which lineage ties are recognized depended

upon circumstances. Lineage members enjoyed certain economic rights. By tradition, if a man has no offspring to inherit, his property went to his lineage mates. A widow is entitled economic support, or right, which may be upheld by the local *uravinmurai*. Conflicts over inheritance were generally sorted out within the lineage. If the lineage members were unable to settle their disputes, they sought outside helps. This however hurt the reputation of the families involved and of the lineage as a whole.

The primary corporate activity of clan members was worship of the clan deity at a common shrine. All shrines were once located in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts. Members who lived at other places returned once a year for a festival in honor of their clan deity. To meet the expenses of this festival, each family paid a tax. After the birth of their first child, a married couple would make a pilgrimage to the clan god's shrine, where the child's head will be shaved. Now such pilgrimages are more common than are the annual festivals.

Clans traditionally acted as a means of bringing together Nadars from a number of different settlements. At the annual festivals, Nadars from various settlements would meet, exchange information about trade opportunities or threats from other *jatis*, and renew their solidarity.

Lineage

With the decline of clans, for some Nadars lineages are becoming the largest exogamous units within their social structure. A lineage consists of a number of men who are related through patrilineal descent to a known ancestor, together with the wives and unmarried daughters of these men. Unlike clan, a lineage is not of unlimited generational depth, usually extending no **further than the** descendents of a common great - great grand father. The extent to which lineage ties are recognized depend on circumstances.

Lineage mates call one another a *Pangali*, which means "Sharer". This term refers only to males, but its plural, *Pangaliga*, is used as a term of reference to include all members of the lineage, including daughters and wives.

Members of lineage might be expected to display solidarity, working together as apolitical unit. In some disputes, lineage mates have actively opposed one another. When this happens, other members of the lineage who are not actively involved in the quarrel may try to persuade the contestants to keep some semblance of solidarity by taking part together in ceremonial and other activities. Lineage members enjoy certain economic rights. By tradition, if a man has no sons or brothers to inherit his property, it goes to his lineage - mates.

An important dimension of lineage activity involves participation of lineage - mates in one another's ceremonies, at least one member from each family within a lineage is expected to be present at all ceremonies held by a lineage mate. In a major ceremony, such as a wedding or a funeral, greater attendance is expected from each family- As one elder respondent, from the garden land village put it, 'one can skip a marriage or puberty function of his lineage mate, but not a funeral, because in the graveyard every one's presence will be noticed by the community elders or the *Nattanmais*'

Feminal Kin

'Feminal kin' is the term used by Mandelbaum (1970: 148) to refer to those of a man's relatives who are related to him through his mother, his married sisters, his wife and his married daughters. The Nadars distinguish between two main groups of feminal kin. The first is through ego's mother's natal lineage, and the second is through ego's affines.

which are of three types: those related through egos' married sisters, through egos' married daughters and through egos' wife.

The two terms *tayathikal* and *sambanthikal* explain the marriage routes through mother and father side. *Tayathikal* (*Thayathi*, singular), means 'members of ones mother's natal patrilineage. A person's *thayathikal* take part in his or her life cycle ceremonies, in the ritual of birth, puberty, marriage and death. Mother's brother is the most important *tayathi*, performing special duties in the life cycle ceremonies, including the funeral of his sister. When the sister's daughter attains puberty, it is the maternal uncle's duty to conduct all the ceremonies and incur all the expenditure. *Sambanthi*, a reciprocal term used between the fathers of married couple, literally means co-fathers - in-law. In the absence of father, elder son acts as the *Sambanthi*, thereby extending the bond created between the two families from one generation to next. *Sambathi kararkal* refers to whole of the families united by a marriage alliance than plain 'marriage'. A Nadar man responding to a request from his sister to assist her son or daughter is responding as a *thayathi* to his sister's offspring. On the other hand, the same man dealing with his sisters' husband or father-in-law would be acting as one of their *Sambathakararkal*. In this way, the maternal uncle simultaneously plays two roles as a *Sampathi* to his affines and as a *thayathi* to his niece or nephew.

Life Cycle Ceremonies

Nadar life cycle ceremonies may be divided into four categories: birth ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, marriage ceremonies and death ceremonies. They mark the main stages of each Nadar's life. The celebration of each ceremony indicates a new status in the community for the principal or principals. The style and importance of life cycle

ceremonies provide useful clues as to the respective weight of the sacred and the secular in the life of the Nadar community.

a) **Birth ceremonies**

Among the Nadars, a number of rituals are performed before and after the birth of a child. They begin when a woman is taken to her parent's home for her confinement and end when she returns her husband's home after the birth of the baby. These ceremonies were little affected either by Sanskritization, or by the self-respect movement against Sanskritization and hence have hardly undergone any change. However, some ceremonies before and after the birth of a child, which serve to bring the families of both parents together, have changed and these changes have occurred from practical considerations rather than from conscious pursuit of status enhancement.

b) **Initiation Ceremonies**

The initiation ceremonies performed by the Nadars during their involvement in the Sanskritization process have completely vanished today. Thurston (1909-366) mentioned this as a 'sort of incomplete parody of the ceremony of investiture with the sacred thread'. With the rise of the self-respect movement among Nadars, these were among the first Sanskrit elements to be purged. The sacred thread came to be regarded as the badge of the enemy as Nadars became increasingly anti-Brahmin.

The converted Christians administered baptism to their children in the church, usually between 9-12 years, which is popularly known as the first communion ceremony. This ceremony is administered to the children by the parish priest or the Christian clergies. Unlike the initiation ceremony of Hindu Nadars, the first communion ceremony is very firm among the Christian Nadars.

c) Puberty

The puberty ceremony for girls appears to be now less common than it was in the past especially among the urban, wealthy, educated and Christian families. It is still performed by some in rural areas. The ceremonies, which begin on the day of the girl's first menses, emphasize the importance of the *thayathikal* or mother's patrilineage. On the sixteenth day after the girl's menses, there used to be a function, whose purpose was to inform people that the girl was now ready for marriage. With their advancement in education, business and overall outlook, today the puberty function is increasingly seen as being embarrassing.

d) Marriage

The Nadars rarely practiced child marriage or widow remarriage.⁵¹ Polygamy and polyandry were also not common among them. The marriages took place only after a betrothal ceremony, called *Nichayadhartam*.⁵² On a fixed day, the maternal uncle of the bridegroom with the relatives would visit the house of the bride, with a specified amount to be given to the bride. They also carried fruits, flowers, garlands, betel leaves, *pansupah*, sandal paste and a silk sari for the bride. In the presence of the members and relatives of both the families, an agreement would be arrived at, and both the maternal uncles would exchange garlands and apply sandal paste on each other's forehead. Then the sari, would be given to the bride, who after wearing that sari would be seated in front of the group. The women would place flowers in the plait of the bride and bless her with vermilion. The ceremony would come to an end with the distribution of sweets, betel leaves, and pansupari.

The *Nichavadhartam* would be followed by another ceremony known as *poun unikkudal*, i.e. the melting of gold sovereign for making the *tali*.⁵³ This ceremony would

take place either at the bridegroom's residence or at the place of a goldsmith. The marriage would take place on the stipulated day.

A day prior to the marriage, the women of the bridegroom's family would visit the bride's residence during late hours of the evening, and construct a small oven and platform with clay in the bride's kitchen. This is called *Aduppu Thinnai Podudhal*. This indicates that the bride was entrusted with the work of the kitchen of the new family. This would be followed by a ceremony known as bangle wearing by the bride.

On the day of wedding, the parents of the bride and bridegroom would arrange for offerings to the respective maternal uncles. This is called *maman sastram*. After that, the bridegroom would be garlanded by his father and taken in a procession along with friends and relatives to the bride's house. At that time the bridegroom's nieces, would get hold of his shirt and permit him to go only after getting money. This money is called *kodukkuppidi panam*. The wedding sari, fruits, garlands, pan and flowers would be carried in that procession. As soon as the bridegroom reaches the house of the bride, his would be father-in-law, with a gold ring and garlands, would welcome him. Then, the women of the bride's family would welcome him with different kinds of *arthis*. (Lighted camphor in different types of plates would be shown thrice to the groom to honor and keep him away from evil eyes).

Then, the actual marriage ceremony would begin. In almost all the families this ceremony would come to an end with the placing of the *tali* round the neck of the bride by the bridegroom. This is known as *tirupputal*. A respected elderly man would conduct this ritual. No Brahmin priest is employed for the conduct of the ceremony. Except in Stvakasi where marriages continued to be performed by Brahmin priests. Nadars disassociated themselves from Brahmins after the self-respect movement.

After the marriage, the couple would be taken in a procession through the main streets to the bridegroom's residence. The bridegroom would be entertained with feasts at the bride's residence for three months. Only after the completion of this period, called *virundu sorakkudal*^ the newly wedded wife would be sent to her husband's house. On all-important festive days, the son-in-law would be invited to have feast in his father-in-law's house.

The Nadar's most preferred form of marriages are i) elder sister's daughter (ESD) i.e. one's own niece; ii) Mother's brother's daughter (MBD) i.e. maternal cross cousin and; iii) Father's sister's daughter (FSD) paternal cross cousin. According to Louis Dumont, this type of Kinship system, in which marriage alliance - based on the rule of cross-cousin marriage and unilineal, descent are balanced. Dumont's view is that positive marriage preferences of the system causes marriages to be transmitted 'with it marriage acquires a diachronic dimension, it becomes an institution enduring from generation to generation.' (Dumont, 1957: 154). Levi - Strauss says, practically, the effect of these marriages is to pressure and strengthen ties of friendship and co-operation founded on the affection of brothers and sisters, thereby forming a secure base for the exchange of services and to permit property to be retained within a tight circle of kin (Levi-strauss, 1969: 33).

Earlier, the southern Nadars, marriage networks were confined to a few clusters of villages. That is not the case today. In the dryland village of this study, Kayamozhi, people confined their marriage transactions to a few villages in the *teri* region namely,

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Cuttam, Padukkapthu and Kurumbur.

But, among the southern Nadars, even among the Kayamozhi Adityans, the marriage transactions extend on to far off places. Three factors made this possible i.e. the

declining importance of village as a political arena, better transport and communication facilities, and the spatial mobility of Nadars to the far off places.

Nadars are entering into a wide range of modern occupations and in a variety of economic enterprises than ever before. Increasingly, the occupational and class considerations are influencing the choice of marriage alliances. The end result is that suitable potential mates may have to be sought beyond the confines of a single settlement or region.

In order to facilitate such marriage alliances, the Nadars were also availing the services of Nadar Mahajana Sangam (NMS), a marriage bureau and the caste marriage brokers. The NMS maintained a register where the eligible grooms and brides and their bio-data was furnished by paying a nominal amount. The marriage register contained the following information: name of the prosperous bride and groom, age, date of birth, date of first menses (in case of girl), birth star, education, parents and siblings education, occupation, height, weight, religion, sub-caste, skin color, family background, contact address etc. Surprisingly, there was no reference to dowry even though it is a part of Nadars marriage practice. The services of marriage brokers and NMS were also frequently sought. The broker kept record of the prospective brides and grooms, which covered all aspects mentioned above in the NMS marriage bureau. If a broker succeeds in arranging a marriage alliance, the families of both bride and groom pay him a fee for the services rendered. Besides these bureau and brokers, Nadar caste journal '*Mahajanam*' (at present a weekly) also publishes the matrimonial column to facilitate marriage alliances. Dowry, continued to be important in all Nadar marriage alliances.

The Dowry¹ was seen as a vindication of status for both the families, it also functioned as an instrument of family mobility. It could open up new business ventures or

serve as a means for settling outstanding debts. The dowry amount could be used in establishing or re-establishing marriage alliances for several generations. The practice of dowry was vastly different between Hindu and Christian Nadars. Christian male Nadars emphasized more on education and preferred educated and employed women over dowry.

Migration and Migratory Routes

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Nadars lived almost wholly from the products of Palmyra and vast majority of the community was engaged in climbing Palmyra trees. The trade of the region was handled by Nadars who, with the load in bullock carts would wander among the Palmyra topes, collecting the products of trees, particularly the jaggery cakes, which were the primary medium of exchange. The major commodities marketed by the Nadar traders were jaggery, dried fish, salt and the products of small garden plots. The geographical sphere however was restricted because of the non-availability of pucca roads, incessant wars and dacoity, heavy duties levied by the *thepoligars* and expensive land traffic.

With the coming of British rule to the Southern districts, roads improved, internal customs were abolished, and better police protection was provided. These changes directly helped the Nadar traders to strengthen their business. They began to migrate northward, widening their business networks in localities well situated to serve as bases to conduct trading activities.

My respondents identified four stages of migration. The first stage was itinerant traders, travelling in large groups to protect themselves from bandits who were still active in spite of British efforts to suppress them. The second stage along their trade routes Nadars established *Pettais*⁵⁵ or fortified enclosures in which they could keep their carts

and bullocks, and in which they might market their goods. In the third stage, the traders established semi-permanent residence in these towns, setting up shops in order to take greater advantage of mercantile opportunities. The traders would return south from time to time to be with their families. Finally, in the fourth stage, they brought their families to live with them in the towns of the northern districts, establishing permanent residence there. The Nadars settlements in Six primary centres:- Sivakasi, Virudhunagar (formerly Virudhupatti), Tirumangalam, Sattangudi, Palayampatti and Aruppukottai - popularly known as the six towns of Ramnad⁵⁶ (Hardgrave, 1969: 130).

As a result of their trading activities, the migrated Nadars mingled more readily with one another than had been the case in their home tract of Tirunelveli, where, the immunities lived in relative isolation. Nadars soon began to work together for their mutual benefit, forming alliances among their association in several towns early in the nineteenth century. Soon, several of the settlements established trading links with the city of Madurai.

Nadar Organization

Confronted by a great majority of non-Nadars in the land they migrated to, the Nadar traders in the six Towns of Ramnad sought a tight and cohesive organization for protection of the community. In order to strengthen unity within the community, the caste organization was to be the final authority. All contract with the government officials would be through the organization of the community as a whole. In relations with other castes, the Nadars would present a common front. The fundamental institutions of the new unity of the Ramnad were *Muhamui* and *uravinmurai*.

The pettais, around which the Nadar towns grew, were originally built and maintained through tax levied on all goods bought and sold. Each trader using the facilities of pettai was required to contribute a portion of his income as 'common good funds' or *Mahamai*⁵⁷ (literally 'to glorify oneself'). As the towns grew, resident merchants and businessman were required to contribute *Mahamai*, the amount of levy to be determined by common decision of all the Nadar family elders.

The Nadar caste Council managing the *Mahamai* fund was composed of the head
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of each household in the community and came to be known as the *uravinmurai* (*Uravu*: consanguinity or relationship and *Murai*: organisation, order, manners or legality)- *Uravinmurai* literally means the way in which Nadars improve themselves by ordering their relationships or concisely an association of relatives. The *uravinmurai* was the corporate power of community; its power was absolute. The organisation of *uravinmurai* varied from area to area. The power of the *uravinmurai* lay in the hands of a committee,
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each member of the committee being known as *Muraikarar* - literally 'one who holds the turn'. The official responsibility of the *muraikarar* comes on rotational basis. The main duty of the *muraikarar* was to collect the *mahamai* and managing ver)' effectively. As *mahamai* was the foundation stone of the *uaravinmurai*, (Hardgrave:1969) payment of *mahamai* was watched closely by the *Muraikarar*.

Wherever permanent building was not available the temple was the seat of *uravinmurai* in many places. The functions of *uravinmurai* were quasi governmental, ranging from raising, training and deploying self defence militia, building and. operating school systems, conducting religious festivals, collecting revenue from the *uravinmurai* properties and function as the custodian of Nadars. In earlier time, in the absence of

police and court, the *uravinmuraïs* maintained the law and order problem to ensure unity among the community members. The *uravinmuraïs* acted as a social control agency in discharging the judicial duties of settling disputes within the community and between Nadars and other communities.

Contemporary Groupings

As mentioned above, though the older divisions based on sub-castes have weakened the Nadars can still be divided in various groupings. These include the territorial divisions, the religious divisions between and divisions within Hindu and Christian Nadars. Occupational and class differences are visible within the community.

a) Territorial Divisions

Geography of the state of Tamil Nadu has divided the entire Nadar community into three groups i.e. the Southern Nadars (Nadars of Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari districts). Northern Nadars (Nadars of Virudhunagar, Ramnad, Sivagangai and Madurai districts) and the Eastern or Kongunadu Nadars (i.e. the Gramanis living in Coimbatore, Erode and Salem districts).

The economic affluence of the Northern Nadars enabled them to excel virtually in all fields viz.. business, education, religion and politics. They were the first one to adopt Sanskritisation. They also participated in the self-respect movement, and now they have been emphasizing on education. The Northerners in all possible ways avoided the marriage ties with the Southern Nadars. But at present they were taking mostly the educated grooms from south. However, they still hesitated to send their daughters to the south. It is for this reason that it seems better to refer to Northern and Southern divisions in terms of *juti* rather than as two separate endogamous sub-groups. During the intense phase of sanskritisation in the late nineteenth century, there was an

attempt by some Northern Nadars to dissociate themselves from the Southern Nadars, whom they regarded as a threat to their hopes of higher status. These Northerners asserted that they were the descendents of the Nadars whom they claimed were a higher placed *jati*, only remotely related to the toddy - tapping Shanars and the Southern Nadars were the descendents of the other Shanar *jatis*. Some Southern Nadars for their part claimed that the Northerners were actually kalla- shanars, the lowest of the original *jatis*. Despite these invocations of past divisions, however, the distinction between the Northern and Southern Nadars is clearly far from absolute. As one Northern Nadar pointed to Templeman, 'a shanar (meaning a Southern Nadar), were a separate *jati*. A Shanar plus money equals a Nadar (Templeman, 1996: 29). In other words, wealth can erase regional divisions within the community.

The Gramanis of Kongu Nadu, are altogether a separate entity. Although they are members of Nadar Mahajana Sangam, and for all practical purposes the government treated them as Nadars, there was absolutely no interaction between southern and northern Nadars.

b) Religious Divisions

While Nadar are overwhelmingly Hindu, roughly 10% of them are also Christian. Again, the Christians are divided into three major categories viz., Roman catholics, Protestants and the Ceylon Penthegosthe Sabha. The Catholics are mostly concentrated in the coastal villages of Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts, where the Portuguese missionaries concentrated their efforts from 1530s onwards (Caldwell 1881: 232). However, a bulk of the Nadar Christians are Protestants. The first Protestant baptism of Nadars was performed in 1797 by missionaries of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), which was connected to the Church of England. The first permanent Shanar

Christian settlement, Mudalur, was established two years later. But, substantial numbers of Shanars converted to Christianity only after the complete cession of Tirunelveli to the British in 1801 (Caldwell 1881: 209).

At the peak of conversion, some Nadar settlements entirely converted to Christianity, Caldwell (1849: 69) attributed this to the tendency to **act** like herds. Hindu Nadars claim that such mass conversions happened because of the fringe benefits the converts expected from the British. As one of the Hindu respondent **from** the garden land village put it, jocularly 'for the sake often liters of wheat and half-liter milk powder, they have mortgaged their faith, nothing else'.

The followers of Ceylon Pentegosthe mission are of very recent origin. They follow strict observances like not wearing any gold ornaments except a wristwatch, Bible, for them is the ultimate thing. They donate one-tenth of the monthly earnings to the church (which is known as Dasamabaham). They wear only white sari at the time of marriage and they strictly follow the Bible without any deviation. One of the Hindu respondents pointed out that "in order to avoid the dowry some Nadars follow the faith and some others to gain free education and employment',

c) Class **and occupational Differentiation**

There was a time when cultivation of the Palmyra, (toddy - tapping) was the only employment and means of subsistence for Nadar community (Ringeltaube: 1806). During the off-season, from March-September, the tappers used to work as agricultural laborers. However, over the years Nadars have been differentiated in terms of occupation as well as economic well-being. A large majority of Nadars in Northern Tamil Nadu have gone into trade.

As Templeman argues, Nadars today could be classified into i) Merchants and business people, ii) Professionals and semi-professionals, iii) Agriculturists iv) Agricultural laborers, and v) Non-agricultural laborers (Templeman: 1996:31). The most desirable professions among Nadars were medicine, law, teaching, engineering and government service. Semi-professionals included low ranking government officials, white-collar works, and some teachers of relatively low rank and status. In the field of agriculture, one could find both the absentee landlords and casual laborers, the former are being urbanized with their business network spread in the urban areas, than latter who are mostly confined to the villages.

Despite such differentiation, the Nadar community reveals a marked degree of solidarity across division of income and occupation. A prosperous man of any occupation would call upon and help his less successful *jati* brethren. This is reflected in our field data also.

Nadars' view of themselves

During the phase of intense Sanskritisation Nadars identified themselves in the classical Hindu social scheme of four Varnas and branded them as Kshatriya Nadars, indirectly hinting that they were originally Kshatriyas, the highest varna rank, with the traditional occupation of warriors and rulers. In nineteenth century, they started claiming that the Nadars were the original descendents of the Pandyan dynasty, which ruled a large part of what is now Southern Tamil Nadu with Madurai as their capital. Nadars still believe that the Telugu Nayakas oppressed the Pandyanas and drove them south from Madurai to Tirunelveli where they were forced to cultivate the palmyra in order to survive. Elderly Nadars feel that their 'noble' origin has contributed in a major way to their present high position, having endowed them with traits that enabled them to reassert their pre-

eminence when the British put an end to their oppression. One of the aged respondent from the garden land village, said, 'the Nadars always remember their good old days as rulers and that inner force motivated them to regain their lost glory'.⁶⁰

When the dominant caste and the Brahmins refused to recognize Nadars' claim to higher status (Kshatriya), they turned towards the self-respect movement, initiated by E.V. Ramasami Naiker alias Periyar. Nadar Stalwarts like Soundrapandian Nadar of Pattiveeranpatti influenced the community to a great extent. This sought the destruction of the traditional caste system, arguing that Sanskritic ritual practices and caste ranking had been thrust upon Dravidian society by Brahmins as a means of social suppression and control. As the time passed, Nadars animosity towards the Brahmins has been significantly minimized. Today one can see a number of educated Brahmins working in Nadars business establishments in various capacities. While interviewing the Secretary of Nadar Mahajana Sangam in his office firm, I discovered that half-a-dozen Brahmin employees were working in his business firm and all the Brahmins were addressed as Swami by the Secretary of NMS.

The Chief characteristics of Nadar community as a whole, reported by the 180 respondents from three different villages, ecology and districts described them with the following adjectives: thrift, industry, practicality, honesty, hard working, dedication, determination, peace loving nature, tolerance, high degree of loyalty, and co-operation within their community, high achievement motivation, simple in outlook, politeness, broader outlook etc.

On the negative side they said that Nadars were money minded, provincial minded, religious fanaticist, self-boasting, clanning, communalistic, short tempered.

profit as their sole motive, quarrelsome, avaricious, deceit, treacherous, dishonest, no business ethics etc.

How others view the Nadars

Other castes in Tamil Nadu take a different view of Nadars. My interview with other caste members in the study villages revealed both positive and negative attitude towards the Nadar community. About their strength, all the communities appreciated the spirit of unity among Nadars, their hardworking nature, business acumen, community solidarity, investment in education, and political solidarity. On the negative side a respondent of Thevar community said, 'the Nadars are experts in doing adulteration. They know the art of brewing profit out of water and sugar. During the off-season, with limited quantity of sweet toddy they mix water and sugar and sell it in the towns'. Another Thevar reported, 'Nadars may do anything for the sake of money. The Jews of Israel are nothing in front of Nadars'¹. There are some common sayings about Nadars and it is popular among other caste groups. One derogatory saying is 'one may not touch a Harijan, but one would not like even looking at a Nadar'. One Asari man (Carpenter) said, that Shanans intelligence could be measured by a foot only. Another Muppanar woman said sarcastically that at the time of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law fight, 'a Nadar woman would wish that her daughter- in- law should become a widow even at the cost of her son's death'. The dalits of Kayamozhi said about the feudalistic nature of Adityans, 'they never allowed others to wear even good dress and to be neat and tidy'. One dalit youth said, 'his grand father wore a new white shirt and went to a Adityan family for his routine labor work. The Adityan happened to see him dressed impeccably and could not tolerate his anger. After munching the betel leaves he spate on his labor's shirt in angry mood'. The young man further said that even today dalits were treated like slaves in Kayamozhi.

Conclusion

However, despite such negative opinions, Nadars are no longer a weak or dependent community. By the 1920s and 1930s, the Nadars began to gain acceptance among their neighbors. They were granted the status of 'clean *sudra*'. Their claims to Kshatriya status were, however, resisted and denied. This led them to rejection of Sanskritic practices and they joined other *sudra jatis* in the anti-Brahmin movement. They continued their efforts at economic upliftment, increased their political power, and gained increasing social acceptance. Such status gain was most pronounced among the merchant and middle classes in Nadar urban settings.

Notes

1. William Ferguson, The Palmyra Palm (Colombo, 1850), W.A. Symonds, "Monograph on the Palmyra Palm and its uses" in Selection from the Records on Palmyra Plantations, Pp. 142 - 143; V. Nagam Aiya, Travancore State Manual (Trivandrum), III. 68-69
2. See Caldwell, Tinnevelly Shanars, pp . 7 - 9
3. *Ibid.*, 144
4. The myth of Nadar origin narrated by caste elders also attributes their glorious past
5. Caldwell, *Tinnevelly shanars* P. 28
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-48
7. *Ibid.*, P.48
8. Public Department, G.O. 1469, dated 26.11.1867, P.5
9. Velu Pillai. T.K. The Travancore State Manual. Vol. 1 1940, P.369
10. Cornish, N.R.F.R.C.S., Report of the Census of the Madras Presidency, Madras, 1871, P. 162

- U Bryce Rayan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, New Jersey, 1953, P. 136
- XI. The Ceylon army under Lankapura Dhandanatha came to help the Pandyas but they did not settle down here
13. Chatterji, S.K. *Dravidian*, P.20
14. Moses Ponnaiah, *Nadar Varalaru* (T) Madurai, 1978. Pp 8 - 12
15. *Ibid.*, Pp 12 - 13
16. See, *Manual of the Administration of Madras Presidency*, Vol. I Madras, 1885, P. 35
17. Elankulam Kunjan Pillai, P.N. *Pandya Keralam* (T) Madras, 1970 Pp. 197 - 199
18. Selvaraj, T.G., *Ancient History of Tamil Nadu Nadars* (T), Tenkasi 1979, P.7
19. Nachimuthu, K.. *Choi an Puruvupattayam Kurrum Kongu Urkal* (T) Trivandrum, 1969, P.70
20. Interview with one of the members of Tiruvadi family at Chettiapattu
21. Kumarayya Nadar and Ramalinga Gurukkal P. 176
22. Nagam Aiya, V.. *op. cit* Pp 382 - 392
23. *Ibid.* P. 392
24. Ramaswami Sastri. K.S. *op.cit.* p. 29
25. It is compulsory' contribution of grain given in certain proportion for temple from cultivators or also include a definite percentage on the profits of commercial transaction for charitable purposes
26. It is found in the copper plate inscription which was granted by *Kongu Desa Nadans* and which was under the custody of Karumapuram Gurukkal Siva Subramania Pandithar whose residence is now at Siddhar Kovil near Salem
27. Chinnasamy Gounder, S.A.R. *Kongu Vellalar Purana Varalaru* (T). Erode, 1963, P. 10
28. '*Thondainadu Sanduruddaithu*' - *Avaiyar Sanga Tamil Puluvar varisai*, Tinnevely. 1963. P. 18

29. Sattam Pillai, according to his son, translated the Caldwell pamphlet into Tamil and sent it throughout the country, Ceylon, Burma to eminent Nadars to make them to understand about the misrepresentation of Nadar community in that book.
30. T. Vijaya Doraisamy Gramani, Research on the word Nadar: A Manual Relating to the Kingly community (Madras, 1927). Pp. 67-68
31. *Ibid.*, P.72
32. J.H. Hutton, Caste in India (Cambridge, 1946) Pp 59-61, 143 - 145. The Tamil Castes were ranked in a linear structure, so they were also divided traditionally into right Hand and Left Hand, a distinction apparently limited to South India. Among the left hand castes were the Maravars and Pallars. Among those of the Right, claiming their privileges to have been bestowed by the goddess kali, were the Vellalas, Nadars, Ambattars, Vannans and Paraiyans.
33. Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi Vs. Irulapan Nadan. P.75
34. Quoted in William Robinson (ed)., Rigeltaube, the Rishi. 1902. P. 69. See also Caldwell, Records of the Early History of Tinnevelly Mission (Madras 1381), P.141.
35. Extract from the journal of Charles Rheinuis dated 1822. Memoirs of the Rev. C.T.E. Rheinuis (London: 1841) P. 241
36. Caldwell Lectures on Tinnevelly Mission P. 45
37. Caldwell, The Tinnevelly Shanars (1849) PP. 4 - 5
38. Pate, *Madras District Gazetteers: Tinnevelly*, P. 101
39. T. Masillamani Nadar, *Pandiyadesa Adita Vamsa Saritiram* (History of the Adityan Family of the Pandiya Country). Madurai 1931. He lists the villages, with which the Adityan family traditionally had marriage relations. P. 40
40. Thurston VI, 376-377, Pate Pp. 129-130
41. Kulasekhara Raj, Account of the Nadars Race. P. 46
42. Quoted by Robert Hardgrave. P. 33
43. Pate *op cit.*, 129-130
44. Thangasami 'Nadars', Kulasekhara Raj Pp 52 - 53
45. Kulasekhara Raj Pp 51 - 52, Thangasami, Nadars. Quoted by Hardgrave, his interview with Nadars at Sawyer Puram

46. Pate 129 - 130, Kulasekhara Raj Pp 55 - 56, Thurston VI 376 - 377.
47. Templeman (1998). P. 49
48. *Kuttam* means the extended clan group 'identified through patrilineal descent group. It is not in practice among the Christian Nadars of Kanyakumari district. Slowly *Kuttam* names are fading.
49. The temples located in and around Kayamoi reveals that Nadars original home tract is the arid land otherwise known as 'Manadu' as it is called by caste historians. Many Ayyanar temples are located in this area. The *Karkuvel* and *Arunjunai Katha Ayyanar* are very famous.
50. The pilgrimage generally coincides with lean season of agriculture and school annual vacation in all over Tamil Nadu.
51. Child marriage is completely absent among the Nadars. However, with the influence of Self-Respect movement and western education now Nadars allow the widow remarriages, if the husband dies at a very early age without any issue.
52. Though *thi?* is a Sanskrit word, it is used by the Nadars to denote the engagement (betrothal) ceremony.
53. This is the small golden ornament symbolizing wedlock; otherwise known as *Tirumangalyam*. The type varies from place to place and caste to caste in appearance. The economic condition enables the people to attach the golden *Tirumangalyam* to gold chain or yellow thread. If they use the yellow thread the bridegroom ties three knots in it.
54. The Adityans wanted to maintain their sub-caste purity in those days. Also the Adityans tried to build a network within the region through marriage. With the development in transport and communication the marriage transactions started widening.
55. *Pettais*, were the fortified enclosures in which the Nadar traders could market their goods. At later stages the *pettais* were developed into large trade centers of Nadars.
56. These six towns were the primary trade centers of Nadars. From here the seeds of caste association were sown first. From these towns, the Nadar business tycoons and famous political leaders emerged at later stages.

57. It is known as the common good fund of the community. The fund was meant to develop the community by providing basic civil amenities in Nadar Settlements. At later stage, the *Mahamai* fund was used to acquire properties to the caste. Caste historians attribute this as the main reason for the caste solidarity and success in their day-to-day life.
58. Literally means the way in which Nadars improve themselves by ordering their relationships. Templeman translated it as 'association of relatives'. The village level caste associations in Nadar settlements are called as *Uravinmurais*. Also considered as a key factor in Nadars strategy for their advancement.
59. *Muraikarar* literally 'one who holds the turn'. The team which managed the *Mahamai* fund of the local association are called as *muraikarar*, their number varied from village to village. They discharge their duties on rotation basis.
60. My interview with Sri Chitiraikannu Nadar, of the garden land village. According to him the past social memory is a driving force, which facilitate to achieve new heights in business, education, politics etc.

Chapter- V

I. Agrarian Transformation in South Tamil Nadu and the Nadars

This chapter focuses on the nature of agrarian transformation in southern Tamil Nadu with special reference to the Nadars. Based on the field interviews and available historical sources, the chapter provides a detailed account of how the Nadars living in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts got increasingly involved with agriculture from the 18th Century onwards. The chapter is divided into three parts. First part focuses on agrarian transformation of the districts, second part is about the production forces and production relations in the sample villages and the third part deals with the nature of agrarian transformation in the villages studied.

The Kanyakumari district was recognized as part of Tamil Nadu only in 1956, at the time of the reorganization of states on linguistic basis. Prior to 1956, it was a part of the princely state of Travancore. The third district selected for this study Tuticorin was formed only in 1986, by further bifurcating the Tirunelveli district. Therefore, the discussion presented on agrarian structure with reference to Nadars in this chapter focuses largely the two districts of Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari. The caste name Shanar and Nadars have been used interchangeably.

i) Tirunelveli District

Agrarian history of Nadars in Tinnevely district goes back only to the 18th century. Massive peasant immigration changed the composition of regional population of Tirunelveli. These immigrants brought new techniques and productive powers to bear on

agriculture, and established the domains for competition over territorial control. People kept on coming from the region called *Cheramandalam* during the medieval times, which became the native state of Travancore during the nineteenth century, and provided countless Malayalam-speaking immigrants to Tirunelveli district over the centuries. Among them the largest group was that of the Shanars.

Sometime in 1300 A.D the Vellalas from eighteen nadus of the river valley supposedly met and passed a resolution banning people called Vellai Nadans from employment in vellala villages, from free access to all Tamil villages, and from marriage to Tamil Women. Their expulsion from Tamil villages and exclusion from marriage to Tamil women strongly suggest their non-Tamil origin.¹ Shanar immigration continued in the nineteenth century, when Tinnevely district officials noted Shanars arrival from Southern Travancore.² The Shanars' traditional occupation was the tending of palmyra palm, which provided fruit, drink, leaves, and material for rope, baskets, mats and myriad of other products. Since the tree thrives in sandy soils, where moisture lies at the root level and where, indeed, it has few competitors. Shanar settlements, thus, have over centuries, tended to concentrate in sandy tracts. The Shanar population had, it appears, moved from established milieus of productive palmyra cultivation towards open ground to plant more trees. Because planting and cultivating the palmyra was an unusually extensive agricultural activity, the Shanars moved about more than most groups. It was a well-established fact that Shanar settlement could subsist entirely on the fruits of palm; yet the shanars were also known for their travels far and wide to exchange palmyra products.³ As a matter of caste custom. Shanars were a peculiarly mobile cultivating *jati*, and their mobility had encouraged occupational diversification in response to new agricultural and commercial opportunities. A comparison of the 1821 and 1881 census

returns for the Southern Tirunelveli showed that shanars increased from 3 to 20 per cent of the population, which must indicate some migratory settlements during the intervening half-century.

Nadars settled along two main routes: one, running north, north-east, took them into southern and south-eastern Tirunelveli, and then along the sandy coast upto Ramanathapuram. Another route pointed north, into the Tambiraparni valley, and from there into the northern mixed and dry zones, where they settled in compact local concentrations. Six towns in Northern Tirunelveli and adjacent terrain of present day Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Viruthunagar districts became renowned as centers of Nadar agricultural and commercial activities.⁵

Thus Nadars came to occupy three very different social milieus within which they sought their livelihood. In the sandy south, they themselves became bulk of the population and their settlement centered on the palmyra and on garden crops and hardy millets. They became skilled in digging wells into higher water table. They moved far from their villages for selling in country sugar and dried fish acquired from the coastal villages. When they settled near Tambiraparni delta, and around the tanks of irrigated villages, they planted their palmyra palm, where Brahmins and Vellalas were local dominants. So. they had to pay these higher castes in goods, services and subservience for access to land. In the mixed zone, both north and south of Tambraparni, they found a more varied set of opportunities, including palmyra cultivation, garden and trade.⁶

The migrant Nadars tried to cultivate many crops under tank irrigation and developed a new practice called "*nanjei-mel- punjaf* (dry crops over wet land) which subsequently became known in Anglo-Indian parlance in the nineteenth century as "*nanjci-mcl-punjah*".⁷

Well digging also became increasingly important for Nadar farmers in the mix of agricultural technologies as these farmers were pushed into the agricultural frontiers. Extensive use of wells in agriculture must have entered the agricultural scene with migrants who entered into the region, centuries after 1300. Nadars, the migrant caste, was most closely identified with the well technology even in the nineteenth century. Nadars concentrated their agricultural activities in the areas of poor drainage, where wells remain to this day of greatest productive importance. With the well irrigation, the Nadars created a style of intensive agriculture.⁸ To quote Pate,

if water exists under the ground, a Shanar will find it, and will quickly convert a luxuriant garden patch of poor soil, which in time of its previous owner had been a dreary waste (Pate: 1917)

In order to produce a livelihood on the frontiers of farming, Nadars adapted and combined crops with the peculiar qualities of their agricultural settings. As generations carved and dug the earth to increase water supplies for the people, animals and crops, Nadar peasants worked with genetic materials that could transform sunshine, moisture and nutrients into food, clothing and other human necessities. Nadar community in their agricultural settings became characterized over time by their particular blend of crops. The regional cropping pattern had emerged slowly in the late nineteenth century in Nadar dominated south Tamil Nadu. Nadar farmers adopted genetic and water-control technologies that worked best in their specific natural settings. They, thus, produced in the natural mosaic, that is the Tirunelveli region, a patchwork of agrarian milieus. The Nadar dominated Tirunelveli region assumed great importance because of garden crops cultivated with the well irrigation, which not only assured their subsistence but also helped to dominate their trade. In the sandiest and driest part of the region, the southeast, palmyra trees also assumed special importance. Official records called this area of

Nadars as the land of 'palmyra forest'.¹⁰ Thus the community developed gradually their own specialized cropping pattern in the Tirunelveli region.

Coherent agricultural zones were developed because contiguous communities along the dry-wet continuum spread over stretches of land that became characterised by one village style of agricultural production. Each agricultural zone supported a distinct social milieu. The migrant Nadars in each agricultural zone developed their kinship network known as *Kuttam*.¹¹ This network provided sustenance for families moving and settling the land. Kin built marriage circles in their caste groupings sought security for their livelihood by forging alliances and stabilizing exchange relations. In this process, the agricultural zone, over the time, became ethnic zone and zone of dominant caste alliances. Historically, Nadar caste became the social constituent of production process in each technologically and naturally distinct agricultural milieu.

Only a half dozen *jati* groups, who by their numbers and productive activity, defined the social geography of agrarian Tirunelveli.¹² Together, they made up about two-thirds of the population in 1881 i.e., Nadars or Shanars (18%) followed by Pallahs and Pariahs (17%), Maravas (9%), Vadugas (8%), Kambalatans (8%), Vellalas (8%) and Brahmins (4%). The transanctional ties within and between these *jatis* established the substantive social basis of agricultural development. Their settlement strategies produced spatial pattern of local caste resource control and spread and consolidation produced domains of caste dominance within each agricultural zones.

Dominant caste domains emerged as powerful families created, over centuries, alliances based upon transactional ties, and obtained in the process predominant control of agricultural production.¹³ Unlike the Brahmins, Vellalas, Maravars and Vadugas, the

Nadars could not aspire to symbolic ascendancy. Their status obliterated any possibility of an inter-jati alliance in which they might be on the top. They dominated, therefore, only where they comprised bulk of the population, where the majority of agricultural transactions could be retained within the *jati* itself, and where the highest among them, the Nadans, assumed the dominant caste role.

The symbolic identification of a caste with a particular territory deepened with time. Marriage networks became interwoven on the basis of status, power and interests in land. The identity of social groups and land interpenetrated.

Census data of nineteenth century Tirunelveli reflects four distinct domains of dominance, each in one agricultural zone. The social basis of irrigated agriculture was dominated by Vellala-Brahmin dominant caste alliance. The Vadugas dominated the black soil of the northern dry-zone. The third, much smaller and poorer domain emerged from Nadar concentration in the southern dry-zone. The Maravars settled heavily in the north mixed zone, an agricultural patchwork and ethnically became highly mixed. The wet and dry zones, therefore, became relatively stable both agriculturally and ethnically; and each had relatively uniform configurations of dominance and interdependence. The character of caste dominance in each agricultural zone played a central role in the socio-political history of Tirunelveli.¹⁴

How did the Nadars acquire agricultural lands in Tirunelveli district?

Although the Nadars were migrants to the Tirunelveli region, over a period of two and a half centuries they acquired good amount of agricultural land and emerged as a provincial propertied class.¹⁵ Though the Nadars still remained poor. Caldwell wrote in 1869,

Christianity promoted their education and enlightenment. Their position has been greatly improved and many spheres of useful, remunerative and honorable labor that were formerly closed against them are now almost open to them as to any other class in the community.¹⁶

The opening of sugar mills at Cuddalore and elsewhere led to an increase in the price of jaggery. The opening of coffee estates in Ceylon brought in new money to Tinnevely and investments in purchasing lands, as the poorer Nadars responded to the opportunities for profitable labour.¹⁷ With the opening up of Ceylon plantations in 1830's, there were systematic recruitment in Madras for laborers. The initial response was slow, but it soon picked up. Between 1843 and 1867 nearly one and one-half million Tamilian emigrated from Madras to Ceylon, a majority of them belonged to Nadar caste. Most of whom returned to their native place with a sizeable earnings with which they purchased agricultural lands.¹⁸

A substantial number of emigrants to Ceylon and Malaya were Tinnevely Nadavs.¹⁹ Pate wrote in the Tinnevely Gazetteer, that

it is from the unproductive Tiruchendur *teri* region, that members of the laboring classes migrate in thousands every year to work in the tea and rubber estates of Ceylon.²⁰

Of the Nadar migrants, greatest numbers were drawn from the Christian community.²¹ During the period of their stay abroad or the plantation of the Western Ghats, the Nadars regularly sent remittances to their families in Tinnevely. As soon as they could afford, the Nadars gave up climbing palmyra trees and began to hire someone else to climb the trees for them, or seek a more respectable occupation such as a being petty shopkeeper or as a cultivator.²² By 1871, a British settlement officer wrote to the collector of Tinnevely,

that in these days many Shanars have nothing to do with climbing, and that through the increased wealth and comfort of the Shanars as a class, owing to the spread of education among them, and remunerative means of subsistence, it has become, even, year, more difficult for owners of palmyra to get people to climb trees.²³

Migrant climbers from Southern Travancore were already being bought in for the Tinnevely seasons, but lack of climbers left an increasing number of trees untapped.²⁴

From middle of the nineteenth century onwards, there was an enormous increase in the number of land titles held by the Nadars. Whereas at one time the land ownership among them was limited to the aristocratic Nadan families, there were now thousands of landowners.²⁵ The Nadars holdings were often minute, but they intensively cultivated garden crops, such as chillies, onion and betel-vine, which had perennial demand in urban market.²⁶ The garden plots in the middle of the desolate *teri* country were irrigated from deep wells. About the hydrological skill of Nadars Pate wrote,

if water exists under the ground, a Shanar will find it, and will quickly convert a luxuriant garden patch of poor soil, which in time of its previous owner had been a dreary waste²⁷

In the *teris*, there were also scattered lakes, which collected water from the northeast monsoon. Around the edges of these lakes, the Nadar cultivators quickly planted their gardens, and as the lake evaporated during the dry season, water was bailed for the crops of plantains, vegetables and even paddy fanning, 'a fringe of luxuriant garden around the , , ,²⁸ lake .

A small portion of the Nadar community, with a family name Adityans,

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possessed vast tracts of land in the regions south of river Tambraparni. The Nadans (lords of the land) were tax gatherers for the Nayaks, and probably functioned as petty landlords under poligars. One account speaks of the appointment by the Pandians of seven collectors from Nadar community in the *teri* region. Another records the appointment in 1639 of eleven Nadans, authorized to collect taxes from the people." As hereditary tax collectors, the Nadans held civil authority over the lands in their control.

With great wealth and power, the Nadans commanded the deference to those beneath them. The tappers, totally dependent on Nadans, came before them only with their arms folded across chest in respect and with their dhotis tied above the knees, as a mark of their inferiority. Although most of the climbers were landless, a few acquired ownership of trees. By the mid nineteenth century increasing number started acquiring ownership of tiny plots, and became economically little better off than before.³² More commonly the ownership of both land and trees was retained by Nadan landlords (the Adityans), since trees were transferred by mortgage and sale apart from and irrespective of land on which they stood.³³

Droughts in the nineteenth century and subsequent famine hit the mixed zone very hard. Many Maravars suffered serious economic problems under these conditions and consequently many of them moved from villages to towns in order find employment in the urban economy. When the marginal and small farmers of the Maravar community disposed off their land, in most cases it was purchased by the Nadars.³⁴

The mixed zone had some success stories as well. Certainly, the biggest gainers in both the north and south were peasants endowed with good dry land, wells and access to town markets. The Nadars had all these facilities. Therefore, among the economic winners, Nadars held special importance for their economic standing, of a sort that did not accrue to any other caste group. Nadars came to be known for their skills in expanding palmyra tree cultivation, digging wells for garden irrigation, and marketing their produce in towns through networks of caste organized commercial exchange.³⁵ Especially, in the mixed zone, in the black and red soil tracts, Nadars excelled in both agriculture and trade. Nadar merchant houses dominated cotton marketing in several

northern towns, most importantly Virudhunagar. Petty traders of Nadar caste forged a link between town merchants and village producers, so that caste and kin ties among Nadars provided social conduits for the forward contracts that supplied towns with both cotton and domestic commodities. The raising fortunes of Shanars amid Marava populations in economic doldrums, and the raising fortunes of dryland peasants in general amid economically stagnant or declining *mirasidar* villages, caused persistent social conflict from early in the twentieth century.³⁶

The upper caste landowners increasingly relied on tenants to farm their land, so that they could concentrate on urban careers in professions, government service and commerce. The Nadar tenants used this as an opportunity to till the land; which assured them a steady agricultural income. Most of the Nadar tenants retained their tenant status for many generations.³⁷ When the land owners started investing in human capital by acquiring English education and started moving to urban centres, the Nadar tenants,

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unlike the untouchable Pallar and Parayar tenants, acquired their masters lands. The Nadars economic prosperity weakened the traditional dominant caste alliance. By the early years of the twentieth century, the non-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu gave the Nadars a kind of Self-respect and political articulation, which helped to weaken the higher caste domination in land ownership,³⁹

The Nadar dominated dry-zone agrarian economy experienced the most dramatic transformation of all during the nineteenth century. Dry-zone, once barren, became the scene of economic boom because of the developments in new transport technology, agricultural technology, construction of cotton road, railway line and port improvement. All these developments helped the Nadar peasants to generate more profits through

cotton cultivation. Nadar merchant and farming families became prominent social and political actors in cotton areas and maintained their position by spreading commercial ties to growers and petty traders in dry-zone villages. Studies of cotton cultivation and marketing in the early twentieth century reveal that great many cultivators, dealers, middlemen, money lenders and cart men in cotton belt were Nadars.

The imperial technologies opened an era of expanding commercial wealth and power. Peasants with assets in land, with family labor, and with caste connection to merchants in town pursued opportunities that triggered the growth of commercial peasant agriculture. In major towns, Nadar merchants became powers to contend with. In the villages, commercially active Nadar peasants transformed the entire agriculture scenario. The cotton economy brought merchants and commercial activity into increasing prominence in the agrarian economy.

Nadars and Commercialization of Agriculture in south Tamil Nadu

Nineteenth century industrialization made much of the world Europe's agricultural hinterland. European demand for peasant crops, among which cotton assumed overwhelming importance as a raw material for English cloth manufacturers went up significantly. Peasants and merchants in south India participated avidly in the worldwide upsurge in agricultural commodity production that accompanied European industrialization. Tirunelveli region held particular importance in south India because it produced high quality' cotton that fetched high prices first in the company's remittances trade, and then in English agency house trade with English and other European manufacturers of cotton cloth. As a result, rapidly expanding peasant cultivation of

cotton for export conversed in its effects on the region's economy with steadily increasing production of all varieties of commodity crops.

The Nadars everywhere in Tamil Nadu had some farm produce to sell. Garden crops like chillies, tobacco, betel, plantain, and vegetables in addition to pulses and palmyra products provided valuable loads for bullock carts to carry from one region to another by Nadar traders.⁴⁵

The industrialization of England led to the commercialization of south Tamil Nadu agriculture. The result of which was that the agrarian society steadily expanded its productive capacities and commercial activities. The technological breakthrough came from the imported materials and techniques that lowered the transport, transaction and communication costs. The cotton produced in Tirunelveli had good demand in industrial Britain. Due to this, the Nadar town Virudhunagar had become the foremost cotton mart in the black-cotton soil tract in the northern dry-zone.⁴⁶ Growing demand for cotton revolutionized the Indian export trade after 1835. Tirunelveli boasted for both high quality soil for cotton cultivation and thriving centres from export handicraft manufacture of cotton cloth to export peasant cultivation of raw cotton, cleaned market towns and shipped out from the ports of Madras and Tuticorin. Increasing commercial agriculture and commodity markets provided the peasants with cash for investment to develop agriculture. As cotton acreage grew rapidly, the peasants made efforts to tap the water table. digging of wells for irrigation gathered momentum. Statistics on agricultural wells show the most rapid increase in digging of wells in the cotton growing areas where their numbers doubled between 1823 and 1850.⁴⁷

The cotton boom in south India led to the construction of new road, new railway line and port improvement at Tuticorin.⁴⁸ All these made the Nadars powerful both in

agriculture and business. The surplus extracted in cotton trade was again reinvested in agricultural land. This is how Nadars emerged as a dominant community in the agricultural scenario of south Tamil Nadu and became a provincial propertied class.⁴⁹

ii) Kanyakumari District

As mentioned above prior to the colonial period the Nadars of Kanyakumari district were generally treated among the 'lower' strata in the caste hierarchy. Their status was just

so

above the untouchables. Most of the lands were owned by the three institutions, the state, the temples and the local landlords. The largest share of the cultivated land in

Travancore was under the ownership of the state, popularly known as *pandarapattom* or *pandaravaka* land.⁵¹ The State land was sub-divided by a number of local chieftains

known as *Madambimar* who further leased the lands to numerous tenants of low castes.⁵²

Among them Nadars would invariably be predominant. Nadars worked in the agricultural fields in conditions of extreme oppression. The conditions of tenants and laborers who worked in the agricultural land, are well depicted by Nagam Aiya in the

following text (1906:1.333)

anarchy prevailed in south Travancore to a sad extent that was further intensified by the regional proclivities of the petty chieftains and the *yogakkars* -a body of managers of the temple of *Padmanabhaswamy* owning enormous landed wealth and commanding the influence and power 53

which goes with it.

At the end of eighteenth century, fifty per cent of the total land cultivated in Travancore was owned by the State, and by the beginning of the twentieth century, *pandaravakka* land constituted nearly 75 per cent of the total registered land in Travancore. The present day Kanyakumari district had approximately 78 per cent of the total lands under *pandaravakka* lands, where the Nadars were more than 60 percent of the total population without much grip on the landed property' (Aiya. 1913).

In 1865, the State granted the people 'a heritable, saleable, and transferable rights' over the land they possessed, and the higher castes like Brahmins, Nayars and the Vellalas (Pillais) used the opportunity to grab the land as much as possible. The Nadars were still deprived of the land rights.⁵⁵

The Hindu temples of Travancore owned large areas of land in two broad groups: a) the Shri Padmanbhaswami temple at the State capital under the direct management and patronage of the State of Travancore and b) the circar temples whose management rested with the individual temple. The land owned by the former was known as *Sri Pandaravakka lands* (17 per cent of the total land in the present day Kanyakumari district) and the latter was known as *Sircar Devaswomvaka*. The famous Suchindram temple, located in Kanyakumari district, was the biggest landowner under the *Sircar Devaswomvaka*.⁵⁶ The tenants, who possessed both types of lands, had heritable, saleable, and transferable rights. However, very few Nadars had such lands on lease.

Most of the land was controlled directly by the local landlords, largely the Vellala community with matrilineal or *marumakkathayam* joint families, each having 50-60 members under its fold. The local landlords generally leased out their land on a fixed rent, commonly known as '*kattukuthagaf*' (Aiya, 1906:151). The relationship between the local landlords and their tenants was one of personal domination and deference.⁵⁷

The agrarian regime in Travancore evolved historically as one dominated by self-cultivating agriculturists or peasants. The large segments of the rural population cultivated either the State owned land by paying land revenue and or land rented from the local landlords who happened to be always the high caste Nairs or Brahmins or Vellalas. The evolution of agrarian regime in Travancore followed two historical trends. First,

with the subjugation of local chieftains by the monarchy in Travancore, the former chieftains came under direct control of State that granted them permanent occupancy, along with heritable and saleable rights over the lands, which they cultivated, subject to the payment of land revenue. Second, land being abundant in comparison to the requirements of population, the state, during the nineteenth century, encouraged people to colonize it. In 1818, the state notified that newly colonized land would be tax-free for ten

years, and this act encouraged the Nadars to occupy more lands.⁵⁸ On this situation, in Travancore during the early nineteenth century, Ward and Cooner (1863:54) wrote that

even the lowest in the caste hierarchy the Shanans, the Parayans and the Pulayans possessed and cultivated *pandaravakka* land, though this fact should not be exaggerated⁵⁹ (Aiya: 1906, III: 177).

The internal structure of the agrarian regime of Kanyakumari district underwent a lot of changes due to its structural incompatibilities. The colonial integration of Travancore with the British India began in 1788. With colonial interference the agriculture started changing*⁶⁰ The British introduced the plantation crops particularly coffee and tea. The Nadar laborers moved to work in plantation industries and the income earned out of their job were invested in acquiring land.⁶¹

The Brahmins, Nairs and Vellalas were the first ones to acquire modern education and the middle class occupations.⁶² When they moved outside their village for the sake of government job, they were forced to sell their land. The Nadars availed this opportunity to buy land. Another reason why the local landlords lost their grip on land was due to the disintegration of joint family. When the land was divided among fifty to sixty members of the kin, agriculture no longer seemed like a viable option for the Vellalas. They were forced to sell it and the immediate beneficiaries were again the

Nadars.⁶³ Even among the educated Nadars, it became a tendency to invest in land. The

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Nadars, who excelled in business, started investing their profits in agricultural land.

The Nadars always considered land as a status symbol. This was one of the reasons for their desire to acquire land. Another source of land for the Nadars became the *pandaravakka* lands and *Dewasom* lands. When the land reforms were implemented, many of the Nadars got pattahs. During an interview, one of the respondents told me that most of the land possessed by the villagers was once attached to *Suchindram* temple. Because their forefathers had been cultivating the lands they were given ownership rights over these lands. P. Kolenda researched on the circulation of lands in Kanyakumari district also came out with similar finding. When the government fixed the land ceiling limits, the higher caste people started selling of their excess land. Nadars were the only ones who came forward to buy these lands.

How the Nadars started Acquiring Land in Kanyakumari District?

In Kanyakumari district, which was part of the erstwhile Travancore State. 80 per cent of the cultivable land belonged to the State. This is the most important point in the land history of present day Kanyakumari district.⁶⁹ These lands were tilled directly by the cultivators⁷⁰ (Varghese 1970:X).

A second important point in Travancore agrarian history was the 'Magna Carta of Travancore', a Royal Proclamation made in 1865. With the proclamation of 1865, most of the Brahmins, Vellalas and the Scheduled castes (particularly the Pallan and the Parayans) became owners of the land, which they had been cultivating. With the proclamation, lands were transferred as private property to the tillers or the former *pattom* holders who could transmit them to relatives or others. Since the Nadars engaged mostly

in toddy tapping, they were not able to claim as much land when compared with the other tenant caste. Although the Nadars population was more than 55 per cent, the land owned by them was very less.⁷¹

With the opening up of modern education and government jobs in the beginning of twentieth century, the Brahmins and Vellalas started selling their lands in order to meet the expenses of their sons' higher education and for paying dowry to their

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daughters. Both these communities were reluctant to work in their fields. Another reason, for the Brahmins and the Vellalas for disposing their lands off was the demise of the Travancore State and the annexation of Kanyakumari district to Tamil Nadu. The annexation brought down their grip on local politics. The costly and refined lifestyles of both the communities, without proper income, made them to sell their land in a phased manner, and the immediate beneficiary were once again the Nadar. A large majority of the scheduled caste, migrated out to towns as soon their bondage with the Brahmins was broke. This happened sometime around the early part of the twentieth century. With the opening up of permanent jobs in plantation industry in neighboring Kerala and to the north, they sold away their minimal holdings at cheap rates and the Nadars bought them.⁷³

At the time of my fieldwork in Kanyakumari district, an aged Brahmin in

Suchindram narrated how the Brahmins and the Vellalas lost their land,

the Brahmins and Vellalas are lazy, they just want to sit idle at home and eat luxuriously. Whereas, the Nadars work in the hot sun and rain. Today Nadars have more land than the Vellalas and Brahmins. Of course, these two communities once owned these lands. Unlike these two castes, the Nadars are hard working. They also do not waste their money and save a lot. Above all, the traditional Nadar crops, palmyra and coconuts were priced advantageously than paddy, cultivated mostly by the Brahmins and Vellalas. There are families whose forefathers were toddy tappers who are now landlords.⁷⁴

The Nadars, on the other hand, have been in a better position because of their numerical dominance, and the community has been fairly powerful in politics. The National prominence of Kamaraj Nadar in the congress party in 1960s helped the caste, generally in the State of Tamil Nadu.⁷⁶ The Nadars, as one hears everywhere in Kanyakumari, are coming up in the world. The credit for this is attributed firmly to their outstanding personal character and hardwork.

By early twentieth century, the Nadars also began to get involved with modern education through the missionary schools. This helped them get middle rank government jobs. The salary received was invariably saved and invested in land, which helped them gain some prestige in the local area. In 1930s, the agriculturists, businessmen, government employees from Nadar caste, were keen to invest in agricultural land. In Kanyakumari district, it was the Nadar professionals, especially the doctors, engineers, lawyers and other white-collar jobholders who acquired agricultural land. Whether they became commercial farmers was yet to be seen.⁷⁷ As one aged Nadar told me that during the days of his youth, it was the dream of every elderly Nadar to educate sons who would get jobs, invest in land, or marry him to a daughter of a landlord who would bring money or land.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Nadars acquired land through various means viz., demise of the princely State of Travancore, the out migration of other castes, land reform legislations, profits from business, income from government jobs, through dowry and the sheer hard work. Within a span of two hundred years, the community with meager land ownership became one of the top land owning castes of an agrarian region.

II. Production Forces and Production Relations in the sample villages

Productive forces consist of people with their production experience and skill, and instruments of production. These elements evolve through, and are a part of the labour process, 'a process in which both man and nature participate, and in which man on his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reactions between himself and nature' (Marx, 1978a: 173).

In the process of material production, resources are combined by human labour with the help of different tools. The term 'forces of production' is used here to include resources and technology (the means of production) and the organization of labour. Amongst the agricultural resources of the sample villages, the irrigation sources, land and soil, crops and varieties, fertilizer, tools and machinery and livestock were discussed.

Land and Soil

The three study villages were selected from three different types of agrarian ecology i.e. wetland, dryland and garden land. But, within these broad categories, one could do further classification. In the wetland village, three-fourth of cultivable land was equipped with alluvial soil. This was rich in organic matter and was easy for irrigation. This alluvial soil permitted intensive cultivation. Again this soil was highly sensitive to flooding and water logging. So, alluvial soil had soluble salts or sodium ions. Such a process of salinization affected the crop yield. No doubt, it was a natural process, but it was more frequently the result of deficient water and poor drainage. The village was near to seashore; continuous irrigated rice crop enhanced the ground water table. So farmers referred the inland salinity in this alluvial soil. The soil had already lost its original value. So the farmers had switched over to coconut plantation instead of rice cultivation.

Another strategy adopted to overcome the salinity problem was the immersion of bore well to exploit the ground water. Poor drainage was another problem in alluvial soil, and caused water inundation subsequently leading to salinity.

The second type of soil in the wetland village was red soil (*Chemmun*), constituting nearly one-fourth of the total village land. This soil is less in organic matter. Its water holding capacity is also poor. Hence, farmers used to add the farmyard manure, household waste to enhance the organic content. Coconut, jackfruit, mango, lemon and seasonal vegetables were cultivated in this wetland.

In the second village one could see three different types of lands, *nanjei* or *vayal* (irrigated wetland), the *punjei* or *thottam* or *eravai* (garden land with assured irrigation) and the *kadu* or *manavari* (typical rainfed lands). Water intensive crops like rice and banana were cultivated in the *nanjei* or *vayal*. The soil type in this land is similar to alluvial soil. Its organic matter is high due to crop rotation, plant residue incorporation and farmyard manure application. In addition to *Kharif rice*, farmers cultivated some dry crops like sorghum, pulses and oilseeds like sesame, sunflower and groundnut. These dry crops on wetland were locally known as *nanjei-mel punjei*. And in the *punjei* land, mostly the garden crops like millets, oilseeds, pulses and vegetable were being cultivated. Red soil is predominant in *eravai* land with less organic content and water holding capacity. Groundnut, sesame, sorghum and ragi were the predominant crops cultivated in this soil. The third type of soil in this village was the black soil, also known as black cotton soil. The main drawback of this soil is high alkaline content and it retained excessive moisture. Cotton and coriander were mostly cultivated in this soil. Poor water management and lack of drainage facility were the main reasons for low yields. The third type of land *kadu* or *manavari* is the typical rainfed land. This is used for cultivating

drought resisting minor millets and pulses (like horse gram and peas). The type of soil in *Kaduu* or *manavari* is similar to sands of arid land. Here, there is no assured irrigation, no water holding capacity and no fertility value. This soil mainly depends on the rainwater and in the local language is known as '*kadu**' or '*manavari*' or '*vaanam patha bhoomi*' (meaning rain dependent land). In this *kadu* only short duration crops like millets and pulses were cultivated.

The dryland village soil was like sand dune with no organic matter. This soil has one advantage, i.e., its capacity to absorb the rainwater quickly and transport it to the profile. If there is a long dry spell after the first rain, the newly sown seed may not even germinate or the germinated seed may die in this soil. Farmers here cultivated drought resistant palmyra and *udai* trees and in some areas short duration millets.

Climate and Rainfall

The wetland village located in Kanyakumari district receives most of its rainfall equally from the southwest monsoon in June-September and from the northeast monsoon in October -December. The average rainfall over the years is 1050 mm, and more than sixty percent of it is from August to November. Because of its proximity to Kerala, with the onset of southwest monsoon, this area too receives light showers. The dry season extends from March to mid June. There would be light showers in May followed by good rain in June. Farmers in this area take advantage of these rains and the early monsoon showers for ploughing their lands, making seedbed and for nursery preparation for paddy cultivation.

Unlike the wetland village, both the dry and garden land villages received rainfall generally during the north-east monsoon season alone. The garden land village was located in the foothills of Western Ghats. It receives light shower in the months of June

and July when the neighboring Kerala gets heavy rains. Farmers use this light shower to sow groundnut and sorghum. There is no such rain in the dryland village. Average rainfall of the dry and garden land villages are 650-750mm and 800-850 mm respectively, with a monsoon failure for every fifth year. Both the villages faced famine like condition for three continuous years from 1993 to 1996.

In all the sample villages, the temperatures rose to around 35° C to 44° C in the hot summer between April and June. In the months of November, December and January temperatures could go down to 10 ° to 15 ° C. The evaporation rates are high through out the year. Not only rainfall is severely limited but it is also highly variable.

Agricultural Seasons

The annual climatic cycle determine the agricultural seasons. The rhythm of agriculture is closely bound up with the cycle of religious festivals and ceremonies. In all the three villages, the availability of water determined the agricultural seasons.

In the wetland village two rice crops were raised in a year. The first one grown from mid April to mid September, locally known as *kanni*. Land preparation for the *kanni* crop usually began by middle of April and seeds sown in middle May. Because of water scarcity there is no nursery raising and transplanting. Irrigation largely depended on the southwest monsoon in June. Harvesting of the crops was done after mid September, just before the northeast monsoon set in. The *kanni* crop thus would occupy the field for nearly five months.

The second rice crop, *kumbhom* would occupy the field from late September to February. Land preparation and transplanting operation would begin soon after the harvest of *kanni* crop. Since the monsoon brought sufficient water, the farmers could go for transplanted paddy. The crop normally required water upto the middle of January,

while the cycle of northeast monsoon terminated in December. The *kumbhom* crop normally occupied the field for about five months. Thus there was a rough correspondence between the crop and the monsoon cycles. But, the banana and coconut plantation did not fit into the annual crop cycle due to their perennial nature.

In the second village, three cropping seasons were reported by the farmers i.e pisanam the long season, from October to April, bulk of the paddy grown in this season. The Tamil New year in mid April (the beginning of the Tamil month *Chittirai*) marks the first agricultural season of the year, and locally as Kodai. It is the hottest season all over Tamil Nadu and only little could cultivation takes place during this time. The occasional thundershowers in May -June helped the crops to escape from the dry spells. In this season, the crops cultivated were wholly dependent upon irrigation. The second season *kar* was the main agricultural season. It started in August and ended in January. The rice crop was generally transplanted in September and harvested in mid January. The season culminates in mid- January (beginning of the Tamil month *Tai*) with the popular Tamil harvest festival *pongal*.

The *navarai* season follows *pongal*. Short duration varieties of rice were cultivated in the main dry season in fields where there is enough water available from the tank or from the wells. Farmers without the assured irrigation generally go for the drought tolerant sorghum, millets, oilseed like sesame and groundnut and pulses like black gram and green gram. Hence, this season is mostly dominated by the short duration crops that can be grown with the residual moisture. However, with the recent decline of monsoon rain farmers in the gardenland village did not strictly follow these agricultural seasons.

In the dryland village, the agricultural seasons exist only in the *almanac*, and not in actual practice. The introduction of industrial crop *udai* shrub, the migration of farmers and laborers to the urban areas in search of employment has made the agricultural seasons an irrelevant phenomena.

The agricultural seasons in the study villages are mostly determined by the availability of water and the timely arrival of monsoon. Only in the wetland village the farmers are strictly following the seasons. Due to the failure of monsoon, depleting ground water and migration of farmers and laborers to urban areas, villagers were unable to synchronize the agriculture in the garden and dryland villages.

Crops and Varieties

The cropping patterns of the villages are determined by factors like soil structure, sources of irrigation and the availability of market within the agricultural zone. In wetland village, the principal crops cultivated were rice, coconut, banana and some short duration vegetables. There are many rice varieties in this village, which can be broadly divided into long and short duration. The traditional varieties are of long duration and the HYVs are of short duration. The long duration varieties were cultivated for domestic consumption and the short duration for sale in the market. The popular rice cultivars used by the farmers were *Cheradi* (traditional long duration variety), white ponni, TPS series (released by Regional Rice Research Station, Tirupathisaram). IR 64, ASD-16 and ASD-17. Of late, the short duration coconut variety *Nakuvvari* bred by the coconut research station of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has also been received well by the farmer. The prevalent banana varieties in this village are Rasa Kathali. Mondan. Nethran, Chevvalai. Vellai Tholuvan, and Poovan.

The rice varieties popular in the garden land village were White Ponni, IR 64, ADT 17, ASD 16, and ASD 19. In case of groundnut, the farmers were using the short duration varieties VR 16, VR17, bred by Regional Research Station, Vrithachalam and TMV 12. For cotton, the varieties bred by both Kovilpatti and Srivilliputhur Cotton research stations were very popular. These varieties have replaced the traditional Karunganni and Varalakshmi varieties. High yielding sorghum varieties CSH-10 and CSH 12 were popular among the farmers. For vegetables crops and chillies, the farmers mostly depended on the private companies like EID Parry and Mahyco.

In the dryland village, the entire agriculture was dominated by the industrial crop *udai shrub* and there was no specific variety in this crop. However, if some source of irrigation is available, the farmers are cultivate vegetables like tomato, brinjal, bhendi and raddish.

Fertilizer and Plant Protection Chemicals

The use of fertilizers and plant protection chemicals are determined by various factors like the size of land, availability of irrigation, cropping intensity, status of commercial agriculture. With the arrival of green revolution in mid sixties, the fertilizer and crop protection technologies became popular in the study villages. The village wise analysis showed that the wetland and garden land village used more quantity of plant nutrients (fertilizers) and the plant protection chemicals. Due to the influence of irrigated agriculture, farmers are using fertilizers like Urea, Di-ammonium Phosphate, Zinc Sulphate and Muriate Potash etc., similarly more quantity of plant protection chemicals were used to control the insect pests and diseases in rice and banana. As for as coconut is concerned, the required plant nutrients were met through farmyard manure and green manure. However, the synthetic chemicals were used to control diseases like mites, leaf

curling and stem borer. As the agricultural labour wages increased, the rice farmers started using herbicides to control the weeds. Earlier the weeds were managed by using human labour. With arrival of commercial herbicides, the manual interculture operations started declining.

In the gardenland village with growing popularity of commercial crops like cotton, chillies, groundnut and vegetables the use of fertilizers and plant protection chemicals had become very popular. The village had two fertilizer and plant protection stores. In addition to this, the local primary agricultural cooperative society (PACS) also caters to the needs of the farmers. During good monsoon the local fertilizer dealers could get a turnover of rupees five lakhs in a year.

In the dryland village, because of the nature of crop, the use of fertilizer and plant protection chemicals were not as prevalent as in the other two villages. However, farmers did use small amount of these inputs if they cultivated the vegetables or some other commercial crops.

Technology: Old and New

Pre-industrial technology was still in use among the farmers in all the three villages. However, it was declining very fast due to the arrival of new technology available at affordable prices and sometime on custom hire basis. Let us describe some of the tools and implements used in the villages. The plough is an important implement for agricultural production both materially and symbolically. It is an ard, which, despite its simplicity works excellently under local conditions. The marginal and small farmers were mostly using the ploughs to cultivate their lands. The local carpenter made the plough, and the edge of the plough was fitted with an iron tip, which brought in another specialist, the blacksmith. With the arrival of 'improved ploughs' with a mould board,

the traditional plough and its makers lost their importance. With the arrival of tractors, **the** middle, big and very big farmers completely gave up the use of wooden ploughs. However, the marginal and small farmers were still dependent on the country or **improved** ploughs popularly known as 'Bose plough'. Another reason for the declining use of ploughs was the decline in the use of draught animals i.e., the bullocks. During off-season or in event of **the** failure of monsoons, marginal and small farmers could sell off their animals for the non-availability of fodder. They depended on the tractor owners to plough their land.

Irrigation Devices

The traditional mode of water control in the region was the '*kavalai*', which is the Tamil term for the device used for lifting water from the wells. Pair of bullocks and one man were needed to lift the bucket, which was tied to the yoke of the bullocks with ropes. Such a team could lift water from the depth of 4 to 6 meters, and in a day could irrigate at the most two acres. The labour intensive nature of the technique sets natural limits to expansion.

The term *kcn-alai* also means a social division of labour. The individual cultivator was involved in a dyadic relation with one or two artisans, on whom he had to depend for the manufacture and maintenance of the *kavalai*. The village carpenter made the wooden frame, the block, and the pulley. The bucket was made by the leather worker (who usually belonged to the untouchable caste of Chakkilian).

But industrialization has brought with it entirely the new forms of technology. Well irrigation has been mechanized. The process started in the early decades of the twentieth century when diesel pump sets were introduced. But, the scale was modest until electrification made an inroad in about the mid sixties. Electricity brought a real

revolution in the technology of lifting water. The new pumps were immensely more effective and more so than the traditional *kavalai*. Almost ninety per cent of the well-irrigated areas of the three villages had been mechanized with electric or diesel motors.

With electrification, the farmers had been drawn more into the national economy. The developmental state has been actively pulling the farmer into the wider system. State agencies supply electric power at subsidized rates. Subsidies have been used as a means of spreading the new technology of well irrigation. In the hope of higher profits, the farmers in these villages eagerly took to the new technology.

Asset Ownership

The data presented in Table No. 5.1 reveals that out of 180 respondents nearly 10 per cent did not possess any worthy asset. They depended solely on their labour power for their day today survival. These included 22.2 per cent of agricultural laborers, 16.7 per cent of marginal farmers and 11.1 per cent of the small farmers. The marginal and small farmers possessed small plots of land but that was not enough to sustain their livelihood.

As many as 73 (40.6%) of respondents, representing the first five categories, had only minor assets. These included, house, agricultural land, agricultural implements, livestock worth less than ten thousand and essential household utensils. In the first three categories of farmers and laborers, it ranged from 50.0 to 66.7 per cent. In the middle and big farmer categories, it was only 20.8 and 12.5 per cent respectively.

However nearly half of respondents from different categories possessed major assets. The value of these assets ranged from Rs.75,000/- to a few lakhs of rupees. They included modern household utensils, electronic gadgets, automobiles (both two and four wheelers), valuable livestock, agricultural machineries like sprayers, tractors, threshers, real estate properties, jewellerys, savings in post office and banks etc. The range of

major asset holders in first three categories were between 11.1 per cent and 38.9 per cent. Value of major asset ranged from 79.2 per cent to 100 per cent among the last three groups of fanners. All the very big farmers had major assets. The household wise analysis revealed that **the** value of assets were determined by many factors viz., size of agricultural land, family size, number of earning members, occupational diversification, income from non-agricultural sources, etc., possession of major assets was directly linked to the number of members a family had living in urban areas. Similarly, farm families engaged in commercial agriculture also possessed relatively more major assets.

TABLE NO. 5.1
ASSET HOLDING PATTERN OF RESPONDENTS

Category	Type of asset with the respondents			Total
	No Assets	Only Minor Assets	Only Major Assets	
Agricultural laborers	08 (22.2)	24 (66.7)	04 (11.1)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	06 (16.7)	23 (63.9)	07 (19.4)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	04 (11.1)	18 (50.0)	14 (38.9)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	0	05 (20.8)	19 (79.2)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	0	03 (12.5)	21 (87.5)	24 (100.0)
Very Big farmers	0	0	24 (100.0)	24 (100.0)
Total	18 (10.0)	73 (40.6)	89 (49.4)	180 (100.0)

Types of Livestock owned

Besides land, residential building, agricultural implements and urban property, the most important asset for the people engaged in agriculture is livestock. Cattle functioned as a

buffer at the time of crisis or total crop failure. During the normal time, they were a source of additional income to the farmer. Most of the farmers and many of the laborers kept milch animals and sold milk. Since the Nadars hereditary occupation is toddy tapping, the milk business had not attracted them in a big way. The local co-operative milk society functioned very effectively in the garden land village. Thus the cattle economy played a vital role here when compared to the wet and dryland villages. There was no co-operative milk society in these villages. The other benefits of keeping cattle were the organic manure, used to enhance the fertility of level of agricultural land. M.N Srinivas also pointed out in his Remembered Village, Rampura, 'that the livestock are the moving fertilizer factory in village India' (Remembered village, 1976 : 134). Generally, the factors which determine the cattle owning of the respondents were availability of fodder, labour force, common grazing ground, size of the farm, co-operative milk society (to sell the milk) and veterinary extension services. An aged farmer from the garden land village told me during an interview, that the technological developments in agriculture have adversely affected the growth of livestock; particularly the drought animal has lost its importance in agricultural economy. The arrival of electric pump sets and oil engines, the introduction of tractors, transplanters, direct seeder and the inorganic fertilizers are the technologies which conveniently replaced the cattle in fanning operations. At the village level, the shrinking of common property resources (particularly common grazing ground) had also affected the culture of keeping cattle.

TABLE NO. 5.2

TYPE OF LIVESTOCK OWNED BY THE RESPONDENT FARMERS

Category of farmers	Type of Livestock owned							Total
	No livestock	Milch Animals alone	Draught animals alone	Sheep and goats	Draught + Milch animals	Poultry birds alone	Milch animals + Poultry birds	
Agricultural laborers	13 (36.1)	05 (13.9)	0	03 (8.3)	0	14 (38.9)	01 (2.8)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	07 (19.5)	08 (22.2)	0	05 (13.9)	0	13 (36.1)	03 (8.3)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	11 (30.6)	07 (19.4)	0	03 (8.3)	0	13 (36.1)	02 (5.6)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	09 (37.5)	07 (29.1)	0	01 (4.2)	0	06 (25.0)	01 (4.2)	24 (100.0)
Big farmer	07 (29.2)	09 (37.5)	01 (4.2)	02 (8.3)	01 (4.2)	02 (8.3)	02 (8.3)	24 (100.0)
Very big farmer	05 (20.8)	06 (25.0)	01 (4.2)	03 (12.5)	01 (4.2)	05 (20.8)	03 (12.5)	24 (100.0)
Total	52 (28.9)	42 (23.3)	02 (1.1)	17 (9.4)	02 (1.1)	53 (29.5)	12 (6.7)	180 (100.0)

As shown in table No. 5.2 the size of operational land holding determined the type of livestock owned by the respondents. This was because the land determined the green and dry fodder required for the animals. The landless laborers mostly kept poultry birds, a few sheep and goats and very few (only five laborers) had milch animals, which they had acquired through the bank loans under poverty alleviation programmes. Same was the case with small and marginal farmers. Only 17 (9.4%) farmers and laborers kept sheep and goat, and the maximum number of animals were 30 while the minimum was one. The sheep and goat reared by the farmers and laborers were specifically meant for the annual sacrifice for their family deities and not for commercial purpose. The data reveal that 52 (28.9%) of farmers and laborers had no money to buy the animals. The middle, big and very big farmers did not want to take risk. Moreover, it was a laborious task to rear animals. As informed by one small farmer of the wetland village, some 15-20 years back, the small and marginal farmers used to have more draught animals to do agricultural

operations. Of late, the price of animals had gone up. To feed a pair of bullocks, it required a minimum of Rs 30-40 per day. But they gave income only during the seasons. Therefore, farmers were no longer interested in rearing any draught animal. There were farmers, mostly from the first three categories, who were having livestock of less value i.e., only poultry birds, sheep and goats. Only 78 (54.2 %) farmers had livestock with some value.

TABLE NO. 5.3
NUMBER OF CATTLE OWNED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Category	Number of Cattle owned					Total
	1-2 Cattle	3-5 Cattle	6-10 Cattle	More than 10 Cattle	No Cattle owned	
Agricultural laborers	05 (13.9)	01 (2.8)	0	0	30 (83.3)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	07 (19.5)	04 (11.1)	0	0	25 (69.4)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	09 (25.0)	0	0	0	27 (75.0)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	04 (16.7)	03 (12.5)	01 (4.2)	0	16 (66.7)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	05 (20.8)	05 (20.8)	02 (8.3)	01 (4.2)	11 (45.9)	24 (100.0)
Very Big farmers	04 (16.7)	04 (16.7)	02 (8.3)	01 (4.2)	13 (54.1)	24 (100.0)
Total	34 (18.9)	17 (9.4)	05 (2.8)	02 (1.1)	122 (67.8)	180 (100.0)

The data presented in Table. 5.3 shows the number of cattle owned by the farmers and laborers. As many as 67.8 percent of farmers and laborers were not owning any cattle at all. Category wise analysis shows that 83.3 percent of agricultural laborers 67.7% of middle farmers, 45.9% of big farmers and 54.1% of the very big farmers did not own any cattle. Of the 56 (32.2%) cattle owners, most were from the last three categories of farmers i.e., middle, big and very big farmers.

The village wise analysis shows that the garden land village was far better than the wet and dryland villages. The credit goes to the Tamil Nadu co-operative milk society scheme for giving milk animal on loan basis and collecting the milk towards the cost of the animal over a period of time. This AMUL model has enhanced the cattle population and income of the farm families. In the dryland village, although the Adityans had sufficient money, land and labour force to keep livestock, they had lesser inclination towards animal husbandry. In the wetland village, the small size of land holding and lack of common grazing area, high literacy rate and lack of veterinary extension services were the major reasons for poor development of animal husbandry.

Different Sources of Irrigation Used by the Farmers

Agriculture is heavily dependent upon irrigation. Since major part of Tamil Nadu is in a rain shadow region, agriculture is really considered as the vagaries of monsoon. The Nadars in South Tamil Nadu have been spread in all ecosystems. Data collected from 144 farm families of this study revealed that the available sources of irrigation to the farmers varied from seasonal rain to exploitation of ground water through bore wells. In the wetland village, major sources of irrigation were canal, bore-well and seasonal rain. In the dryland village, seasonal rain and bore well were the main sources. In garden land village, the agricultural lands were mostly irrigated by open wells, tank and seasonal rain.

The cropping systems in these sample villages are based on the availability of irrigation water. In wetland village, the water intensive crops like rice, banana, and coconut were grown. Since, this village was located in the high rainfall area and also equipped with a canal from near by dam, the crops never faced the problem of water scarcity. Again, the high number of bore-wells in this village also could be attributed to the higher level of water table. In the garden land village, the lands are mostly irrigated

by open wells. The wetland (*nanjei*) in this village is irrigated by tank. The village tank gets filled during the rainy season and the water is mainly used to raise paddy. The open wells located in the tank *ayacut* area recharge very fast. In addition to the open well and tank, some lands, generally called as *Kaadu* or *Maanavari* (semi arid) entirely depended on the seasonal rain. In the dryland village, the main source of irrigation was the seasonal rain. The well to do Adityans have dug bore wells to raise commercial crops like vegetables and orchard crops. Due to the poor irrigation, the farmers were mainly cultivating the *udai* shrub, which is a drought resistant tree. Since it is an arid land, the rainwater deeply penetrates in the soil and recharges the water table fast. It also gets exhausted in the same speed, if exploited through bore wells. The main crops cultivated by the farmers were the *udai* trees (for industrial use), millets, vegetable, Palmyra trees etc. Except vegetable crops, all the others needed little water. They can withstand in drought conditions.

TABLE NO. 5.4

DIFFERENT SOURCES OF IRRIGATION USED BY THE FARMERS

Category of farmers	Sources of Irrigation						Total
	Only seasonal Rain	Canal	Tank	Open well	Bore well	More than two sources	
Marginal farmers	10 (27.8)	07 (19.4)	05 (13.9)	10 (27.8)	04 (11.1)	0	36 (100.0)
Small fanners	06 (16.6)	05 (13.9)	10 (27.8)	14 (38.9)	01 (2.8)	0	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	0	04 (16.7)	03 (12.7)	13 (54.1)	04 (16.7)	0	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	0	03 (12.5)	02 (8.3)	09 (37.5)	05 (20.8)	05 (20.8)	24 (100.0)
Very big farmer	0	04 (16.7)	03 (12.5)	10 (41.6)	03 (12.5)	04 (16.7)	24 (100.0)
Total	16 (11.0)	23 (16.0)	23 (16.0)	56 (39.0)	17 (11.8)	09 (6.2)	144 (100.0)

The data in Table 5.4 shows that the marginal and small farmers depended more on the seasonal rain, canal irrigation and tank water. These sources do not demand much investment. The farmers depending on the seasonal rain and tank water were from the garden land and dryland villages. Twelve farmers from the first two categories depended on canal irrigation and they are from the wetland village. None of the middle, big and very big farmers depended only on seasonal rain. Similarly, none of the marginal and small farmer had more than two irrigation sources. The village wise analysis reveals that, in the wetland village, irrespective of the size of the operational land holding, farmers used canal water. However, the middle, big and very big farmers also had bore well to irrigate their fields whenever there was no flow in the canal. In the garden land village, the resource poor farmers depended mainly on seasonal rains, tank irrigation and a few of them had access to open well on partnership basis. But, the middle, big and very big farmers were mostly dependent on the tank and open wells. The bore well was not a popular source of irrigation in this village. In dryland village, the major sources of irrigation were the seasonal rains and bore wells. The poor farmers depended on the seasonal rain. Only a few farmers from the middle, big and very big categories engaged in vegetable cultivation and raising orchard crops, had bore wells.

Farmers from the first two groups were mostly dependent on conventional sources of irrigation viz., seasonal rain, canal and tank irrigation. Out of the 144 sample farmers, 43 (29.9%) from the first two categories were using these sources. But, only 19 (13.2%) farmers from the last three categories were using the conventional sources. As for as the open wells and bore wells are concerned, only 29 (20.2%) of the farmers from the first two category had access to them.

TABLE NO. 5.5

OWNERSHIP PATTERN OF OPEN WELL AND BORE WELL BY THE FARMERS

Category	Ownership pattern				Total
	Not owned any well	Owned only open well	Owned only bore-well	Owned both	
Marginal farmers	22 (61.1)	10 (27.8)	04 (11.1)	0	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	21 (58.3)	14 (38.9)	01 (2.8)	0	<i>ib</i> (100.0)
Middle fanners	04 (16.7)	13 (54.1)	04 (16.7)	03 (12.5)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	0	09 (37.5)	05 (20.8)	10 (41.7)	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	02 (8.3)	10 (41.7)	03 (12.6)	09 (37.5)	24 (100.0)
Total	49 (34.0)	56 (38.9)	17 (11.8)	22 (15.3)	144 (100.0)

Production Relations

The relations of production are defined by the mode of appropriation of surplus labour and the manner in which different groups of people are related to the forces of production and to one another in the process of production. In this part, the sale and purchase of land, the labour availability, labour use pattern, wage structure and wage determining mechanism are discussed.

Land Acquisition in the Last Ten Years.

The details of land acquired by respondents during the last ten years can be seen in Table No. 5.6. Out of the 144 sample farmers belonging to all categories, only 45 (31.3%) farmers had acquired some land in the past ten years. The middle, big and very big farmers together constituted 66.7 percent where as the marginal and small farmers were 15 (33.3%). The data further indicate that none of the marginal and small farmers purchased more than 6 acres of land. But, the middle, big and very big farmers had purchased land ranging from 1 to 9 acres. The data further suggests that Nadars were not

interested in investing their surplus into land. Village wise analysis shows that the land markets were more active in the garden land and wetland villages. This is because of water availability and cropping intensity. The land acquired more than three acres by respondents were mostly from the garden land village only. The average holding size in the wetland village was mostly one to two acres. However, agriculture was not profitable enough as to encourage farmers to sell their lands.

TABLE NO. 5.6
LAND ACQUIRED IN THE LAST TEN YEARS BY THE RESPONDENTS

(IN ACRES.)

Category	Less than one Acre	1-3 Acres	4-6 Acres	7-9 Acres	Not applicable	Total
Marginal farmers	3 (8.4)	2 (5.5)	2 (5.5)	0	29 (80.6)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	3 (8.4)	02 (5.5)	03 (8.4)	-	28 (77.7)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	01 (4.1)	03 (12.5)	03 (12.5)	02 (8.4)	15 (62.5)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	-	03 (12.5)	05 (20.8)	03 (12.5)	13 (54.2)	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	-	02 (8.4)	05 (20.8)	03 (12.5)	14 (58.3)	24 (100.0)
Total	07 (4.9)	12 (8.3)	18 (12.5)	08 (5.6)	99 (68.8)	144 (100.0)

Sources of Finance for New Land Acquisition

To acquire new land, the farmers used various sources of finance. The table 5.7 indicates that 21 respondents (14.6%) from all categories used profit from business to acquire additional land. Another 9 (6.3%) used earning of a family members' as the source. Almost in all the categories, either one or two respondents used dowry brought by either wife or daughter-in-law for acquiring land. In some cases, the land was given or taken as dowry. Five farmers from the marginal, small and middle level categories used informal credit to acquire land. However, informal credit was not the only source of

financing the purchase of land. Only one farmer from each middle, big and very big category used the surplus generated from agriculture for acquiring more land. Interestingly, all these three farmers were cultivating commercial crops such as cotton, chillies, banana and coconut. This data indicate that only a very few people were interested in agriculture. Majority invested their savings in urban property or business. Returns on investment were reported to be more and constant supervision was also not required. Nadars are now more interested in business than agriculture. The big and very big farmers wanted to switch over from agriculture, whereas, the marginal small and middle farmers still wanted to buy more. This was because of the value and status attached to the land.

TABLE NO. 5.7

SOURCES OF FINANCE FOR NEW LAND ACQUISITION

Category	Sources of Finance						Total
	Savings from Agriculture	Family member earning	Dowry	Informal credit	Business profit	Not applicable	
Marginal farmers	0 (8.3)	03 (8.3)	02 (5.5)	01 (2.8)	01 (2.8)	29 (80.6)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	0 (5.5)	02 (5.5)	01 (2.8)	02 (5.5)	03 (8.3)	28 (77.9)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	01 (4.2)	0	01 (4.2)	02 (8.3)	05 (20.8)	15 (62.5)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	01 (4.2)	0	03 (12.5)	0	08 (33.3)	12 (50.0)	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	01 (4.2)	04 (16.7)	01 (4.2)	0	04 (16.7)	14 (58.2)	24 (100.0)
Total	03 (2.1)	09 (6.3)	08 (5.6)	05 (3.5)	21 (14.5)	98 (68.0)	144 (100.0)

Land Disposed in the Last Ten years

The data presented in Table No. 5.8 pertaining to disposal of land in the last ten years reveal that a total of 118 (65.6%) had disposed off their lands ranging from less than one acre to less than 9 acres. As many as 68 (37.8%) representing all categories had disposed off their land with a size of less than one acre. The landless laborers, marginal and small farmers put together came to a total of 45 (25.0%). The last three categories constituted 23 (12.8%). As the size of land disposed off increased, the representation from first three categories started declining. A total of 35 (19.4%) respondents disposed off land varying from one to three acres. In the range of land disposed of from 4 - 6 acres, there was no representation from the agricultural laborers and marginal farmers categories. Last, only two big farmers had sold more than 7 acres of land. Overall category wise, the table reveals that nine agricultural laborers (25.0%), twenty marginal farmers (55.6%), 32 small farmers (88.9%), 19 middle farmers (79.2), 18 big farmers (75.0%) and 20 very big farmers (83.3%) had disposed either full or part of their land in a period of last 10 years. The data clearly show that the marginal, big and very big farmers were slowly moving away from agriculture by disposing off their land. But, the small and middle level farmers and even the agricultural laborers had acquired land over the last ten years. The migration of more educated members in the family to urban centers, investments in business, attraction for urban property, fragmentation and subdivision of family property after the death of the head of household, growing cost of agricultural inputs and low procurement price were reasons for land disposal.

TABLE NO. 5.8

**LAND DISPOSED IN THE LAST TEN YEARS BY THE
RESPONDENTS (IN ACRES)**

Category	Land disposed in the last ten years by the Respondents					
	Less than one Acre	1 - 3 Acres	4-6 Acres	7-9 Acres	Not Applicable	Total
Agricultural laborers	08 (22.2)	01 (2.8)	0	0	27 (75.0)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	15 (41.7)	05 (13.9)	0	0	16 (44.4)	36 (100.00)
Small fanners	22 (61.1)	09 (25.0)	01 (2.8)	0	04 (11.1)	36 (100.0)
Middle fanners	12 (50.0)	05 (20.8)	02 (8.4)	0	05 (20.8)	24 (100.0)
Big fanners	06 (25.0)	08 (33.3)	04 (16.7)	0	06 (25.0)	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	05 (20.8)	07 (29.2)	06 (25.0)	02 (8.3)	04 (16.7)	24 (100.0)
Total	68 (37.8)	35 (19.4)	13 (7.2)	02 (1.1)	62 (34.5)	180 (100.0)

Interview with fanners of all categories and laborers revealed that the agricultural laborers (who were once marginal and small farmers) had disposed off their land due to increasing cost of cultivation and non-availability of irrigation facilities. The middle, big and very big farmers had disposed off their land due to less inclination to practise agriculture.

Reason for Disposal of Land

The Table.5. 9 reveal the factors that led to the sale of land among various categories of respondents. Respondents provided nine important factors that led to the sale of land. There were some from all categories of farmers and laborers had sold either part or whole of their land in order to perform the children's marriage. There were 23 (12.8%) farmers and laborers who had disposed off their land for this purpose. The important point here is that the land was sold only for the sake of daughter's marriage mainly to give dowry.

Nadars in Tamil Nadu are known for giving fat dowry. Another eighteen farmers (10.0%) disposed off their land and invested in urban property. Twenty-one farmers (11.7%) sold their land in order to educate their children, mostly, their sons for technical and professional education. Apart from the prospects of urban employment investing in boys' education also brought good dowry. Getting children educated was also a status symbol in the society. Farmers from all categories had disposed off part of their land to invest in children's education. A total of 21 farmers (11.7%) had sold part of their land to invest in business. If the business demands more investment, Nadars rarely hesitate selling off the land and meet the business requirement.

From the first four categories of farmers and laborers, 11 (6.0%) respondents had disposed off their land because it was economically unviable. Another 8 (4.4) respondents (agricultural laborers, Marginal and small farmers) were compelled to sell their land in order to meet their immediate consumption needs. This had happened due to the monsoon failures from 1992-1996. All these respondents were from the garden and dry land villages. Seven farmers had debts to pay and the only source left with them was land. So, they sold it. Another 9 farmers disposed off their land to incur the medical expenditure on the family members.

While middle, big and very big farmers sold their land to invest in income generating avenues like investment in urban property', business or son's higher education or on dowry, the agricultural laborers, marginal and small farmers had to dispose off their land to meet their immediate needs, such as meeting consumption requirements, daughter's marriage, clearing old debts or for meeting medical expenditure.

TABLE NO . 5.9

REASON FOR DISPOSAL OF LAND IN THE LAST TEN YEARS
BY THE RESPONDENTS

Category	Education of children	Marriage	To clear old debts	Unviable	Consumption needs	Medical purpose	To invest in business	To invest in urban property	To construct house	Not applicable	Total
Agril. laborers	0 (5.6)	02 (5.6)	01 (2.8)	03 (8.3)	03 (8.3)	0	0	0	0	27 (75.0)	36 (100)
Marginal farmers	02 (5.6)	03 (8.3)	02 (5.6)	03 (8.3)	03 (8.3)	04 (11.1)	01 (2.8)	02 (5.6)	0	16 (44.3)	36 (100)
"Small farmers	06 (16.7)	05 (13.0)	03 (8.3)	04 (11.0)	02 (5.6)	02 (5.6)	04 (11.1)	04 (11.1)	02 (5.6)	04 (11.1)	36 (100)
Middle farmers	05 (20.8)	06 (25.0)	0	01 (4.2)	0	0	04 (16.7)	02 (8.3)	01 (4.2)	05 (20.8)	24 (100)
Big farmers	05 (20.8)	03 (12.5)	01 (4.2)	0	0	0	04 (16.7)	05 (20.8)	0	06 (25.0)	24 (100)
Very big fanners	03 (12.5)	04 (16.7)	0	0	0	0	08 (33.3)	05 (20.8)	0	04 (16.7)	24 (100)
Total	21 (11.7)	23 (12.8)	07 (3.9)	11 (6.1)	08 (4.4)	06 (3.3)	21 (11.7)	18 (10.0)	03 (1.7)	62 (34.4)	180 (100)

Nature and Extent of Indebtedness

What was the nature and extent of indebtedness of farmers and laborers? Sixty-six farmers (45.8%) from all the categories had borrowed money from both formal and informal sources, whereas, 54 fanners borrowed only from informal sources. Another 24 fanners from the middle, big and very big categories were financing their agriculture with their own savings.

The size of indebtedness in terms of rupees bonowed from both formal and informal sources varied according to the size of the land holdings. Forty-four farmers had no debts at the time of this study. Around 19 percent of the laborers and 42 percent of the marginal and small farmers had no outstanding debts. Because of their small loan

amount, either they had repaid or they could not get any loan. All the middle farmers were indebted either to an institution source or to a local moneylender. Ten big farmers and 12 very big farmers were debt free. The reason for debt freeness of laborers, marginal and small farmers was their inability to get loans from either of the sources. On the contrary, the middle, big and very big farmers were either self-sufficient or were reluctant to borrow. Only 21 laborers (58.3%) and 28 farmers i.e. 19% had borrowed, and that too less than five thousand rupees. They mostly borrowed from the PACS or local moneylenders. None of the middle, big or very big farmers came under this category. Their credit requirements were higher. A total of 27 (15.0%) out of 180 respondents had borrowed amount ranges from Rs. 5001-10000. Sixteen farmers and laborers had the debt with the range of 10001- 15000. Only 12 (16.7%) farmers were having debt varying from Rs.20,000 to 25,000. Here also, no laborer or marginal farmers were in this range. Of the twelve members, 8 were from the last three categories, and the remaining four were from small farmers' category. At last, 11 (6.1%) farmers had debt of more than Rs. 25,000/- and all of them were middle, big and very big farmers. The maximum amount of outstanding debt with a respondent was 1.75 lakhs. This loan had been taken from the district industrial center by a very big farmer from the garden land village for starting an oil mill. Most farmers in this range had availed loans for non-agricultural purposes.

TABLE NO. 5.10
RESPONDENTS INDEBTEDNESS

Category	Degree of Indebtedness (in rupees)							Total
	No debt	Less than 5000	5001-10000	10001-15000	15001-20000	20001-25000	25001+ more	
Agril. laborers	07 (19.4)	21 (58.3)	06 (16.7)	02 (5.6)	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	11 (30.5)	18 (50.0)	04 (11.1)	02 (5.6)	01 (2.8)	0	0	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	04 (11.1)	10 (27.8)	08 (22.2)	04 (11.1)	06 (16.7)	04 (11.1)	0	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	0	0	06 (25.0)	04 (16.7)	08 (33.3)	04 (16.7)	02 (8.3)	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	10 (41.6)	0	03 (12.5)	04 (16.7)	02 (8.3)	01 (4.2)	04 (16.7)	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	12 (50.0)	0	0	0	04 (16.7)	03 (12.5)	05 (20.8)	24 (100.0)
Total	44 (24.4)	49 (27.2)	27 (15.0)	16 (8.9)	21 (11.7)	12 (6.7)	11 (6.1)	180 (100.0)

The data clearly shows that the first three categories are represented more where the loan amount is less. It is just opposite in the case of farmers from the last three categories. When the loan amount is less than Rs.5000/-, laborers and farmers had invariably borrowed from informal sources, particularly the local moneylenders and commission agents. Agricultural laborers, marginal and small farmers had outstanding debts varying from less than Rs. 5000 to 25,000. They borrowed mostly for son's higher education, daughters' marriage, medical expenses, or house construction. Middle level, big and very big farmers were more in number when the debt amount was in the range of 10001-25000 and it was borrowed for non -agricultural purposes. Thanks to their influence **and** contacts, compared to the first three categories, the last three categories were **invariably more** successful in getting institutional loan.

Primary sources of Finance for Agriculture

The credit requirements of farmers in all the three villages were met by seven different sources of institutional and informal sources. Under institutional sources, the primary agricultural cooperative society (PACS), commercial banks, and regional rural banks (RRBS) were playing a major role in lending finance for agriculture. Under the informal sources, local moneylenders, local traders, commission agents, relatives and friends were important. Forty six percent of the farmers regularly availed loans from institutional sources, and 38 percent farmers were borrowing from informal sources. A meager 17 percent were meeting their financial requirement from their own source (saving). Of the 144 farmers, 53 (36.8 %) farmers were availing finance from the PACS. Here again, the last three categories were predominant. Out of the 72 marginal and small farmers, only 22 could avail financial assistance from PACS. Next to PACS came the regional rural banks. However, none of the big and very big farmers has utilized this facility. Only 4 marginal farmers, 2 small farmers and 3 middle farmers had availed this facility. The main reason for this low popularity of RRB is that it was available only in the garden land village. The wet and dryland villages did not have the regional rural bank facility.

Poorer section of the village obviously borrowed from moneylender. The main reason for approaching the moneylender was that they provided financial help immediately. Although, they charged exorbitant rate of interest (ranging from 40% to 60% P.A), the marginal and small farmers did borrow from them. The farmers also borrowed money from their friends and relatives, which was generally interest free; this is what Weber called "neighborhood help". The interest rate among friends and relatives varies significantly from zero to 25 per cent per annum.

Marginal and small farmers depended more on informal sources because of the bureaucratic formalities and corrupt practices of officials, in case of the institutional sources, fear of official credit or antagonistic relationship with the director and secretary of PACS, inadequacy of amount, untimely sanctions etc. In contrast the big and very big farmers had good influence on the financial institutions and they could get their loan sanctioned easily.

TABLE NO. 5.11

PRIMARY SOURCE OF FINANCE FOR AGRICULTURE

Category	Primary sources of Finance							Total
	Own savings	PACs	Commercial Banks	Regional Rural banks	Local Money lenders	Local Traders/ Commission Agents	Relatives and friends	
Marginal farmers	0 (27.8)	10 (27.8)	01 (2.8)	04 (11.0)	11 (30.6)	02 (5.6)	08 (22.2)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	0 (33.3)	12 (33.3)	0	02 (5.6)	14 (38.9)	03 (8.3)	05 (13.9)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	04 (16.6)	12 (50.0)	01 (04.2)	03 (12.5)	01 (04.2)	03 (12.5)	0	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	08 (33.3)	12 (50.0)	03 (12.5)	0	0	01 (4.2)	0	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	12 (50.0)	07 (29.2)	0	0	0	04 (16.6)	01 (4.2)	24 (100.0)
Total	24 (16.7)	53 (36.8)	05 (3.5)	09 (6.3)	26 (18.0)	13 (9.0)	14 (9.7)	144 (100.0)

Labour Availability in the Farm Households

The data in Table 5.12 indicates that there was an inverse relationship between the availability of labour within the household and the size of the holding. More the labor availability in the household, less the size of land holding. Baring one marginal farmer, all the households of the first three categories had one to five laborers in the household.

So, some of them were selling their labor power to earn their livelihood. In the marginal and small farmer categories, the labor force was used to carry out the agricultural operations in family farms. If labor is not required, in the family farm, they would go to others, particularly during the offseasons. Sixty-nine (38.3%) of the farmers had no labor force of their own. They depended almost completely on the outside labor. All the big and very big farmers, and large majority of the middle farmers had no labour.

TABLE NO. 5.12

HOUSEHOLDS WITH AVAILABLE AGRICULTURAL
LABOUR FORCE

Category	Available Labour force						Total
	Not applicable	One labour	Two laborers	Three laborers	Four laborers	Five laborers	
Agril. labourers	0	02 (5.6)	08 (22.2)	13 (36.1)	07 (19.4)	06 (16.7)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmers	01 (2.7)	04 (11.1)	09 (25.0)	15 (41.7)	05 (13.9)	02 (5.6)	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	0	13 (36.1)	10 (27.8)	09 (25.0)	03 (8.3)	01 (2.7)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	20 (83.3)	01 (4.2)	03 (12.5)	0	0	0	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	24 (100.0)	0	0	0	0	0	24 (100.0)
Very big farmers	24 (100.0)	0	0	0	0	0	24 (100.0)
Total	69 (38.3)	20 (11.1)	30 (16.7)	37 (20.6)	5 (8.3)	9 (5.0)	180 (100.0)

Nature of Labor use Pattern by the Farmers

Table. 5.13 shows the nature of labor use by farmers in the sample villages. Of the total 144 farmers from all the categories, 49 (34.0%) were not employing any wage labor for carrying out any of the agricultural operations. Marginal farmers, small farmers, and

middle farmers depended on their family labor. However, for land preparation and harvesting, some of these farmers hired one or two laborers in addition to the family labor. As mentioned above the availability of labor within family was comparatively higher among the smaller farmers. The big and very big farmers on the whole depended on the hired labor of one or the other type. The farmers from the first three categories were mostly using the daily wage labor at the time of land preparation and harvesting. The middle, big and very big farmers hired labor on seasonal contracts. Crops like banana, cotton and sugarcane, needed constant labor work. The well to do farmers, who have diversified into business or are employed in government job employed attached labour or annual contract labor and such labor is generally both in cash and kind. In addition, some fringe benefits also are given like free fodder, dress during the festival time, and hand loans at time of emergencies.

Twenty-three farmers (16.0%) from the last three categories employed more than one type of labor to carry out agricultural operations. At last, two big farmers and three very big farmers were using seasonal contract, daily wage labor and annual contract labor. The village wise analysis explains that the farmers from the wet and garden land villages were using more than one type of labor, whereas, in the dry land village farmers were using only one type of contract labor.

TABLE NO. 5.13

**NATURE OF LABOUR USE PATTERN IN AGRICULTURE
BY THE RESPONDENTS**

Category of farmers	Nature of Labour use in Agriculture							Total
	No hired labour	Only daily wage labour	Only seasonal Contract labour	Annual contract labour-	Daily wage + contract labour	Seasonal contract + Daily wage labour	Seasonal contract + Daily wage + Annual contract labour	
Marginal farmers	24 (66.7)	12 (33.3)	0	0	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Small farmers	20 (55.6)	16 (44.4)	0	0	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Middle farmers	05 (20.8)	09 (37.5)	06 (25.0)	02 (8.3)	0	02 (8.3)	0	24 (100.0)
Big farmers	0	03 (12.5)	04 (16.7)	08 (33.3)	04 (16.7)	03 (12.5)	02 (8.3)	24 (100.0)
Very big Farmers	0	04 (16.7)	02 (8.3)	06 (25.0)	03 (12.5)	06 (25.0)	03 (12.5)	24 (100.0)
Total	49 (34.0)	44 (30.6)	12 (8.3)	16 (11.1)	07 (4.9)	11 (7.6)	05 (3.5)	144 (100.0)

Existing Wage Structure of the Sample Villages and Working Hours

Table 5. 14 reveals the variation of wages, the sexual division of labour and the working hours of laborers in all the three villages chosen for this study. Interviews with respondents revealed that the availability of water resources, nature of cropping system, cropping intensity, availability of local labour force, pace of farm mechanization, development of non-agricultural occupation, inter state labour migration, and cultivation of commercial crops were all the factors which determined the agricultural wage structure of a particular area. In the wetland village (V-1), the labor force required to carryout agricultural occupation was lesser. Compared to the other two villages, the working hours were also very less and the wage rate was higher because of the availability of non-agricultural occupation in bricklin industry, saltpan, coir industry, sea-shall industry etc. Due to the assured source of irrigation, the

agricultural operations were being carried out through out the year, which gave the laborers a regular source of employment. Here again, the available labour force was less and the result was that the laborers demanded higher wage rates. Since the operational landholdings size was too small, using farm machinery was not feasible, and the only alternative left was to use the local labour force. The commercial crops like coconut, banana and labour intensive wetland rice cultivation demanded more labour force. This was another reason why these laborers were well paid. Since geographically, the village is very close to Kerala, the laborers were to some extent, becoming conscious of their wage rates and working conditions. (In Kerala the Communist oriented agricultural labour unions determine the hours of work and wage rates). Since, the big landlords were very few in number, the exploitation of labour was unheard off. The laborers imbibed the quality of wage and class-consciousness from their counter parts living in neighboring Kerala. Another feature of this village is that most of the laborers (both sexes) were well educated and they were aware of the wages and hours of work. At the time of field work in 1997 summer, I could see the young laborers with college and University education engaged in paddy harvesting and land preparation work. The overall literacy rate in Kanyakumari district is very high i.e. compared to any other districts of Tamil Nadu. Regarding the female laborers, the development of coir industry, hand loom, sea-shell beedi rolling, basket making and embroidery work provided them better wages with fixed hours of work, as well as other facilities like annual bonus, provident fund etc. All these factors led them to demand higher agricultural wages and limited hours of work. In this village, the laborers started work at 6 O' clock in the morning and their day was over by 1 O' clock in the afternoon. Some able-bodied men and women worked again from 1.30 PM to 6.30 PM. For which, separate payment was made. In this way, a man could earn up to Rs. 100/- per day and a woman upto Rs. 50-60 per day.

TABLE NO. 5.14**EXISTING WAGE STRUCTURE OF THE SAMPLE VILLAGES**

Type of Village	Working Hours	Wage structure in rupees	
		Men Labour	Women Labour
Zetland Village (V-1)	6 - 6.30 hours	55-60	30 -35
Garden land Village (V-2)	8 - 8.30 hours	35-40	20 -25
dryland Village (V-3)	6 - 7.00 hours	40-45	25-30

In the garden land village (V-2), the working hours of the laborers were around 8 - 8.30 hours and the existing wages were Rs. 35-40 for male laborers and Rs. 20-25 for female laborers. Here, the available labour force is more whereas the demand was lesser. Therefore, it led to more hours of work and less wage rates. The existing cropping pattern was less labour intensive in the village because the level of mechanization was higher.

The wage rates in the village were apparently lower and had come upto this level only during last two or three years. Of the two important factors that led to this increase were i) migration of the male labour force to Kerala for agricultural and construction work, and the development of beedi industry that began to employ women. On an average a woman could earn Rs. 20-25 per day by rolling beedies for of 6-7 hours, besides attending her regular household work. Nearly 800-1000 women were employed in four different beedi companies in the area.

The dryland village (V-3) provided an altogether different picture as far as the wage rates and working hours are concerned. Here, the available labour force was very less. The well to do Adityans neither work in their fields nor allow their women folk to go out for work. The working hours ranged from 6-7 hours. The men folk received Rs 40-45, and the women 25-30. Given the unique nature of cropping system in this

village, not many women were required for carrying out agricultural operations. Due to the less clay content and poor nutrient value of the soil (only sand dune), farmers were cultivating drought resistant long duration *Udai* trees, which were procured by the Adityans owned paper mill for making pulp. These trees required minimum of five years to harvest and demanded no fertilizers irrigation, weeding or plant protection measures. At the time of harvesting also not much labor was required. Generally, harvesting was done on contract basis @ Rs. 4000-4500 per acre. Mostly, group labour force was used to harvest the trees. The laborers in this village generally migrated to neighboring towns for work in construction or any other industry.

Wage Determining Mechanism

Regarding the determination of wages, only the garden land village (V-2) had some set pattern. Before the crop season started, the big and very big farmers assembled in the village choultry (or) the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam (uravinmurai)* building and decided the wage rates for both men and women labour force. The landowners were paid the fixed wage throughout the season or agricultural calendar year. If anyone paid more wages, the committee sought explanation from him. However, during the peak season of paddy transplanting or harvest or groundnut harvest everyone paid more (one or two rupees) than the fixed wage to get their work done in time. In the wet and dryland villages, there was no such system of wage determination.

The nature of wages payment also differed in the three villages. The wages for paddy harvest were always in kind. Fixed quantity of paddy was given as wage for harvesting a fixed size of land. The harvest was usually done by employing gang labour. In case of commercial crops like groundnut, chillies and pulses, the wage rate was 3:1 i.e. 75 percent of wage in the form of cash and remaining 25 percent in kind. When it

came to sugarcane and cotton, the entire wage was paid in cash. Immediate consumption requirement determined the proportion of wages in kind. In the wetland village, except paddy harvest, all the remaining works were paid in cash. For coconut harvest, the labour was paid either Rs 4/- per tree climbed, or one nut per tree. Invariably, the laborers took the second option. They can sell a coconut to Rs. 4.50 to 5/- in the market. Given the nature of cropping pattern in the dryland village, all wages were paid in cash. Interestingly wage rates for commercial crops were a little higher than other crops.. However, it was the annual cereal crops like paddy that benefited the laborers more because they assured a kind of food security for the family. Cash wage was invariably spent in an extravagant manner, like consuming liquor and gambling.

III. Agrarian Transformation in the Study Villages

Given the nature of biotic and human factors agricultural transformation in the study villages took different paths.

Study Village - I (Wetland Village)

In wetland village (Swamithopppu), agriculture was transformed because of two factors. One, excellent market value for commercial crops like banana and coconut and two, the influence of higher education. Rice, the traditional crop of this village, was often destroyed by frequent floods and occasional droughts. Over the years, cost of cultivation

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went up. Banana chips made out of unripened fruits and its constant demand in gulf market motivated rice farmers to convert their traditional paddy fields into banana fields. Access to Nagercoil, a nearby market town (headquarters of Kanyakumari district) known for banana and coconut business, too encouraged the farmers to go for banana cultivation extensively.

Coconut was the second crop that had replaced the traditional crop of rice. Nearby tourist centre, Kanyakumari, was an added advantage to the farmers of this village and the district as a whole. Tender coconuts were sold for rupees eight per nut. By harvesting early farmers also saved a lot of time. Unlike rice crop, pest and disease was also minimal in coconut. The crop is also resistant to abiotic stresses such as frequent floods and occasional droughts. High yielding, short duration variety, bred by the Coconut research station, *Veppankulam* under the aegis of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, has been a boon for the farmers. On an average, farmers harvested coconuts four times, while the rice was harvested only twice in a year. Coconut also required lesser inputs. According to the cost of cultivation provided by a progressive farmer of this village, a tree bore a minimum of 150 nuts per year, and even if farmers sold at the rate of rupees six per nut, he was assured of getting 900 rupees per annum per tree. Due to this reason, farmers started growing coconut trees in all their spare land including the backyard of their houses.

Another reason for change in the cropping pattern in Kanyakumari district as a whole and the sample village in particular was the higher level of literacy rate. Literacy rate of Kanyakumari district is much higher than many other districts of Tamil Nadu, also above the state and national averages. This could be attributed mainly to the efforts of Christian missionaries during the pre-and post-colonial periods, and the influence of highly literate neighboring state of Kerala. Of all the caste groups of present day Kanyakumari district (erstwhile princely state of Travancore), Nadars were the first to convert from Hinduism to Christianity. Hence, they were exposed to modern education and subsequently took up government jobs. Since, they knew the significance of land ownership, they invested much of their savings in acquiring lands, usually sold by higher

castes like Pillais and Brahmins. With their entrepreneurial acumen, the Nadars used the opportunity to shift their agriculture from subsistence to commercial cropping through which they accrued more profits and reinvested it in agriculture, either by adding to their operational holdings or by strengthening agriculture related infrastructure.

Some of them also took up jobs in the private sector and left their native places for far-flung areas of Tamil Nadu and elsewhere in the country or abroad. However, they continued to have a strong attachment for land and rural life.⁸² When they moved to other parts of Tamil Nadu they did not give their land on lease or for share cropping. They had known about the agrarian conflict between the tenants and the absentee landlords from neighboring state of Kerala. Therefore, they chose to change the cropping pattern, and moved to crops, that demanded lesser attention, such as coconut cultivation. This way, they could keep one foot in the government job and the other in their traditional farming. By doing so they could also keep their family tradition of rural life going.

Another important factors often quoted by the respondent farmers for converting their fertile rice field into coconut garden was the neighborhood effect, or a kind of forced change. Rapid spread of coconut cultivation over a period of time influenced every one. Change introduced in one plot invariably motivated the rest to shift. When the shadow of the tall coconut trees spread over neighboring small statured rice crop, the crop was affected. In such a situation, cultivators found it difficult to continue rice cultivation. Within a short span of time, a sizeable portion of irrigated lands in the whole village had been converted into coconut gardens.

Various respondents in the study villages identified following reasons for changes in the cropping patterns: 1) to cope up with the changes followed by some of the farmers,

2) for easier supervision, 3) to avoid difficulties in labor management, 4) to overcome biotic and abiotic stresses like pests, diseases, weeds droughts, floods, soil related problems (acidity, alkalinity, sodicity, toxicity etc.,) common to the rice, 5) to upkeep the land despite being away, 6) migration of younger members of the family to far off places, 7) growing viability of coconut fanning for week-end farmers and gentlemen farmers, 8) to enhance the returns on investment per unit area of land cultivated, and 9) attractive crop insurance schemes available for coconut trees.

This shift from rice to coconut became a common feature in the mid eighties. Many marginal and small farmers tried to persuade the government officials to come to their rescue to curb planting of coconut trees in rice fields. A suggestion made by officials was that coconuts could be planted only at a distance often feet from the nearby land. But, it could not be made obligatory for those who wished to convert their land. Probably in the past, the village community had a say in the use of privately owned land. But, they could no longer influence the cultivators.

Data presented in Table No.5.15 reveals that the area under rice had been consistently declining at the cost of cultivated area under coconut and banana. Within a span of ten years, the traditional crops in the village had lost one-third of its area, whereas, cultivated areas under coconut and banana had almost doubled.

TABLE NO. 5.15**AREA UNDER DIFFERENT CROPS IN 10 YEARS (area in acres)**

Year	Rice	Coconut	Banana	Total
1987-88	154 (75.1)	34 (16.6)	17 (8.3)	205 (100.0)
1988-89	148 (71.8)	37 (18.0)	21 (10.2)	206 (100.0)
1989-90	146 (66.0)	49 (22.2)	26 (11.8)	221 (100.0)
1990-91	132 (62.5)	51 (24.3)	28 (13.3)	211 (100.0)
1991-92	127 (59.1)	55 (26.6)	33 (15.3)	215 (100.0)
1992-93	124 (56.9)	57 (26.1)	37 (17.0)	218 (100.0)
1993-94	123 (53.7)	62 (27.1)	44 (19.2)	229 (100.0)
1994-95	117 (50.6)	68 (29.4)	46 (20.0)	231 (100.0)
1995-96	111 (46.8)	77 (32.5)	49 (20.7)	237 (100.0)
1996-97	103 (43.2)	80 (33.8)	55 (23.0)	238 (100.0)

Source: *Crop statistics records maintained by the VAO of
Thamaraikulam Village panchayat*

All these factors had led to a transformation of agriculture in the study village. In this process, labor force displaced by the agricultural sector was absorbed by the coir and seashell industries and also by local spinning units, which had cropped up over a short period of time.

Study Village - II (Garden land Village)

The second village (Sendamaram), is popularly known for cultivation of commercial crops like cotton, chilies, groundnut, vegetables and rice. Agrarian transformation in this village was mainly due to the arrest of water flow from the Western Ghats. Tanks received water from Western Ghats. The seasonal rains recharged the wells. Since mid

eighties, water flow from the Western Ghats had been arrested due to ~~the~~ construction of a dam {*karupanadhi* dam) across the river *Karupanadhi*. Subsequently some people in the upper reach of the canal {*Pappan kalvai*) also constructed houses, which completely arrested the water flow. Many agitations were carried out to remove the unauthorized construction in the canal area, so that a fixed quantum of water could reach the tail end of the village. However, despite the intervention of district collector and engineers of the irrigation department nothing happened.

As an informant told, the dam was located in the assembly segment of Kadayannallur and most of the *ayacut* area was in Sankarankovil assembly segment. Because of this it had acquired political overtones. The local politicians always engage in hydro-politics in order to woo the voters. If we cannot devise a formula to share water within a district how are we going to have a compromising formula between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over Cauvery water dispute? With massive deforestation of Western Ghats, the quantum of rainfall was also on the decline since mid-eighties. These two factors had led to a change in cropping pattern of this village. Instead of annual cereal crops farmers started cultivating vegetable crops, which were of shorter duration and needed less water. Vegetables have an assured market in towns like Tirunelveli and Madurai. Vegetables produced in this village also went to far off places, like Chennai

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and Thiruvanthapuram (Kerala). The second factor, which brought about this change in cropping pattern was the short supply of labor. Since mid-eighties, beedi-rolling industry had begun to employ virtually all female laborers, hitherto employed in the agricultural sector. Assured employment, good wage rate, other benefits like bonus, ESI scheme and less drudgery, the labor force started shifting from agriculture to household industry. Due to this, agricultural labor wages went up manifold. The last factor,

which led to agricultural transformation was migration of the educated members of farm families. **According** to the statistics available in the local Nadar caste association (*uravinmurai*) of this village, over a period of five years starting from 1991-92, as many as 52 families had sold **their land** either entirely or partly (see Table 5.16) and the amount received was invested in establishing mini-transport services, provisional stores, vegetable shops etc. in the nearby towns like Sankarankovil, Surandai, Tenkasi, Erode, Salem, and Chennai.

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Over a period of time, number of vehicles in the village had gone up too. In 1990, it was only two vehicles and by 1997 the village had 32 vehicles. These were mini buses, maxi cab vans, swaraj mazda vans, ambassador cars, jeeps, mini lorries, tractors, and pick up vans. Thanks to the DMK government's initiative of introducing the mini bus services to connect all the villages, several villagers bought vehicles for commercial use. Of the 32 vehicles in the villages, the Nadars owned 21 and the investment **had** been made simply by disposing off the agricultural land. Sometime the institutional finance was also availed from the nationalized banks or the district industrial centers. But in these cases also, in order to escape from the defaulters list, the land was invariably sold to pay back the loan amount. Since the village is near Kerala, Keralites purchased much it. They found the land value in the village much cheaper than in Kerala. More than 40 percent of the lands sold by the villagers were purchased by the Keralites. Thanks to the inflow of gulf money into Kerala, they had enough cash. The buyers started converting the newly acquired land into orchards by using drip irrigation.

TABLE NO. 5.16**PARTICULARS OF LAND SALE BETWEEN 1991-1996**

S.No	Year	Number of Land sale	Land sold by Nadars
1	1991-92	18	11
2	1992-93	21	09
3	1993-94	14	08
4	1994-95	19	10
5	1995-96	32	14

Source: Statistics of property sale maintained in the Sub-Registrars' office, *Veerasigamani*

Nadars' provision shops in the northern districts of Tamil Nadu are popularly known as *Annachi kadai* (elder brothers' shop). The southern Nadars who migrated to the northern Tamil Nadu virtually had monopoly over these shops. When the researcher interviewed some Nadars during a village festival, they justified their act of selling land and investing money in business ventures by arguing that returns on investment in agriculture were declining due to higher cost of critical inputs, steep hike in labor wages, fluctuation in the agricultural markets and the recurrent droughts. Unlike agriculture, droughts had little impact on the business in towns. Moreover, educated younger generation was less inclined to do agriculture, which is rather painstaking compared to business and other middle class jobs.

Study Village - III (Dryland Village)

Agricultural transformation of the dryland village (Kayamoli) was mainly due to the edaphic factor. The soil structure of the village was merely like sand dune with low fertility value, highly porous, loose in structure, and the humus factor was minimal. Therefore, the water holding capacity (WHC) of the land was less. Writing about such lands, Robert Hardgrave mentioned

'the southern portion of Tinnevely district, including Tiruchendur and greater portions of Srivaikuntam and Nanguneri taluks, is one of the most desolate areas in South India. The *teris*, ranges of deep and loose red sands, are peculiar to the region and are often destitute of vegetation. In the *teris*, two of which cover an area of some forty square kilometers each, the sands constantly shift with ever blast of wind, forming sand dunes.'(Robert Hardgrave: 1969)

Agricultural land in this village was suitable for drought resisting palmyra palm and for cultivation of minor millets at rainy seasons. The entire village was dominated by the aristocratic Nadars known as 'Adityans' and the size of their operational holding size was big. At one time it used to be 100-150 acres, but now it is reduced to the level of 20 acres due to the family partition among the members. However, even today, some Adityans own more than 50 acres of land.

Till the establishment of Sun Paper Mill, the Adityans were cultivating minor millets and vegetables, along with palmyra trees with the help of attached labor force.. Since the establishment of sun paper mill by Adityan family, at Cheranmahadevi, some 100 kilometers away from Kayamoli, the management introduced an industrial crop '*udai shrub*' which was considered the best raw materials for production of high quality paper. The paper mill assured the procurement of timber from the cultivators. The Adityans, who until then, cultivated their land with help of wage laborers, slowly switched over to the cultivation of *udai shrub*. This shift was also useful because it did not need regular irrigation, weeding, plant protection measures, or intensive labor. With the introduction of this crop, labor force was alienated from agriculture and began to move to the nearby towns and cities in search of jobs and they were mostly absorbed by Adityans in their newspaper industries, located in all the district headquarters of Tamil Nadu. Agricultural laborers of Kayamoli became the industrial laborers over a period of time. As one aged Adityan put it, 'only the nature of occupation differed, but the patronage, exploitation, shutting down of individual thinking, all continued in the urban atmosphere'. This is the

reason why the workers of Adityans firms never had class-consciousness nor did they form any trade union to fight for their legitimate rights.

As the years passed, younger generation of the well to do Adityan families acquired modern education and migrated to cities (See the Table. 5.17). The Sivanthi Adityan family had established quite a good number of educational institutions in Kayamoli and the nearby temple town Tiruchendur . This has helped the Adityans to acquire degrees in arts, science, commerce, management and professional education. When they migrated to the cities for employment in government services, or in the fellow Adityan firms or to do business, they never deserted their place of origin. They had a constant touch with Kayamoli and were reluctant to sell off their land because of the deep-rooted values they attached to it.

TABLE NO. 5.17
NUMBER OF MEMBERS MIGRATED FROM THE
ADITYAN FAMILIES OF KAYAMOLI

S.No	Number of Members Migrated	Number of Families
1	One member	18
2	Two members	12
3	Three members	09
4	Four members	07
5	Five members	03
6	Six members	02
7	Seven members	01
	Total	62

Source: *Kayamoli Adityan Varalaru* by Dasaratha Adityan (1998)

Agricultural transformation of this village occurred primarily through the introduction of industrial crop *udai*, which altered not only the cropping pattern but also the labor relations and the over all agricultural scenario. This case reveals how an industry located hundred kilometers away from the village could influence agrarian relations.

Conclusion

Though the sample villages of this study are located in three different agro-ecological conditions, they were all dominated by one caste i.e., Nadars. Agrarian transformation in these study villages occurred due to both endogenous and exogenous factors. In all the three villages, a group of factors induced change. In wetland village, the constant demand created by the local market for both banana and coconut led to reduction in the area under traditional rice crop. The second significant factor responsible for change was a shift in the cropping pattern, partly due to migration of educated younger members of the Nadar caste to cities in search of better employment. However, they did not want to break from their agrarian roots. Hence, the landowners switched over from annual cereal crop to perennial tree crop. The factors responsible for agrarian change in garden land village were deficit water supply, declining rains over the years, the rapid spread of household industry, which offered alternate sources of employment to women laborers. Opening up of the urban market for vegetables also played a role. Similarly as in the first village, migration of younger members of the family to urban areas played a role in bringing about agrarian transformation in this village.

In the dryland village, agrarian transformation was mainly due to three factors. First, the soil quality was not good for cultivation of food crops or horticultural crops. Second, the industrial crop *udai shrub* introduced by the paper mill owners was highly adaptable to the prevailing agricultural scene, and third the migration of educated younger members of the agricultural castes and declining interest in farming made them go for the risk free perennial industrial crop.

Notes

1. Pate, Gazetteer, Pp 205, 220 - 226; Robert Caldwell, The Tinnevely Shanars (Madras, 1850), Pp. 2 - 3 , and Lectures on Tinnevely Missions; Robert Hardgrave, Nadars, Pp. 19-21
2. J. Hepburn, 'Settlement Report' 17 October, 1807, TCR, TNA Vol. 3782, 1807, P. 290, also see papers relating to the Revenue Settlement of Tinnevely, TCR, TNA Pp 83 - 97.
3. In the absence of currency, Nadars used Palmyra Products as an exchange to do their trade. The exchanged products again sold at their native place. This is something equal to barter system
4. The Shanar population showed dramatic increase, which may be the repudiation following famines of 1811 - 1813 and 1831 - 1833 or may be the by products of census procedures, if for example, the census counts in the southwest were taken during times of seasonal immigration by Shanars to tap the Palmyra trees. Between 1823 to 1881 the Shanar population grew manifold. See, Thomas Turnbull ' Geographical and Statistical Memoirs of Tinneveli'.
5. The 'six town' are Sivakasi, Virudhunagar, Tirumangalam, Sattangudi, Palayampatti and Palayampatti. These towns are located in Madurai, Virudhunagar and Ramnad districts. Both Sivakasi and Virudhunagar were in Tinnevely district before 1911. Hardgrave, Nadars Pp 95 - 97
6. See Pate, Madras District Gazetteers: Tinnevely Pp. 496 - 497
7. The cultivation of dry crops on wetland was Nadars innovation, which was latter adopted by the British colonial rule and their parlance it was known as '*nunjah - me! - punjah*'. This was used as the criteria to collect land revenue
8. Pate. *op. cit.*. Pp. 496 - 497
9. David Ludden, 'Ecological Zones and the cultural economy of irrigation in Southern Tamil Nadu. South Asia 1(1) 1978. Pp 1-13 presents an overview of the process of regional agricultural differentiation
10. * Thomas Turnbull *op.cit.*, P. 98
11. The extended clan group of Nadars. usually considered as Social unit, next to family. Family name usually identified through the *Kuttam*
12. See Ludden (1989). Peasant History in south India, Chapter. II, Farming Frontiers Pp. 65 also Thomas Turnbull, 'Geographical and Statistical Memoirs of Tirunelveli and its Zamindaris. P. 38

13. Berenda, E.F. Beck. ' Centers and Boundaries of Regional Caste Systems' Pp. 255-288.
14. For more detail, See Stuart Manual, and Pate Gazetteer, upon which this account is based. Good accounts of Semi-arid agriculture include S.M. Shah 'Cropping Pattern in relation to Irrigation' Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics 18 (January 1963), 154 - 160; and P.A. Venkateshwaran, Agriculture in South India (New Delhi; 1961).
15. See Balagopal, in Economic and Political weekly who defined and discussed in detail about the emergence of provincial propertied class. Vol 21 (36-37)
16. Caldwell, Tinnevelly and the Tinnevelly Mission (Madras 1869), P.9
17. Caldwell, Tinnevelly Shanars. *Op.cit*, P. 55
18. Dharma Kumar, Land and caste in South India, Agricultural Labour in Madras presidency in the Nineteenth Century (1965) Pp 128 - 129
19. Pate *opp.cit.*, 193 - 194 also see Gilbert Slater, some South Indian villages (1918) Pp. 15-16
20. Ponnaiah, Christian Community P. 40
21. *Ibid*. P. 45
22. *Ibid*. P.46
23. Letter to the Collector from W.A. Symonds, March 25, 1871. Quoted in Selection from the records on Palmyra Plantations, P.94
24. *Ibid*, P. 193.
25. Ponnaiah *opp. cit* Pp 96 - 97
26. Pate, Tinnevelly Gazetteers, Pp. 128-129
27. *Ibid*. 496 -497
28. *Ibid*. p. 497
29. *Ibid*, 498
30. Masillamani, *Pandiya DesaAditya Vamsa Sahittiram* (1931) P. 16-19

31. Pate, *op. cit*, Pp. 306-310
32. L.S. Thangasami, Tinneveli' The Nadars' 338 - 339 cited by Pate
33. T. Masillamani. P. 49. On Adityan Land owning pattern
34. See Ludden, Pp. 56
35. The producers and traders of Nadar community formed a network which strengthened both the buyers and sellers, also the whole caste - Nadars
36. The conflict between the Vellala land owners and Nadar tenants, between Nadars and Maravars in sharing the place of worship were the outcome of declining Mirasidar villages. See, 1834, Zilla Court cases between landowners and tenants.
37. Revenue Department, Tinnevelly (1830) paper relating to the protection of under tenants in Ryotwari tracts
38. See Ludden, *op. cit*, P. 167
39. Irschik, 'Politics and Social conflict' Pp. 171 - 357. Washbrook, 'Emergence of Provincial Politics', Pp. 228 - 329' Baker, Politics in South India.P.64
40. Report of the select committee on the 'cultivation of cotton in India' - parliamentary papers. Accounts and papers, session 2, 1857, Vol. 30, Part - 1
41. See, Sarada Raju, Economic conditions Pp. 75 - 101
42. J. Forbes Royle, on the culture and commerce of cotton in Pate Gazetteer Pp. 158-167
43. Ponnaiah, 'Production and marketing of Raw cotton.' Pp 94 - 95
44. See, Headrick, Tools of Empire and Wolf. Europe and the people without History, Pp 310 -384.
45. Pate, on Tinnevelly Gazetteer, Pp 240 - 241
46. Pate, *op. cit*, P. 243
47. See, Ludden, 'Agrarian Organization' Pp. 50 - 55. Statistics for 1823 include all wells, not only ' agricultural wells' as do latter counts
48. Cotton road to the stretch of seventy miles from Srivilliputhur though Sattur and Ettaiya puram to port Titicorin in the Tinnevelly district, as well as on the ninety miles of trunk road from Madurai to Tirunelveli town were constructed. Similarly, the railway line connected Madurai, Virudhunagar to Tuticorin Port.

49. See, Balagopal, in Economic and political weekly 1987, Vo. 21 (36-37).
50. A. Sreedhara Menon, A survey of Kerala History P. 277
51. Sixty percent of the total cultivated land were under *Pandaravaka*, which in turn was divided into *Pandaravaka Pattom* and *Pandaravaka Otti*. The pattern holdings did not vest any ownership or transfer of occupancy rights, whereas, *otti* lands conferred occupancy rights.
52. See, Travancore Land Revenue Manual - IV . Pp 375
53. Nagam Aiya, 19061, P. 333
54. Aid:, P. 351
55. T.K. Velupillai, The Travancore State Manual Vol. III P. 33
56. Varghese, T.C. 1970, Agrarian change and Economic consequences; Land tenures in Kerala. P 26 also Pillai, K.K. 1953, The Suchindram Temple . PI27
57. See, P. Ramachandran, History of Nachil Nadu (1981) P. 81
58. Nagam Aiya. *op. cit*, P. 177
59. T.K. Oommen, Agrarian Mobilization in Travancore - Cochin, Pp 56 - 57
60. Nagam Aiya, *op. cit*, P. 181
61. See, Pauline Kolenda, Foxes. Lions and Bears; The circulation of Land ownership in Southern most Tamil Nadu Pp 27 - 49
62. *Ibid.* P.35
63. *Ibid.* P.36
64. *Ibid.* P.41
65. Interview with Vaikunta Nadar of Swamithoppu village at the time of fieldwork
66. Kolenda, *op. cit*, P. 36
67. Kolenda, *op. cit*, P. 36
68. *Ibid.* P.32
69. Varghese, *op. cit*, P. 141

70. *Ibid*, 142
71. Kolenda *op. cit*, P. 3 7
72. /6W., P 38
73. Interview with an elderly Brahmin, at Suchindram at the time of fieldwork of this study
74. The member of Parliament and five out of the six MLAs from Kanya Kumari district are always Nadars only, irrespective of their political affiliation
75. Quoted by P. Kolenda, M.S.S. Pandian and Bala Prajapathy
76. Kolenda, *op. cit*, P. 48
77. *Ibid.*,?. 45
78. *Ibid*, P.46
79. This villages was earlier called as poovandanthoppu, later it was names as Swamithoppu and it is the birth place of nadar social reformer Vaikuntaswamigal.
80. The information was furnished by the state department of agriculture. See the cost of cultivation data furnished by the joint Director of Agriculture. Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu.
81. P.Kolenda, P. 44
82. *Ibid*, p. 40
83. Interview with the farmers and merchants involved in vegetable cultivation and trade in Sendamaram village.
84. Information furnished by the fanners of garden land village
85. Discussion with migrant Nadars
86. See, M.P. Gurusami, *Tamilar Thanthaiyin Patihkkai puratchi* (T). P. 84

Chapter -VI

Social Mobility Pattern of the Nadars in South Tamil Nadu

This chapter examines the social mobility pattern of the Nadars in south Tamil Nadu. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section deals with the concept of social mobility and the models used by various scholars to study social mobility. The second section describes the various strategies adopted by the Nadars to move up in the social hierarchy. The third section focuses on religious mobility, and the fourth on educational mobility. The fifth section discusses occupational mobility and the sixth analyzes the spatial mobility of Nadars. All these four dimensions viz., religious, education, occupation and spatial are analyzed across four generations i.e., the self, two preceding generations and one succeeding generation of the respondents.

I The Concept of Social Mobility

Pitrim Sorokin (1972) made the first systematic formulation of the concept of social mobility. He defined social mobility as 'any transition of an individual or social object or value, anything that has been created or modified by human activity, from one social position to another'.¹ According to Bernard (1957), social mobility refers "to movement, either upward or downward, between higher and lower social classes; or more precisely, movement between one relatively full time, functionally significant social role and another that is evaluated as either higher or lower. This movement is to be conceived as a process occurring over time, with individuals moving from one role and social class position to another because of what they have done or what has happened to them in

various kind of social interaction, such as in their family or in their work organization, or socio-economic expansion in their society'.² A more or less similar definition of the concept has been offered by Lipset and Bendix (1959).³ The term 'social mobility' according to them, refers to the process by which individuals moving from one position to another in society - positions which by general consent have been given specific hierarchical values. It is a change in one's education, occupation, income, prestige, status, power, and wealth. It changes an individual or family's overall position.

Thus, social mobility is a much wider term and includes within it upward or downward changes in the educational, religious, occupational, and spatial spheres of an individual or a whole group.

Studies of Social Mobility Studies in India

Many scholars studied the permissibility and pattern of social mobility in the caste system in India. Social mobility in Hindu India is characterized by group mobility, occurring fairly gradually, rather than individual mobility.

Studies on social mobility in the caste system in India are not new. Professor Silverberg, in the interdisciplinary symposium (1968), extended the understanding of the nature, extent, significance, mechanism and determinants of social mobility in Indian society, where caste provides the structural basis. The older view that traditional Indian society is static, impenetrable, and immobile has no basis; and, social mobility is present in all ages of Indian history'. (Barber in Silverberg, Ed., 1968:78) It is apparent that social mobility in Hindu India is characterized by 'group mobility,' occurring fairly gradually, rather than "individual mobility." For Burton Stein, the trend of social mobility in India during the medieval period is the movement of individual families rather than

'corporate mobility' for the entire caste (Silverberg, Ed., 1968: 78 and Srinivas in Singer & Cohn, Eds., 1968: 191).

The establishment of Pax Britannica witnessed far-reaching effects of social mobility, 'Indian society ceased to be stationary and became mobile, and the quantum of mobility increased as the years went by' (Srinivas in Singer & Cohn, Eds., 1968:191). In emphasizing the indispensability of Sanskritization, the traditional idiom of mobility during the British period, Srinivas is of the opinion that there is need for identity shifts in castes, but 'caste mobility was essential for individual or familial mobility' and further, 'mobility in medieval India was based on fission and, in modern India, on fusion' (ibid: 196-199). Mahapatra notices the intensification of mobility in modern India, and states, "...new dimensions - that of all India or regional organizations, political solidarity and social philanthropy - have been added to the caste groups, so that, by a process of fusion the formerly strictly endogamous sub-castes are gradually tending towards a single endogamous unit." (1960: 592). Barber spells out social mobility in Hindu India through 'symbolic justification,' which includes a number of processes, collectively comprehended as Sanskritization by Srinivas (Silverberg, Ed., 1968: 33). Lynch points out that the concept of Sanskritization is 'culture-bound' and is not applicable, as a process, to all movements for social mobility in post-independence India, as experienced by him while studying the Jatavs of Agra city, who took up political action as a means to social mobility (Singer & Cohn, Eds., 1968: 224-228). It may be mentioned here, that the Indian Census Reports, for the far end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, bear evidences of status elevation through adoption of new caste names and reform of caste practices. Rowe's illuminating study, 'The New Chauhans : A

Caste Mobility Movement in North India' uncovers the trends of mobility in the Noniya communities which permitted them to reduce the discrepancy between their contrasting positions in the ritual and the economic hierarchies (Silverberg, Ed., 1968: 66, 67 and 74).

Schermerhorn's (Gupta, Ed., 1978: 46-51) paradigm on the modes of mobility based on brief studies by A.K. Das, Andre Beteille, and J.M. Mahar, and following the lead of Ralph Turner's (1960) model of 'contest mobility', and 'sponsored mobility' unravels and modes of social mobility among the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Muslims; and, extends the scope of the application of these to field of political activity. Bailey's argument maintains that it is the caste group which enjoys the benefits of the social mobility and not individuals and, again, Hardgrave quotes, 'The forces of change are thus canalized into the idiom of caste and, given certain conditions, the structure of the caste-group is unimpaired, although the ranking of units within this structure may be modified in accordance with their changed economic rank.' (Hardgrave, 1969: 6). Hardgrave's study of the Nadars of Tamil Nadu explains how they have moved from the lower rungs of hierarchy to a position of status and power. His analysis reveals that the process of Sanskritization was initially attempted and could not be successful after which they turned to secular strategies through the formation of the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* for community integration and mobilization (Hardgrave, 1969: 262-266). While observing the recurrent change through social mobility in Indian Society, Mandelbaum opines, "Individual mobility, by itself is limited and ephemeral" and mentions the mobility tactics and modern means for *jati* improvement through caste associations and federations (1972: 428, 468 and 500). C. Bhatt's study on Waddars of

Kamataka had empirically demonstrated how an ethnic group in their effort to achieve upward social mobility through reform and protest (Bhatt, 1984: 195). G.S. Bhatt's study on the Chamars of Dehradun explains the trends and measures for status mobility to drop their 'unclean' stigma through Sanskritization and increased economic opportunities in an urban situation (1974: 174 - 186). Rowe's analyses on the Kayastha and the Khatri castes explain the contemporary (1890-1915) struggle for mobility, the claim for social precedence in the 1901 Census, and the 'organized response through the caste association was effective in countering this attack on the fundamental basis of mobility,' (Singer & Conn Eds., 1968:202-206).

Another significant dimension comments upon the application of Merton's 'Reference Group Theory' and 'offers a theoretical and methodological approach to some mechanism of social mobility...' (Silverberg, Ed., 1968: 16). Damle's four reference group models, i.e., the Brahminic model, the Kingly (Kshatriya) model, the Vaisya model, and the Western model, are suggestive of emulation of higher status. He cites the example of the Patidars (studied by David F. Pocock), who took up braiding, acquired wealth and raised their caste rank by hypergamy, and have laid claim to Kshatriyahood (ibid: 95-101). Alexander's (1968) study on 'Social Mobility in Kerala' applies the 'Reference Group Theory'. Marriott feels the necessity of three zones of reference; (1) the zone of village community and the directly connected part of the country side, (2) the zone of the recognized cultural or linguistic region, and (3) the zone of the whole civilization, while thinking about mobility of caste (Silverberg, Ed., 1968: 108-114). In the words of Barber, 'Caste mobility is extremely instructive for identifying the

tremendous variety in structures and values in the traditional and present Indian systems.' (Silverberg, Ed., 1963: 117)

On the basis of the above analyses, social mobility refers to a shift in status either in the ascribed ritual status hierarchy, or in the achieved or achievable secular status hierarchy.

II SOCIAL MOBILITY STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY NADARS

The Nadars have adopted various strategies to move up in the social hierarchy over a period of two and a half centuries. Some of the strategies were related to the religious sphere and others were in the secular sphere. These strategies were worked out according to their convenience and time. The major strategies adopted by them were conversion to Christianity, Sanskritisation, forging an indigenous religious movement and many other protest movements viz., temple entry movement, change of caste name, campaign against toddy, Self-Respect movement and the backward class movement.

Sanskritization

Rituals form the functional aspects of any religion but in Hinduism they have acquired a special significance. Rituals are closely associated with the notion of purity and pollution around which the whole system of Hindu religious life revolves.

Ritual mobility is often initiated through group efforts aiming at a higher ritual position or rank in a society where ritual status form one of the important criteria of social stratification. The existence of a nexus between the social status and ritual rank is a unique feature of the Hindu system of social stratification. In such a social system, in order to achieve higher social status, it is essential to improve the ritual rank. Thus, the main feature of social mobility in India, particularly during pre-independence period, was

ritual in its essence. Mobility of this kind has been described by Srinivas (1952: 30) as 'Sanskritization'.

In this sense, sanskritisation may be viewed as a mode of achieving group mobility that is consistent with the Hindu caste system. Sanskritisation of rituals for caste mobility is a group phenomenon. The role of an individual in the context of such ritual mobility is to conform to the expectations of the mobile group to which he belongs.

The currents of the Sanskritisation process were set in motion among the Nadars in closing years of the nineteenth century. At that time organized efforts towards achieving a higher status in society were made than the one generally ascribed to them.

The Nadars did not emulate the practices of a single higher *jati*, rather the emulation was largely a combination of the practices of ritually *high jatis* in their region which was then combined with their understanding of Kshatriya practices. Men began to tie their dhoti in the manner of the Brahmins, to crop their hair in the fashion of the Brahmin tuft, and to abandon the heavy jewelry and ear piercing which had been common among them. The women adopted their jewelry and dress to the new style. Widows were permitted to wear only white saris, like the Brahmins, remarriage was forbidden.⁴ Nadar who decreed that women would cease to carry water on their heads and, like the higher castes, would carry water pots against their hips. To enforce the order, men were stationed at the gates of the gardens where the wells were located.⁵

Where once burial had been the custom among the Nadars, the community increasingly chose cremation as symbolic of the desired higher status.⁶ In marriages, the traditional bride price was replaced by Sanskritized custom of dowry.⁷ The use of

palanquins became widespread among the Nadars. In order to emphasize their position of wealth and power, the Nadars hired Maravars as their palanquin bearers.

Vegetarianism came into vogue among the Nadars, and fathers named their children after the Sanskritic gods. The practices gradually spread among the members of the community. They constructed temples of Siva and made rich gifts to established temples, to which they were once denied entrance. They met the cost of festival days, paid *pūja* expenses and fed the Brahmins. Brahmin priests who were quite willing to provide their services to the wealthy Nadar temples and to officiate the ceremonies of the caste were found and employed. Perhaps, the most important symbol of status adopted by the Nadars was the sacred thread of the 'twice born'. The Brahmin priests were paid to conduct the *upanayanam*, the sacrament of investiture, for the Nadars, thus endowing them with the Symbolic attribute of twice bornhood.

Conversion to Christianity

Mass conversions have almost always been a form of social protest against conditions of oppression and discrimination.¹⁰ As noted by Duncan B. Forrester, 'there was hardly a region of India that did not have movement of depressed castes into Christianity'¹¹ to find remedy for their social ills. Amongst other things, inaccessibility to Hindu temples and practice of a severe form of untouchability and unseeability were the practices against which the Nadars sought conversion as a remedy to their predicament. That there were economic and political reasons that contributed to conversions should also be taken into account. However, as Forrester observes:

the search for material improvement or enhancement of status is seldom, if ever, the sole or even the dominant motive in a mass movement. Dignity, Self-Respect, Patrons who will treat one, as

equal, and the ability to choose one's own destiny-all these are powerful incentives to conversion (G.A. Oddie 1991:70).

Conversion to Christianity among the southern Nadars was mainly to relieve themselves from the tentacles of caste rules strictly followed by the caste Hindus, and also from other socio-economic and political oppressive measures. In short, conversion movement among the Nadars embodied their remedial aspirations. Many Nadars thought of Christianity as their major liberating force. Hence, conversion movement was an important form with which they asserted and protected themselves against the oppressive caste society.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, there was a mass conversion from the Shanar community to Christianity. Within one or two decades of its inception protestant Christianity in this region, recorded considerable growth. In 1818 itself around 3000 people¹² mostly from the Nadar caste joined the religion. Between 1800-1802, 5000 Nadars took to Christianity in Tinmelveli region,¹³ and in the year 1861-62, in Neyyur and Parasala divisions, 4000 Nadars embraced protestant Christianity.

Conversion, especially from the Nadar caste seemed to have threatened the proponents of the caste system. It had to face stiff resistance from the upper castes as well as from the government machinery. In 1870, Nagam Pillai, 'the Divan of Travancore, commenced prosecution against catholic converts of the Nadar caste to induce them to¹⁴ worship Vishnu (Yesudass, 1980: 22).

Due to the conversion movement, the Divan of Travancore observed, within a quarter of century the Nadars had advanced in industry, wealth and knowledge (White Rouse-. 223). Spread of education \n tngYisVi during the first phase, and both in English and vernacular in the next phase was an integral part of the mission of Christianity. No

sooner than the educational project of the missionaries got initiated than it grew to great proportions. For example, already in 1827, as per London Missionary Society (LMS) recognition, the eastern division, 'contained 36 schools with 1304 boys and 106 girls, and the western division had 21 schools with 541 Children'.¹⁵ The LMS paved the way for female education too. They started in 1820 a boarding school for girls in spite of opposition from caste Hindus.¹⁶

The advent of education transformed the socio-political reality of the subaltern Nadars to a great extent. It opened a new vista of political thought and practice along with a realization of a new sense of individuality, dignity and self-respect. On its heels came an urge for social freedom and equality.¹⁷

The print media, introduced by the missionaries in 1820, contributed towards rationalizing and popularizing knowledge, making it available to the masses. It desacrilised the knowledge and enabled the participation of people in its production. Now it is in place to quote an observation of R. N Yesudhas in this regard:

It played a key role in general enlightenment. Tracts, periodicals and books, which were a distant dream, now became a reality to thousands. This mass education brought in its train the seeds of new civic consciousness and created a fertile soil for the germination of mass movements¹⁸

(Yesudhas, 1980: 151).

It was, with the advent of Christianity that the religio-cultural universe of the 'higher castes' was seriously challenged. Values of individuality, equality, rationality and liberalism that came with the spread of Protestantism and western education contributed substantially to the emergence of civic consciousness that combated the sacralised view of the extant of brahminic ideology. R.N. Yesudhas observes:

As the Nadar converts advanced in education and enterprise and improved their material circumstances, they resisted the injustice and humiliation inflicted by caste Hindus. The upper

classes could not tolerate the advancement of lower class Nadars and refused to recognize the equality, which the latter claimed as a logical sequel to their enlightenment¹⁹ (ibid: 64-65).

Ayyavali Movement

The nineteenth century South Travancore was characterized by a hierarchical social organization. The Nadars or Shanars were social groups that lived under the system of agrestic slavery. Nadars were a populous group in South Travancore that suffered untouchability and social degradation. The religio-cultural universe of the time was variegated. The indigenous folk religio-cultural universe, expressed through innumerable religious practices and beliefs, was strongly present and operative among the subaltern people, in spite of it being despised and degraded by the higher castes and westerners. The Sanskritic religio-cultural universe, rooted in *Varunachira Dahrman*, was operative among the Brahmins and the *sudhra* sections of populations. Its temples, rituals, ceremonies, festivities, and charitable activities conducted in them were privileged in the public sphere. The economic system of the Travancore region was feudalistic, and the political system of the day contributed to the maintenance of the hierarchical social organization.

A close look, at the subaltern social reality of the time, brings to light the following: There was an oppressive system evident in the measures that functioned to deny the rights to public space, and in the measures that conditioned the subaltern psyche with fear. On the other hand, an affirmative process was evident in the various forms of protest and self-assertion that emerged among the subaltern people.

In this context of assertion, Ayyavali emerged and functioned as a new and singular subaltern religious phenomenon. It offered a different religious experience to its adherents, which constituted mostly by the subaltern group of Shanars. The charismatic

leadership of Vaikuntasami, the momentous gathering of people around him, the innovation and performance of alternative symbols and rituals, the newer teachings offered in a mythical religious idiom contributed to the making of a unique subaltern religious phenomenon. It may, then be stated, that Ayyavali was developing as a distinctive alternative religious tradition to the Sanskritic Hinduism, the incoming Christianity and the not so prominent Islam.

The salient preaching's of Ayyavali by Vaikuntasami include righteousness, activity of charity or alms giving, courage and fortitude, living with dignity, against caste discrimination, political oppression, economic exploitation, puja, blood sacrifice, offering to temples and Brahmin domination.

The distinguishing feature of Ayyavali needs to be seen against the background of the Sanskritic tradition whose pre-eminence was upheld by the state. That Ayyavali had emerged differently against this religious tradition is a pointer to its distinct singularity. As in the words of Mr. Narayanadas, a devotee of Ayyavali,' its uniqueness needs to be recognized and this new religion should not be buried within Hinduism'.²⁰ The emergence of Ayyavali needs to be seen also against the presence of the British in the country. Mr.R. Ponnu noted this point in the following words:

*Reform movements in general had the patronization of the British in the nineteenth century Travancore. But the British did not patronize Ayyavali. It arose and stabilized without the support of the British. In one sense, it was anti-establishment'²¹ (Quoted in G. Patrick 2003 : 128).

Social Disabilities of the Nadars

Society denied privileges and ill-treated the Nadars. They should remain 12 feet away from Nairs and 36 paces away from a Nambudiri Brahmin. They were denied entry into public schools, government offices and services. Articles like oil, milk and butter

touched by the Nadars were supposed to be polluted and they were forbidden to wear any clothing above their waist and not permitted to carry umbrellas, or to wear shoes, sandals or golden ornaments or to carry pots of water on the hip or to build tiled houses above one storey in height **or to milk** cows. Nadars were not allowed to enter even the courts of justice and could they get justice only from outside the court.²² They could worship god only from outside the temple. The study of sacred or profane science was also forbidden

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to these unfortunate people. Nadars were prohibited from the using of public roads, bridges, wells of caste Hindu villages. They were not permitted to use the names that were popular among the dominant class and families. These grievances were making the ground ready for the revolt.

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The Nadars were not paid for their labour. They were compelled to render grievous *Ulium* (service without wage) to the Sirkar.²⁵ The low caste Nadars were subject to strange modes of torture like women had to bear the pain of having heavy rice pestles attached to their hair. Similarly, men had to spent fire-locks (gun) hanging from their ears.²⁶ Rev. Thomas Whitehouse mentions that on the advice of Brahmins, Raja Marthanda Varma sacrificed 15 Nadar infants.²⁷ With this incident the enmity between the downtrodden and the upper class started. Nadar men honored chastity and tried their level best to protect their women from humiliation and dishonor. "

Nadar woman who refused to expose their breast before the Brahmins were looked down upon as immoral and immodest.²⁹ They in the absence of their husbands, were tortured by being made to bear a heavy s^tolic placed on four small pebbles on their backs while they stood **all** the time in an unⁱ-ia^latural posture.³⁰ The caste Hindus were

permitted to punish them as they liked, without any written rules to regulate the punishment.

Samuel Mateer, in his native Life of Travancore, gives a surprising list of over 110 distinct taxes³¹ (See Appendix). The Nadars suffered greatly under the pressure of the heavy-poll tax, not only for those who are alive but also for the dead. The authorities collected money in an oppressive manner and created fear in the minds of the poor

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people. There was tax for the hair one grew and for the breasts of the women called breast tax,³³ So the Nadars, who came to Travancore because of the oppression of the Nayaks, started emigrating to Tinnevely.

Breast Cloth Controversy

Patronized by the Christian missionaries, emboldened by the spread of English education the oppressed Nadars made a determined move to break all the barriers to social justice, liberty. The prolonged and arduous struggle that they launched, liberated them from the fetters of traditional oppression and exaction. The Nadars of south Travancore came forward to organize an agitation called Breast Cloth Revolt. The revolt was of importance and contained far-reaching consequences in the matter of raising the social status of Nadars

Awakening Work of Missionaries

William Tobias Ringeltaube was the first LMS missionary who moved with the Nadars and labored to help them to attain their privileges.³⁴ The educational institutions started by Ringeltaube began to brighten the lives of the people and instructed them for their legitimate rights, liberty and equality. * As they found advice in difficulties, sympathy in

adversity and help in sickness and as they were governed by the principles of Christian justice and guided by European intelligence and as they were protected from oppression by their wealthy neighbors, the Nadars enjoyed peace and prosperity after becoming Christians. The caste Hindus believed that the Nadars and other down-trodden people used Christianity to evade taxes and *Uliyam* as well as to raise their social status.³⁶ So they wanted to put an end to conversion.

The Resident, Col. Munro also took keen interest in this matter and a proclamation was issued on 29th June 1814 exempting the Christians from paying poll

tax.³⁷ Several other taxes were also abolished.³⁸ He decided to enhance the wages of

³⁹ Nadar coolies. He permitted the Christian converts to inherit the property of their parents. In his capacity as Resident, he permitted the women converted to Christianity to wear cloths above the waist. Christianity taught them that going without upper cloth was indecent. The English education, which they received, made them to realize that they were in no way inferior to other castes. The innermost qualities of Nadars, as observed by Rev. Abbs, stimulated them to rise against the privileged classes for their rights even at the beginning of the 19th century. In 1814, Col. Munro issued an order that permission be granted to 'he women converted to Christianity to cover their bosoms as obtained among Christians in other countries'.⁴⁰ In pursuance of this order, the Government of Travancore issued a circular order in May 1814. permitting the female converts of the Nadars to cover their bodies with a short bodice or jacket, as worn by the women of the Syrian Christian and Muslim Mopla communities.⁴¹ The Government of Travancore issued a Royal proclamation on 3rd February 1829, prohibiting Nadar women from wearing any cloth over the breast, but allowing them to wear short bodices. It ruled out

the earlier court order.⁴² However, this led to a period of conflict and tension among the non-converts and converts.

Temple Entry Movement

The economic rise of the Nadar community and their attempts to achieve a social status commensurate with their new economic position invariably brought the community into conflict with the higher castes. The claims of the Nadar community to higher status through the adoption of the symbolic paraphernalia of those above them was soon compounded in their attempt to gain entry into the temples. Adopting the attributes of the higher castes, the Nadars sought interactional recognition to their claims through their admission into the temples, which had denied them entrance.

In 1872, the Brahmins and the Vellalas of Tiruchendur brought a case against seven Nadars for entering the temple. The Nadars of Madurai in 1874, attempted to assert their right to temple entry through a criminal complaint lodged against the servants of the Meenakshi temple. In 1876, a similar attempt was made to enter the temple of Tirutangal. When a case was registered, the Munsiff at Srivilliputhur passed an order in 1876, stating that the Nadars had no right to enter the temple, but granted permission to go in procession along the streets. The denial of temple entry was contested as usual. In 1890, the Nadars in Tiruchuli who attempted to enter the temple there, were fined.⁴³ The Nadars of Aruppukkottai started building a temple for Amuthlingeswarar in 1887 in their place. The Ramnad Zamindar filed a case against them in 1893, in the District Munsiff court at Manamadurai and the construction was stopped. An appeal was made to the High Court. Afterwards in 1896, the Ramnad Zamindar himself permitted the Nadars to construct the temple.⁴⁴ At that juncture, the entry of one Irulappa Nadan into the

Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple, of Kamudhi violating the existing custom, caused the Kamudhi riot of 1898.⁴⁵

Though the **Nadars** did not achieve temple entry for which they were fighting for about half-a century, it formed a distinct step in the course of their rapid progress. As they were not **permitted** inside the temples controlled by the caste Hindus, they constructed temples exclusively for Nadars. The Amuthlingeswarar temple at Aruppukkottai, the Muthurariamman temple at Kamudhi and the Mariamman **and** Bhadrakaliyamman temple at Sivakasi could be cited as suitable examples in this regard.⁴⁶

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They donated liberally for religious purposes to identify themselves in the society.

Formation of Caste Association

With new community awareness, the Nadars turned from the 'sacred' to the 'secular'-Sanskritisation had failed. It now remained for the Nadars to use their resources viz., wealth and power, in a manner that would help to raise the status of the entire community to a position of political influence in Tamil Nadu. The main instrument of this process of social mobility was the caste association, the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam*.

The movement for the temple entry, breast cloth controversy and the dramatic confrontation between the Nadars and the communities which opposed their aspirations, gave Nadars a new impetus towards unity and social uplift. At this point, in 1895, a number of prominent Nadar merchants and the traders assembled at Madurai and named

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their caste association as *Kshatriya Mahajana Sangam*, but it failed. Fifteen years later, Rao Bahadur T.Ratnasami Nadar of Poraiyar, of a distinguished and wealthy family of *akbari* contractors, sought to revive the association. Ratnasami Nadar invited a

number of leaders within the Nadar community to Poraiyar for a plenary session in Feb 1910 **and** the caste association of Nadars popularly known as Nadar Mahajana Sangam was formed. The purpose of the association was to uplift the Nadar community. It was stated 'the Nadar class of people have money, but do not have higher status', and therefore, the leaders of the community 'had to come together to improve their lot'.⁵⁰

It was, until 1917, when the third conference was held at Madurai, the association had not chalked out its strategies for the development of the caste. The concrete objectives were formulated by the NMS in the third conference. Accordingly, the objectives were a) to promote the social, material, and general welfare of the Nadars; b) to protect and promote the interests and rights of the community; c) to take practical measures for the social, moral and intellectual advancement of the Nadars; d) to start schools and colleges for imparting western education to Nadar children and to help poor, but, deserving pupils belonging to the community with scholarships, books, fees, etc., e) to encourage and promote commercial and industrial enterprise among the members of the community; f) to foster and promote the spirit of unity and solidarity among the members of the community; g) to raise funds by subscription, donation or other means for the above objects, and the doing of all such other things as are incidental and conducive to the attainment of the above objects or any of them.⁵¹

Dakshina Mara Nadar Sangam

The Nadar Mahajana Sangam seeks to represent the entire Nadar community, Hindu and Christian, southern and northern. Since NMS has been essentially an association of Ramnad - Madurai Nadars, and while it has involved prominent Tinnevely Nadars, yet there has been relatively little involvement on the pan of the southern or Dakshina Mara

Nadars. In order to have the distinct identity of southern Nadars, especially the Tirnevely **and** Kanyakumari Nadars, the Dakshina Mara Nadar Sangam (DMNS) was incorporated **only** in 1942. It traces its origin to the community of *pettais* and was established in **the** mid-nineteenth century. The main responsibility of DMNS was to manage the property - *pettais*, buildings, shops also implementing a number **of welfare** activities. According to the bye laws of DMNS, through the profits yielded by the properties, the Sangam was to encourage 'the advancement of education, industry, trade, agriculture and cooperation among the members of the community'. It was to establish schools, hospitals, libraries, orphanages, hostels, poorhouses, and other similar institutions; in order to promote industrial progress through the establishment of a bank, to publish newspaper and periodicals, and to arrange for propaganda through lectures, and conferences for the unification and welfare of the community. The Sangam was also to grant free scholarships and give interest -free loans to deserving poor students of the community.

The ultimate authority in all matters relating to the administration of the Sangam was to be vested in the General Body which consisted of 51 members elected on a regional basis, among these 11 members were to be elected as executive committee including a president, vice-president, secretary and assistant secretary. The secretary was responsible to the executive committee for the general supervision of Sangam affairs.

The main motto of DMNS is 'Unity is Strength'. The first president of DMNS was Raja Palavesamuthu, heir to the power of the Nadans of Arumuganeri, a few miles north of Tiruchendur town. He was a man of enormous size and power, commanding

respect and fear. Under his leadership the Sangam's properties have increased and grown in value.

After the death of Sri Raja Palaveshamuthu, DMNS lost its vigor and vitality. The DMNS has not held regular conferences, and the management of the association was held by a clique who used the association for personal enrichment and power. The Sangam failed to utilize its resources for the betterment of the community, and it has not gained the respect of the community generally. On the other hand the NMS is recognized even in Tinnevely, where its activities are not extensive, as the organizational representative of the Nadar Community. As of today both the associations were working together for the betterment of the community. In all the matters pertaining to the entire Nadar community, both NMS and DMNS take collective decisions even though DMNS maintains its separate regional identity

The Change of Caste Name from 'Shanan' to 'Nadar'

One of the first concerns of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam was to disassociate itself from the word Shanar and to seek official recognition of the community's claim to Kshatriya status. According to the 1891 census report, the Nadars 'are usually placed only a little above the Pallas and the Paraiyars and are considered to be one of the polluting castes'. They are classed in the census division with 'the castes which pollute even without touch, but do not eat beef.

In 1910. P.V. Pandian addressed a petition to J.C. Molony, Census Superintendent, in the name of Nadar Mahajana Sangam and requested that the census register Nadars as Kshatriya - Sandrores.¹¹ While forwarding the letter to the collector of

Tinnevely, Molony stated that it was too late to issue any detailed instructions to the census enumerators regarding the entry of Shanars in the census schedule.

In January 1921, the executive Council of Nadar Mahajana Sangam passed a resolution calling upon all Nadars to enter their caste as 'Kshatriya' in the forthcoming 1921 census, and circulars were distributed throughout the community urging compliance with the resolution. In explaining their position in a letter to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, the Sangam stated that

'the term Shanan has acquired an offensive and contemptuous significance in common parlance. The Nadars, as a rule, resent being called as 'Shanans' and no one ordinarily refers to them by the name except when he intends to be discourteous or reproachful. The Nadars are usually described in formal documents such as title deeds, pleadings in court, etc., as Kshatriyas or as 'Nadars' simply. The term 'Shanan' as a caste name has long gone out of the use except in government records where it still lingers. There is no reason why the government should continue to retain an offensive expression in describing a community, which is among the most loyal of His majesty's subjects' (Quoted in Hardgrave, 1969 : 134).

In compliance with the government order, Boag, in the Madras Census Report, States:

The 1921 census records the caste as Nadar rather than Shanar in 1911. In deference to the wishes of the representatives of the Nadar Community, the Madras Government have decided on this occasion not to show traditional occupation in the census tables, the traditional occupation of the Nadars has hitherto been shown as toddy-tapping, but they now claim that they are by tradition and inheritance lords of the soil and that toddy-drawing was the occupation only of comparatively few degenerated members of the caste.⁵³

Following the government's order with regard to the census, the Sangam Council resolved 'to request the Government to adopt the term 'Nadar-Kshatriyas' in place of 'Shanars' for use in all Government records'. Accordingly, a letter was written to the Chief Secretary to the government. While responding to the Sangam's petition, the government chose to recognize the simple term 'Nadar' rather than 'Nadar - Kshatriya'. In July, a government order was issued to that effect.⁵⁴

Nadars and Justice Party

Due to Brahmin domination in the Congress, the non-Brahmins began to quit the party and the 'South Indian Liberal Federation' was formed in 1916.⁵⁵ W. P. A. Soundrapandian and V.V. Ramaswami were the founding fathers of this association which became the fore runner to the Justice movement.⁵⁶ In the 1920s the Nadar Mahajana Sangam extended its support to the Justice party and the British government. The Nadars became the staunch supporters of the Justice party while the educated and Christian Nadars joined the National movement.

The propagation of the Justice Party ideals became vigorous from 1930 to 1936. Due to the efforts of prominent Nadar leaders, Virudhunagar became a formidable fort of the Justice party.⁵⁷ As W. P. A. Soundrapandian was the Vice President of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam and the member of the Legislative Assembly, he was busily engaged in the activities of Nadar Mahajana Sangam, legislative proceedings and the programmes of the Self-Respect movement. V. V. Ramasami who became the Chairman of the Virudhunagar Municipality in 1931 and invited the Justicites to the town.⁵⁸ The efforts taken by V. V. Ramasami to strengthen the Justice Party indirectly helped the Nadars to get their legitimate demands.

When the members of the South Indian Liberal Federation organized a meeting on the 30th of December 1934 at Virudhunagar, V.V. Ramasami was requested to invite the Justice Party to hold its session at Viruthunagar. So the first conference was held at Virudhunagar on the 30th of March, 1935. Similar conferences were organized in most of the Nadar dominated towns of Tamil Nadu."

Nadars and the Self-Respect Movement

Following World War-I, Nadar leaders became increasingly conscious of the importance of regional politics and also noted that the Brahmins dominated the independence movement in the Madras Presidency at that time. The British, also, aware of this fact, moved to secure the non-Brahmins support. They conceded the Nadar demand that the community be designated as Nadar as against Shanar in the 1921 census. They appointed W. P. A. Soundrapandian to the Legislative Council on the recommendations of the anti-Brahmin Justice Party (Hardgrave 1969 : 176, 181).

The Self-Respect Movement was launched in 1925. The Nadars who formed a suppressed community were attracted by the ideals and activities of the Self-Respect Movement especially since it aimed at a casteless society. Both W. P. A. Soundrapandian and V. V. Ramasami took an active part in the Self-Respect Movement. Though the former was an active member of the Justice Party, his leanings were towards the Self-Respect Movement.⁶⁰ As it was concerned with community reforms and also with temple entry, W. P. A. Soundrapandian suggested that the Self-Respect Movement must co-operate with the Justice Party to carry out its reform activities.⁶¹

W. P. A. Soundrapandian presided over the first provincial Self-Respect Conference, held on the 17th and 18th February 1929 at Chingelpet, and he was elected president for that year. He attacked caste system and the conference decided to ask its members to give up all caste titles and religious symbols. W. P. A. Soundrapandian and V. V. Ramasami dropped their caste titles.⁶² The Tinnevely District Self-Respect Conference under the president ship of E.V. Ramasami took place on the 20th of July 1929.⁶³ In the year 1930, when the second provincial self-Respect Conference met on

the 10th of May, at Erode, W.P.A. Soundrapandian was an executive Committee member.⁶⁴ V. V. Ramasami and W.P.A. Soundrapandian solicited E. V. Ramasami to conduct the next Self-Respect conference at Virudhunagar.⁶⁵

The Hindu commented⁶⁶ 'the vociferous reactionaries of the Nadar community have deceived themselves and tried to deceive others into the belief that the community as a whole is opposed to national progress'. In fact, the Brahmin newspaper was not able to tolerate the activities of the 'reactionaries' of the Nadar community, since their aim was to put down 'Brahmanism'. It is true that a few people like K. Kamaraj were participating vigorously in the freedom movement. It does not mean that the whole community were nationalists. The Nadars involved in the National movement did not care for their community but for the Nation.⁶⁷ Even when they formed the National Nadar Association in 1940, they did this to strengthen the National Congress and not to strengthen the Nadar Mahajana Sangam. When in 1939, the temples were opened to all,⁶⁸ the Nadar community, which did not turn towards congress till then began to associate itself with the congress and turn them away from the Justice party', which also did nothing for their social uplift.

Methods of Involvement

Nadars participated along with their families in the self -Respect conferences and all the family members got membership in the movement. They enthusiastically bought and read the newspapers and journals published by the movement. Some of the prominent Nadars became office bearers of the movement.⁶⁹ They contributed liberally to the movement activities and took active part in the agitations organized and some of them were jailed

and some died in the jail itself.⁷⁰ Some Nadars even published journals and magazines to propagate the ideology of the movement at the grass root level.⁷¹ As one stalwart of the movement aptly puts it 'instead of saying that Nadars helped the Self-Respect movement, it is appropriate to say that the Nadar caste as a whole become the movement'.⁷²

The Impact of the Self-Respect Movement

Owing to the opposition of the caste Hindus, the Nadars discarded the sacred thread, removed the tuft and stopped inviting the Brahmin *purohits* for their rites and ceremonies. Self-Respect marriages⁷³ were arranged in the presence of the elders of the community. In his wedding V.V. Ramasami, the forerunner of the Self-Respect movement, refused to allow the *purohit* to perform the ceremony.⁷⁴ Because of his earnest labor, Self-Respect marriages became popular among the Nadars. He presided over hundreds of such marriages. When the Self-Respect Movement gathered momentum, the *Gurukkals* (Brahmin priests) were left without any job as the movement encouraged the Nadars to give up all rituals and ceremonies. Instead of the priest, a learned or respected personality from within the community presided over the marriages. The *tali* (*Mangalasutra*) was considered as forbidden object and instead, the exchange of rings and garlands gained popular. The Nadar caste as a whole came forward to follow the self-respect style of marriages. The Nadar Mahajana Sangam, in its annual conferences passed resolutions and approved the Self-Respect marriages and pleaded the community as a whole to practice in toto.⁷⁵ These Self-Respect marriages were called by different names viz.. non-Brahmin marriage, reformed marriage, Brahminless marriage, marriage contract, and life contract. At the Self-Respect marriages the couple used to

donate money to the newspapers, journals, and magazines published by the movement. Community dining (*Samabhandhi Bhojanam*) is a peculiar feature of self-respect style marriages where in all the people without caste discrimination used to dine together. This experiment really challenged the upper caste people. There were instances when Brahmins ate food in Nadar houses along with other low caste people. The Self-Respect Marriages held in various places were very well covered by the journals published by the Self-Respect Movement.⁷⁶ Incidentally, the Self-Respect Marriages (which began in 1928) were legalized by the Tamil Nadu Government through the Marriage Act of 1967.⁷⁷

Yet another achievement of the Self-Respect movement was performing and encouraging intercaste marriages among the Tamils. According to the movement, the very idea of this marriage was to establish an egalitarian Tamil society. The Nadar community performed a great deal of intercaste marriages.⁷⁸

Another area in which the Self-Respect movement succeeded was the widow remarriage. The Nadar Mahajana Sangam passed many resolutions in support of widow remarriage. Many widow remarriages followed among the Nadars. The Nadars took bold step to perform the marriages, which was until then considered as a forbidden practice.⁷⁹

Naming the children with pure Tamil Names

Resenting the invasion and influence of Aryans over the Tamils, the Self-Respect Movement fought to remove the Sanskritic influence in all fronts, including language. When Hindi was implemented as a compulsory subject in school syllabus, they started the anti-Hindi agitation. Gradually the anti-Hindi agitation was transformed into Tamil puritanist movement. As part of the movement, it emphasized that all the names should

be in pure Tamil and emphasized the slogan 'Tamil children of the Tamils should bear only Tamil name'. The Nadars started giving their children with 'pure' Tamil names.

Nadars Accepting the Ideology of Self-Respect Movement

Due to the socio-political reasons, the Nadar community as a whole was treated very badly by the so-called higher castes. Even there were places where the Nadars were treated like untouchables. At this time, the Self-Respect Movement dawned in Tamil Nadu. Since there was no big difference between the Justice Party and the Self-Respect Movement, the Nadars who were already in the Justice Party voluntarily joined the Self-Respect Movement. The Nadars willingly accepted the ideology of the Self-Respect Movement. The founder and the supremo of the movement, E. V. Ramasami Naicker *alias* Periyar, was invited to preside over the Nadar Mahajana Sangam annual conferences. He participated the 11th, 12th and the 13th conferences. Periyar utilized all these conferences as a platform to propagate the ideals of Self-Respect movement. These three conferences brought about revolutionary changes within the Nadar caste and it accepted the principles of Self-Respect Movement. The resolutions passed in Kumbakonam Conference clearly indicate whether these resolutions were of a caste conference or Self-Respect Movement.⁸⁰

In the beginning, the Nadar Mahajana Sangam did not own any journal to publish and propagate its activities and view point. To overcome this lacuna, the journals of the Self-Respect Movement regularly published all the activities of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam.⁸¹

The 15th annual conference of NMS was held at Palayamkottai. The president Sir Edwin Periya Nayaha Nadar in his inaugural address recalled the contributions of Self-Respect Movement to the caste as a whole.

Since Self-Respect movement is an intellectual movement, the Nadar community should extend all types of help to spread the movement very rapidly in all the Nadar settlements. Due to this movement I could see some positive sign in our community. This movement will help to develop rational thinking through which we can eradicate the superstitious practices. At present I can call this as an intellectual movement of south India. The well to do Nadars, educated Nadars and those who are really interested to uplift the community should come forward to join this movement. In future it is going to prove much superior than the spiritual movement started by some religious leaders' (Quoted by P. Rajadurai, 1992 : 204).

The Campaign against Toddy

After its success in changing the caste name, Nadar Mahajana Sangam began a campaign against toddy tapping within the community. According to the Sangam, 'the community as a whole had suffered in prestige by the common notion that its traditional occupation is toddy tapping,' when in fact, only a small section of the community, 'by vicissitudes of fortune', had been driven to the manufacture of hot drink. Since association with toddy elicited a low esteem among the people, the Council of Xadar Mahajana Sangam decided to foreground the social and moral advancement of Nadars. Accordingly, it appealed to such members of the community who were practicing toddy-tapping to abandon the occupation on the grounds that it is certainly not conducive to health and prosperity, to ethical or religious excellence, or to the domestic felicity of the people who indulge in drinking, and urged them to take to the extraction of "sweet toddy" and the manufacture of jaggery, sugar candy etc.

The Sangam distributed circulars among the Nadars urging them to abandon
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toddy-tapping and the operation of toddy shops. Touring agents from the Sangam were

dispatched to all such areas wherever toddy tapping existed to do propaganda against toddy.

In response to the Sangam's campaign, in December 1921, Nadars in many villages took it upon themselves to enforce the resolution. Holding Kangaroo courts, Nadars forcibly brought tappers and toddy shop owners before tribunals of the community.

The Sangam's anti-toddy campaign was effective for only about a year or so. Throughout the years following, the Nadar Mahajana Sangam continued to support prohibition and as the community became more secure in its advancing position, the Sangam began to work for the welfare of the Palmyra climbers, who still constituted the major portion of the community.

Nadars as Backward Class

From late 1920s, the Nadar Mahajana Sangam started showing increasing concern for the plight of the palmyra climbers. In their anxiety to claim a higher status than what is traditionally ascribed to them. The Nadars denied the continued backwardness of the larger portion of their caste brethren - the toddy tappers. In 1910, ten affluent Nadars from Virudhunagar and Madurai submitted a petition to the Governor of Madras, praying that the Nadars be removed from the list of depressed classes, as the caste held large tracts of land and owned many prospering business. Again in 1918, the executive council of the NMS had sent a personal representation to the government for the removal of the

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Nadar community from the lists.

After continuing to urge the government to remove the caste from the depressed class lists, the Sangam realized the opportunities in education and employment that lay

before the backward classes. The Sangam urged the government that the Nadar community be included among the 'backward classes'. In 1935, and again in 1940, the NMS requested the government to include Nadars in backward classes list, so that fee

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concession might be given to Nadar students. The Nadars continued their efforts till the establishment of the backward classes commission. The 22nd conference held at Sivakasi requested both the central and state governments to include the Nadar community in the backward classes list.

Having tried for so long, to build the image of an advanced community, they now had to depict its depressed state for the benefit of the community. In a letter to the Backward Classes Commission in January, 1954, the NMS stated

'while some of those who took to trade and commerce, have become rich and flourishing in some towns from humble beginnings..., The lakhs and lakhs of poor and backward people of the community should not be prejudiced by a handful of well to do persons., viz., about ten per cent of the whole community scattered here and there' (N.M.S. Annual Report, 1955: 47).

Both NMS and Dakshina Mara Nadar Sangam (DMNS) submitted responses to the Commission's questionnaire, with a request to be included in backward class list. In a letter, in August 1955. to the Minister of Education, Government of India, the Sangam stated succinctly the case it had put before the Backward Classes Commission:

'the Nadar community is treated as an outcaste even today in several villages in the Madras state and they are denied the ordinary rights of citizens such as the use of public streets, wells etc. Barring a few individuals who can be counted in numbers, the community is illiterate, economically poor and socially boycotted even today. We respectfully submit in considering the social and economic conditions of the community the status and condition only of those living in the villages and who form nearly 90% of the population to be taken into consideration'.⁸⁵

In January 1957. the Madras government placed the "Shanars community' among the most backward classes for educational concession. The denial of educational concessions to the poor Christian Nadars simply because of their religious affiliation was

i clear instance of inequity in the Government order, but in 1958 the concession was

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extended to all converts of those communities listed in the 'most backward' category.

The president of the Dakshina Mara Nadar Sangam, Raja Palaveshamuthu, sent a circular in July 1957 to schools and colleges in southern districts, requesting that they 'change the Nadar' in the application as 'Shanan' and avail all concession granted to the Backward Classes.

In a memorandum to the Chief Minister, the President of the DMNS opposed actual occupation as the criterion for eligibility to backward classes benefits. 'This is a patent injustice' he wrote, 'In the case of no other community is the actual occupation of the individual parent made the criterion'.⁸⁸

In 1963, in supercession of all previous orders on the subject, the government ordered that the community 'Nadar' be treated as synonymous with the communities 'Gramani' and 'Shanan' and all the three be treated as 'other backward classes' to be allowed the concession awarded to that category.

Having discussed the various strategies adopted by the Nadars, now let us discuss the nature of social mobility of the respondents of this study in four important areas viz., religious, educational, occupational and spatial aspects across four generations.

III. Religious Mobility

The Nadars have been practicing different religions at different points of time. Before the arrival of Christian missionaries to South India they were following the typical Dravidian religion, which was a kind of demonology. Caldwell illustrated the anti-Brahminical character of the Nadar religion. They worshipped Bhadrakali as the tutelary

deity of their community, and considered them as the sons of *Bhadrakali*. Hence the *amman kovil*, (goddess temple), the central to every Nadar settlement. With the influence of the Christian missionaries the Nadars converted into Christianity in enmass. The Nadars were one caste group, who converted to Christianity than any other caste group in such a large scale. Caldwell called their blind faith in Christianity as a 'think in herd' mentality (Quoted in Robert Hardgrave 1969 : 47).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Tinnevely had the largest number of Christians in Madras presidency, equally divided between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. A number of factors were responsible for the great response of southern Nadars to Christian missionary efforts. In south and south-eastern Tinnevely, the Nadar community was overwhelmingly dominant in numbers, hence had little contact with other castes. Although the Nadars were degraded in the eyes of the higher castes, they occupied a middle position and in the areas of geographic concentration, maintained a high degree of autonomy. As a community, they were placed better to respond freely to the missionaries. Further, as they converted to Christianity in large numbers, often as a whole village, they risked none of the sufferings of being outcaste by their own community. They could take Christianity and keep caste too ⁸⁹

With the passage of Temple Entry Act, the Nadars were allowed to enter the temples on par with the higher castes. Since then the question of religion became less significant issue. However, over the years Nadars have been influenced by five different 'religious way of life 1) the Dravidian style of religion i.e., indigenous Hinduism. 2) Christianity. 3) Sanskritized Hindu religion. 4) Self-Respect Movement i.e.. atheist religious life, and 5) Secular religious outlook.

Religious mobility of the Nadar respondents of this study over four generations revealed very less intensity, mainly due to the peculiar features of the sample villages of this study. In both the wet and dryland villages, the religious mobility was completely arrested. In case of wetland village, owing to the influence of Ayyavali movement by Ayya Vaikuntasami, this movement was completely against the Nadars conversion to Christianity. Although the entire district under Princely state of Travancore was attracted towards Christianity, the village was an exception. The ways in which Ayyavali movement under the influence of Ayya Vaikuntasami checked the Nadar conversion to Christianity while also putting breaks on the missionary work has been extensively commented upon by the missionary documents.

The report of the London Missionary Society for the year 1833 observed that 'multitudes of people flocked (to Muthukutty *alias* Vaikuntar) from all parts of the

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provinces of Travancore and Tinnevely". A large number of people criss-crossing the country converged around Vaikuntasami, the founder of Ayyavali at Samithopp^u-

The majority of those who participated in this religious phenomenon of Ayyavali were from the subaltern sections of the Society. The LMS Report that says that 'number

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of the low classes have joined him' and, several accounts of the present day social historians too confirm the subaltern character of the masses that flocked to Vaikuntasami in great numbers. They were largely drawn from the Nadar or Shanar community. The missionaries complain in a number of their reports that the spread of Ayyavali has been one of the main 'obstacles' to their proselytizing mission. Considering the historical fact that Shanars were the primary target people among whom the LMS labored in South Travancore, their frustration points to the fact that Ayyavali came in the way of

proselytizing the shanars who were being attracted towards the new religious phenomenon preached by Vaikuntasami.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Ayyavali had come to be a recognizable religious phenomenon of Shanars, making its presence felt in South Travancore and in the southern part of Tirunelveli. From the LMS reports one gather that the Ayyavali tradition was spreading with certain 'extraordinary' speed. The report for the year 1843, noting the 'rapid and extraordinary career' of Vaikuntasami, mentions that the religious phenomenon has 'spread to an astonishing degree'.⁹⁴ The report for the year 1847, along with the information that around 10,000 people, principally of the 'Shanar tribe' had joined Christianity in an area near Patnam (Thengapattanam), shares that, 'an equal, if not greater number' has taken to Ayyavali. The growth of Ayyavali had effectively checked the Nadar conversion to Christianity. The report of the Nagarcoil Mission District for the year 1864 says that, 'day after day Nadars flocked to him (Vaikuntasami)' while another report for the 1866 mentions that 'he drew after him great many people'.⁹⁶ Writing in 1870, Samuel Mateer says 'he (Vaikuntasami) attached

to himself thousands of credulous followers'.⁹⁷ The report of Kottaram Mission district for the year 1871 records the anguish of Mr. Nathaniel, evangelist of James town, who 'deplored' the increase of the followers of Ayyavali in 'several places around him'.⁹⁸ Writing about it in 1870, Samuel Mateer opines that "this singular people display considerable zeal in the defence and propogation" of their faith.⁹⁹

In the dryland village, the well-to-do Adityans patronized the famous Subramania Swamy temple at Tiruchendur, and projected them as the custodian of Hindu religion.

Their philanthropic work and donations to all the Hindu shrines, particularly to the Nadar owned temples, checked the religious conversion not only among the Adityans of Kayamoli but also in the nearby Nadar settlements. The aristocratic Nadans as a class opposed the missionaries. The Reverend J.L. Wyatt, son-in-law of Caldwell, wrote in the Mission Field that the Nadans, particularly the Kayamoli Adityans, 'will not stop to embrace a religion which is offered to the dependents and slaves as well as to themselves; while many of these dependents and slaves are afraid to adopt a creed which their lords do not patronize .

Caldwell noted that a majority of the wealthier sort of shanars - those who call themselves by a name signifying 'lord of the soil' - are not Christians, and show no intention generally speaking, of becoming Christians, and are in some instances as much opposed to the idea of actually joining the Christian church as any class of people in the

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country.

About the Shanar conversion to Christianity 'as the adherents of a political party or local faction.' the aristocratic Nadans were fearful of the missions, and wish their wealth and influence, often sought to deter poorer members of the caste from joining the movement. Some of the Nadans gave their support to the Vibuthi Sangam. the Sacred Ash Society, founded in Tiruchendur during the 'mass movement' of the 1840s to put an end to the wholesale conversions. Members of the Society took an oath of allegiance to the gods to oppose the spread of Christianity. As disturbances broke out and charges were leveled from all sides against the Tinnevely Missionaries, from among the Nadars there arose in 1884 a sort of nativistic reaction to Christianity, as a soothsayer, Alagappa Nadan, proclaimed himself a "champion of heathenism." A native pastor reported in

1865 in Kuttam village, the wealthy Nadans given the mission great difficulty in preaching the gospel of Christ. The description given here holds good for dryland village of this study, since eighty per cent of the population is dominated by the aristocratic Adityans.

Therefore, the conversions reported in this study over four generations are only from the garden land village, where Christianity entered two centuries ago. Nadars of this village are equally divided between Hindu and Christian faiths. There has been a continuous matrimonial transaction between Hindus and Christians, with a precondition of converting into Christianity at *the time of marriage* and taking baptism. The local caste association (*uravinmurai*) also accepted this practice among *the caste* brethren. There were more Hindu brides married into Christian families but very few Christian girls married Hindu Nadar boys. Whatever data presented in the table indicate only of the male members' conversion, because family inheritance was always identified with sons. If Nadar women's religious mobility were to be taken into consideration it may have doubled the figures presented in the table 6.1.

Table No. 6.1

RELIGIOUS MOBILITY OF FOUR GENERATIONS

Category of Farmers/ Laborers	Number conversion occurred over generations				Total
	1 st Generation	2 nd Generation	3 rd Generation	4 th Generation	
Agricultural Laborers	02	02	0	08	12
Marginal Farmers	0	0	02	06	08
Small Farmers	03	01	0	11	15
Middle Farmers	0	0	0	01	01
Big Farmers	0	02	02	03	07
Very Big Farmers	1	1	0	02	04
Total	06	06	04	31	47

Data presented in Table 6.1 reveals that there was religious mobility in first, second and fourth generations. In the third generation, two families inherited their Christian hood from the previous generation, but there was no further conversion. In the fourth generation, eight members converted to Christianity consequent upon their marriage into Christian families. The nature of conversion in the first and second generations was voluntary, whereas, in the fourth generation it was due to compulsion of matrimony. When a prospective bridegroom is presented with a good bride with handsome dowry, they simply convert to Christianity. At the time of fieldwork I have seen many such converts, and their justification was that they have married within Nadar community and not in other castes. In the garden land village, within an extended family one can see both Hindu and Christian Nadars.

Among the marginal farmers, the first two generations witnessed no religious mobility. In the third generation, two members (25.0%) converted to Christianity because of their marriage with Christian brides. In the fourth generation, six (75.0%) moved to Christianity, of which four members converted because of marriage, while the rest were instances of voluntary conversions and they stated that Christianity is superior to Hinduism.

Among the small farmers, only the first and second generations witnessed religious mobility and in the third generation it was dormant. Again in the fourth generation 11 (73.3%) members moved to Christianity. Ten members moved due to their marriage with Christian brides, another person moved because he got a teacher's job in the parish managed elementary school, and was gradually influenced by Christianity.

The middle fanners of this study revealed an interesting feature across generations. Except for the fourth generation, there was no conversion in the preceding three generations. Even in the present generation just one member from the garden land village got converted due to his marriage. Religious mobility in this category was very minimal if compared with the other categories.

In the first generation, among the big farmers, religious mobility was not found. In the second, third and fourth generations there were 28.5, 28.5 and 43.0 per cent respectively who moved to Christianity. This shows that economic status has nothing to do with mobility, and people moved to another faith not simply to get material benefits, but non-material well being as well.

At last, only 4 members from the very big category moved to Christianity over four generations, i.e., one each in first and second generations and two from the fourth generation. The third generation had not witnessed any conversion.

Put together, in all the four generations, there were 47 people who moved from Hinduism to Christianity. Most number of conversions took place only in the fourth generation and it was observed in the first three categories i.e., agricultural labor (12), marginal farmer (8), and small farmer (13). In the last three categories the mobility was little less i.e., only one member got converted in the middle farmers category followed by seven in big and four in very big farmer categories.

Most of the converted people were of Roman Catholic denomination and only a few were Protestant. As stated before, all instances of religious mobility had occurred in one village. Nearly 95 per cent of the mobility was due to marriage and the remaining five per cent were due to voluntary option, employment, influence by parish priest,

economic help etc. In many cases after conversion the people were not attending the church prayer or following strictly the religious code in their day-to-day life. In some cases, conversion took place with a condition that after marriage he will be back to his original faith. If we take into account the number of women converted to Christianity their number may swell. Another point worth mentioning here is that though in the first generation conversion was perhaps due to the economic considerations, and at latter stages it was voluntary and without any direct expectations from the church or the state.

IV. Educational Mobility-

Education directly leads to upward social mobility. It plays an important role in personality development and in raising the standard of life. It also helps break social barriers and opens up the possibilities of secular employment. The role of education as a catalyst or social change has been well recognized. M. N. Srinivas (1966) accepted the functional role of education in bringing about an over all change in Indian social system and the upward movement of low castes in caste ranking through Sanskritization and Westernization.

In modernizing society, where statuses and roles are based on achievement, merit, qualification and training rather than on ascription, and further, where production is increasingly based upon the use of machines necessitating a complex division of labor, the modern education acquires a strategic significance in terms of promotion of scientific and technical advancement, occupational recruitment and social selection, based on mainly training, qualification and knowledge suited to non-ascriptive, rational, secular and universalistic patterns of change unlike the traditional society.

The traditional scales of measuring the highness or lowness of a caste based on purity and pollution have lost their potentiality of existence as they have been shattered by the ethic of modern education and westernization process. Education is an agent of social fluidity as well as stability. But in developing society it works largely for bringing about change and mobility. The role of education as a catalyst of social change has been well recognized. Education is said to determine the level of aspiration, technology productivity, efficiency etc., which constitutes some of the basic factors in the process of development,

Oommen (1968) has also argued in favor of education being the strategic point for initiating social change, according to him it enables members of the society to play new roles. The significance of education in social mobility had been pointed out by M. S. A. Rao as well. Education helps in promoting values and achieving new goals. It is widely recognized that formal education plays a vital role in social mobility both horizontal and vertical. If formal education is seen as a socializing agency preparing individuals for a style of life associated with a stratum, it is at the same time an agency helping individuals to overcome prejudices, and promoting values and behavior of a more universalistic nature' (Rao 1972: 131-132). Lannoy (1971) observes that 'the greatest source of hope for backward classes is modern education, which acts as a solvent of caste barriers'.

S. C. Dube (1967) says, education is a mobility multiplier and instrument of change. In his study of social mobility with reference to modern education he explains that social mobility and stratification system are very much related to each other. The phenomena of mobility is intimately associated with modern education, migration to cities, as a result of the growth of industrial urbanism. associated with job opportunities

and the new hierarchical groups and classes. In India, according to Dube social mobility is more a result of modern university education, and the British administration, which offered greater opportunity and white-collar jobs to the educated minority,

Bhai (1986) says: 'Education changes one's relationship with other castes. It also changes perception of costs and human values and their contribution to the economy of the household and nation. It has become a medium of interaction with other sources and individuals in a society, irrespective of caste and sectarian conditions. It improves one's abilities, skills, and general performance. It determines aspirations, technology, productivity, and vertical and horizontal mobility'.

The Church Missionary Society was the first agency to start schools and immediately began to educate the Nadars. The advantages of Christianity became rapidly apparent to the Nadars, as the educational conditions of their Christian neighbors began to improve. As one missionary of Tinnevely wrote 'the education and Christian knowledge opened their eyes and character; and till, in cases of oppression arising among the earlier converts, it was demonstrated that even the Shanar with the advice of his Christian teacher, could obtain justice and enjoy protection'. ¹⁰⁵ By the mid nineteenth century, rapid strides had been made in education, and of the Nadar boys enrolled in the mission schools, nearly one-third were Hindu Nadars ¹⁰⁶ The number of Nadar teachers went up rapidly to constitute a substantial majority of the profession in the district.

Caldwell wrote in 1869, 'Christianity promoted their education and with enlightenment, their position has greatly improved, and many spheres of useful remunerative and honorable labour which were formerly closed against them are now

almost as open to them as to any other community purely because of their acquisition of education . , 107

Nadar Schools and Colleges

While seeking out the concessions awarded by the Backward Classes Commission the Nadar community did not solely rely upon the government for educational advancement. Perhaps more than any other community in Tamil Nadu, the Nadars recognized the importance of education for social uplift. Education was stressed by the missionaries among the Nadar converts in Tinnevely and Kanyakumari districts and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Church Missionary Society established elementary and high schools through out southern Tamil Nadu and several important colleges were started to impart higher education . The Hindus were at first less responsive to education, but a little later began to advance in the field of education, and schools were established through *Mahamai* funds by the local *Uravinmurai*. The first of these schools was the Kshatriya Vidyasala High School at Virudhunagar. Established in 1885, the school provided free education to the children of all communities. Today this has become a Higher Secondary School with a complex of lower schools, and serves some 8000 students with modern facilities. It is supposedly one of the best school systems run by a caste association in South India.

The most important advance in education among the Hindu Nadars came with the founding of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam in 1910. Since its inception, education became one of its primary concerns. One of the objectives of Nadar Mahajana Sangam was to start schools and colleges for imparting western education to Nadar Children and to help poor but deserving pupils belonging to the community with scholarships, books, fees etc.

At the beginning itself, the Sangam decided to provide financial aid to needy students. In 1921, the first Scholarship and loans were awarded, and many poor students availed of this opportunity to acquire education. Loans were given to qualified students of Nadar community and were to be repaid without interest after the completion of schooling. Some students were given financial assistance not only for higher education but for education abroad as well. The Sangam also assisted villages and towns to establish their own schools and each year as many as forty to fifty elementary schools under the local *Uravinmuraïs* receive direct financial assistance from the Sangam. The Scholarship and educational expenses represent the largest expenditure of Nadar Mahajana Sangam and the fund are drawn from the general Sangam income, from donations and from the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Ltd. The Cooperative Societies generally gave 5 per cent of their profit to the scholarship fund. In 1998 alone, for instance the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank donated Rs. 5.0 lakhs for scholarships.¹¹⁰

The Nadar Mahajana Sangam played an important role in the founding of new colleges too. As early as 1928, at the twelfth Nadar Conference, held at Aruppukottai under the presidency of P. Subbarayan, Chief Minister of Madras, it was proposed that a Nadar College be established.¹¹¹ Twenty two years later, that dream was realized. Rao Bhadur M. S. P. Senthilkumara Nadar, at the 1947 Nadar Conference, announced that he was prepared to donate two lakhs of rupees towards the founding of a Nadar college. In response to his offer, the leaders of the Nadar Community in Virudhunagar agreed to accept the responsibility and in August of that same year, the Senthilkumara Nadar College was inaugurated.¹¹² A women's college and polytechnique at Virudhunagar and the Ayya Nadar Janakiammal College at Sivakasi soon followed. The S. Vellaisami

Nadar College at Madurai was endowed by the Nadar Mahajana Sangam itself, accepting the responsibility of managing this institution. The ex-general secretary of Nadar Mahajana Sangam, Sri P.R. Muthusami Nadar said, the college is 'a turning point in the

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history of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam.' The College, 'open to all students of all castes and creeds', was inaugurated in July, 1965, by Shri K. Kamaraj Nadar, President of the All-India Congress party. In the same year, the Nadars of Kanyakumari district laid the cornerstone of the Vivekananda College at Kanyakumari. Over the years the well to do Nadars, local *uravinmuraish*, and the Nadar Mahajana Sangam invested heavily in establishing educational institutions.

As on June 1997, at the time of fieldwork of this study, the Nadar Mahajana Sangam managed 6 industrial training institutes, two polytechniques, one pharmacy college, eight degree colleges, one engineering college and more than 150 primary, middle, secondary and higher secondary schools. If we take into consideration the educational institutions managed by the local *uravinmuraish* and the individual Nadars and Nadar Mahajana Sangam it may cross 1200, a testimony to the importance given to education and social upliftment through education. The Kayamoli Adityan alone operates more than 14 educational institutions ranging from primary school to professional colleges in Kayamoli, Tiruchendur and other places. Since the introduction of capitation fee based professional colleges in the mid eighties, the Nadars started investing very vigorously in the educational field. As one of the touring agents said to me that 'no other community in Tamil Nadu is running this many number of educational institutions and maintaining the quality of education'. What he said appears to be quite true. According to the 1996 Annual report of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam, the Nadar managed

colleges bagged first ranks in the following subjects at the university level (affiliated with Madurai Kamaraj University): physics, computer science, commerce, chemistry, statistics, Tamil and English, (all at post graduate level).

The Vellaisami Nadar College at Madurai was equipped with 45 sophisticated computers at the cost of 50 lakhs, and has become one of the excellent center for computer education in Tamil Nadu. In addition to the educational institutions the Nadar Mahajana Sangam had founded library and reading rooms in all Nadar settlements all over Tamil Nadu to stimulate literary awareness among the Nadars.

Kalvi Thanthai and Kalvi Thai

The Nadar Mahajana Sangam introduced an innovative scheme to mobilize the required funds to strengthen its educational institutions and its academic activities. This is popularly known as *Kalvi Thanthai* and *Kalvi Thai Thittam*, which literally means father of education and mother of education. In this scheme, if a person contributes R.5000/- he or she will be honored with the above-mentioned title and their photo will be published in the Mahajanam journal with a short biographical sketch. Many Nadars proudly stated that no other community in Tamil Nadu has such an innovative mechanism to mobilize funds for running the caste association managed educational institutions. Most of the well-to-do Nadars have contributed to this fund in the name of their parents after their death. An amount of Rs. 10000/- towards contribution will allow the person's photograph to be kept in the NMS. During my visit to the caste association head quarters at the time of fieldwork I saw hundreds of such photographs and portraits adorning on the walls the office of caste association. As the years passed, the list of *Kalvi Thanthai* and *Kalvi Thai* has been growing rapidly. In the year 1999-2000 alone 120 people had paid money for including their names in this list. The total number of *Kalvi Thanthai* and

Kalvi Thai had crossed 1200 1^ The touring agents of NMS were pursuing many more well to do Nadars to enroll themselves in this list. Most of the contributions made under this scheme goes for student scholarship. There was a special drive made by NMS to woo the overseas Nadars to contribute under this scheme.

Having discussed about the systematic drives taken by the Christian missionaries, caste association and the Government to help the caste on educational front, the educational mobility of four generations of the respondents' families could now be analyzed. The result of this study on educational mobility of three sample villages reflects at the caste as whole covering a period of approximately for two hundred years. The educational mobility among four generations of Nadars has been examined viz., respondent's grandfather, father, respondent and their sons. The educational status across four generations of all categories of farmers and laborers were examined.

The Nadars have shown high educational mobility. They have realized the potential of education for the upliftment of their community. They are preparing their younger generation with the help of education. So the rate of literacy in the caste has increased tremendously perhaps much more than in any other backwards caste of Tamil Nadu.

1. Agricultural Laborers

Educational mobility over four generations of the agricultural laborers revealed that a consistent mobility had taken place starting from the respondents grand father's time onwards. In the first generation, three-fourth of them were illiterates and the remaining one-fourth of them possessed primary education. This was due to their poor economic status and also non-availability of educational facilities at the Nadar settlements.

Table No. 6.2 EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY OF GENERATIONS

AGRICULTURAL LABORERS

Generations	Level of Education								Total
	Illiterate	Primary school	Middle school	High school	Graduate	Post Graduate	Technical education	Professional Education	
First Generation	27 (75.0)	09 (25.0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Second Generation	20 (55.6)	13 (36.1)	03 (8.3)	0	0	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Third Generation	04 (11.1)	21 (58.3)	04 (11.1)	07	0	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Fourth Generation	0	43 (51.8)	27 (32.6)	10 (12.0)	0	0	03 (3.6)	0	83 (100.0)

MARGINAL FARMERS

Generations	Level of Education								Total
	Illiterate	Primary school	Middle school	High school	Graduate	Post Graduate	Technical education	Professional Education	
First Generation	22 C61.JJ_	14 (38.9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Second Generation	16 (44.4)	11 (30.6)	07 (19.4)	01 (2.8)	0	0	01 (2.8)	0	36 (100.0)
Third Generation	0	18 (50.0)	13 (36.0)	01 (2.8)	0	02 (5.6)	02 (5.6)	0	36 (100.0)
Fourth Generation	0	11 (18-1)	14	16	14 i22^)	03 -US	03 (4.9)	0	61 (100.0)

SMALL FARMERS

Generations	Level of Education								Total
	Illiterate	Primary school	Middle school	High school	Graduate	Post Graduate	Technical education	Professional Education	
First Generation	17 (47.2)	18 (50.0)	01 (2.8)	0	0	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Second Generation	08 (22.2)	22 (61.1)	05 (13.9)	1 (2.8)	0	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Third Generation	01 (2.8)	13 (36.0)	09 (25.0)	11 (30.6)	02 (5.6)	0	0	0	36 (100.0)
Fourth Generation	0	10 (13.3)	14 (18.7)	32 (42.7)	07 (9.3)	01 (1.3)	09 (12.0)	02(2.7)	75 (100.0)

MIDDLE FARMERS

Generations	Level of Education								Total
	Illiterate	Primary school	Middle school	High school	Graduate	Post Graduate	Technical education	Professional Education	
First Generation	13 (54.2)	10 (41.7)	01 (4.1)	0	0	0	0	0	24 (100.0)
Second Generation	11 (45.9)	09(37.5)	03 (12.5)	01 (4.1)	0	0	0	0	24 (100.0)
Third Generation	0	05 (20.9)	10 (41.7)	08 (33.3)	0	1 (4.1)	0	0	24 (100.0)
Fourth Generation	0	03 (4.4)	22 (32.4)	11 (16.2)	16 (23.5)	2 (2.9)	8 (11.8)	6	68 (100.0)

BIG FARMERS

Generations	Level of Education								Total
	Illiterate	Primary school	Middle school	High school	Graduate	Post Graduate	Technical education	Professional Education	
First Generation	09 (37.5)	12 (50.0)	03 (12.5)	0	0	0	0	0	24 (100.0)
Second Generation	04 (16.7)	15 (62.5)	05 (20.8)	0	0	0	0	0	24 (100.0)
Third Generation	0	05 (20.8)	08 (33.3)	03 (12.5)	01 (4.2)	03 (12.5)	0	0	24 (100.0)
Fourth Generation	0	06 (9.4)	12 (23.4)	12 (18.8)	14 (21.9)	05 (7.8)	07 (10.9)	05 (7.8)	64 (100.0)

VERY BIG FARMERS

Generations	Level of Education								Total
	Illiterate	Primary school	Middle school	High school	Graduate	Post Graduate	Technical education	Professional Education	
First Generation	13 (54.2)	08 (33.3)	02 (8.3)	01 (4.2)	0	0	0	0	24 (100.0)
Second Generation	05 (20.8)	11 (45.8)	05 (20.8)	03 (12.5)	0	0	0	0	24 (100.0)
Third Generation	01 (4.2)	04 (16.6)	05 (20.8)	09 (37.5)	03 (12.5)	01 (4.2)	01 (4.2)	0	24 (100.0)
Fourth Generation	0	08 (12.3)	08 (12.3)	09	12	06 (9.2)	15 (23.0)	07 (10.8)	65

In the Second generation, 55.6% were illiterates, and of the remaining 44.4 percent, 36.1% had education till primary school and 8.3% possessed middle school level education. The second generation showed slight improvement over the first generation. The educated laborers of this category were mostly from the garden land village, and this was due to their conversion to Christianity. In the respondent's generation, level of education was extended upto high school. This was a positive sign of their mobility when compared to the previous two generations. More than 88.9 per cent respondents of this category were literate, and within them 19.4 per cent had education upto high school level and the remaining 69.5 per cent respondents had education upto primary or middle school levels. This was due to the establishment of educational institutions at the village level. The non-availability of resources and educational institutions hindered the acquisition of higher education among the respondents.

In the fourth generation, agricultural laborers showed tremendous improvement over the preceding three generations. There was nearly complete literacy among the members. However, 84.3 per cent had studied upto primary and middle school levels. Twelve per cent of them were educated up to high school level. Of the three persons (3.61%) with technical qualification, two were trained in industrial training institutes with a specialization in fitter and welder course and one had a diploma in civil engineering.

The educational mobility showed a gradual improvement over successive generations. In the first generation the maximum level was primary school education. It was extended to middle and high school, then into technical education in the succeeding generations. The contributions made by caste the association, the Christian missionaries

in addition to the government efforts helped the fast mobility of education among the members of agricultural laborers over four generations.

Further, given **the** nature of my study, I **could** focus only on those who were currently **living in the study** villages. With education many would have also **moved out** of agriculture, **and** into other occupation in the **towns and** cities.

2. Marginal Farmers

Educational status of **the first** generation of respondents in the marginal farmers category was almost similar to the first generation of the landless laborer category, with a minor drop in the number of illiterates and a corresponding marginal increase in the number of literates. However, the second generation exhibited improvements by acquiring middle and high school as well as technical education. There was nearly one-sixth decrease in the illiterate category. The literates constituted 55.6 per cent. In the third generation (the respondent generation), astonishingly there were no illiterates and the level of education varied from primary school level to professional education. Fifty percent of them had acquired primary education and of the remaining fifty per cent, 36.0 per cent had middle school education, 2.8 percent had high school, 2.8 percent were post -graduates and 2.8 percent possessed technical qualification. The technical qualification was mostly training in industrial training institutes. The fourth generation showed great improvement in the literacy level, and like the preceding one, contained no illiterates. Among the literates, 11 (18.1%) were with primary education, 14 (22.9%) with middle school level and 16 (26.3%) with metric level. Of the seventeen respondents who had college education, a majority of them (26.3%) had graduate degrees and the remaining (4.9%) were

postgraduates. The three remaining persons (4.9%) had with technical education i.e. a diploma from polytechniques.

Village wise analysis showed that the dryland and garden land villages had more number of educated marginal farmers than the wetland village. This was due to the efforts taken by the Adityan families and the Christian missionaries in the garden land village. Also the Nadar caste association had established many of educational institutions near in **proximity** of these villages.

3. **Small Farmers**

Educational mobility across four generations of small farmers revealed altogether a different picture compared to the agricultural laborers and marginal farmers. Unlike the first generation of the first two categories, here slightly more than fifty per cent were literates whose level of education extended upto middle school. This indicates that as the land holding size increased the literacy rate also went up. In the second generation, the illiterates were reduced to 22.2 per cent, and the level of education among them went upto high school. More than 61.1 per cent in this generation were equipped with primary education followed by 13.9 per cent with middle school education: one member had studied till high school. In the third generation, except for one farmer, all were literates; and the level of education varied from primary school to graduate level. Accordingly a little more than one-third had primary education, and one fourth of them had middle school education. Another two of them were exposed to college education. This was largely because of the college established by the Adityan family at Tiruchendur, which is barely few kilometers from the study village (Kayamoli). The fourth generation of this category of respondents had received different types of education, ranging from primary to professional level. The value attached to modern education by the present generation

was very high. There was not even a single illiterate person in this group. However, nearly one-third of them were confined to primary and middle school level. Thirty-two members (42.7%) had education upto high school level. Nineteen members were exposed to higher education viz., graduate degrees (9.3%), post-graduate degrees (1.3%), technical education (12.0%) and 2.7 per cent to professional education. The technical education consisted of type writing and short hand, fitter, welder, automobile mechanic, electrician course, and the three years diploma from the polytechniques. Two respondents with professional education included an engineering degree in computer science and a bachelor degree in agricultural sciences. There were many instances wherein the farmers disposed off their land and invested in their son's education. This was the reason behind the cent percent literacy among the fourth generation of the small farmers. Also the spread of educational institutions and its easy access to the villagers coupled with the scholarships provided by the caste association, state government, and the missionaries were behind the success of educational development of the present generation.

4. Middle Farmers

Educational mobility pattern of four generations of the middle farmers category displayed a different trajectory compared to the other three categories of farmers and laborers. In the first generation the trend was similar to that of the laborers and farmers of the marginal and small categories. Slightly more than fifty per cent were illiterates and the remaining mostly had primary educational status, barring one farmer who had middle school education. In the second generation too unlike the previous categories, illiteracy prevailed to the extent of 45.9 percent and the remaining were equipped with primary education (37.5%), middle school level (12.5%). and high school education (4.1%). In the third generation, the literacy level reached 100 percent, but still mostly confined to

the middle and high school levels. Only one farmer of this category belonging to the wetland village, studied upto the post-graduate level. Though the first three generations of middle farmers **had** access to finance and infrastructural facilities, surprisingly no one was exposed to the technical and professional education. Constant income from agriculture **had made them** not to invest in acquiring higher education. In the fourth generation, like the marginal and small farmers group, the members witnessed cent percent literacy, and the level of education ranged from primary to professional degrees. Of the 68 members, only 3 (4.4%) were with primary education, a maximum of 22 (32.4%) with middle school level and 11 (16.2%) with high school education. Surprisingly 22 (32.4%) possessed college education mostly with bachelor degrees in commerce followed by science and arts. Two members studied upto postgraduate level, and 8 (11.8%) had technical qualification mostly with diploma in civil, electrical, automobile and mechanical engineering from the polytechniques. The unique feature observed was that in the fourth generation, members with technical education from the laborer, marginal, and small farmer categories were products of industrial training institutes, whereas in the middle farmer category they were the products of polytechniques. This demarcation exhibits a strong correlation between economic status and reality of education accessed. Six (8.8%) were equipped with professional educational qualifications like medicine, engineering, agriculture and veterinary science. The data shows that the land holding size had a direct effect on the literacy level and quality of education. The main reasons for the differences over generations are the resource availability, parental education, and availability of education, employment opportunities etc.

Village-wise analysis showed that the level of education of the marginal farmers over four generations were uniform in the dryland and garden land villages than the wetland village. Since this village was a part of the princely state of Travancore, Nadars were denied the entry into schools. However, from the respondent generation onwards the scenario completely changed, thanks mainly to the efforts of the missionaries and the caste associations. As mentioned earlier the efforts taken by the Adityans and the establishment of schools by the Parish priest helped the Nadars to get education in the dryland and garden land villages.

5. Big Farmers

Although the educational status of the first generation of big farmers was similar to the first generation of middle farmers, percentage of illiterates among them were little less. This shows the direct bearing of the size of land holding on the level of literacy. Nine persons (37.5%) were illiterates and the remaining 15 (62.5%) were literates. Among the literates, 12 (50%) were in the primary school level and the remaining 3 (12.5%) were in the middle school level.

In the second generation too the level of education was confined to the maximum of middle school, but there was a steep reduction in illiteracy which was reflected in the primary and middle school levels, which shot upto 83.3 percent.

The noticeable point of departure was observed in the third generation with not even a single illiterate, and among the literates the educational level was upto technical qualification. More number of respondents entered high school, college, university and vocational stream of education. Hence, the land holding size had a direct effect on the literacy and level of education.

Like the third generation, the fourth generation too displayed 100 percent literacy. There were very few among them who stopped at the primary school level. Little more than one-fourth of the members had middle school education, nearly one-fourth possessed high school and college level degrees. Five members each had post-graduate and professional education and seven members had technical education. The big farmers invested greatly in acquiring education at least in the present generation and the educated in the present generation was gradually getting alienated from agriculture.

6. Very **Big Farmers**

Educational mobility of very big farmers across four generations showed a different pattern. In the first generation, a little more than 50 percent were illiterates. Of the 45.8 percent of literate farmers, majority were with primary school education and only three had education upto middle and high school levels. Only one in the first generation reached high school, and he hailed from the dryland village and belonged to the prominent Adityan group. Except this one entry into high school, the educational status was almost similar to the first generation of the big farmers category.

As in the first generation, in the second generation too, educational status was confined upto high school level only. However, there was a 33.4 per cent drop in the incidence of illiteracy accompanied by a rise of 12.6 percent in primary, 12.5 percent of middle school and 8.3 percent in high school education.

Educational status of the third generation extended up to technical education along with a decline in the percentage of illiterates and those with primary school level education to 4.2% and 16.6% respectively. On the contrary, high school level increased to the extent of 25.0 per cent than the previous generation. Also there were four persons

who received college education of whom three were graduates and one a postgraduate. One member acquired technical education, a diploma in civil engineering from a polytechnique.

In the fourth generation, not a single person was illiterate. Twenty-five (38.2%) were equipped with primary education, 12.3 percent each had middle and high school level education. The remaining 40 (61.8%) possessed graduate, post-graduate technical and professional qualifications. As many as 15 (23.0%) had technical education - mostly the diplomas acquired from industrial training institutes and polytechnics, followed by 12 (18.5%) with bachelor degree in arts, science and commerce, seven members (10.8%) with professional qualification in medicine, engineering, veterinary, pharmaceutical and agricultural sciences and the remaining 6 (9.2%) had post-graduate degrees. The 100 percent literacy rate of this generation can be attributed to the influence of landed property, parental education, values attached to modern education and the spread of all kinds of educational institutions at the village, taluk and district levels. As one informant from the garden land village pointed out, the efforts taken by the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam*, Christian missionaries and the well-to-do Nadars' investment in educational field were the factors behind Nadar success in modern education.

Overall in regard to educational mobility we can conclude that

1. Irrespective of landholding size, the educational statuses of the members of first generation were mostly restricted upto middle school.
2. The number of illiterates started declining from the 2nd generation onwards.
3. Except the agricultural labour category, the illiterates were negligible or non-existent in the third and fourth generations of all categories of fanners.

4. A drop in illiterates of all groups in second and third generations consequently witnessing a high level of attainment in primary education.
5. Barring the laborers, other categories of farmers in the second-generation attained education to the maximum of high school level.
6. Decline in primary education among the members of the fourth generation of all groups were reflected in the increase in higher level of education viz. attainment of the middle and high school, graduate and post-graduate, technical and professional qualifications.
7. Hundred Percent literacy was observed in all groups of farmers and laborers in the fourth generation.
8. Except the marginal farmers group, in all other categories, the graduate, post-graduate, technical and professional education were not noticed among the members of first two generations.
9. Mostly the members of the farmers' category attained college and University education only. Members of the laborer group could not attain this. Due to the influence of Christianity and availability of educational institutions nearby, members of fourth generation of marginal farmers, secured reasonably good education.
10. Technical education was mostly secured by the fourth generation, and the well-to-do farmers showed better acquisition than the agricultural labour and marginal farmer groups.
11. It was observed in this study that professional education was the prerogative of members of fourth generation. Within the fourth generation too, the laborers and marginal farmers were unable to attain it.

V. OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

The caste system which believed in hereditary occupational specialization proverbially prevented mobility and innovation in its hey days; but the post World war-II period, in general, opened up new avenues for the emergence of a great variety of new occupations. The new occupational opportunities offered to the people were concerned not only with economic development, but also affected the entire social fabric. Notwithstanding its paramount economic role, occupational structure has to play a vital social role.

A number of studies have analyzed social mobility through both single and multiple approaches. The single approach¹¹⁶ emphasises the criterion of occupation for determining social status, whereas, the multiple approach¹¹⁷ includes more than one criterion for

¹¹⁸
determining social status. Kaur¹¹⁸ has dealt with it in detail and analyzed the different issues involved. She argues that the measurement of occupational mobility should be in terms of 1) occupation as an important index of social status: 2) there is temporal stability in occupation: and 3) the present status of son is determined by the status of his father.

In India, social mobility studies aiming to study occupational mobility relating to caste, class, stratification, rural-urban background and social background have been attempted by many scholars.

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Soran Singh¹¹⁹ observed that both internal and external forces are responsible for mobility in the traditional occupational structure. The external forces include land legislation, secular ideas regarding social matters, industrialization, urban contact and education. The internal are handwork and faithful observance of duty. However, both

types of forces in occupational mobility are interrelated and operate in a cumulative way. Both the forces at the same time have psychological and sociological implications; aspirations **for higher** occupational grades, better standards of living and non-manual work may be considered psychological aspirations for a higher social status and adopting or discarding certain occupations may be regarded as imbued with sociological implications. ¹²⁰

Occupation forms **one** of the significant secular avenues of social mobility. While it is the single most important criterion for social mobility in achievement-oriented societies, its role is rather less pronounced in societies where ascription is the rule. The latter was true in the case of traditional Indian society wherein, occupations were ascribed, and each caste group was assigned an occupation.

Occupational mobility occurs when any change of occupation, or any addition to the already existing one, is associated with a relative change in social status. Such mobility may pertain to an individual or to an entire group. Again hierarchy of occupations on the basis of status associated with different occupations is a pre-condition for any occupational mobility.

In order to understand the trends of occupational mobility among the Nadars, it is at the outset necessary to be acquainted with the occupational structure of the caste. The occupational distributions of the Nadar respondents in the three sample villages over four generations can be broadly classified into the following types viz., caste occupation, self-employed, agriculture, agricultural labor, business, industrial labor, government service, and unemployed.

In order to understand the trends of occupational mobility among the respondents of this study, the researcher has taken occupational mobility as any shift in occupation over four generations of the respondents. Occupational mobility not only acts as an indicator of social change but also as a transmitting agent of new attitudes and behavior. Occupational mobility occurs between generations. Studies of intergenerational mobility showed that children inherit the occupational levels of their parents to a very little extent.

Occupational mobility among the Nadars may be conceived at two different levels: first at the group level in terms of caste, sub-castes, and second, at the individual level. Mobility in the caste or sub-caste occupations, or in other words group mobility is often gradual and requires conscious and sustained effort on the part of the members of the group as a whole. On the other hand, individual mobility may be achieved with greater ease since it concerns only an individual.

Regarding the Nadar occupational mobility at the individual level, a British Settlement Officer wrote to the collector of Tinnevely in 1871, that

'in these days Shanars have nothing to do with their traditional occupation of climbing, through the increased wealth and comfort of the Shanars as a class, owing to the spread of education among them, the remunerative means of subsistence, it has become every year more difficult for owners of palmyra to get people to climb the trees'.¹²¹

As the time passed, Nadars followed a variety of heterogeneous occupations. The mythological origin of the caste describes them as toddy tappers. It is also believed that the occupational differentiation in due course led to a number of endogamous groups equipped with exclusive occupations. Whether their belief has any truth or not, the Nadars today have a number of sub-castes, each with a name more or less suggesting the occupations it follows. The individual occupational changes are due to the impact of industrialization, formal education and specialized skills etc.

In this study the classification of occupation has been made under eight categories:

1) Caste occupation, 2) Self-employed, 3) Agriculture, 4) Business, 5) Agricultural labor, 6) Industrial labor, 7) Government service and 8) Unemployed.

The data presented in Table 6.3 explains the nature of occupational shifts across the various categories of farmers and laborers over four generations.

1. Agricultural Laborers

The occupational structure of the first generation revealed that the respondents followed only three types of occupations. Their hereditary caste occupation (toddy tapping) played a vital role and nearly 64 per cent practiced it. Next to caste occupation, 30.6 per cent followed agriculture, and remaining two worked as agricultural laborers. The landlessness made many of them to practice toddy tapping. In the second generation, traditional toddy tapping was reduced to 30.6% marking a fifty per cent drop from the first generation, and this was due to the land acquired by the second generation and their involvement in business. Nearly 36 per cent followed agriculture, 20 per cent worked as agricultural laborers. Only two members were self-employed as carpenters and they were from the wetland village, and the remaining three were engaged in business in their villages. In the third generation, the occupation followed by the members were confined to only two types i.e. caste occupation in case of 6 (16.7%) respondents and the remaining 30 (83.3%) were agricultural laborers. This indicates that some of the respondents had lost their inherited lands and joined the ranks of laborers. In the fourth generation, with growing scope of secular employment, migration to cities and higher education, they occupied a variety of occupations - ranging from traditional toddy

tapping to government service. Of the 83 members of the fourth generation, only seven were practicing traditional caste occupation and were mostly from **the dry and** garden land villages. Fourteen of them (16.9%) were self-employed in jobs such as running an automobile workshop, working as carpenters, tailors etc. **Only one** became a farmer and acquired his **land** through marriage as dowry. Ten members were doing small business either in the villages or in nearby towns. Almost one-fifth of them were working as agricultural laborers. The Adityans' owned newspaper industries and locally available coir industries and spinning mills employed 14 (16.9%) of them. The remaining two were in government services, one worked as teacher in an elementary school and other as a peon in the Panchayat Union Office. The occupational mobility of laborers revealed that first generation confined to three types of occupation, second generation to five types, third generation to two types, and in the fourth generation the number of occupations the respondents are involved with had gone up to seven different types. Further, the data revealed that employment in traditional caste occupation consistently declined, and modern occupations consistently gained over generations.

2. Marginal Farmers

Data pertaining to the marginal farmers across four generations revealed that the nature of occupation in first generation was caste occupation (41.7%), agriculture (44.4%), business (5.6%) and agricultural labor (8.3%). In the second generation most members were confined to agriculture followed by caste occupation (19.4%), agricultural labor (11.1%), self-employed (5.6%) and business (1.8%). A steady declining number followed caste occupation, while an increasing number practiced agriculture, self-employment and agricultural labor. In the third generation, more number of persons followed secular

occupations like self-employment (16.7%), business (11.1%), and industrial labor (5.6%), while the number of persons in caste occupation (5.6%), agriculture (47.2%) and agricultural labor (13.9%) declined compared to the preceding generations. In the fourth generation, out of the 61 members, 17 (27.9%) were unemployed while the employed were mostly in business (21.3%), industrial labor (19.7%) followed by agriculture (9.8%), self-employment (8.2%), agricultural labor and government service (4.9%) each, and the remaining 3.3 per cent in the traditional caste occupation.

3. Small Farmers

Occupational mobility of small farmers over four generations revealed that in the first generation the nature of occupations were restricted to only four types viz. caste occupation (66.7%), cultivation (25.0%), agricultural labor (5.6%) and self-employment (2.8%). The type of occupation in the second generation were extended to one more type i.e. government service. Accordingly, the occupation followed by the members in order of the dominance were agriculture (58.3%), caste occupation (25%), business (11.1%) and 2.8 percent each in self-employment, industrial labor and government service. It is pertinent to note that in second generation, 95 per cent of the people were confined to three main occupations viz., agriculture, toddy tapping and business. Surprisingly not even a single member worked as an agricultural laborer. When compared with their preceding generations, the number of those employed in agriculture doubled, whereas, those employed in caste occupation reduced by nearly two-thirds. Similarly, new avenues in industries opened up,

Table No. 6.3 OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY OF FOUR GENERATIONS

Category of farmers	Generation(s)	Type of occupation practiced																	
		Caste occupation		Self employed		Agriculture		Business		Agril. Labour		Industrial Labour		Govt. service		Unemployed		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 Agricultural laborers	Grand father	23	63.9	0	0.0	11	30.6	0	0.0	2	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Father	11	30.6	2	5.6	13	36.1	3	8.3	7	19.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Self	6	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	30	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Son(s)	7	8.4	14	16.9	1	1.2	10	12.0	17	20.5	14	16.9	2	2.4	18	21.7	83	100.0
Marginal farmers	Grand father	15	41.7	0	0.0	16	44.4	2	5.6	3	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Father	7	19.4	2	5.6	22	61.1	1	2.8	4	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Self	2	5.6	6	16.7	17	47.2	4	11.1	5	13.9	2	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Son(s)	2	3.3	5	8.2	6	9.8	13	21.3	3	4.9	12	19.7	3	4.9	17	27.9	61	100.0
Small farmers	Grand father	24	66.7	1	2.8	9	25.0	0	0.0	2	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Father	9	25.0	1	2.8	21	58.3	4	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.8	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Self	0	0.0	1	2.8	31	86.1	2	5.6	0	0.0	1	2.8	1	2.8	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Son(s)	3	4.0	2	2.7	6	8.0	15	20.0	7	9.3	8	10.7	9	12.0	25	33.3	75	100.0
Middle farmers	Grand father	7	29.2	6	25.0	10	41.7	1	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Father	1	4.2	3	12.5	12	50.0	4	16.7	4	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Self	0	0.0	1	4.2	20	83.3	2	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.2	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Son(s)	0	0.0	5	7.4	20	29.4	10	14.7	0	0.0	11	16.2	9	13.2	13	19.1	68	100.0
Big Farmers	Grand father	5	20.8	0	0.0	15	62.5	0	0.0	2	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Father	2	8.3	0	0.0	14	58.3	3	12.5	4	16.7	1	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Self	0	0.0	0	0.0	15	62.5	5	20.8	0	0.0	2	8.3	2	8.3	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Son(s)	0	0.0	2	3.1	8	12.5	12	18.8	0	0.0	9	14.1	14	21.9	19	29.7	64	100.0
Very big farmers	Grand father	5	20.8	0	0.0	18	75.0	0	0.0	1	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Father	1	4.2	0	0.0	16	66.7	2	8.3	5	20.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Self	0	0.0	0	0.0	15	62.5	4	16.7	0	0.0	3	12.5	2	8.3	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Son(s)	0	0.0	2	3.1	4	6.2	15	23.3	0	0.0	9	13.8	14	21.5	21	32.3	65	100.0
Total		130	13.6	55	5.8	321	33.5	112	11.7	96	10.0	72	7.5	58	6.1	113	11.8	956	100.0

In the third generation, as many as 31 individuals (86.1%) followed agriculture as their main occupation and the remaining 5 (13.9%) were in self-employment, industrial labor and government service. Compared to the previous generation, a 27.8% increase in agricultural occupation was observed. Another point worth noting is that not even a single member had followed the traditional caste occupation i.e. toddy tapping. Of the total 75 members of the fourth generation, nearly one-third (33.3%) were unemployed. Among the employed, 15 (20.0%) were in business, followed by 9 (12.0%) in government service, 8 (10.7%) as industrial labor, 7 (9.3%) as agricultural labor, 6 (8.0%) as farmers, 3 (4.0%) in their traditional caste occupation and 2 (2.7%) as self-employed. A rapid shift from agriculture to other occupations was observed from 86.1% in the preceding generation to mere 8.0% in this generation. The respondents alienated from agriculture were absorbed by government sector, into industries and traditional occupations. Some of them also became agricultural proletariat.

4. Middle Farmers

In the middle farmers category, members of the first generation were confined to four types of occupation viz. agriculture (41.7%), traditional caste occupation (29.2%) self-employment (25.0%) and business (4.2%). Unlike the previous groups, here the land ownership played an important role in determining their occupation. In the second generation, there was a decline in caste occupation and those who deserted it became agricultural laborers or farmers by acquiring land titles through some source. Similarly, the number of self-employed also decreased, and the members of this generation entered into business as well. When ranked in order of their numerical strength, the occupations

followed were agriculture (50.0%), business and agricultural labor (each 16.8%), self-employment (12.5%) and the least popular employment was in caste occupation (4.2%).

Although all the 24 respondents in the third generation identified themselves as farmers, four pursued other occupations along with agriculture viz., 2 (8.3%) in business and one each in self-employment and government service. The traditional caste occupation and agriculture labor had been completely given up.

Of the total 68 members in the fourth generation, 19.1 per cent were unemployed and the remaining 55 (80.9%) were divided among various occupations viz. agriculture (29.4%), industrial labor (16.2%), business (14.7%), government service (13.2%) and self-employed (7.4%). The point worth noting here is that no one followed the caste occupation or worked as agricultural labor. The influence of education helped them to get into the modern occupations like government service and industrial labor. Further, their migration to urban areas influenced them to do business.

Overall the occupational mobility of middle farmers over four generations revealed a consistent withdrawal from agricultural labor and toddy topping and a gradual move towards business, self-employment and a sudden spurt in the number joining the industrial labor force. The spread of education, alienation from agriculture and migration to urban areas were the factors responsible for such occupational mobility.

5. Big Farmers

Like the previous group of farmers, the first generation of big farmers had its primary base in caste occupation. Of the 24 farmers, one-fifth of them identified their occupation

as toddy tappers. A little above three-fourth (63.5%) practiced agriculture and the remaining members followed self-employment and agricultural labor.

In the second generation nearly 12.5 percent deviated from the traditional caste occupation. Similarly a declining trend was observed in agriculture and they went into occupations like business (12.5%), agricultural labor (16.7%) and industrial labor (4.2%).

During the respondent generation, all of them were identified with farming. However, five (20.8%) had business along with agriculture, two (8.3%) worked as industrial labor and the remaining two (8.3%) were in government service. Since a major portion of income derived from agriculture, for all practical purposes they were 'farmers'. In this generation no one was identified with caste occupation, agricultural labor or self-employment.

In the fourth generation, out of 64 members, nearly seventy per cent were employed and remaining thirty per cent were unemployed. Of the 45 employed, nearly **22.0%** of them were in government jobs, followed by business (18.8%), industrial labor (14.1%), agriculture (12.5%), and self-employed (3.1%). The landholding size and influence of education were directly reflected in their nature of occupations they followed. Traditional caste occupation and agricultural labor were considered as degrading by the younger generation. The acquisition of modern education enabled them to get into government service and industries.

6. Very Big Farmers

First generation of the very big farmers were confined to only three types of occupations. While a majority of them was in agriculture (75.0%), the remaining 25 percent were

divided into hereditary occupation (20.8%) and agricultural labor (4.2%). Land ownership clearly influenced the occupational pattern. In the second generation, the mobility was extended to one more type of occupation i.e. business. In this generation too, majority of them (66.7%) were confined to agriculture, followed by agricultural labor (20.8%), business (8.3%) and only one (4.2%) was involved with toddy tapping. Compared to the previous generation, two members lost their land while four came out of traditional occupation to join the agricultural labor group.

In the third generation, 24 recorded themselves as farmers, but nine of them had other occupations along with agriculture viz., four (16.7%) in business, three (12.5%) in industrial labor and the remaining two (8.3%) in government service. Of late, diversified occupations are becoming a feature of farming families. Of the total sixty-five members in the fourth generation, one-third of them (32.3%) were unemployed. Remaining 44 members were engaged in five different types of occupations viz. business (23.1%), industrial labor (13.8%), agriculture (6.2%) and self-employment (3.1%).

Data presented in table 5.3 reveal that the younger generation of big and very big farmers group were withdrawing from agriculture and entering into business, government service and industries.

The occupational mobility of Nadars of this study over four generations can be summarized as follows.

1. In the first two generations, the members followed their traditional caste occupation and the percentage varied from a minimum of 4.2 percent to a maximum of 66.7%. Among the middle, big and very big farmers there was a systematic withdrawal from caste occupation in the third and fourth generations.

2. In the first two generations in all categories of farmers and laborers, occupational profiles was largely confined to caste occupation (tapping), agriculture, agricultural labor.
3. Only in the third and fourth generations, members entered into secular occupations like business, government service and industrial labor.
4. In the fourth generation, many of the members alienated themselves from agriculture and got into modern occupations like business, industrial labor and in government service.
5. Irrespective of the economic status, caste occupation consistently declined over generations. The entry into business, industrial labor and government service consistently increased.
6. Unemployment was a striking feature of the fourth generation and it was mainly due to the educational factor.
7. Government employment emerged as an important avenue, primarily from the third generation and more people entered into it in the fourth generation. The spread of education was the main reason behind it.
8. Agricultural labor as an occupation was prevalent mostly in the first two generations in all the categories and in the first three categories this was prevalent even in third and fourth generations. Land holding pattern and occupation as agricultural laborers exhibited a negative correlation.
9. Only in the third and fourth generations, more number of people entered into business. The Nadars enterprising nature was demonstrated in the last two generations.
10. Self employment was noted from all the categories and its absence were noticed in the first generation of agricultural laborers and marginal farmers, second and third

generation in case of big farmers and first three generations in case of very big farmers. The nature of self-employment across generations varied from carpentry, coir making to modern avocations like printing press, oil mills, rice mills, dyeing unit, automobile workshops etc.

11. Industrial labor was almost absent in the first two generations in all categories of farmers and laborers where as, in the last two generations it became an important avenue. In the fourth generation between 10- 20 percent held employment in industries in various capacities. This was due to their professional qualification, spread of industries and urban led migration. Nearly 40 per cent of the industrial labor of all groups in the fourth generation were employed in the Adityans owned newspaper and magazine industries spread all over Tamil Nadu and the adjoining states.

12. Atlast, it can be concluded that out of 956 members spread over four generations of farmers and laborers, ignoring the occupational differentiation across the generation, majority of the occupations followed can be ranked as agriculture (33.5%), traditional caste occupation (13.6%), business (11.7%), government service (6.1%) and self-employment (5.8%). The remaining 113 (11.8%) were designated as unemployed.

13. Twenty to 66.7 per cent practiced the traditional toddy tapping as their occupation, which implied that Nadars were rooted in caste occupation. As and when they acquired wealth, or as the other opportunities opened, they deserted the caste occupation due to low social value attached in it.

VI. SPATIAL MOBILITY

Change in space can be considered as one of the avenues that may ultimately lead to a certain amount of mobility. In other words, any change in space could result in a

change of social status, whether it is ascending or descending order. Such spatial mobility, under certain special conditions is more likely to effect a change in the social status. For instance, if a group, moves from one cultural region to another where there has been no such group or a counterpart caste, then it can establish a place of its own in the new surroundings. Similarly, if the movement of a caste group involves considerable distance in space and if the caste group is less known in the new region, there is a favorable chance of upward mobility. In such cases, spatial mobility may prove to be an easy avenue for social mobility. Spatial mobility may facilitate those castes whose position is not clear in the local or regional hierarchy to claim a higher status than the one accorded to them. On the other hand, if the members of a caste move on to another area where the members of the same caste are found, more so with a definite position in the local caste hierarchy, the chances of any social mobility due to spatial mobility are few.

Spatial mobility has been quite significant in the case of Nadars and has contributed positively to their social mobility. Spatial mobility may be considered as one of the important aspects of Nadar life in the past. They were leading a seasonal migratory way of life, moving from one region to another during the tapping season.

The Nadars throughout their developmental phase had witnessed one or another form of spatial mobility in search of better occupation, to do business, or to protect them from the discrimination by the upper castes.

Regarding the Nadar inter-country migration in search of employment, Pate wrote

the Ceylon plantations opened up in the 1830s and by 1839. there was systematic recruitment in Madras for laborers. The response was initially slow, but soon accelerated. Between 1843 and 1867, nearly one and one and half million emigrated from Madras to Ceylon, and of these more numbers were Nadars from the arid land region (Pate, 1917: 131).

Hardgrave (1969) wrote that the British rule brought peace to the southern districts and the abolition of internal customs, opening the way for the expansion and development of trade. With peace and relative security of travel, Nadar traders loaded the essential commodities and moved to the northern regions to do business. For the first time large numbers of Nadars from the Western Ghats moved into the northern region. The migrated Nadars predominantly settled in six primary centers - popularly known as the six towns of Ramnad.¹²² In addition many southern Nadars settled in a number of smaller subsidiary towns, such as Kamudi, and Sannalgudi.

The Nadars of Kanyakumari district (erstwhile princely state of Travancore) seems to have employed the technique of spatial mobility and collective withdrawal as forms of protest against oppression.¹²³ A resolution of the farmers of Nanchil Nadu, made in an assembly, to protest against the tyranny of the tax collecting officials of

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Travancore king, by 'unitedly emigrating' from the country, is a good example of protest in the form of migration. In this case, the ryots of Nanchil Nadu seem to have considered migration to force the rulers to withdraw the oppressive tax measures by posing a threat of leaving the agricultural land uncultivated. CM Agur mentions of another instance where several families of Nadars migrated to Tirunelveli in order to escape the oppressive poll tax imposed on them.¹²⁵

Spatial mobility, in spite of its limitations, seems to have thus served as a strategy to coerce, or to escape the clutches of the rulers, in conditions where the subaltern Nadars could not contemplate more active forms of protest.

Table No 6.4 revealed the spatial mobility pattern of the members of four **generations of this** study. The **nature** of spatial mobility of each generation is compared with its landownership pattern.

1. Agricultural Laborers

Geographical mobility of the agricultural laborers was mainly due to search of employment. In some cases it was due to marriage and only rarely when the family was excommunicated by the caste. In the first generation of agricultural laborers, out of the 36 members, only 13 (36.1%) witnessed one or other form of spatial mobility. Six (16.7%) had inter-village migration, while three (8.3%) laborers migrated to nearby districts, and two each (5.6%) moved to the neighboring states and countries. The inter-state and inter-country migrations were mostly in search of employment. The inter-state and inter-country destinations were the neighboring Kerala and Malaya respectively, where they were employed as indentured labor in the plantation industries. In the second generation, spatial mobility was restricted to only 13.9 percent and most of it was inter-village migration due to marriage and toddy tapping opportunities. In the third generation also spatial mobility was limited as only nine (25.0%) had moved from their place of origin. Six of them moved to another village and the remaining three of them moved to the nearby districts. Members of the fourth generation witnessed maximum number and types of spatial mobility, which was mostly in search of employment. Out of the 83 members, 32 (38.6%) were confined to their place of origin, while the remaining 51 (61.4%) moved to various destinations viz., nearby villages (4.8%), nearby towns (9.6%), neighboring districts (18.1%) and 28.9 per cent each to another state and country.

TABLE NO. 6 . 4 TYPE OF SPATIAL MOBILITY OVER FOUR GENERATIONS

Category of farmers	Generation(s)	Type of spatial mobility												Total	
		No migration		Inter village migration		Migrated to nearby town		Inter district migration		Inter state migration		Inter country migration			
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Agricultural laborers	Grand father	23	63.3	6	16.7	0	0.0	3	8.3	2	5.6	2	5.6	36	100.0
	Father	31	86.1	5	13.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Self	27	75.0	6	16.7	0	0.0	3	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Son(s)	32	88.9	4	11.1	8	22.2	15	41.7	24	66.7	0	0.0	83	100.0
Marginal farmers	Grand father	19	52.8	9	25.0	1	2.8	3	8.3	2	5.6	2	5.6	36	100.0
	Father	33	91.7	3	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Self	30	83.3	4	11.1	2	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Son(s)	38	105.6	2	5.6	5	13.9	3	8.3	13	36.1	0	0.0	61	100.0
Small Farmers	Grand father	20	55.6	13	36.1	2	5.6	0	0.0	1	2.8	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Father	31	86.1	4	11.1	1	2.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Self	32	88.9	1	2.8	1	2.8	1	2.8	1	2.8	0	0.0	36	100.0
	Son(s)	24	66.7	6	16.7	11	30.6	8	22.2	25	69.4	1	2.8	75	100.0
Middle Farmers	Grandfather	14	38.9	4	11.1	0	0.0	3	8.3	0	0.0	2	5.6	24	100.0
	Father	22	61.1	2	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Self	22	61.1	2	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Son(s)	27	75.0	0	0.0	6	16.7	17	47.2	18	50.0	0	0.0	68	100.0
Big Farmers	Grand father	21	58.3	1	2.8	0	0.0	1	2.8	1	2.8	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Father	19	52.8	3	8.3	1	2.8	0	0.0	1	2.8	1	2.8	24	100.0
	Self	16	44.4	3	8.3	0	0.0	4	11.1	0	0.0	1	2.8	24	100.0
	Son(s)	39	108.3	0	0.0	6	16.7	10	27.8	4	11.1	5	13.9	64	100.0
Very Big Farmers	Grand father	18	50.0	0	0.0	2	5.6	1	2.8	3	8.3	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Father	22	58.3	1	2.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.8	24	100.0
	Self	15	41.7	3	8.3	1	2.8	3	8.3	2	5.6	0	0.0	24	100.0
	Son(s)	44	117.8	2	5.6	3	8.3	8	21.1	5	13.9	3	8.3	65	100.0
Total		619	64.7	84	8.8	51	5.3	83	8.7	101	10.6	18	1.9	956	100.0

These instances of spatial mobility among the agricultural laborers were mostly in search of employment in agriculture, construction, business and manufacturing industries. The poor employment opportunities in the villages and modern education influenced the mobility among the members of fourth generation.

2. Marginal Farmers

Unlike the **agricultural labor** category, good number of the first generation of marginal farmers 17 (47.2%) witnessed spatial mobility of one form or the other. Twenty five percent of them moved to the nearby villages, while one farmer moved to a nearby town to work in a spinning mill. Three of them (8.3%) had migrated to the neighboring districts in search of employment and two each had moved to neighboring states and neighboring country i.e., Sri Lanka. The plantation industry boom in Kerala and Sri Lanka was an ideal destination for employment, and many of them utilized such opportunities.

In the second generation, only three (8.3%) moved from their place of origin but their migration was restricted to the neighboring villages. This migration was due to marriage, to do farming on the leased land and to do tapping. Generally, the possession of even a small piece of land checked migration because of an assured livelihood. Migratory movements among the members of the third generation were also very minimal. Only six (16.7%) moved, of whom four (11.1%) migrated to the neighboring villages and the remaining two (5.6%) to the nearby towns. On the contrary, members of fourth generation moved to different destinations, except to neighboring countries. Of 61 members 23 (37.7%) witnessed one or the other form of spatial mobility. As many as 13 (21.3%) migrated to neighboring states especially Kerala where there was a constant

demand for labor, followed by five (8.2%) to the nearby towns, three (4.9%) to the nearby districts and the remaining two (3.3%) to the nearby villages. In this generation those who moved to neighboring villages, towns and districts, were mostly engaged in business, while those who moved to the neighboring states engaged in labor work.

3. Small Farmers

Sixteen people in the first generation migrated for various reasons from their place of origin. Of the sixteen, as many as 13 (36.1%) members' migration destination was the nearby villages. Of the remaining three (8.3%), two members moved to the nearby towns and one moved to the neighboring state. Since the first generation of small farmers category had maximum number of toddy tappers and agricultural laborers, migration in search of better employment opportunities became part of their life.

In the second generation, 31 (86.1%) had been satisfied with their village life also had not moved anywhere. Only five (13.9%) migrated to two different destinations i.e. four (11.1%) to the nearby villages and one individual (2.8%) to the nearby town.

In the respondent's generation too, the tempo of migration had reduced. As many as 88.9% of the respondents remained confined to their villages. Only four (11.1%) migrated in search of employment. Destination wise they had gone to nearby villages, town, district and state.

The fourth generation created a new trend in spatial mobility when compared to their preceding three generations. Sixty-eight per cent had moved out of their place of origin. The development in transport and communication, failure of monsoon, declining employment opportunities in the villages, higher qualifications the factors responsible for their spatial mobility. Of the 51 people who had migrated, 25 (33.3%) moved to Kerala.

where a constant demand for labor force existed. With the native labor force migrating to Gulf countries, Kerala depended on the Tamil Nadu labor to carry out their day-to-day work. Migration to neighboring villages and towns attracted eight members each. Six members mobility was restricted to the neighboring villages and only one member moved to a Gulf country to work as a mason.

4. Middle Farmers

Spatial Mobility in the middle farmer category across four generations revealed that members of first and fourth generations witnessed more movements compared to the second and third generation. In the first generation, out of the 24 members, 10 (41.7%) had moved. Four of these (16.7%) migrated to the nearby villages, followed by inter-district migration (12.5%) inter-country migration (8.3%) apart from the single instance of a migration to nearby towns (4.2%).

In both the second and the third generations, only two had (8.3%) migrated and that too to the neighboring villages.

As many as 41 (60.3%) members in the fourth generation had gone through the experience of spatial mobility, of which one each moved to the neighboring village and nearby country. Others migrated to nearby towns (8.8%), neighboring districts (25.0%) and adjoining states (26.5%). Most instances of migration were defined by their employment in government or private sectors.

5. Big Farmers

Unlike their counterparts in middle farmer category, members of the big farmers category in the first generation displayed very little spatial mobility. Only three of them (20.8%) had moved out of their villages, and had been to nearby villages, districts or states.

Probably the land ownership must have arrested their mobility. The three who moved were all from the garden land village. The economic well-being of dryland and irrigated agriculture in wetland checked the spatial mobility in the first generation.

In the second generation, only five (20.8%) moved out of their villages. Three members who migrated to other villages were from the garden land village. While the other two who migrated to nearby town and country respectively were from the dryland village. They were employed in fellow caste man owned newspaper industries.

In the third generation, a total of eight (33.3%) migrated from their villages in search of employment. Of the eight members, five were Adityans from the dryland village who moved to different districts, and one migrated to Sri Lanka to work in the newspaper industry. The other three moved to nearby villages to do farming in their newly acquired lands.

Members of the fourth generation witnessed more spatial mobility than the preceding three generations. Shrinking of employment opportunities in villages, acquisition of modern education, division and fragmentation of family property, rapid development of transport and communication facilities, new employment opportunities in urban areas were the factors that helped them to move to different destinations. There was not even a single member in this generation who moved to a nearby village. All the migrants had gone to nearby town (9.4%) different districts (15.6%), neighboring states (12.5%), and other countries (7.8%). The members moved to nearby towns were doing business, mostly running grocery and vegetable shops. These Nadars owned shops Popularly known as '*Annachi Kadai*' all over Tamil Nadu. Those who migrated to different districts of Tamil Nadu were mostly employed in the Adityans owned

newspapers, and some of them worked for government. Inter-state migration had occurred primarily due to the central government jobs except for one case where it was to work for a business establishment in Kerala.

6. Very Big Farmers

Spatial Mobility of the very big farmers revealed a mixed trend across generations. In the first generation, only 25 percent of the members moved and their migratory movements were restricted to neighboring states (12.5%), nearby town (8.3%) and to the nearby district (4.2%). Their higher land holding size was perhaps responsible for their lesser mobility. Most of their movements were also due to business interest. In the second generation, the mobility was further arrested to the extent of 91.7%. Only two farmers moved out of their villages i.e. one towards the neighboring village because of his marriage into a family with no male inheritor while, the other farmer moved to Burma to help his relative in a business firm at Rangoon. In the third generation, nine (37.5%) farmers migrated to different destinations to earn more. Their movements were restricted to nearby village (12.5%), nearby town (4.2%) other districts (12.5%) and to the neighboring states (8.3%). Migration to a neighboring village was to do farming, to a nearby town to do business, to the districts to work in newspaper industries and to neighboring states to do business. Hence, more profitable jobs, business and farming directed their migration and destinations.

In the fourth generation, out of 65 members only 21 (32.%) migrated to different places. Mostly in search of better employment, for education or simply for comfortable life style they moved out of their villages. Eight members (12.3%) moved to different districts of Tamil Nadu to work in the newspaper industries. All these members were

from the dryland village and all of them belong to the Adityan families. Five members (7.7%) moved to nearby state as government servants or to do business and the states were Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka and northeastern state of Nagaland. Three educated members of this generation moved abroad: two to gulf, and the remaining to the United States of America to work as a software engineer. Three members (4.6%) moved to a nearby town, of which two had business firms, one working as a clerk in taluk headquarters. Two members (3.1%) moved to the neighboring villages, one person looking after agriculture and another one running a tobacco company (Beedi Company)-

The spatial mobility of the members of four generations can be summarized as follows.

1. In the first generation, irrespective of the economic condition only 36.1 per cent of the members witnessed one or the other form of spatial mobility. Most of the migratory movements were restricted to neighboring villages. Migration was mostly directed to do tapping, farming, business and sometime to work as agricultural labor. Migration to neighboring states and countries were induced by the plantation industries and its constant demand for labor force.
2. Migration towards the nearby villages were mostly concerned with toddy tapping and to do farming in the newly acquired lands and, if rarely, due to marriage.
3. In the first generation, the spatial mobility of the first 4 categories of farmers and laborers were ranging from 36 to 47 percent, whereas in last two categories of farmers it was between 12-25 percent, which implied the positive correlation between landed property and geographical mobility.

4. Similarly migration towards nearby towns and districts were to work in the newspaper industries of caste mates or to engage in business.
5. Inter-state migration by the first, second and third generations were purely in search of employment. In some cases it was due to government job and business purposes.
6. In the first three generations, international migration were directed towards Sri Lanka, Burma and South-East Asian countries and migrants were mostly engaged in plantation industry, whereas, in the fourth generation the destinations were the Gulf countries, the USA and Australia to work as skilled labor and professionals. Fourth generation international migrants were mostly from small, big and very big farmers.
7. As the land size increases, migration to the nearby villages and towns reduces. Of the 83 members across generations, who moved to the nearby districts, the majority of migrants from the third and the fourth generation, (54.0%) were from the dryland village. These were the Adityans and worked in fellow Adityan owned newspaper industries, which are located at all the district head quarters of Tamil Nadu.
8. Barring the big and very big farmers category, 60 to 70 percent of the members of the fourth generation witnessed one or the other form of spatial mobility mostly in search of employment. This showed that the landholding size was an influencing factor in geographical mobility.
9. More migratory movements in the first two generations were from the garden land village, but in the last two generations it was from the dryland villages. This was due to employment opportunities created by the Adityan brothers in their newspaper industries. In case of the wetland village, by and large across the generations migration was very

minimal. Irrigated agriculture and assured livelihood checked the movements of members in all four generations.

Conclusion

The Nadars, under study used various strategies according to the changing time and space to move up in the social hierarchy. When one such strategy failed, they designed another strategy to move upwards in the social schemata. Like when their social mobility through Sanskritisation or Kshatriyahood were opposed by the higher castes and consequently failed, they switched over to the Self-Respect Movement and later to adopt a secular way of life.

The Nadars as a caste have shown great mobility trends in religious, educational, occupational and spatial aspects. The roles played by Christianity, Dravidian movement, caste association (Nadar Mahajana Sangam), educational institutions, urbanization and industrialization, prominent Nadar families, regional politics and the village level caste association (local *urminimurais*) helped the caste in its social mobility process. Overall, the various aspects of social mobility not only helped the caste to progress in social, cultural, educational, occupational and political fronts but also changed the caste identity from time to time. The formation of caste identity over a period of time, as well as the institutionalization and consolidation of caste identity is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Notes

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8. Evidence introduced by the Nadars in the Kamudi case showed that Maravars carried palanquins for the six town Nadars. *Raja Bhaskara Sethupathy Vs. Irulappan Nadan*, Pp. 68 - 69
9. A Panchangam Brahmin testified in the Kamudi case that he officiated for the Nadars' domestic Sacraments. On perusal of his deposition, the Judge said that 'he exhibits gross ignorance of *Upanayam* ritual and prescribed for the Kshatriyas
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16. *Ibid.*, P. 134
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23. James Hough, The History of Christianity in India, London, 1839, Vol. II, Pp. 226-227
24. Samuel Mateer, Land of Charity, London, 1871, P.4
25. Rendering work to the government (Travancore Princely State) without pay
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29. D.H. George. *Kumari Mavattap Pennurimaip Porattam* (T). P.102-104
30. Arulnool P. 70
31. Samuel Mateer, Native Life in Travancore P. 290
32. *Ibid.*, 292
33. Krishnan. N.R. Ezhavas, Yesterday and Today (Malayalam) Pp. 175 - 180. "The inhumanity and injustice in the collection and nature of this tax compelled an Ilava lady, who was unable to bear the humiliation of the caste - Hindu Tax Collectors to cut off one of her breasts and present it to them". Quoted in Yesudhas, R.N., *op. cit.*, P. 41
34. Caldwell. R., Records of the Early History of the Tinnevely Mission of the S.P.C.K. and S.P.G., P. 141
35. Yesudhas, R.N.. *op. cit.*, P. 65
36. *Ibid.*, P. 62. Quoted from Directorate of State Archives. Document No. III (Malayalam)
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58. Administrative report of Virudhunagar Municipality for the year 1933 - 34, P. 2
59. Kudi Arasu (Tamil), 30th March, 1935, P.3
60. When E.V. Ramasami Naicker felt that as the Justice Party was interested in capturing political power, they would obstruct his own plans for bringing about social Changes in Tamil Society. For that Soundrapandian said that they must utilize the co-operation of the Justice Party, Kumaran, 21st October, 1935
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66. The Hindu, 6th June, 1931
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68. When C. Rajagopalachari brought two acts 'the Removal of Civil Disabilities Act (Madras Act XI of 1938) and the Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Act (Madras Act - XII of 1939) which removed the social disabilities of low castes
69. Rajadurai, P. 1992 P. 259
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71. Aruppukottai S.A. Muthunadar published '*Nadar Kula Mitran*', Kallurani, K.A. Punnamuthu published '*Valikatti*' V.M. Jesudoss edited *Thenthilagam*, Murugappa published 'Kumari' Adityan published *Daily Thanthi*. All these journals propagated Self-Respect ideas.
72. *Ibid.*, 260
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74. See Sarada Devi, The History of the Nadars. P. 229

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76. Kudiarasu, 20.11.1927. P. 15
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89. *Ibid*, P. 50
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Chapter -VII

Caste Identity Formation

This Chapter attempts to map the trajectory of identity formation among the Nadars over a period of time. The constitutive elements entailing both institutions and individuals involved in the making of caste identity are discussed in detail. Further, the ways in which identities restructure themselves responding to changed contexts and its demands even as they replace exiting ones, and caste investments are differentially made to recognize caste identities with changes in the context are discussed.

The term identity needs a distinct conceptualization. Frederik Barth (1969) was perhaps the first scholar to attempt a definition of identity. He saw it as a boundary maintaining mechanism that keeps groups distinct. It can also be conceived as an expression of localism or increasing local consciousness. According to Nadel Klein (1991) localism refers to the representation of group identity as defined primarily by a sense of commitment to a particular place and to a set of cultural practices that are self consciously articulated and to some degree separated and directed away from surrounding world. Ginkel (1995) prefers the concept of 'articulation' to the frequently deployed notion of "construction of identity" because it implies that people lend meaning to their identity in strictly intentional ways. This however is only partly true: identity is also the result of unintentional behavior and thought. Paul Brass (1991) conceived such identity formation as an expression of ethnicity while by De Vos (1975) conceived it as consisting of the 'subjective' i.e., symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups. Brass

maintained that an ethnic group that uses cultural symbols in this way is a subjectively self-conscious community that establishes shared criteria for inclusion in and exclusion from the group. He views the process of identity formation as a movement from an ethnic category to an ethnic community from a merely subjectively conscious social formation which also involves, in addition to subjective self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition, either as a superior group or a group that is at least equal to other groups.

Among the classical theorists of Sociology, it is perhaps only in the writings of Mead and Cooley that one can find detailed references to the question of identity. Both of them approached identity in a socio-psychological manner rather than a politico-sociological one. They talked about identity while trying to understand the formation of an individual self, in a collectivity through the experience of meaningful interactions as part of socialization process (Mead: 1934 and Cooley. 1962). The most crucial point both of them made in their discussions on the subject was the significance of the 'other' in the formation of an individual's self-identity.

Jenkins says, 'identity can also be understood as a process. One's social identity (or identities) is never a final settled matter' (Jenkins 1996: 5).

Social identity is thus based on recognizing the contrast between 'us' and 'them'. Every dimension of this distinction between them and us allows us to establish something we have in common with the rest of the individuals in the group we belong to, and that makes us different from others, who in their turn distinguish themselves from us in a similar way. In other words, nothing would be similar unless marked by difference, just as difference depends on a context of common recognition.

The members of a given caste identify themselves on the basis of different criteria (such as kinship, cultural features, ethnic affiliation, occupation, religion etc) that make them different from other castes. Durkheim's collective representation is similar to the collective identity of caste in Indian social set up. Calhaun (1994) calls this type as 'shared identity'.

In the Indian context, a number of historians have argued that certain identities that have become common today were the products of the colonial state. Romila Thapar, for example, points to the nationalist Indian middle class for creating their modern identity.¹ Drawing on Benedict Anderson's pioneering work, *Imagined Communities*, she argues that there were no overarching religious communities in the pre-colonial days where the sense of religious identity seems to have related more closely to a sect than to a dominant Hindu community.²

Sumit Sarkar, Gyanendra Pandey and Sandria Freitag have maintained that identities became choate, focused and organized during the colonial period.³ C. A Bayly, on the other hand, traces the historical formation of the religious identities from the pre-colonial period.⁴ He points out that many forms of political and economic change in India in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were accompanied by conflicts over religious symbols when social and economic groups temporarily perceived others as communities.⁵

Social historians have also explored the formation of specific caste identities.⁶ With their focus on institutional and economic causation, their writings underline the importance of exogenous factors and more specifically the colonial context. Recently,

this debate has developed into a colonial discourse analysis which drawn inspiration from Edward Said's Orientalism. Mainly concerned with the problem of agency of Indians, Ronald Inden points out that the influence of 'wild fabrications of the nineteenth-century European imagination was to give pre-eminence to caste' through its search for essences.⁷

Nicholas Dirks observes that 'under colonialism caste became a foundational

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basis of India Society'. He considers caste as a colonial invention in which indigenous discourses or 'native actors' had little scope to play. Said and some other historians deny the agency of the colonized by focusing on 'colonial discourse'. This history of ideas and mentalities, however shows a prominent representation of communities, caste does not operate as an autonomous, rigid construction alone, but reveals as a pre-colonial presence.

Richard Fox shows the manner in which the British integrated the Sikhs into the world economy and created a class of petty commodity producers and traders in both rural and urban Punjab. The British invented and assiduously cultivated a Khalsa identity which was readily appropriated by this class. Though, Fox tends to overlook the role of myths, symbols, rituals, older cultural traditions and linkages, which bound the Sikhs in the 1920s with pre-British past.

Disagreeing with Sarkar, Pandey and others. Dipankar Gupta underlines that collective identities have not been fuzzy, inchoate or determinate but are products of shifting historical contexts.

Although there were many works on Nadars of Tamil Nadu, their identity formation has not been studied from a sociological angle. I try to look at the ways in

which the Nadars interpreted and demonstrated their caste identity. The changing meanings of Nadar identity in the pre-colonial, colonial and post independent period clearly indicate that identity develops slowly, gradually and historically.

Identification of Nadar Community

There are two levels on which identity operates namely individual and collective. The name and the status one occupies in his or her caste establishes individual identity. There are two relevant questions for an individual that reveal his/her identity. The first, 'who am I?' is generally answered by an assertion of continuity through genealogy and residence, by pointing lineage, family status and place of birth or residence. The second question, 'what am I?' is generally answered by assertion of distinctiveness through culture and community, one's membership of and adherence to particular cultures and distinctive communities. Collective identities (say group or caste identity) are composed of individual members. And as such people have multiple identities as farmers, laborers, and members of religious communities, ethnic group, caste and nation. The basic and important cultural elements of caste identity are:

- 1) A sense of stability and rootedness of the particular unit of population.
- 2) A sense of difference or distinctness and separateness of the cultural unit.
- 3) A sense of continuity with previous generations of the cultural units through memories, myths and traditions and
- 4) A sense of destiny and mission of shaped hopes and aspirations of the culture

The sense of stability and rootedness is imported by traditions including customs, laws, codes and rituals. The sense of difference and distinctiveness of the community is expressed through flags, emblems, costumes, special food and sacred objects. The sense

of continuity with previous generations is rooted in the memories of past sacrifices e.g., victories and defeats and deeds of heroism. Collective courage, honor, wisdom, compassion **and** justice confer sense of destiny and mission.

Collective Identity

Collective identity of members of a caste is formed when the caste has certain characteristics (Sivaprakasam, 2001: 77). The main features of the collective identity of a caste are

- 1) A collective (common) name, which symbolizes the uniqueness of the community, which distinguishes it from others.
- 2) Myths of common origin, which relates all the members to common ancestors, birthplaces and foundation.
- 3) A shared history' i.e. the shared memories of successive generation of the collective community.
- 4) Some cultural characteristics, which can serve to distinguish members from non-members, such as institutions, customs, or language.
- 5) A sense of solidarity on the part of at least a significant section of the collective community.

We could look at these characteristics with reference to the Nadar community in order to bring out the specific features of their identity.

The first characteristic is a collective name and common origin. The Nadars or previously Shanars are clearly distinguished from other Hindu castes and obviously symbolize the uniqueness of the caste. The caste has gradually come to be known with a common name as Nadars, meaning one who rules the country.

The second characteristic is the origin of Nadar caste, which is a constructed one. They see themselves as the sons of Bhadrakali, having a divine origin. Some of them also claim to be the descendents of the Pandya Kings of Madurai.

The third feature is the shared history (i.e., shared memories of successive generations). Past oriented discourses are a way of producing identity. The reconstruction of a past as a universe of meanings, events and natural narratives for an individual or collective subject. It is not a question of historical reconstruction of the past, but of an interpretation of past events according to the needs imposed by the present. The caste elders have been reproducing Nadars past through stories passed from earlier generations, which glorify Nadars past and their subsequent sufferings due to the Nayakas and some other castes.

The fourth feature i.e. the common cultural characteristics that kept the Nadars distinguish them from non-Nadars. Some institutions and customs are unique to the Nadar community. Significant among them are the clan based network (*Kuttam*), mother goddess worship, Ayyanar cult, palmyra tree and its products (as major part of the diet), and of late, the establishment of *ura* (*inmurais*) (local associations), collection of *mahamai* fund, *peltais*, ancestral worship, caste owned financial institutions (eg. Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited).

The fifth feature a collective identity and a sense of solidarity is very visible among Nadars. The Nadars living in village, town and city are members of at least one of the caste association. The membership at the caste association gives them a collective identity, strengthening simultaneously the caste solidarity.

In Tamil Nadu, the Nadar caste witnessed a good number of reforms and brought forth a host of social workers who had sympathy for their caste brethren. However, the most significant among them who made efforts to make the caste gain awareness and Self-Respect include Ayya Vaikunta Swami, Soundrapandian, K. Kamaraj Nadar and Chi. Pa. Aditanar. They appealed to the Nadars to quit those occupations that were assigned to them by the upper castes, take interest in secular occupations, education and get to know their legitimate rights. They also emphasized on being self-sufficient, self-reliant and most significantly uphold their Self-Respect.

All these five features gave the caste a collective identity and a sense of solidarity in the eyes of other caste in Tamil Nadu. Now let us probe how the caste identity of Nadars were constructed historically over a period of time.

Construction Caste Identity - Historical Moorings.

The Nadars caste identity has been built over a period of two hundred years. While analyzing the evolution of caste identity based on historical materials and through personal interaction with caste leaders and respondents, I have identified a good number of symbols. However, symbols of caste identity keep changing over time and therefore one needs to adopt a historical perspective to understand identity symbols and the rationale of change (a more detailed discussion is presented below).

In the initial stages Nadars occupied a social limbo between the caste Hindus and untouchables. Caldwell described the Nadars 'as belonging to the highest division of the lowest classes or the lowest of the middle classes; poor, but not paupers; rude and unlettered, but by many degrees from a savage state' (Caldwell 1881: 111). The caste,

defined as ritually impure, was forbidden to enter into temples. Their use of public roads, wells and other facilities were strictly prohibited. The caste was considered as 'half-polluting jati' ¹¹ and allowed to live in separate habitations just outside the main village, though not in so remote a site as the untouchable *cheri* (slum). The caste shared a lower position and identity in the hierarchy of ritual rank, and its occupational identity was chiefly concerned with the cultivation of the palmyra trees, which became the main source of their employment and means of subsistence. The products of palmyra trees were their occupational and food related identity symbols. ¹² Caldwell considered the palmyra forest as their original home tract.

The caste is traditionally divided into endogamous sub-castes. And each sub-caste is divided into exogamous septs or clans, which were known as *kuttams*. There are more than one hundred such divisions and each village or town may have as many as a dozen or more *kuttams*. At the village level, these extended clan groups or *kuttams* provided them an identity within and outside the caste. Further the people of the same *kuttam* share a family deity (*kula deivam*), usually identified with a distant ancestor who founded the family and who is worshipped at the *kuttam* temple in the ancestral village. In the villages, each Nadar family identifies with the name of its *kuttam*. Hence *kuttam* came to be as one of the early identity markers of the caste.

The first attempt to change the Nadars was made by the Christian missionaries with the motive of propagating the gospel among the toddy tappers. Christian missionaries like Caldwell and Ringeltaube have extensively documented Nadar history and their living conditions. These works helped the Nadar historians to build the image of their community at later stages. Christianity helped the caste to acquire a new religious

identity. Prior to it the Nadars worshipped local deities like Amman and Ayyanar, but were also familiar with demonology. Most of the Ayyanar temples located in the *teri* regions and the mother goddess temples located in the Nadar settlements came to be the caste identity markers on the religious front.

Next to Christianity, the Sanskritisation process adopted by the northern Nadars, provided a reformed Hindu identity to the caste. The caste transformed its religious identity in every day life by adopting the Brahminical way of life.

Role played by Caste Historians

In 1850, Robert Caldwell, a Christian Missionary wrote the first history of Nadars and titled his book 'Tinnvelly Shanars')³ By now more than thirty scholars have written on the history of the caste and their social identity.¹⁴ As pointed out by an elderly Nadar in the dryland village, no other community in Tamil Nadu had invested so much money and time in retrieving its history. Almost all the work by Nadars strives to establish a glorious history of the caste and its pristine origin. The writing of caste history and construction of an identity lost tempo after independence and this was attributed to the fact that by then Nadars had achieved progress in all spheres of life and atrocities committed against them by the upper castes had come down tremendously. Their advancement in agriculture, business and other middle class life enabled them to compete and occupy the urban space at par with other higher castes.

Most of the caste historians have focused on "the hidden' meanings of the term Nadar. They gave various interpretations, such as the warrior race (*kshatriya*), learned one (*Shandror*), the erstwhile rulers of Madurai (*Pandians*). The caste historians have used the available palm-leaf texts, copper plates, unpublished articles and theses, family

manuscripts, epithets, phonetic changes of words over a period of time to construct an identity of their 'glorious' past. Reading the caste history of Nadars as delineated by various scholars, one can witness how identity symbols have undergone change.

From 1850 to 1950, the caste symbols were mostly of ascribed nature, primarily traditional in character, and reflected their occupation (toddy tapping), traditional religion, caste panchayat, type of trade etc. But after 1950 the symbols became secular in character and mostly achievement oriented, focusing on modern institutions like the caste association, caste journals, educational and financial institutions etc. The changes in identity symbols as projected by the caste historians were tallied with the responses given by the respondents. To a question about the past and present identities of the caste, the respondents came up with a list of 20 symbols relating to the past and the present. However, after assigning ranks only five past and seven present symbols were short-listed.

Kshatriya movement led a new caste identity

The preaching of social reformer Muthukuttysamy alias Ayya Vaikuntar aroused the spirit of Self-Respect among the members of Nadar community in the erstwhile princely state of Travancore.¹⁵ " He considered the Nadars not as sons of laborers but called them *Deiva Sanrorkal* (divine people called Sanror), *Neynithia Sanrorkal* (Sanrors who are for justice) and *Desa Venra Sanrorkal*¹⁶ (The Sanrors who conquered countries). *Thuvayal Panthi*,¹⁷ was arranged to make them wash their clothes regularly and take bath, wear turbans¹⁸ on their head instead of *summadu*.¹⁹ The customs of high class people were taught to them so that they could raise their status in society. His writings and activities

laid the foundation for the Kshatriya movement that started in Tinnevely during the later half of the nineteenth century.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, there arose a movement called 'The Kshatriya Movement'. This movement was directed towards asserting their social status as Kshatriyas boasting of a royal ancestry, and to construct a new caste identity on par with the Maravars, Brahmins or other upper castes of Tamil origin.

T.Vijaya Doraisamy Gramani has carried out an etymological research on the word Nadar.²⁰ He published a monthly *Kshatriya Mitran* in 1919 and 1920, wherein he speaks of the divine origin and kingly traditions of the Nadars. The Nadars claimed the title *Valankai Uvarkonda Iravikula Kshatriya* (Kshatriyas of the Solar Race belonging to the Right Hand Faction).

The Kshatriya movement continued upto the early part of the twentieth century. In 1901, when Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of the Ethnographic Survey of Madras visited Nazareth, he was presented with a petition by Pandian, son of Sattampillai, stating that Nadars were Tamil Kshatriyas with royal ancestry.

The Nadars claimed the right to wear the *poonool* (sacred thread), followed the custom of cremation like the upper castes, instituted schools and called them *Kshatriya Vidhyasalasa*. Nadar women were asked to imbibe the behavior of higher caste women like wearing saris, carrying the water pots on their hips. Nadars started using palanquin in their marriage procession, in which the Maravars were the palanquin bearers. They also started hiring Brahmin priests to conduct pujas and for performing *Upanayanam* (initiation ceremony). They declared themselves Kshatriyas during census enumerations.²¹ Commenting on the status of the Nadars, the Government of Madras

recorded in 1899 that the position of the Nadars in the scale of castes was peculiar. Their abstinence from spirituous liquors and from beef and the prohibition of widow remariage connected them with the top of the *Sudra* group of castes.

The Nadar businessmen who went and settled in Coimbatore, Salem and Trichinopoly called themselves Chettis. They even took the title of Pillai and in Coimbatore they adopted title Mooppan.²² It is believed that they adopted those titles just to boost their status in society.

Influence of Industrialization

The influence of industrial revolution in Britain in the nineteenth century affected the caste identity of Nadars on two fronts viz., the occupational and spatial mobility. The cotton produced in the Nadar dominated South Tamil Nadu had good demand in industrial Britain. The cotton boom in South India led to the construction of metal road (Cotton Road), new railway line and a port in Tuticorin. All these developments made the Nadar community powerful in both agriculture and business. The Nadars very vigorously cultivated cotton crop and the profit made through cotton cultivation and trade were again reinvested in agricultural land. This helped many Nadars to shift from their hereditary occupation of toddy tapping to commercial farming. Many cotton traders belonging to the Nadar community forged a link between the town merchants and village producers. Caste and kin ties provided social conduits for the forward contracts. At the same time the Nadar traders started moving to the towns to get into the cotton business, and acquiring a mercantile identity. Studies of cotton cultivation and marketing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveal that great many cultivators, dealers, middlemen, moneylenders and cart men in the

cotton belt were Nadars (Ponnaiah, 1944 : 125). The booming cotton towns attracted the Nadar businessmen and the southern Nadars started moving towards the northern towns, facilitating spatial mobility within the caste.

The economic independence and spatial mobility enabled the Nadars traders to respond positively and effectively to the economic changes that were to come. The Nadar traders would travel with their wares (primarily jaggery, dried fish, salt and products of small garden plots) between weekly markets. British rule in the southern districts led to abolition of internal customs, which opened way for the expansion and development of trade, and it also established effective police against the dacoities of hereditary highway men. With peace and relative security of travel, Nadar traders began to move into the region of Maravar country (as the regions to the north were then known). The frequent and rapid movement of goods from one region to another involved the engagement of larger numbers of men and material, carts and bullocks.

The migrated Nadar traders started settling permanently in towns like Palayampatti, Aruppukottai, Virudhunagar, Sivakasi, Sattangudi and Tirumangalam popularly known as *Arur Nadars* (six town Nadars of Ramnad). These towns not only attest the spatial mobility of Nadars from the south and their involvement in trade, but also considered as the Nadars stronghold and considered as Nadar dominated trade centers in Tamil Nadu. Hence, these towns were vouched as the caste identity over a period of time.

Caste Association Role in constructing Identity

The year 1917 is a watershed in the history of Nadar caste. Nadars representatives assembled at Madurai and formed the caste association and named it Nadar Mahajana

Sangam, which gave a common identity to the caste as a whole, irrespective of its differentiation based on sub-caste, religion, geographical region etc. The *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* journal *Mahajanam* was first published in 1947 as a bi-weekly and from 1974 it became a weekly. It publishes all the happenings of the caste association. Nadars considered it as the official Gazetteers of the caste. Right from the day when its first issue was published it became a caste identity symbol for Nadars. Others in Tamil Nadu also see it as a Nadar caste journal which reports on the happening of their caste. This caste journal acts as a communication link between the association head quarters and the local *uravinmurai*s. The institutions like *mahamai*, *uravinmurai*, *nattanmai*, *muraikarar* were all considered as the identity components of the caste association at the grass root level.

Since its inception the NMS appointed nine agents - cum reporters (*Thuduvur*) , who are constantly in the field. Their duty is to collect all the happening of the local *Uravinmurai*s, and assist all the Nadar settlements to establish the local *uravinmuais*. In addition to this the touring agents has to collect the subscription fee for *Mahajanam* journal and donations from the Nadar philanthropists to run NMS owned educational institutions. As one Nadar leader pointed out to me at the time of my fieldwork, these touring agents are considered as the ambassadors of Nadar caste. Wherever, there is a dispute between the Nadars, or between Nadars and other caste groups, the NMS will send their reporters to collect the first hand information. According to the report furnished by the agents, the NMS take decisions. The touring agents attempt to eliminate factional antagonism among the Nadars and try to ensure community solidarity. I have furnished the nature of duty of the touring agents in an appendix. When I asked to give

the caste identity symbols of Nadars, many of my respondents mentioned these touring agents as a caste symbol and the justification given by them were that these office bearers are as old as the NMS and local *uravinmuraish*. Some people went to the extent of saying that these touring agents are the fulcrum of the caste association and its smooth functioning.

The Annual conferences of the Nadar caste association has given them a solid identity and it presents them as a united community in the eyes of other caste people. In its ninety three years of history 66 annual conferences have been organized by the association in order to consolidate the caste identity and strengthen its solidarity.

The establishment of caste owned financial institution Nadar Bank (currently known as the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited) in the year 1921 provided a mercantile identity to the caste. In reviewing 32 years of service in 1952, the NMS wrote that it brought up the Nadar community and country along with it.²³ (Discussed in detail in the later part of this chapter).

Influence of Provincial Politics

The elements that went into the making of Nadar identity left their impression on popular politics and contributed to the creation of a highly self-conscious and assertive leadership in the 1920s and the 30s. The distribution of political power and authority among the Nadar elites were extended to the northern Nadars, yet mostly confined to towns like Virudhunagar, Madurai and Pattiveeranpatti. The provincial politics of Tamil Nadu was significantly influenced by Nadar leaders like Soundrapandian of Pattiveeranpatti, V.V. Ramasiami and K. Kamaraj of Virudhunagar. Both Soundrapandian and V. V.

Ramasami aligned with Justice Party and latter into Self-Respect movement while, K. Kamaraj Nadar identified himself with the Indian National Congress Party.

In the election of 1920 to the Madras Legislative Council, Nadars extended their support to the Justice party. W. P. A. Soundrapandian took an active part in the election campaign and impressed the justice party. As a reward to the meritorious services of the Pattiveeranpatti Nadar families and to satisfy the desire of Nadar community, the Justice party recommended the name of W.P.A. Soundrapandian as a member of the Legislative Council. On 20th December 1920 Lord Wellington, the Governor of Madras presidency nominated of W.P.A Soundrapandian to the Legislative Council and he became the first Nadar member of the council.²⁴

The year 1954 was yet another mile stone in the history of Nadars. Community's illustrious son became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Subsequently when K. Kamaraj Nadar was elevated to the position of All India Congress Committee President in 1963, the caste as a whole came to be recognized at the all India level. Although it was an achievement of an individual, the people looked him as a Nadar.

Constructing political Identity

In the past Nadars political identity had revolved around the caste panchayat and *local uravinmuraïs*. Both these institutions were dominated by the male members of the community. The informal leaders known as *nattanmai* in Nadar settlements held the official position on hereditary basis and were selected based on their family status, economic strength and personal influence. But with the arrival of modern political institutions like political parties, election and Panchayati Raj system the old political

identity was slowly replaced by the new ones. The *nattanmai* (caste leaders) have very little say **and** the elected leaders now hold the powers in the village.

With the introduction of political parties, Nadars started aligning with the political parties. Their political participation has been confined to only two major political streams, namely the Dravidian parties (which includes the DMK, AIADMK and MDMK) and the Congress parties. Nadars political stalwarts like K. Kamaraj, W .P. A. Soundrapandian and Chi. Pa Aditanar are considered as political symbols of caste. K. Kamaraj Nadar brought the community into the political mainstream through Indian National Congress, whereas, Soundrapandian and Aditanar took the caste close to the Justice party, Self-Respect movement and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhaham (DMK). When both the Justice party and Self-Respect movement lost glamour, Nadars switched over to the DMK and latter to the All India Anna Dravinda Munnetra Kazhaham (AIADMK). Prominent Nadar leaders like Aditanar, A.V.P. Asaithambi and Aladi Aruna in the DMK party were instrumental in popularizing and attracting the Nadars into DMK. When K. Kamaraj Nadar became the Chief minister of Tamil Nadu in 1954 and later the President of All India Congress Committee (1963 -1967) he attracted large number of Nadars into congress party. Hence, these leaders became not only the icons of their caste but also treated as the political stalwarts of their caste.

The Nadars also tried to launch separate political party, but have not been successful. On August 1, 1965 one Mr. T .Ganapathy formed a party known as '*Nellai-Kumari Nadars Nala Urimai kazaham*' (Tirunelveli-Kanyakumari Nadars Welfare Federation) with the aim of seeking benefits for the Nadars community. The party caused some excitement in the two southern districts only. Majority of the Nadars saw it

as an attempt by a handful of rejected claimants for the congress tickets. Slowly the members of the party deserted it and joined back either in the congress or DMK.

In 1958, Chi. Pa Aditanar formed a political party known as 'We Tamils' (*Naam Tamilar*) the party was unable to match with the Congress or DMK in terms concrete ideology or a popular leader. In 1967 assembly election the founder of the party merged it with the DMK. The second experiment of having a political party of Nadars also failed.

Later in 1990, taking a clue from the Dalits, Vanniar and Maravars the younger elements of the community headed by one Mr. Karate Selvin Nadar formed a political party and named it as Kamarajar- Aditanar Kazhaham. In order to consolidate the Nadar vote bank the leader and members of the party indulged in violent activities and agitations, which ultimately led to the death of its founder leader Mr. Karate Selvin Nadar in a bomb blast near Palaymkottai central jail. With his death the party started declining.

Since the Nadars are involved in business activities, majority of them are not directly interested in political activities. Now the political identity and affiliation of the caste are spread into various political parties. The respondents' political affiliation and their perception on who can be a better political allies for Nadars are discussed below.

Respondents affiliation to political parties

In response to a question about the respondents' political affiliation, the data presented in Table No. 7.1 shows how the members of caste were influenced by the political parties. The Nadar vote bank in the sample villages was mostly shared by the Dravidian parties like AIADMK (20.6%) DMK (11.7%) and the MDMK (5.5%) followed by the congress - I (19.4%) and the Tamil Manila Congress (13.3%). an offshoot of congress formed

during 1995 parliamentary election. The main reason for the Nadars dominance in congress and Dravidian parties was the presence of prominent Nadars in the leadership of these parties. The late Sri. Kamaraj Nadar was a prominent figure in congress and became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and subsequently the president of AICC. Similarly the Self-Respect movement and Justice party was headed by Sri. Soundrapandian of Pattiveeranpatti. Nadar leaders like Chi. Pa. Aditanar, A.V.P. Asaithambi played prominent role in DMK party. The Janata Dal was also a popular party among the Nadars. Twenty-three (12.8%) respondents identified themselves with the party and most of them were the followers of Sri K. Kamaraj. The Nadars political party, Kamarajar-Aditanar Kazhakam (KAK), formed by late Karate Selvin Nadar of Tirunelveli attracted a meager 12 (6.7%) respondents, mostly the younger members of the community. The middle aged and aged farmers do not have a good opinion about the party, its leaders and the followers. Also, the well to do farmers of Nadar community were not happy with the party. The data also revealed that except one very big farmer, none of the middle and big farmers had affiliation with the party. The communist parties (both CPI and CPM) were not familiar with the Nadars of the sampled villages; only 4 (2.2%) respondents, an agricultural labour, two marginal farmers and a lone small farmer had an affiliation with the communist parties. They were also not active in the party's affairs. The Nadars, irrespective of their economic status, were mostly blended with the capitalistic bent of mind. Therefore, the left-wing ideals were really anathema to them.

TABLE NO. 7.1

RESPONDENTS AFFILIATION TO POLITICAL PARTIES

Political Parties	Category of Farmers and Laborers						Total
	Agril. labor	Marginal farmer	Small farmer	Middle farmer	Big farmer	Very Big farmer	
Cong -I	07 (19.4)	04 (11.1)	03 (8.3)	06 (25.0)	08 (33.3)	07 (29.2)	35 (19.4)
Tamil Manila Congress	05 (13.8)	03 (8.3)	04 (11.1)	3 (12.5)	05 (20.8)	04 (16.7)	24 (13.3)
CPI/CPM	01 (2.8)	02 (5.6)	1 (2.8)	0	0	0	04 (2.2)
BJP	02 (5.6)	03 (8.3)	04 (11.1)	01 (4.2)	0	02 (8.2)	12 (6.7)
Janata Dal	04 (11.1)	05 (13.9)	04 (11.1)	03 (12.5)	04 (16.7)	03 (12.5)	23 (12.8)
DMK	03 (8.3)	06 (16.7)	05 (13.9)	02 (8.3)	03 (12.5)	02 (8.3)	21 (11.7)
AIADMK	06 (16.7)	08 (22.2)	08 (22.2)	06 (25.0)	04 (16.7)	05 (20.8)	37 (20.6)
MDMK	02 (5.6)	03 (8.3)	03 (8.3)	02 (8.3)	0	0	10 (5.5)
KAK	05 (13.8)	04 (5.6)	04 (11.1)	0	0	01 (4.2)	12 (6.7)
TVS	01 (2.8)	0	0	01 (4.2)	0	0	02 (1.1)
TOTAL	36 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	180 (100.0)

Cong -I : Indian National congress, CPI/CPM : Communist party of India, Communist party of Marxist, BJP: Bharatiya Hatnata party, DMK: Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, AIADMK: All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, MDMK: Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, KAK: Kamarajar Aditanar Kazhagam, TVS: Tamilaha Vivasayigal Sangam

Respondent opinion about the political allies for Nadars

The data in Table No. 7.2 shows perceptions on the suitable political allies for Nadar Caste. Irrespective of the economic status, a majority of them 54 (30.0%) were of the opinion that in order to come up in the political field, the Nadars have to have tacit understanding with all the backward castes. According to this group, the forward caste

and the dalits could not be trusted. The forward caste people were the dominating type whereas, the dalits were of wavering mentality and, of late, they were misguided by their caste leaders and were perpetrating only violence. Followed by this, 46 (25.6%) of the respondents were of the opinion that the backward castes and dalits put together could be potential ally for the Nadars. The respondents pointed out that the backward castes and dalits put together would constitute around 85% of the total population of Tamil Nadu and no one can challenge this combination. Only 37 (20.5%) of the respondents, mostly from the first three categories, were in favour of having alliance with the dalits. The reason given by them was that the other backward castes were jealous of Nadars' and could not be trusted. Above all, the Nadars concentration was only in few pockets; therefore, in association with the dalits, Nadar could retain their political influence, wherever they were a dominant group. Only 11 (6.1%) were in favor of having alliance with the forward caste people and the reason justified by them was that the 'cultural capital' of the forward caste would help the Nadars to do better business, also help the younger generation to acquire good education and social values. The data further reveal that, as far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, the combination of more backward castes or backward castes in association with dalits would be a formidable force. This is the reason why most of the national and regional political parties leadership were aligning with backward castes or dalits. Since the Nadars are fully involved in business, they would like to get along with all castes. That is why irrespective of the economic background, nearly 18 per cent of the respondents from all categories opted that the combination of all Tamil castes were the suitable allies for Nadar, by ignoring a particular caste, the business of Nadars could be affected.

Table No. 7.2

**RESPONDENTS OPINION ABOUT THE SUITABLE POLITICAL ALLIES
FOR NADARS**

Category	Suitable political allies					Total
	Forward caste	Backward Caste	Dalits	Backward Caste & Dalits	All castes	
Agricultural labor	02 (5.6)	10 (27.0)	09 (25.0)	07 (22.2)	07 (19.4)	36 (100.0)
Marginal farmer	03 (8.3)	09 (25.0)	05 (13.9)	10 (27.8)	09 (25.0)	36 (100.0)
Small farmer	0	11 (30.6)	10 (27.8)	12 (33.3)	03 (8.3)	36 (100.0)
Middle farmer	01 (4.2)	06 (25.0)	05 (20.8)	08 (33.3)	04 (16.7)	24 (100.0)
Big farmer	02 (8.4)	08 (33.3)	03 (12.5)	05 (20.8)	06 (25.0)	24 (100.0)
Very Big farmer	03 (12.5)	10 (41.7)	05 (20.8)	03 (12.5)	03 (12.5)	24 (100.0)
Total	11 (6.1)	54 (30.0)	37 (20.5)	46 (25.6)	32 (17.8)	180 (100.0)

Although the Nadars vote bank decides nine parliamentary constituencies and approximately sixty assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu, but it is unable to have a separate political identity like the Vanniars, Dalits and Thevars. Some of the elderly respondents felt, since Nadars were more interested in business, they did not want to invest their time and money in forming a political party'. Being a business community they did not want to earn enmity from anyone. As one of my respondents puts it, 'the major political parties in Tamil Nadu always give adequate representation to our community and take care of our interest, that is why our community is not worried about the political identity building exercise. Since leaders like Kamaraj, Soundrapandian and Aditanar had given the caste enough familiarity in the field of politics; we can survive with it for another hundred years' (Interview with Thangasami on 26.1.98).

Temple Entry

After the success of the first phase of the social struggle directed towards the liberation of womenfolk in south Travancore, there emerged a series of communal riots between Nadars **and** Maravas in Tamil Nadu. The cleavage between the different castes is much **more marked** in the Nadar-Maravar relationship. Instigated by **the** higher-class people, the Maravas rose against the Nadars. This conflict lasted from **1861 to 1899** ceaselessly in different areas.

The assertion of religious equality was by no means a simple issue, as the Hindu Nadars found much to their disarray. Under the Act of XX, 1863, when the British decided to transfer the supervision of Hindu temples to individuals and committees, the Nadars wished to become the members of such committees, even as they were not allowed entry into the temples. In Tanjore, the Poriayar Nadars were very powerful in the temple administration and they fought with the subordinate court to get the membership. The Nadars not affected by the Christianity in southern Tamil Nadu made tremendous efforts to have the privilege of Temple entry.

The temple entry agitation that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century in various parts of Tamil Nadu and the neighboring southern Travancore was an instance of self-assertion that characterized the identity building exercise of the Nadars. Violent struggles that broke out in Aruppukottai (1860), Tiruchendur (1872), Madurai (1874, 1890), Kamudi (1897), Sivakasi (1899) and other places like Srivilliputhur, Tiruthangal, and Kalugumalai provided opportunities to the Nadars to assert their caste identity on par with the upper caste Hindus.

Court battles and communal riots

The Nadar court battles and their involvement in communal riots at various points of time were also significant resources in the construction of a caste related identity. Reaction against the Kshatriya movement, which lasted from 1861 to 1899, was staged at different places reacting to different provocations. The Nadars preferred court decisions so that their actions will be legalized.

The Nadar - Marvar riots in Aruppukottai (1861), Kamudi riots (1888), Sivakasi (1899), The Nadars- Brahmins and Vellalas temple entry riot of Tiruchendur (1872), the Tiruthangal temple entry riot (1876), the *Meenakshiamman* Temple entry (1874), all these gave a new sense of identity to the caste.

The Maravars were afraid that allowing Nadars to gain status by using palanquin in their marriage processions, or by letting them enter the temples, would not only question their authority but could also disturb the social equilibrium.

Though Nadars could not achieve temple entry through their struggles waged for about half a-century, the struggles formed a distinct step in the course of their rapid progress in asserting their caste identity and forging solidarity. Denied entry into the temples controlled by the caste Hindus, they constructed temples exclusively for the Nadars. which latter became their caste identity symbols in the religious field. The *Amuthalingeshwax* temple at Aruppukottai, the *Mariamman* temple and *Veilukandamman* temple at Virudhunagar, the *Muthumariamman* temple at Kamudi, the *Mariamman* and *Bhadrakaliamman* temple at Sivakasi, the number of *Ayyanax* temples at Tiruchendur region could be cited as suitable examples in this regard. Individual Nadars donated liberally for such activities.

Educational Institutions

The most important aspect of the caste association (NMS) was setting up of educational institutions. The first educational institution was set up in 1889 at Virudhunagar i.e., *Kshatriya Vidhyasala*. Today Nadars own more than 500 educational institutions in Tamil Nadu. In addition to imparting education to the poor and the needy these institutions also perform the function of developing and consolidating caste identity and community consciousness among the people. To promote education, the caste introduced innovative schemes like lottery, *Kalvi Thanthai*, *Kalvi Thai*, *nallasiriayar* award, educational bureau, scholarship scheme etc.

Backward Class Movement

In 1917, the Nadars submitted a petition to the Governor of Madras, praying that the Nadars be removed from the list of depressed classes. But after realizing the importance of being in the list of backward classes the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* urged the government to include Nadar community into the list of backward classes. The Nadars decided to avail fee concession, reservation in educational institutions and government jobs. The caste as whole made concerted steps to build a backward class identity. In December, 1952 in Sivakasi. at the twenty second Nadar conference they 'resolved to request the government of India, the Government of Tamil Nadu and the Government of Travancore -Cochin to include the Nadar community in the list of backward classes.²⁵

The caste used the Self-Respect movement and Justice party to achieve this target. Soundrapandian. the Nadar representative in the Legislative Council, argued for their caste's demand. Both the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* and the *Dakshina Mara Nadar Sangam* submitted responses to the Backward Classes Commission's questionnaire. But

it was only in January 1957, the Madras government placed the 'Shanar' community among the list of 'most backward classes' for educational concessions. In 1963, all the sub-castes of Nadars were treated as backward classes. Nadars movement for inclusions in the backward classes list was yet another example of how the caste identity was built in changing circumstances.

Nadar Diaspora

Since the late nineteenth century, Nadars of Tamil Nadu have been going abroad for a variety of reasons, although employment opportunities and financial gain were the primary. Majority of these Nadar migrants were designated as Tamils. By the middle of the 20th century they formed communities and enclaves all over the world including U.S.A, Malaysia, Burma, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Singapore, etc. They were engaged in the plantation industries as laborers and occasionally worked as businessmen. Nadar out-migration increased after World War II and India's independence.

Since 1950, the migrated Nadars have been establishing permanent residence, acquiring citizenship, raising families, building businesses and establishing caste networks outside Tamil Nadu and India. This activity of establishing caste associations in alien soil gives new identity to the caste as a whole. The Nadars diaspora through its overseas caste association helps the caste in many ways. Some of the Nadar caste association established in other countries by Nadar Diaspora includes, the *Hindu Nadar Mahajana Sabha*, Rangoon (1918), *Indhia Kshastriyakula Nadar Mahajana Sangam*, Ceylon (1918), *The Nadar Paripalana Sangam*, Malaysia (1925), and the *All United States of America Nadar Mahajana Sangam* (1991).

All these overseas association are treated as the branch offices of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam, located in Madurai. The objectives of these associations are similar to the NMS, Madurai. The All USA Nadar Mahajan Sangam listed its objectives as 1) to promote the social, material and general welfare of the Nadars settled in USA 2) to abreast them about all the latest developments of the caste in Tamil Nadu 3) to help them in education, employment, business avenues and other walks of life and to collect the *mahamai* to strengthen the association activities in USA.

A software engineer working in USA hailing from Tirunelveli told me at the time of my fieldwork that 'these associations will help us retain our caste identity within the macro identity of being Indian (National identity) and Tamils. In the United States it also provides us a sense of belongingness. Since it provides information related to education, job opportunities, marriage alliances, other developments relating to the caste in Tamil Nadu, it acts as our custodian in the foreign lands' (Interview with Wellington Babuon 14th Jan, 1997).

Symbols of Caste Identity

Caste identity is composed of symbols, which are constructed historically to assert the history and superiority of the caste. The symbols are generally ambiguous and in the history of a specific caste, they may be used selectively and in different ways to construct the identity. Identity symbols are self-conscious formulations. They represent creative efforts to draw from the conglomerations of political and religious imageries and work to synthesize a meaningful conceptualization of caste identity.

In the case of Nadars, there are many symbols that have become popular over a period of time and they act as caste identity markers. Accordingly these symbols are categorized as past and present symbols.

Past Identities

The past identity markers of Nadar caste are mostly of traditional, ascribed and communal in character and they are unique to the Nadars alone. They are 1) Palmyra Tree 2) *Uravinmuraish* 3) *Pettaish* 4) Religious Symbols and 5) Caste Titles.

1. Palmyra Tree

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Nadars of southeastern Tinnevely lived almost wholly off the products of palmyra. Vast majority of them were engaged in climbing the palmyra tree.

The cultivation of palmyra and toddy topping were the predominant modes of employment and means of subsistence (Ringeltaube: 1806). This was the occupational identity of Nadar caste as a whole. Through out Tamil Nadu wherever the palmyra was to be found, the Nadars were the ones who tapped the trees. Some of the palmyra trees are exclusively used for producing liquor i.e., the fermented toddy. Toddy tapping could be carried out only from some trees, whereas jaggery production was far more widespread. The palmyra tree products sustained them for six months (the tapping season from March to September)²⁶ and for rest of the year they worked as agricultural laborer. To the south of Tambraparni, down along the coast to the tip of Kanyakumari, 80 to 90 percent of the Nadars were involved in toddy tapping. Therefore, palmyra became an inevitable part of their occupation in the earlier days.

The 'Palm poem' *Tala Villasam*, by the Tamil poet Arunachalam of Kumbakonam, extols Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, and narrates the super natural origin of the palmyra and its eight hundred and one uses. In a remote age, man, as he grew discontent with the creation of Brahma, supplicated Siva to supply one thing which would at once feed the hungry, heal the sick and enrich the people, who, for want of it were 'trembling like water on the leaf of lotus'. Siva responded to man's entreaty and directed Brahma to create the palmyra. The tree was dedicated to Ganesha, the elephant headed son of lord Siva. It was praised as the *Kalpa* tree, the Hindu tree of life. It was enthroned as one of the five trees of the Hindu paradise. According to a Tamil proverb²⁷ 'the palmyra lives a thousand years and lasts another thousand years when it dies'.

The most highly valued product of the palmyra is the saccharine sap or juice of the tree. The unfermented juice, called 'sweet toddy' is used without cooking or preparation and is staple in the diet of the Nadar, who takes it early in the morning before beginning their working day. When the juice of palmyra is allowed to ferment, a process

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that takes only a few hours, a sweet liquor or toddy is produced. Both sweet and hard toddy were sold locally for cash by the tappers. But in the regions of the palmyra forest, where the industry was the foundation of economic life, most of the palmyra juice was boiled into hard, coarse sugar called jaggery or into palmyra candies. This hard black jaggery cake was often eaten, as midday meal by the tappers, but most of it was sold either as a low-grade sugar or for the distillation of arrack, the hot country gin.

The Nadar tappers attached a lot of value to the palmyra tree. The tappers can never leave the trees unattended, even for a day. As a dairy cow must not be left unmilked, so the palmyra - proverbially the "Shanars cow" - will cease to yield if

untapped. So, palmyra trees had become invariable for their occupational or economic identity and was a symbol of their caste identity in the past.

The incongruity between their economic position and low social status led the Nadars to attempt to disassociate themselves from the community's traditional occupation. Even by mid nineteenth century, the palmyra tree was seen as a curse than a boon given by the almighty.

Although many Nadars, particularly the merchants, might still shy away from the sight of palmyra, the community, as it continued to rise and to gain the respect of the traditionally higher castes became more self-assured. Indeed, Alexander Gnanamuthu, in his presidential address in the 1960 Nadar conference said

' the palmyra palm is associated with our community, I feel proud of its symbolic association. It is the tree which grows tall, straight and heavenwards' (Quoted in Hardgrave, 1969: 140)

M. Immanuel, who has done intensive research on Nadars' lineage, identified palmyra tree as the Nadar cultural and occupational symbol and said that 'it is a unifying common symbol'. According to him, palmyra products like palm leaf was used for storing traditional knowledge and the palm juice, which was highly nutritive was used in those days by all classes of people, from the ruler to the ruled. The *chera* king's (considered to be a Nadar king) guardian tree was palmyra tree. His daily decorative garland was made from palm tree. As a ritual in ancient times, the military grades of *chola* armies were nourished on palm products like *nonku* (tender palm fruit), *panampalam* (ripened palm fruit), and *panam kilangv* (the germinating sapling) before starting of any war. Palm juice was used for rituals and also as a privileged drink amongst the kings and nobles. It was only in later times that this drink and the

occupation of palmyra tapping were treated as of low status, on the imposition of new *agamas* by the Aryans (Immanuel: 2002: 70)

The relation between palmyra tree and the Nadar goddess *Mahakali* or *Bhadrakali* is inseparable. The palm tree is the abode of the goddess, who is known as the nourishing mother or sustainer of Nadars. It is said the goddess as the trainer of martial art to the Nadar *Kshatriyas* and the Nadars learnt it from her after offering the *Amrit* extracted from the female palm on a full moon day (Itmanuel, 2002: 71).

The 120 names attributed to palm juice in literature surely gives it a fit position to the status of celestial food which it very well deserves (see Appendix - 4). When I interviewed Harikrishnan of the *Kamarajar Aditanar Kazaham* (a political party of Nadars), he narrated the importance of palmyra tree as a Nadar caste symbol. It even forms part of their party's flag. The party also decided to use palmyra tree as their election symbol. The palmyra products like sweet toddy, fermented toddy, leaves, timber, jaggery, fruits, etc were the inevitable products in Nadars day-to-day life. The Nadar settlements mostly thrive on these products. Hence, it has become their cultural and occupational symbol. With the arrival of sugar mills, and Nadars occupational mobility to trade related activities, the symbol has lost its value. With their material advancement, the association with palmyra is considered as inferiority. This is why the Nadars past agrarian symbol has lost its prominence.

2. *Uravinmurai* (Local Caste Association,)

A key factor in the Nadar strategy for advancement has been their system of internal organization. This consists of *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* and a network of town and village level caste associations called *uravinmurais*. According to Templeman (1996)

uravu refers to consanguinity or relationship and *murai* to organization, order, manners or legality. Literally it means 'the way in which Nadars improve themselves by ordering their relationships' or more concisely, 'an association of relatives'. These local associations or '*uravinmuraïs*' traditionally had quasi-governmental functioning, ranging from raising, training, and deploying self-defence militia, building and operating school systems. The institutions of *mahimai* and *uravinmurai* are considered as the fundamental institutions of new unity of the Nadars. Confronted with a great majority of non-Nadars in the early years of the nineteenth century, the Nadars sought a tight and cohesive organization for the protection of the community. In order to maximize the unity within the community, the Nadars created the *uravinmuraïs* or caste council.

Each Nadar trader was required to contribute a portion of his income as 'common good funds' or *Mahamai* (literally 'to glorify oneself'). The Nadar caste councils controlling the *mahamai* funds were composed of the head of each household in the community, which came to be known as the *uravinmurai*. The *uravinmurai* was the corporate power of the community. Its power was absolute. The organization of the *uravinmurai* varied between the towns and the villages. Participation in the *uravinmurai* was limited to the married head of each household. The hereditary head man of each *uravinmurai* is known as *Ambalakaran* or *Nattanmai*. There was also a hereditary secretary of the *uravinmurai*. The substance of power, however, lay in the hand of a committee. Each member in the committee is known as *muraikarar*- literally 'one who hold the turn'. The number of *muraikarar* varied in each town. Each *muraikarar* held the position of president for a week and then handed over the accounts and cash to the next in line. As the *mahamai* was the foundation of the *uravinmurai*, the

payment was watched closely. If any doubt were raised as to proper payments, the *uravinmurai* would exercise its right to examine man's accounts. A failure to pay *mahimai* would double the tax.

Temple was the seat of the *uravinmurai* in many Nadar settlements. Some villages had a meeting place specifically for the *uravinmurai*. Meetings were held both in ordinary and extra ordinary sessions. Although there was no stipulated date, ordinary meetings were usually held at least once in a month. In the evenings, few hours before the appointed time for meetings, the barber in his role as the town crier would go through the streets calling out the members of *uravinmurai*. Each member was bound to attend or would be charged a fine. The order of business began with the reading of accounts followed by an open session for the hearing of complaints.

The *uravinmurai* sought to keep all disputes within the community. In cases involving morality or minor criminal offences, the *uravinmurais* would accept jurisdiction, if it was possible to avoid police intervention. If a charge of defamation, or adultery, for example, was brought against someone within the community, notice was given to the accused to appear in the next meeting to defend himself. In an adultery case, the woman would be brought in. The accused brought before the *uravinmurai* and standing on three lines drawn in saffron was obliged to tell the truth. Any man of the *uravinmurai* could question the accused and witnesses. In important cases, special invitations might be issued to Nadar leaders from outside the village or town.

The court would be opened by the headman, who would seek permission to read the complaint. If a compromise could not be reached between the parties, the assembly was open for discussion. The discussion would end when all the relevant points in the

case had been made. The views expressed by prominent persons of the community were often the decisive factors. When a decision was reached, the headman would be informed, and the verdict and sentence would be announced by him before the *uravinmurai*.

In cases of sexual molestation or adultery viewed as most serious offences the sentence was a public beating before the *uravinmurai*. The Nadar barber executed the sentence, beating the accused with sandals. For a grave crime such as theft, the sentence might demand that the accused run a distance, some hundred feet or so, and return. On both sides, the young men of the village would stand to give him a blow as he went by. Minor crimes were normally punished by admonition and fine. Fines were initially set at a staggering figure. The accused would then prostrate himself before the assembly. If the elders considered him sufficiently repentant, the figure would gradually be lowered with successive prostration. The final figure must be paid immediately. If payment was not made, the whole case would be reopened and a more severe verdict reached. In such rare cases, the *uravinmurai* would go to the house of the accused and remove the door and all the movables.

The most severe punishment was used only when the *uravinmurai* was defied particularly in instances when someone thought of himself as wielding sufficient power to refuse to comply with the orders of the *uravinmurai*. If he refused to prostrate himself before the *uravinmurai* member, he would be ostracized from the community. No Nadar would be permitted to talk to him, to give him fire, water or food. He would be denied the right to participate in community life, including the services of the temple. Shops would be closed to him and the barber and washer man would refuse him their services.

A resolution to outcaste would be prepared and the same would be sent to nearby *uravinmurais*. The ostracized family will be forced to move away. In the case of sexual molestation, the accused would be beaten and his head shaved and covered with cow dung, and in this condition, he would have to walk around the village six times, sufferings the insults of the town people.

Whenever the community is threatened, an extraordinary meeting of *uravinmurai* would be convened. All shops were closed during the continuous deliberations, and no man would dare to leave the assembly. If there was a dispute between two *uravinmurais*, or between two Nadars of two villages, a joint session might be held either a meeting of the two whole assemblies or of deputized elders of each.

In each case of civil disputes within the community, the *uravinmurai* would seek to refer the case to a committee of mediators, prominent persons especially selected and acceptable to both parties. All attempts would be made to affect a compromise in order to keep the dispute out of courts.

As the wealth of the Nadar merchant communities grew during the nineteenth century, the common fund of *mahamai* was used for the welfare of the community as a whole. The poor among the caste were fed and clothed, and jobs were secured for those with able bodies. Business failures were prevented with considered use of *mahamai* funds. Wells and public buildings were constructed, and in each of the towns a *Mariamman* temple was constructed to the community deity. Perhaps the most important use of *mahamai* funds was in the establishment of schools by the Nadar *uravinmurais*. The first of the Nadar schools, the *Kshatriya Vidyasala* High School, was established by the Virudhunagar *uravinmurai* in 1885. and it was one of the first schools in Tamil Nadu

open to children of all castes? The school in Kamudi was opened by the local *uravinmurai* in 1889.³⁰ The *kshatriya* high school at Aruppukottai was established in 1895.³¹

The increasing differentiation within the Nadar community and the concomitant decline in the differentiation between the Nadars, as a community, and other communities has affected the organization of the *uravinmurai*. In 1950, a speaker at the Nadar conference said, 'the outstanding advancement of our community in social, political, and commercial fields has been mainly due to the establishments of the *uravinmurais* and the collection of *mahimai*. But, now unfortunately, disunity and dissatisfaction seems to have set in. The *uravinmurai* in most towns and villages are not able to command as much respect and confidence as in the past'.³² At the 1965 conference, a speaker warned 'the material factor - of rich and poor has been an increasing factor in the disruption of the *Uravinmurai*. It has become pronounced in recent years. People will not only obey the *uravinmurai* leaders if they are rich, because of jealousies. The discipline is gone' (Mahajanam 1965 : 28)

Most of the *uravinmurai* since 1947 have registered as societies and have adopted formal constitutions. Speaking of these changes, Justice S. Ganesan said in an interview:

"the traditional monolith of the Nadar *uravinmurai* is gone and the Nadar Mahajana Sangam find that each year there has been a rise in the number of petitions it receive with reference to internal disputes even as the number of petitions concern with inter-caste disputes has declined. The Nadars remain one of the most caste conscious of Tamil communities, and cliqueishness is hardly less notorious today than in years past; but the changes are evident and are reflected in the political history of the Nadar community' (Quoted by Hardgrave 1969: 172).

3. *Pettais* (Fortified Enclosures)

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Nadars of southeastern Tinnevely made a living almost wholly off the products of Palmyra. Later, economic independence and mobility enabled them to respond positively and effectively to the economic changes that were to come. The Nadar traders would travel with their wares among the weekly markets, dealing with jaggery, dried fish, salt and products of small garden plots.

Nadar trade was confined to small areas, owing to difficulties of transportation and the dangers of incessant wars and dacoity which precluded the development of commerce.³³ Internal trade was further restricted by duties levied by the Poligars on goods passing through their estates. Transportation was so expensive and hazardous that it was restricted to articles of small bulk and high value.

British rule brought the abolition of internal customs to the southern districts, opening way for the expansion and development of trade. It also established effective policing against the dacoities of hereditary highwaymen. With peace and relative security of travel, Nadar traders now loaded the side packs of their bullocks and pushed northward into the Maravar country with jaggery, dried fish and salt. For the first time, a great number of Nadars began to move into the region carrying large stocks of wares.

Many Nadars acquired carts for more extensive trade, and in their return journeys brought back the cloth of Muslim weavers, cottonseeds, sheep, bullocks and tobacco. Travel in the Maravar country (as the regions to the north were then known) was by no means completely safe. The Nadars established *pettais*, fortified enclosures in which they could safely keep their goods. As there was no safety on the roads for traders

during those days, they constructed *pettais* on trade routes, wherein, safely, they could take rest or stay **for the** night with their carts and bullocks. Need of safety was not only the reason for construction of *Pettais*. The frequent **and** rapid movement of goods from one **region to another involved the** engagement of larger number of men and material, carts **and** bullocks. Therefore, the increase in the number of *Pettais* during the British rule was, not only for security but because of the increase in trade. In the beginning, trade was mainly carried on in jaggery, dried fish and salt. Then, they began trading in cotton and groceries. So in the beginning of the twentieth century, there were roughly 156 Nadar *Pettais* (See Appendix - 5)- The Nadars who utilized these *pettais* were required to **contribute part** of their income to the upkeep of these centers. It was thus that after **the British rule** was established in the south, the Nadars achieved rapid progress in their commercial transactions. Around the *pettais*, small shops were established, and increasing numbers of Nadar traders migrated with their families to build their houses and businesses around the new trade centers. Nadar movements, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were determined by the distribution of *the pettais*.

The *pettais* around which the Nadar towns grew were originally built and maintained through a tax levied on all goods bought and sold. Each trader using the facilities of the *pettai* was required to contribute a portion of his income as "common good funds" or *Mahamai*. From these funds, the Sivakasi Nadars constructed *pettais* for the use of their traders in ninety-six towns and villages in Tamil Nadu and Travancore. There was an enormous increase of Nadar *pettais* in almost every taluks of the Tinnevely District.

4. Religious Symbols

The Nadars have many religious symbols like the *kuladeivam* (family deity), Ayyavali, Lord Ayyanar, Mother Goddess worship, etc. Among all the religious symbols, caste deities of Ayyanar and the mother goddess (Mariamman) are the two symbols which are prevalent in all the Nadar dominated regions and sub-castes. Therefore, these two symbols, **taken to be** as their primary religious symbols are discussed here in detail,

a) The Ayyanar cult

Ayyanar temples are found in almost all Nadars settlements. Ayyanar is their principal and sole male divinity. There are two opinions about the Ayyanar's pre-eminence. Oppert (1893) consider as an autochthonous or Dravidian God, recipient of blood offerings, the chief among the demons, a masculine counterpart of the mother goddess represented by the village goddesses. For Whitehead, (1921), Ayyanar is a Brahmanic God, to whom such sacrifices are not offered and who is opposed in this matter to the village goddesses, whom he considers to be Dravidian. According to the oral tradition, he was born from Shiva who was seduced by the feminine form of Vishnu. He had assumed in order to free him from a threatening *Asura*. Some say that the Brahmans invented this 'disgusting' story in order to degrade Ayyanar.

Ayyanar is represented either as a warrior, on foot or riding a white elephant or a horse or is seated between his two wives, carrying a scepter and wearing a meditation band. The seven mothers (or seven virgins) are sometimes mentioned as present in his temple. **Outside are found terracotta** horses. These are offered to the god and his suite for his mainly **nocturnal rounds**. The escort is composed either of the god's generals or

vassals or of demons. The troop riding in the mid-air in the night recalls the well-known theme of the wild hunt. But, here it is a matter of watching the village land, of which Ayyanar is first of all the guardian. That is why Ayyanar is considered a *Kaval Deivam* (Territorial God who safeguards the village territory). He is also, occasionally concerned with rain. The Ayyanar temple is usually situated on the bank of the reservoir in which rainwater is gathered for irrigation purposes.

There are many temples of Ayyanar throughout Tamil Nadu. Yet the temples located in *Maana Veera Vala Nadu* (The original home tract of Nadars) are considered to be the important one. Among the temples located in this arid land region, the famous one and of the first order of importance is the *Arunjunai Katha Ayyanar* (one who safeguards the stream located in the arid land). There are 12 Ayyanar temples with different names: 1) *Arunjanai Katha Ayyanar* 2) *Karukkvel Ayyanar* 3) *Elambalai Ayyanar* 4) *Vanangamudi Ayyanar* 5) *Kunnimalai Ayyanar* 6) *Thoothuval Ayyanar* 7) *Maanadu Ayyanar (Kaliyuga Varathar)* 8) *Thalaiyuni Ayyanar* 9) *Ponvandu Ayyanar*, 10) *Palavesha Muthayyanar* 11) *Manithamalai Ayyanar*, and 12) *Alliyoothu Ayyanar or Kalvalai Ayyanar* (Dasarathan,1996: 53)

Among the twelve temples, the two which are very popular and worshipped by a majority of the Nadars are *Arunjunai Katha Ayyanar* and *Karkuvel Ayyanar*. When the Nadars migrated from the *Maana Veera Valanadu*, many of the temples lost their importance. But, when they improved their economic status, the temples were renovated and their past glory was restored.

The Ayyanar cult finds mention and description in the *valangai malai* composed in 1600 AD, *Venkala Rajan Kathai* (1606). *Perumal Swami* story in (1623) and the

Kumar a Swami Nadar Kathai (1678). Further, folk songs, folk palm-leaf manuscripts and the stories circulated in the region too relate the significance of the cult.

Ayyanar as territorial God

According to available literature in Tamil on the Ayyanar cult, most of the temples were located in the hilly tracts. As and when people settled, they erected Ayyanar statues at the village entrance. Even today, many Ayyanar temples are located outside the villages, particularly in the Nadar dominated settlements. Since the temples of the goddesses are located in center of the villages and considered as powerful, many of the Ayyanar temples had lost their importance.

The northern Nadar settlements too housing Ayyanar temples. Generally the Ayyanar temples have Ayyanar along with his warriors (*Parivara Deivam*). In earlier days, Ayyanar statues were carved in stone. But in latter stages the statues were designed according to the rules (*sastras*) of architecture. Ayyanar is usually flanked by his two wives on the right *Pooranai amman* and on left Putkalai (*Porkodi*). Both wives are carrying a male baby on their hips. Most of the Ayyanar temples located in the Nadar dominated *Maana veera valanadu* have this style. Except that he had two wives and two sons, no other details are available about Ayyanar family.

The devotees of Ayyanar believes that since he is a territorial god, he uses the horse for his rounds (*bavani*). He uses his horses for hunting too. In addition to these animals, his gang consists of his friends and the goddesses. In the Ayyanar temples, the statue of Ayyanar is never alone. There were twenty-one other subservient gods and goddesses placed in Ayyanar temple. These are considered to constitute one family.

There are three famous Ayyanar temples in South Tamil Nadu i.e., the Nadars dominated Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts. They are *Arunjunai Katha Ayyanar*, *Karkuvel Ayyanar* and *Chorimuthayyanar* temples. All these temples are managed by the Nadars. *Arunjunaikatha Ayyanar* temple is exclusively managed by eight Nadar families of *Mela Puthukudi* village on rotation basis. The *Arunjunai Katha Ayyanar* temple festival is celebrated every year in the Tamil month of *Panguni* (March - April). It is a ten days festival starting with a flag hoisting on the first day and the remaining days are marked with cultural programmes and entertainments. The devotees generally stay in the temple premises. The tenth day's programmes generally coincide with the full moon day. Religious lectures on Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranic stories, debate, orchestra, folk arts like *Villuppattu*, history of Ayyanar cult etc. marks the functions. Most of the functions are sponsored by the migrated Nadar businessmen and well to do Nadar business houses. On the tenth day, the statue of *Arunjunai kata Ayyanar* will be taken on procession on a special chariot. The procession continues through out the night, where people offer coconuts, banana and camphor to lord Ayyanar- The entire festival will be concluded with a feast (Dasarathan.1996: 77)

The *Arunjunai Katha Ayyanar* became family deity (*Kuladeivam*) for many Nadar families. Many of the well to do Nadars attribute his boon and blessings for their betterment in business, agriculture and over all progress in life.

Many Nadars migrated to other places and found it convenient to establish new Ayyanar Shrine at their place of settlement. When a new Ayyanar Shrine is established, soil from the old Shrine is sprinkled over the site on which the new Ayyanar Temple is to be built and a new image is then set up and worshipped.

The Ayyanar temples located in Nadar dominated northern towns **like** Sivakasi, Kovilpatti, Sattur, Viruthunagar, Rajapalayam, Tirumangalam, Madurai were **built over** the little **quantity of soil** (*Pidimari*) brought all along from the Nadar dominated *teri* region. The **Nadar clan** (*Kuttam*) which worship the Ayyanar of the *teri* regions are more in number in **the** Northern Nadar settlements. The important clans (*Kuttam*) are named as *Thathan*, *Allathaam*, *Siluvan*, *Baggyakkaran*, *Pavali*, *Vaadian*, *Chimini*, *Sivanandian*, *Sudi*, *Mulukkada* and *Edamari*. These clan members proudly claim *Arunjunai Katha Ayyanar* as their *Kula deivam*, (family deity) and actively participate in the ten days festival. At Sivakasi five clan members (Ivar Pangalikal) own a *Arunjunai Katha Ayyanar* temple located at Pavalian Street. According to the available oral tradition, two hundred years back, these five clan members constructed the *Arunjunai Katha Ayyanar* temple at *Manaveera Valanadu*. (Dasarathan,1996: 67).

Some of the prominent Ayyanars worshipped by the Northern Nadars are *Vanamoorthilinga Ayyanar*, *Chembukutti Ayyanar*, *Neerkarthalinga Ayyanar*, *Hariharaputra Ayyanar*, *Arichandra Ayyanar* and *Adaikalamkatha Ayyanar*.

Of the three sample villages of this study, the dryland and garden land villages have Ayyanar temples in the out - skirts of the villages are exclusively managed by the Nadar *Uravinmuraish*. The Adityans have done a lot of charitable work for the *Anmjunaikatha Ayyanar* temple and *Karkuvel Ayyanar* Shrines located in the *teri* region. In the wetland, village, due to the influence of 'Ayyavazhi' movement, the Ayyanar worship is totally absent. The preachings of Aiyar Vaikuntar emphasise non-idol worship. In the other two villages, the temples have all religious celebrations on par with any Ayyanar **temple** of **the** Nadar settlements and the expenditure is met by collecting tax

from all the Nadar households. The priests of these temples are from the non-brahmin Pandaram caste.

b) Amman Goddess

The cult of mother goddess involves a belief in the supremacy of female energy with the creative power in cosmic process (Gupta, 1999: 3). Mother goddesses are identified as Nadar goddesses by the Nadars. There are different images of the mother goddess which are identified by attaching particular names as prefixes to the word amman viz., *Mariamman*, *Kaliamman*, *Mupprariamman*, *Patrakaliamman*, *Chelliamman*, *Kanimariamman*, *Isakkiamman* etc. The symbol of mother goddess is of great antiquity among the Nadars. In the Nadar dominated south Tamil Nadu, there are over 1000 differently named mother goddesses and are exclusively worshipped by the Nadars. However, some of them are open to other castes too without the rights to celebrate the annual festivals (Dasarathan 1993: 17 -19).

The symbol of amman is evocative of health and sickness, of safety and danger. To the believer, any social/moral deviance can anger amman who has the ability to punish him or the entire group. An amman can serve as the home deity, group deity, village deity or the universal deity. The boundaries are established by the believers. The goddesses serve as models of personal, group, or village integrity, incorporating diverse attributes of the human condition.

The symbol of the mother goddess simultaneously denotes the positive and negative aspects of the phenomenal reality, and the believers conduct propitiatory ceremonies for her at both registers of experience. Divinatory rituals are frequently performed to seek answers about future events through her shamans, and the shamans

divine the etiology of human calamities as well as render services to eliminate those calamities. The shamans of Nadar owned amman temples are usually from the non-Brahmin caste known as Pandaram.

Blessings of amman are sought at annual community ceremonies as well as at specific family ceremonies, and her presence is invoked at all times in one form or another to insure the continuation of positive aspect of the phenomenal reality. Mother goddess is also propitiated for the elimination of negative aspect like disease or personal or group misfortunes. These two aspects are represented in the goddess with two trees believed to be her sacred extensions. The neem or margosa tree, which in Indian pharmacology has curing qualities, and the poisonous oleander tree viewed by the believers to be the dual expression of her personality.

The dual attributes of the mother goddess- a benevolent, protecting deity and a malevolent, destroying deity are rooted in experience and in the ethos surrounding femininity which is believed to have the power to do both good and evil.

The symbol of mother goddess synthesizes conceptions of order and expression of disorder, and this is the generic trait for all the differently named mother goddess. The variously named mother goddesses are distinctive in so far as they are associated with particular qualities. Each goddess can be viewed as a particular vehicle of conception or symbol of experience and the number of such symbols and different qualities attributed to them depend on the kinds of historical experiences and differences in the values of different Nadar settlements.

The distinctiveness and differential qualities of mother goddess can be traced historically to the context in which it was erected for a particular goddess. Conflict

among caste brethren is an important reason for erecting new mother goddess temples that are then exclusively maintained by the group, which constructed the temple. The distinctiveness in the qualities of the goddess are due to a particular group consciously attributing such qualities to differentiate itself from other groups and distinguish its goddess from other goddesses.

There is a belief among the Nadars that their original ancestors were the adopted sons of *Kali*. They usually built a temple for *Bhadrakali* wherever they settled down. Even if they migrated from the place, they returned to offer worship at that temple on important occasions. *Valangaimalai*, *Thottukkariamman Kathai* and *Poolamkondalamman Kathai*, the ballads of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries too bestow much importance on *Kali*. The third ballad cited here states that the Nadars who migrated from Krumbur to Agasteeswaram worshiped *Kali* by placing her image in the northwestern corner of the house on a dais.

The ballads like *Bhadrakali* *Pathikam*, *Shri Bhadrakali* *Mulaippari Sindhu* and *Sri Bhadrakali* *Tottira Malax* also indicated that *Kali* was the ancestral deity of Nadars. The Nadars all over Tamil Nadu celebrated a festival of *Kali* (of course with different names) in the Tamil month of *Purattasi* (September - October), the festival coinciding with the *Sakthi* worship known as '*Navarathrf*'. Contributions are collected from all the Nadars of that area for meeting the expenditure incurred in the conduct of the festival. Sweet pongal (sweet rice) is offered to *Kali* along with other offerings. After the rituals are over, the pongal is distributed to all the donors. The goddess *kali* symbolizes the incarnation of *Kottravai*, the ancient Tamil Goddess of war, who protects her devotees and destroys her foes.

Another important female deity of the Nadars is *Mariamman*. Though this deity does not have the same attributes as Kali, she is also worshipped as a protective deity. The study villages have more than one mother goddess temples, and in all the villages one temple is exclusively managed by the Nadar through the local *uravinmurai*. In the wetland village, due to the Ayyavali cult, worshipping of mother goddess has remained insignificant. Only few Nadars visit the temple and manage the affairs, for the Ayyavali cult is against idol worship. In the dryland village, the mother goddess temple (*Muppurariamman*) is more than hundred years old. It is renovated periodically, and the expenditure is borne by the Adityan brothers. Although the temple is open to all castes of Kayamoli village, the festival rights and management are entirely in the hands of Adityans. Every year in the month of June a ten days festival is celebrated with much gaiety. Propitiatory rites are performed on nine nights and the festival culminates on the tenth day with a ceremonial village parade of the idol of *Muppurariamman*. The Adityans living all over Tamil Nadu and elsewhere visit the village and actively participate in the festivities (Dasarathan, 1996: 71). In the gardenland village the mother goddess is known as "*Mariamman*" and her temple is 152 years old, exclusively managed by the Nadar through the local *Uraxinmurai*. The temple committee members are elected every year. The temple has sizeable property in the form of land and buildings. The annual festival of ten days duration is held every year in the Tamil month of *Puratasi* (Sept - Oct.). The festival is known as *Mariamman Pongal*. Usually, the festival is celebrated before the seasonal rain (southeast monsoon). As one elderly Nadar told me, the festival is to appease the goddess to get good rain and safeguard the people from dreaded diseases. The expenditure related to the celebration is collected from all Nadar

households and the amount varies every year. On the tenth day the goddess is taken in a procession in a decorated temple car and the devotees offer their prayers as the car passes through their houses. Unlike the mother goddess temples located in urban areas, fire-walking ritual was not observed in these villages and no animal sacrifices were performed. Although non-vegetarian food was prepared on the next day of the ten-day festival in two of the study villages, the practice of animal sacrifice was missing.

5. Caste title or caste name

The cultural history of Nadar caste provides an example of how *jati* names, *jati* titles and *varna* categories are not only interchangeably used, but also are distinctive emblems of group identity that have different contextual significance (see Rudolph and Rudolph 1967: 36 - 49; Hardgrave Jr. 1969, and Irschick 1969: 277 - 278). In the 19th century, the *jati* group was known widely by its name *shanar*, but at the same time, wealthy and land owning members of the group used the title 'Nadar' which means 'owner of territory'. The name *shanar* was interpreted by the group members as a derivative of Tamil concept '*Shantror*' (literati-nobility). Over the years, the *jati* title Nadar became the preferred *jati* name of the group. Members of the group also claimed to be Aryans (*Kshatriya*). They established a link between Nadar and the *varna* category *Kshatriya* (warrior), but in the 20th century, they rejected their claims to Aryan identity and gave up using *Kshatriya* as a status model. The rejection of *Kshatriya* model, however, did not minimize the importance of *jati* title Nadar. The title has become widely accepted name virtually for all of them.

Jati names may be defined as labels of group identity that refer to or represent and connote endogamy and ritual purity/ pollution. Members of a *jati* group, with distinctive

name, conceive themselves as having common historical or biological heritage. Thus, it reflects a kin based identity. The function of *jati* titles, on the other hand, is largely political. That is they are expressions of authority within a *jati* group and between *jati* groups. *Jati* groups that use the same title do not have a common ceremonial-complex. But, in some cases, a title can be considered as the larger category within which several endogamous units are incorporated. These titles do not generally indicate the ritual boundaries of endogamy.

The use of *jati* titles is an indicator of power relationships. It denotes the authority of a group or several groups. A title is also used frequently as a term of reference and address. In that case, it acquires the meaning and function of that *jati* name becoming a label of endogamy. So, new titles emerge with it.

The political authority of an individual or group in the village is expressed in the use of *jati* title or political symbols that are locally accepted vehicles of leadership in decision making.

Jatis have a multiplicity of labels - *jati* names, *jati* titles, *varna* categories. These labels are often used interchangeably. So it is difficult to identify the basic endogamous groups and relate them to larger categories of social classification of the various labels. Caste titles have often been interpreted by scholars as local or regional versions of the all-India *varna* categories. They are related to the upward mobility of low ranking caste groups only. By studying the history of the symbols of group identity and their contextual significance - what the group names and titles means to the users and how such usages acquired significance at different intra and inter group levels of interaction - caste titles can be understood.

To illustrate the diversity in the use of caste labels, I will mention few examples from my study villages. I found that three most popular caste titles were Adityan, Nadar and Shanar. The title Adityan is used as a prestigious family-cum-caste title by all the members of the Kayamoli village. Some of the Adityans added Nadar as well. For eg., Subramania Aditya Nadar, Sivanthi Aditya Nadar etc. The title Adityan indicates the oldest and highest Nadar family, and the recipients claimed themselves the descent from Surya, the sun god and held special rights at the Siva temple in Tiruchendur.

The Adityans are a small portion of the community, originally the Nadars, who possessed vast tracts of land in the region, to the south of the *Tambraparni* River. Appointed as tax gatherers by the Nayak's and probably by the Pandyans before them, these Nadars or 'lords of the land' held their position either under the Nayak, as in the region of Tiruchendur or as petty lords under the *poligars*. One account speaks of the appointment by the Pandyans of seven collectors from the Nadar Community in the *teri* regions (Kulasekara Raj, 1918: 25-28). Another records the appointment in 1639 of eleven Nadars authorized to collect taxes from the people (Thangasami, 1964-: 338-339). As hereditary tax collectors, the Nadars held civil authority over lands in their control. The Adityans were basically Nadars but, in order to differentiate them from their caste brethren, they added the family title as 'Adityan'. With great wealth and power, these Adityans, commanded the deference of those beneath them. The climbers (usually shanars), totally dependent on the Nadars, came before them only with their arms folded across the chest in respect and with their *dhotis* tied above the knees, as a mark of inferiority. The Nadars would buy *Paraiars* and *Pallars* to work in their houses as slaves, so as to retain their usual proud customs.

While the Adityan and Nadars are the same, (only the families of Kayamoli added the title as 'Adityan'), the Adityan came to function like a sub-caste. But the Adityans continue to have matrimonial relation, if only with the well to do Nadar families.

The title 'Shanar' or 'Shanan' are the Nadars who are entirely dependent on toddy tapping for their livelihoods. Prior to the northward migration, the bulk of the Shanar population was concentrated in the arid, sandy region or *teris* of Tiruchendur in Tirunelveli district (Hardgrave, 1969: 41-42). The Shanar economy centered on the palmyra palm. At that time, the only commercially viable agricultural crop in the *teris* was the palmyra. The association with alcohol was one of the primary reasons for the traditionally low status of the Shanars. A separate group of Shanars acted as servants and as the palanquin carriers for the Nadars. The Shanars were regarded as "unclean" or ritually polluting by other *jatis*. They were ranked at the lowest and most highly 'polluting' level of the Shudra or non-Brahmin *jatis*. But, at the same time, they were not as low as the Pallan or Parayan *jatis*, who constitute the "untouchable" or Adi-Dravida population of the region (Caldwell 1849: 4; Thurston 1909: 369). Hardgrave (1969: 34) describes the Shanars as occupying a 'sort of limbo' in the caste.

In the scholarly literature, caste titles are generally viewed as the regional or local versions of varna categories. This provides a distorted picture of how titles are used. It is often concluded that the *jati* titles are associated with the ritual purity, as well as with occupational purity, pollution and endogamy. Yet, caste titles in the case of Nadars are associated with village authority (as among the Adityans) and the politico economic power, and hence with the panchayat.

According to Beteille, one major obstacle to a clear discussion of non-brahmin castes lines is the confusion of terminology. Caste titles among the non-brahmins have been undergoing transformation and this process seems to be fairly widespread. Members of a certain caste 'A' begin to adopt a particular title or surname 'B' and soon they began to return 'B' as their caste name. As a consequence, members of the same caste may return different caste names and sometimes members of different castes adopt the same title or caste name (Beteille 1965 : 80).

The main reason for the vagueness concerning their status appears to be that a majority of them were located outside the mainstream Hindu society in the region, and in villages that comprised of several Nadar sub-castes. Here, the internal divisions provided the principal framework within which they functioned.

Shanars of the last century constituted what Mandebaum has called *ajati-cluster*. All Modern-day Nadars are members of a single endogamous group or *jati*.

The northerners (those who moved from south) claim that the southerners were a separate Shanar *jati*. A Shanar (meaning a southern Nadar) plus money equals a Nadar (Templeman 1995: 29). In other words, wealth erases the caste titles within the community.

Contemporary Identity Markers

The present identity markers of the Nadars are more secular in character and project the achievements of the caste during modern times. It shows how the caste as a whole is giving importance to modern institutions. Although the respondents listed more than twenty symbols as caste identity markers, after ranking them in order of merit, the below mentioned seven were taken into consideration. They are: 1) Nadar Mahajana Sangam,

2) Mahajanam Journal, 3) Educational Institutions, 4) The Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank, 5) Caste Leaders, 6) The Business Establishment and 7) Caste property

1. Caste Association (*The Nadar Mahajana Sangam*)

The temple entry movement and the dramatic confrontation between the Nadars and the communities that opposed their aspirations, gave the Nadar community an impetus towards unity and social upliftment. The major six town system of caste organization in Ramnad was not good enough to control the caste group as a whole because of their migration towards further northern areas like Chennai, Madurai and even abroad. Therefore, in 1895, a number of prominent Nadar merchants and traders assembled at Madurai, and formed their association and named it as *Kshatriya Mahajana Sangam*. But, it failed to take a proper shape (Hardgrave, 1969: 103-131)•

In 1910, Rao Bahadur T.Ratnasami Nadar of Poraiyar, Tanjore district, sought to retrieve the Nadar caste association with the ulterior motive of fulfilling his political ambition. He had requested the government to nominate him as the Nadar representative to the Madras Legislative Council. When Ratnasami Nadar appealed to the government, it was turned down on the ground that the Nadar did not have a caste council like the Nattukottai Chettis or *Nagarathars* had. To fulfill that condition, Ratnasami Nadar invited a good number of caste leaders to Poraiyar in February 1910. The transport charges of the delegates were borne by the local *uravinmuraïs*, while the board and lodging expenditure were met by Sri.Ratnasami Nadar.

Ratnasami Nadar's uncle, V. Poonusami Nadar, was elected as the first president of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam. The membership was open to all Nadar adult males without any distinctions of sub-caste or religion or geographical area. The Mahajana

Sangam was very loyal to the British crown and resolved that anyone in opposition to the government would be removed from the association. Also it was resolved to request the government to select one man for the legislative council as representative of the Nadar community. The purpose of the NMS was to uplift the community as a whole. The Nadars had money, but did not have high status. Many prominent Nadar leaders expressed their dismay. Therefore, they had come together to improve their lot.

In December 1910, the second conference of the sangam was held in Madras, wherein more than 750 representatives of the caste attended (Nadar Mahajana Sangam Report: 1910). However, soon with the death of the Sangam founder, T.Ratnasami Nadar, the association received a fatal blow. The Sangam activities were greatly weakened until 1917. In 1917, another conference was convened at Madurai. The annual conference of the Sangam was overwhelmingly dominated by the northern Nadars of Ramnad and Vladurai. Most of the executive council members hailed from the northern **Nadar** settlements. The sangam had its headquarters at Madurai.

The objectives of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam were i) to promote the social, material, and general welfare of the Nadars; ii) to protect and promote the interests and rights of the community; iii) to take practical measures for the social, moral and intellectual advancement of the Nadars; iv) to start schools and colleges for imparting education to Nadar children and to help poor but deserving pupils belonging to the community with scholarships, books, fees, etc., v) to encourage and promote commercial and industrial enterprise among the members of the community; vi) to foster and promote the spirit of union and solidarity among the members of the community; vii) the raising of funds by subscription, donation or other means for the above objects, and the

doing of all such other things as were incidental and conducive to the attainment of the above objects or any of them (Nadar Mahajana Sangam, Rules and Regulations 1920: 9-10).

In 1921, the NMS urged all Nadars to join the association, and each member was encouraged to bring new membership and to establish branch offices. Youths between the age group of five and fifteen were encouraged to attend school, and educational faculties for girls were advocated. The efforts of NMS succeeded by forming the Travancore Hindu Nadar Association. In 1918, the migrated Nadar merchants and traders in Rangoon established the *Hindu Nadar Mahajana Sabha*. Similarly, the Nadar in Ceylon formed the *Indhiya Kshathyakula Nadar Mahajana Sangam* in 1925. Nadars in Malaya established the *Nadar Paripalana Sangam*. By this way the caste association crossed the homeland and spread its network in many foreign countries.

The *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* regularly conducts elections to elect its office bearers. The annual conference is another feature of the caste identity. In its ninety-three years history, the caste association has conducted 66 annual conferences. No other community in Tamil Nadu boast such a democratic tradition to elect its office bearers and of the record number of annual conferences organized for the smooth functioning of the caste association. One of the main aim of these annual conferences is to take stock of the situation related to the problems the caste is facing. The occasion is also used to air their view to the government.

Rudolphs argues.

The Nadar Mahajana Sangam is a voluntary organization, drawn from the ascriptive reservoir of caste - the natural association of traditional India. Its actual membership is but a fraction of its potential in full recruitment, but the association claims to speak for the community as a whole, asserting virtual representation.

The Association is the voice of the community interests, has demanded an increase in prestige, influence, and benefits within the system. The modern incarnation of the caste, the association, provides the channel of communication and bases of leadership and organization which enable those still submerged in the traditional society and culture to transcend the technical political illiteracy which would otherwise handicap their ability to participate in democratic politics. The Sangam has thus provided the critical link between tradition and modernity (Rudolphs 1960: 5-6).

2. Caste Periodical (*MAHAJANAM JOURNAL*)

Caste periodical, one of the important identity symbols, acts as a medium of communication between the concerned caste's central and local associations as well as helps in establishing and reinforcing contacts between widely dispersed caste members. The first Nadar caste journal '*Mahajanam*' (literally, "the great people") was published in 1947 by the Nadar Mahajana Sabha Headquarters at Madurai as a bi-monthly, and from the 14th April 1974 it became a weekly. The '*Mahajanam*' journal was born with the passage of a resolution moved by a prominent Nadar (Rao Bahadur Ratnasami Nadar) in 1910 itself. In 1920, the veteran Nadar leader Soundrapandian established the Nadar Press, which published the journal *Mahajanam* for more than 75 years continuously. The *Mahajanam* journal is an organ of the *Nadar Mahajanam Sangam*, and is considered as the Gazetteer of the caste. Each issue of this journal has 20 to 40 pages. Seeing its promptness, even the editor of India Today had vouched a positive comment, and admired the office bearers of the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* (Letter dated 10th August 1997 to Secretary NMS by India Today).

The columns of these periodicals are principally open to all but in reality they are for Nadars alone. The articles published in the journal reflect the aspiration and achievement of the caste members and their problems.

Pages of the journal mostly carry portraits of caste elites, and pictures on current topics. An analysis of the topics covered in the journal for a period of three years (1997-1999), **revealed that** the major items covered in the journal were caste **related articles**, speeches of caste elites, mythology, matter relating to caste welfare, matrimonials, **editorials, literary articles**, correspondence and notices to the members of the caste association, issues related to Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank, Nadar business houses, invitation to caste association functions, news from different Nadar settlements, request to help fellow Nadars in crisis, decision taken by caste association on various aspects, resolutions passed in the annual conferences of Nadar *Mahajana Sangam*, annual balance sheet of caste associations, examination results, poems about Nadar caste, historic speeches made by Nadar stalwarts in legislature and parliament, jokes, short stories, interpretation of Tamil literature, photos of all life members, request to help caste people, donations, obituary column, death anniversary, invitation to Nadar business houses, admission notices, counseling for higher education, felicitations, medical tips, food recipes, election results of panchayat. assembly and parliament where Nadar candidates won. application format for scholarships, historical research on the caste, news about individual Nadars achievements, travelogues, important dates and events in Nadars history, history of Nadar educational institutions, consumer awareness, rehabilitation work done by Nadar *Mahajana Sangam*. family history of the founder member of Nadar *Mahajana Sangam*. package of practices to agricultural crops, water conservation methods, coaching for civil services examinations, procedure to get admission in the universities abroad, government recruitment, news about the college days, hostel days and convocation of NMS managed colleges and other educational institutions, business

consultancies, classified advertisements, blood donation camp, free medical camps, inauguration of Nadar business houses, family functions of the well to do Nadars, budget analysis, weekly quote, importance of women's education, gender issues, advise to the week, English grammar, book reviews etc.

In addition to these, the journal also published other materials. On an average, fifty percent of its space was devoted to matters relating to general happenings.

The following are some examples of typical articles that have been published in the journal. They are on the explanation of the word 'Nadar' or 'Shanar'. Origin of the caste with reference to its supra local and supra ethnic extension, the fusion and fission of sub-castes of the Nadar caste cluster, the necessity of caste association, the importance of caste journal and caste solidarity appeal.

If one arranges the contents of articles appearing in the *Mahajanam* journal chronologically it reflects the changing emphasis and concerns of the caste. One Nadar historian who is researching about the origin and the kingly past of the community wrote more than 75 articles within a span of five years. From 1996 onwards, almost two pages were devoted to the activities of the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank. Since 1996 - 1999, the editorials of almost all the issues exclusively focused on the Mercantile Bank issue.

The financial condition of many of the caste journals was not sound, but *Mahajanam* is an exception. The NMS created an innovative mechanism to mobilize funds for the journal. Those who contribute a donation of Rs. 5,000/- were to be awarded a title as *Kalvithai* or *Kalvithanthai* (Mother or father of education) and their photo appeared on the front cover of *Mahajanam* journal, along with a small biographical sketch of the person. Membership fee was another source of fund raising. Till

September 1998, 2800 annual members and around 3150 ordinary members **joined the** *Mahajana Sangam*. The third source of finance was the advertisement. The Nadar business houses and educational institutions liberally **give** advertisements in the widely circulated caste journal. The fourth source of finance to the journal was the direct contribution made by the Nadar philanthropists and business houses. Most of the issues of '*Mahajanam*' contain appeals for enrolling new members and raising funds for the periodical. The primary duty of the touring agents (*thuduvors*) of NMS is to collect the subscription fee from Nadars. All the touring agents have fixed annual targets. All these types of fund mobilizations lead to prompt publication of the caste journal.

Thus, the *Mahajanam*, as the caste periodical is an elite backed enterprise with the objective of serving the cause of Nadars, and is seen as one of the identity markers of Nadar community

3. Educational Institutions

The *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* was established primarily with the aim of promoting education and learning of the community. In the prospectus prepared by Nabhi P.V. Pandian for the preliminary meeting held on 6th, 7th and 8th February, 1910, it was explicitly stated that the money collected from the members of all *uravinmuraish* would be spent on building educational facilities for the Nadars. His view was that, like the Jews, the Nadars should not mind spending money for running schools and colleges and giving loans and scholarships. The draft of the proposed activities to be taken up by the Sangam clearly portrayed the ambition and enthusiasm of the Nadars for education.

In Virudhunagar, 1889, Nadars started a Hindu primary school in a small *Kshairiya I'iJhyasula*, which was the first in the state to offer free education to all

without any discrimination of caste. The leaders appealed through the magazines to the controller of the *mahamai* fund to help the poor students to continue their education.

Nadars were exhorted through periodicals to realize the value of education and were encouraged to start schools wherever they were and to give them free education. Nadar schools were started even in small villages of Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli districts. Some schools were opened for girls as well. They started building colleges only after 1947. Today, Nadars have more professional colleges than any other caste in Tamil Nadu has. The NMS asked the boards of the Nadar Schools to register their names with the NMS by paying a nominal fee to enable the Sangam to link the executive bodies of all the schools in order to make it possible for them to meet and discuss the concessions and grants given by the Government. Nadars opened libraries in villages where they were a dominant one. They also made efforts to inform the community about educational facilities available in the state.

It was decided in the NMS that *thalaikattu vari* (individual household tax) must be collected from every family to buy magazines and newspapers. They wanted the community to be well informed about the world around and beyond them. On 16th January 1972, they formed an association of the private schools under Tamil Nadu *uravinmural*. The membership fee for High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools was Rs. 25/- and for middle schools and elementary schools Rs. 15/-.

The association of private schools under *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* decided on the 23rd of November 1980 to give certificates of merit to all the teachers who were working in NMS and other Nadar schools. Such teachers are awarded the title of *nallasiriyar* (talented teacher). These certificates were awarded in the forty-ninth conference. The

NMS also gives away certificates to students who receive the highest total marks in Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) and Higher Secondary School (HSC) examinations.

As mentioned above the Nadar Mahajana Sangam (NMS) has introduced some innovative scheme to mobilize the required fund to strengthen its educational institutions. Most of the well to do Nadars have contributed to this fund in the name of their parents. The NMS is always in a position to help students by offering them loan scholarships. The loans are to be repaid once the students begin earning. Thus, the NMS continues to be the backbone of education of the Nadar.

4. Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited

(Discussed in detail in the next chapter)

5. Caste Leaders

Respondents also considered their caste leaders to be a significant identity marker. A good number of caste leaders, ranging from local panchayat leaders to national level leaders, were mentioned by the respondents. However, after assigning scores, four Nadar caste leaders emerged as important for the entire community were taken by the maximum number of respondents. They are K. Kamaraj, W. P. A. Soundrapandian, Chi. Pa. Aditanar and Marshall Neasmani. The following is a description of the ways in which they rose to the status of being Nadar icons.

a) K. Kamaraj Nadar

According to the respondents, while K. Kamaraj never added his caste name as a suffix, his political circle knew him as a Nadar. Though he openly declared that he belonged to the caste 'Congress', the Nadars all over Tamil Nadu and in the country came to be

recognized through his political articulation and patriotic attitude. Some of the elderly Nadar respondents pointed out that the only Tamilian (and a subaltern) who headed the All India Congress Committee (AICC) thrice, was known as king maker in deciding the prime ministerial candidate on three occasions and was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu after overthrowing the powerful Rajaji (a Brahmin, in a Brahmin dominated state polity) was from their caste.

Robert Hardgrave pointed out that Kamaraj, 'a man of simple tastes' was often hailed as a *Sanyasi* in white clothes' and 'a man of the people'. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, he was "a man with extraordinary capacity, ability, and devotion to his task'. Kamaraj came to bestow, through his success, a sense of prestige and pride upon all the Nadars (Hardgrave, 1969: 154).

When Nadars were rallying behind the Self-Respect movement under the leadership of W. P. A Soundrapandian and V. V. Ramasami of Virudhunagar, it was K. Kamaraj who formed the National Nadar Association in order to woo the Nadars to the Congress Party. In the political field, K. Kamaraj was always addressed as Kamaraj Nadar by his friends and other leaders, which in turn, got the community a political recognition in the country.

As the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, K. Kamaraj's contribution to the education, agriculture, industrial and social development of Tamil Nadu had left an indelible mark on the state in general and the Nadar community in particular. He never received much from his caste people (he was even defeated in his own hometown Virudhunagar, considered to be the Nadar stronghold), but the caste gained a political identity and economic prosperity through him.

K. Kamaraj's contributions as narrated by the respondents, were free education to all children till they completed the age of fourteen, the mid-day meal scheme, introduction of uniform in the schools and opening up of primary school in every 10 kilometer radius.

As one educated youth pointed out, 'the University in Madurai (Madurai Kamaraj University), Chennai Airport domestic terminal (Perunthalaivar Kamarajar Domestic Terminal) and the railway station at Maraimalai Nagar were named after him, and the entire Nadar community has to be proud of this'. He further pointed out that the promise of ushering the Kamaraj rule in Tamil Nadu is repeatedly made by all political parties. He draws attention to the fact that K.Kamaraj was the only backward caste leader of post-independent India who was adorned with 'Bharat Ratna'. While the Kamaraj Memorial at Chennai and Virudhunagar became tourists' attraction, Nadar consider them as their caste identity markers (Interview with G.Jeyaraj on 12-7-1997).

Today a majority of Nadar settlements have erected a statue of Kamaraj Nadar. The local schools, youth clubs, reading rooms in most of the Nadar settlements are named after him. Of late, some Nadars have also named their newborn male child as Kamaraj. My respondents reported that the birth and death anniversaries of Kamaraj are celebrated like any other Hindu festivals in all Nadar dominated villages and towns. K. Kamaraj is turned into the most significant and deified hero of Nadars.

b) W. P. A Soundrapandian

(Discussed in detail in the next chapter)

c) Chi. Pa. Aditanar

Unlike Kamaraj and Soundrapandian. Chi. Pa Aditanar was a different personality, blended with higher education and entrepreneurial talent. After completing his education

in law in London, he practiced as an advocate in Malaysia. Later he moved to Singapore. Although it was a lucrative profession, Aditanar was inclined to start a new business concern in the field of media. He started his first newspaper in 1942 at Madurai and named it Madurai *Murasu* (M.P. Gurusami 1992 : 29) Those days the newspapers were mostly owned by the upper caste Brahmins and their target group was the urban educated middle class and thus were all published only from the state capital, Madras. Aditanar broke the tradition by starting a Tamil Newspaper meant for the common man and dared to published it from Madurai. His very idea of starting Tamil Newspaper was to create awareness and reform in the Tamil Society.

Through the medium of newspaper, he created a silent revolution among the rural folk, which led to the adult literacy movement. By reaching nook and corner of Tamil Nadu, his newspaper Daily *Thanthi* seeded in creating a vibrant Tamil society. With the arrival of Tamil newspapers, the village saloon and tea stalls became the hub of debate and discussion.

The Adityan-owned newspaper provided opportunities to the villagers to write column in the newspaper which was until then a prerogative of the English educated urban elites. This was considered a major breakthrough in the field of journalism.

Aditanar provided two types of identity to his community. One was the mercantile identity and other a Tamil oriented political identity. The mercantile identity was built through his newspaper industry and his Sun Paper Mill. But, the political identity was constructed through his association with Dravida Munnetra Kazaham (DMK) and the We Tamil (*Nauni Tumilar*) movement. The non-Nadars in Tamil Nadu came to know the Kadar community through various sources but the prominent one was the Adityan group

owned Tamil newspaper industry. Newspapers like *Daily Thanthi*, *Dinakaran*, *Kathiravan*, *Malai Murasu*, *Malai Malar* and the weeklies and fortnightlies like *Rani*, *Ranimuthu* and *Devi* are treated as Nadar papers and magazines.

The initiation of the Tamil newspaper *Daily Thanthi* was not only a turning point in Aditanar's life but also in the history of the Tamil society as a whole and his name is primarily associated with this newspaper (K. Kuppusami, 1969 : 18).

In his condolence message, when Aditanar passed away, the Dravidar Kazhagam supremo Periyar stated 'prior to Daily Thanthi Newspaper, the Tamils were anguishing to own a newspaper. It was only Aditanar who could fulfill their wish. Even today the Tamils considers Daily Thanthi as a Nadar business identity. But I would say it is the symbol and has become part of Tamils life' (M.P. Gurusami 1992: 75)

Yet another contribution of Chi. Pa. Aditanar was that of bringing all Tamil businessmen together to form the Tamil Nadu Chambers of Commerce. In 1953, Aditanar was elected to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Council, where he became the opposition leader. When the government of Tamil Nadu imposed taxes on the palmyra tree, Aditanar strongly opposed it. Ultimately, he tendered his resignation in protest of the tax. The government was then forced to withdraw it.

In 1957, Aditanar contested and was elected as an independent MLA from Sattankulam constituency. In 1966, Aditanar merged his *Naam Tamilar* (We Tamils) with DMK. In the 1967 election Aditanar was elected from Srivaikuntam constituency. The congress party lost power, and many-attributed Daily Thanthi newspaper to have played a major role in it. Aditanar became the speaker of the legislative assembly. In 1969 Aditanar was inducted into the DMK cabinet headed by C. N. Annadurai as the

Minister of Cooperation. In 1973 he became the agriculture minister in K.Karunanidhi's cabinet. As agriculture minister, he was responsible for the success of green revolution in Tamil Nadu.

In 1962, Aditanar established the Sun Paper Mill at Cheranmahadevi to meet the news print requirement of his newspaper. The paper mill used *udai shrub* as raw material, which was then considered to be an innovation. When Aditanar passed away on 24th May 1981, he had spent approximately seventy-five years in public life in varied roles.

Today, the Aditanar educational trust is doing a commendable job in imparting education to the people of the backward areas. It has instituted a good number of scholarships to the meritorious students. Although Aditanar is considered as father of the Tamils, Nadars see him as their guiding star and a messiah. hence, making him a prominent caste symbol.

d) Marshall Nesamani

Marshall Nesamani has been considered as one of modern architects of Nadar community. (Mahalingam.1995: 118). Many of my respondents from the wetland village ranked him as occupying number one position among the Nadar stalwarts and saw him as a caste symbol in the post independent India. Nesamani was born in 1895 at Palliyadi village in Kanyakumari district. He served as a member of the legislative assembly for 25 continuous years. During his tenure as MLA, he worked relentlessly for the community, particularly for the poorer sections. He was known for his orator)' skills through which he mobilized the people to liberate the Kanyakumari district from the princely state of Travancore and integrate it into Tamil Nadu on linguistic basis. Being a

Christian, he was actively associated with the missionary developmental work. With fifteen lakh members, he headed the Tamils Movement in the erstwhile princely state of Travancore. Due to his efforts, the Tamil Nadu Congress spread in Kanyakumari district at a faster rate. Travancore Congressmen negotiated with him to merge the Congress with Kerala Congress so that he can get a ministership in Kerala government. But he rejected the idea claiming that he would not betray his Nadar community for the sake of a position in the government. When the Kerala government denied the legitimate rights of Tamils, he started a *satayagraha*, for which he was arrested and had to spend a long time in prison.

While the Tamil Nadu Congress was fighting for political freedom in Tamil Nadu, the concern of the people of Travancore was more social than political. Dissatisfied with the Malayalee domination in Kerala State Congress, the Tamils of Kanyakumari under the leadership of Nesamani formed the Travancore Tamil Nadu State Congress (TTNC). to have their grievances redressed. In South Travancore, being a majority community, the Nadars spearheaded the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress movement. Repeated events in Travancore taught the Tamils, especially the Nadars as early as 1938 that the interest of the Tamils could be safeguarded only by merging the Tamil areas with Tamil Nadu. It was this idea that guided and shaped the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress movement. When the Malayalam speaking Cochin was merged with Travancore on the first of July 1949, the Tamil speaking people (mostly the Nadars) became a small minority.³⁴ The entry of Nesamani into TTNC was a turning point in the movement. It was he who strengthened and stabilized the TTNC. On the 19th of August 1947, Nesamani proclaimed that it was the sole political organization through

which the Tamil population was to fight for its rights and privileges (Sarada Devi 1985: 194)

Nesamani believed that the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee headed by K.Kamaraj Nadar could solve their problem, who could understand the ordeal of the Nadars of Travancore-Cochin state and invited Kamaraj to address a meeting at Nagercoil.

The TTNC submitted a memorandum to the government claiming a quarter of the Reform Committee membership,³⁵ but, the government agreed to include only Nesamani as a representative of the South Indian United Church.³⁶ Nesamani turned down the offer since he was not considered as representative of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress. The government's aim was to dilute the strength of TTNC by not recognizing it. Kamaraj did not work towards finding solution for the grievances of the people of this area, nor did he help them in representing their grievances. When the election was announced in 1947, a keen rivalry broke out between the TTNC and Kerala State Congress. The Nadars suffered a great deal in police attacks. Nesamani gave an account of the sufferings of the Tamils to the government. Again Kamaraj was sent to Nagercoil to settle the issue in the hope that he would be able to take his own community along. Yet, the Kamaraj mission was not to solve the problem but only to strengthen the Indian National Congress. In the 1952 general election, Nadar leaders like Nesamani, R. Ponnappa Nadar and William got elected. Nesamani was authorized to conduct negotiation with the Congress. Tamils under the leadership of Nesamani started their agitation with two aims. viz.. the introduction of Tamil as official language in Tamil areas and their integration with Tamil Nadu. On 21st Novemebr 1954, Nesamani met

Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi and presented a report of the police torture of Nadar leaders and common people. In 1953, the government of India appointed the States Reorganization commission.³⁷ TTNC petitioned for the merger of nine Tamil taluks with Tamil Nadu. Kamaraj made a statement before the Commission when it visited Trivandrum on the 25th May 1954 that Thovalai, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavangode, Shenkottah, Peermedu, Devikulan and Chittoor should be merged with Tamil Nadu. In October, 1955 the States Re-organization Commission submitted the report suggesting that the southern taluks, (Thovala, Agastheeswaram, Vilavangode, and Kalkulam) be merged with Tamil Nadu. Accordingly a new district, Kanyakumari, was carved out as the southern tip of Tamil Nadu. The long cherished aim of Nadars and Nesamani was thus fulfilled.

K. Kamaraj Nadar, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, said

Neasamony is known for fighting for legitimate rights. He is not afraid of injustice and very frank to express his views in any gatherings. He has occupied a permanent place in the hearts of the people of Kanyakumari district and I consider him as one of the top most leader of the Nadar community and the Tamils in general.' (Mahalingam 1995: 119).

In the wetland village studied, a graduate student said

Italy had a Caribaldi, for Turkey it was Mustafa Kamal Basha, Ireland produced a De Velara, India produced Mahatma Gandhi, Tamil Nadu was blessed with E.V.Ramasami (Periyar) and Kanyakumari had Marshall Neasamani'. The Nadars of Tamil Nadu affectionately call him as 'Father of Kanyakumari district' (*Kumari Mavatta Thanthai*) and cite him as an icon.

6. Business Establishment

Interestingly the business houses managed by prominent Nadars have become identity markers in the present day context. Most of my respondents, particularly from the younger generation and the educated ones, identified these as the main caste symbols.

According to them, the business establishments provided them with a mercantile identity and helped them overcome inhibitions of other caste people about their caste. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Nadar owned business establishments were confined to the six towns of Nadars settlements. But, today, due to the development of transport and communication, and migration towards urban areas they have business all over the country and even abroad. As pointed out by my respondents, Nadars are well known through out the country and abroad due to their businesses particularly in fire works, match industries, offset printing, provisional stores, hotels, hardware, automobile spare parts, plantation, and the Tamil newspapers and magazine industries, salt and to some extent, the software industry.

The Nadars owned provisions store all over Tamil Nadu is known as '*Annachi kadai*' (elder brother shop) provided a trade related identity to the caste. As one informant pointed out. the Nadar business house as a caste identity marker has been very well popularized by the HCL company owner Shiva Nadar who is in the Forbes billionaire list next to the Ambanis (of the Reliance group) Aziz premji (of the Wipro group) and Narayana Murthy (of the Infosys). Even after achieving economic prosperity, he has not renounced his caste title. By adding the caste title in his name as suffix, he made the entire world aware of his community and its mercantile skills.

Due to the well known business houses of Nadars viz., HCL computers. Ram Softs, VEL computers, the Daily Thanthi news paper. Sun Paper Mills. VGP Group of Companies, ADJ Group. Hotel Saravana Bhavan and its sister concerns. Idhayam Group, VVD Group. KAS Sekhar Group. Arasan group. Andi Nadar group. Santosham group.

MGM group etc., the caste as a whole not only got recognition from other communities, but also proved as a caste identity marker in the present era.

The six towns of Nadars (of Aruppukottai, Palayampatti, Sattangudi, Sivakasi, Tirumangalam **and Virudunagar**) provided a mercantile identity as early as the nineteenth century. When the Nadars of the six towns moved to other cities of Tamil Nadu and elsewhere, they became pioneers in doing business that ranged from agricultural commodities to automobile spare parts. The migrant Nadar firms bear the name of their place of origin as a prefix and caste name as suffix. To cite a few, Virudhunagar Somasundara Nadar Tile Works, Aruppukottai Jeyaraj Nadar, Palaympatti Balagurusami Nadar, etc. The place and caste names provided an identity of the Nadars primarily for the other caste people.

The Sivakasi Nadars were known for their business monopoly in fire works, printing press and match industries, because of their dominance in these fields, the town was branded as kutty Japan (mini Japan) by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1960. According to one authentic report furnished by a website related to Sivakasi, the Nadar dominated town contributes upto 80% of India's total safety matches production, 90% of the India's total fire works production, 90% of India's total offset printing solutions and is one of the high sales/ excise/custom duty paying town in the country (www.kuttyjapan.com). The number of Nadar owned industries located in the town give a sense of caste identity to the whole world. (See the Nadars owned safety matches, fireworks and offset printing industries in Appendix - 6).

7. Caste Owned Property

The *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* and the local *uravinmuraish* owned property have been considered as the present day identity markers of the caste as a whole. In order to help the members of the caste and to appreciate the *mahamai* fund, the caste started investing its common capital into a number of properties. These properties are not only used by the members of the caste, but are also made available to others. Initially, caste associations at the village level invested the *mahamai* fund to construct temples, *nadavanams* (bathing ghats) cremation grounds, drinking wells etc to enhance the caste social status. With the change of time, the *mahamai* funds were diverted to strengthen the durable assets and to make the fund more dynamic in its functional utility. These days the *Mahamai* funds are invested in acquiring income generating long duration assets such as lodges, marriage halls, community halls, shopping complexes, housing, office premises, gyms and sports complex etc. While serving the people in general and members of the caste in particular, the caste owned common property also generates wealth for the caste in the form of income from rent or auctioning the property on annual turnover basis. Many of the Nadar caste association owned property are rented out to government offices and banks.

In Tirunelveli and Chennai alone, quite a good number of government offices were functioning in the Nadar association buildings (field observation). As an elderly Sivakasi Nadar, settled in Chennai and looking after the association's property, pointed out. "by providing the community owned buildings to government offices. Nadar settlements easily get facilities like schools, bank, post office, electricity board, telephone exchange, telegraph office, police station and other government offices'. He further added that by providing Nadar *mahamai* funded building to government offices, his

native village got a veterinary hospital, a telephone exchange and a sub-registrar's office (interview with Chairmakani Nadar on 28-12-1997). In the garden land village of this study too, the local *uravinmurai* building was let out to the government offices. In all these buildings, it is very explicitly written that such property belongs to the Nadar *Mahamai*. When the property is let out to the private parties, preference is given to the caste brethren. In this way, the caste owned property helps the Nadars to do business with minimum rent. In the sample villages of this study, the value of caste owned property ranged from fifty thousand to twenty-five lakh rupees. The wetland village has only Rs.5000/- worth property, while the garden land village Nadars association property was valued around twenty-five lakh rupees.

The migrant Nadar association in urban areas have also acquired a lot of properties. In cities like Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore one can see hundreds of such properties in the form of lodge, community halls, schools, marriage halls, office premises etc. On all these buildings, it is written that the property belongs to the 'Chennai settled Sivakasi Nadar *Uravinmurai*'. 'Nellai-Tuticorin Nadars settled in Chennai' etc. According to the Manager of the Nadars' lodge at Egmore, Chennai (whom I interviewed during my stay at the lodge in January, 1998), five hundred such buildings were owned by the migrant Nadar *uravinmura*is in Chennai city alone. These properties have provided them a kind of identity among the urban folk. The manager further added that only the Jews, Gujaratis and Marwaris used to build their social identity by acquiring property in places of their migration, and now the Nadars too have imbibed this character.

The caste owned property also symbolized the community's economic strength and internal solidarity to other castes. Unlike private property, the caste owned common property helps the overall development of the caste. Since these properties are also available to others, they help in building bridges with other communities in the urban set-up.

Identification of the Respondents in order of Ranking

The question of identity has become a major problem for the Southern Nadars today due to the sub-caste, religious, occupational and residential classifications and migratory movements. The common Nadars, as well as the elite and middle class Nadars face this problem due to different reasons. The problem of common Nadars is that they are poor and under privileged, and that of the middle class Nadars is for their not being accepted by the middle class people of higher castes. Nandu Ram calls this state of affairs among the dalits as 'status incongruity' (Nandu Ram 1988: 91), this is applicable to the Southern Nadars as well. Especially the Nadar Middle class suffers from this dual identity i.e. their caste, which cannot get away from and their middle class, which encourages them to look for a secular identity. They were treated differently by upper caste people for their caste background and they are more considered as the prospering backward caste in Tamil Nadu. They are looked down by their own community i.e. the well to do northern Nadars as southerners and others do so because they are Nadars.

In the changing socio-cultural context, Nadars' options for social mobility are increasing. Their entry into modern walks of life is opening new opportunities for them. Their identification with such options varied from that of their sub-caste to a common caste or ethnic identity. Some saw themselves primarily as members of the middle class

and chose the occupational identity, some chose language or the Nation as their primary markers of their identities (see Table: 7.3). The concept of identity is also used psychologically as it deals with the self and personality formation of an individual, whose identity is related to subjective (private) and objective (public) aspects of interpersonal relations. Personality and identity are inter-dependent and inseparable (Nandu Ram, 1988: 93). Sociologically, the concept is used as a process of adjustment of an individual in his social milieu. The identity of an individual is the projection of his social image through the process of self-evaluation. Zetterberg (1966: 23) discussed the 'identity postulates' with which an individual evaluates his identity to formulate a self-image with cognition and motivations.

Identification process works at two levels - one at the level of the reference group and the other at the ethnocentric level. This, again, depends on the social and economic position a person is holding. In the Indian case the reference group identification will be the caste and class contexts, which is not possible always when an individual is deprived of all chances of mobility. However, the Nadars have had bright chances and have experienced mobility in occupation, education, religious and spatial spheres. In the absence of reference group identification, the ethno-centric identification might come up. The contra-identification from caste depends on various other reasons also.

In case of the respondents of the present study, identities are intersecting at many levels, like caste, sub-caste, religion. The respondents attributed both ascribed and achieved identities according to the context. The well to do Nadars had achieved a new-socio-economic status, which was new to them and to their ancestral family. The educated and upwardly mobile Nadars chose the achieved identity to escape from the

ethno-centric identity in order to avoid ambiguity they identified themselves as landlords or **merchants**. **However, in the** new socio-economic context, it has become difficult for them to choose **any one of these identities**.

Though Sanskritization participation in self-respect movement and conversion to Christianity **has** not changed the caste as a whole but has made tremendous impact in some packets. For example, within selected regions viz. Sanskritization and Self-Respect movement among the Northern Nadars and conversion to Christianity among the Southern **Nadars**. Though these processes do not work directly among all the sub-castes of Nadars, they could produce a context where they tend to go the caste Hindus way and Christian way. Their very exposure to the wider society after they join the middle class makes the Nadars live a life of caste Hindu or one close to Christianity than to the community of their origin.

The reference group identification and the ethnocentric identification are the two levels with which Nadars identify. The reference group mostly belongs to others, non-Nadars. The ethnocentric identification is the caste identification. The respondents of this study were asked in this regard to identify themselves in the given identities namely, caste, religion, occupation, place of residence, language and identification with the country (India). They were asked to rank those identities according to their preference.

Table No. 7.3

IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS IN ORDER OF RANKING

Category	Identity	Ranking the order						Total
		R - 1	R - 2	R - 3	R - 4	R - 5	R - 6	
Agricultural Laborers	Caste	13	08	05	06	03	01	36
Marginal farmers		14	07	03	05	07	0	36
Small farmers		11	08	04	07	04	02	36
Middle farmers		07	06	04	03	02	02	24
Big farmers		05	05	05	04	02	03	24
Very big farmers		06	06	04	03	03	02	24
Total		56	40	25	28	21	10	180
Agricultural Laborers	Religion	08	10	09	05	04	0	36
Marginal farmers		09	08	10	04	03	02	36
Small farmers		10	07	08	04	05	02	36
Middle farmers		08	07	02	04	02	01	24
Big farmers		07	05	04	03	03	02	24
Very big farmers		06	06	04	04	02	02	24
Total		48	43	37	24	19	09	180
Agricultural Laborers	Occupation	05	09	06	07	04	05	36
Small farmers		08	12	07	04	02	03	36
Middle farmers		06	05	05	03	03	02	24
Big farmers		07	03	03	02	05	04	24
Very big farmers		05	06	04	04	03	02	24
Total		39	45	31	24	21	20	180
Agricultural Laborers	Place of Residence	04	08	09	08	04	03	36
Marginal farmers		03	04	05	12	07	05	36
Small farmers		04	07	06	06	09	04	36
Middle farmers		02	04	07	02	04	05	24
Big farmers		03	05	05	04	03	04	24
Very big farmers		02	06	04	02	05	05	24
Total		18	34	36	34	32	26	180
Agricultural Laborers	Language	04	06	05	08	08	05	36
Small farmers		05	09	08	06	03	05	36
Middle farmers		04	05	06	02	04	03	24
Big farmers		06	07	03	04	03	01	24
Very big farmers		07	04	03	03	05	02	24
Total		29	38	34	28	28	23	180
Agricultural Laborers	Nation	01	06	05	09	07	08	36
Marginal farmers		0	04	10	08	08	06	36
Small farmers		01	03	04	10	08	10	36
Middle farmers		02	04	05	07	02	04	24
Big farmers		03	06	02	06	04	03	24
Very big farmers		04	05	03	03	05	04	24
Total		11	28	29	42	34	35	180

The data in Table No. 7.3 reveals the respondents' order of ranking of their identification. Their order of identification confined to six identity markers viz. caste, religion, occupation, place of residence, language and Nationality. The category wise identification has been described with regard to the respondents.

i) Identification with caste

Identification with caste by the respondents include the caste title used with their names, which includes multiplicity of labels - like sub-caste names, family names, viz. Adityans, Nadars, Shanars etc. *The jati* titles or caste names used by the respondents possess their contextual significance and acquire significance at different intra-and inter-group levels of interaction. These titles are regional or local versions and provide a distorted picture of how the titles are used. The title depends on its meaning to the person who uses the label. The caste titles are generally associated with village authority and politico-economic power and, hence, with the caste panchayat. Among the sample respondents of all the categories 31.1 per cent assigned first rank to caste as their identification marker and 22.2 per cent assigned second rank.

The data further revealed that, in the first three categories, the range is from 30 to 38 per cent and in the last three categories; it varies from 20 to 29 per cent. Therefore, we can infer when the wealth increases, the ethno-centric identity declines and people may assign weightage to other factors. The data further revealed that better the economic status, education and diversified occupation, lesser would be the identification through caste.

ii) Identification with Religion

Next to caste, majority of the respondents from all categories chose religion as an identification marker for them. On the whole, 27 per cent respondents assigned first rank to their religion through which they identify themselves in their day to day life. Category wise analysis shows that in the first three categories of farmers and laborers, the range is 22.2 to 27.7 per cent, whereas in the last three categories, the range is 25.0 to 22.3 percent.

The point worth mentioning here is that the Christian and the members of Ayyavali movement mostly identified and assigned first rank to their religion than the Hindus. This shows that both Christianity and the Ayyavali movement influenced them a lot. Again 23.8 percent of the respondents from all categories assigned second rank to religion. Compared to other identification markers and the difference is very narrow. This indicates that religion has a very good influence on all categories of Nadars .

iii) Occupation

The identification with occupation was more among the respondents who owned more land. In the first three categories, all put together only 19.4 per cent identified them with their occupation, whereas, in the last three categories, out of 72 respondents, 18 (25.0%) identified through occupation. The overall data reveals that nearly twenty two per cent respondents assigned first rank to the occupation and 25.0 percent assigned second rank. The highest number identified in this category' was in second rank with a number of 45 (of which the small farmers alone were 12 i.e. one-third along with first rank assigned by the small farmers roughly 56.0 percent identified with occupation). Put together, the

first two ranks assigned by the respondents, the small farmers (55.5%) gave importance to occupation as an identification marker followed by marginal farmers (50%) both middle and very big farmers (45.8%), big farmers (41.6%) and agricultural laborers (38.8%). The prestige and value attached to the occupation played a vital role while using this as a marker,

iv) Identification with place of Residence

Surprisingly, only 18 (10.0%) of the respondents chose to identify with the place of residence as their first identity i.e. their village. The respondents assigned second, third, fourth and fifth rank with more in number i.e. 34 (18.8%), 36 (20%), 34 (18.8%) and 32 (17.7%). Only one-third (33.3%) of the marginal farmers assigned fourth rank to this identification marker. Since, most of the respondents gave first rank to caste, religion and occupation, they assigned other ranks to the 'place of residence.'

v) Identification with Language

Linguistic identity has been an important factor in Tamil Nadu and often considered as an integrating symbol. But in this study, the respondents mostly assigned only second rank (21%) and third rank (18.8%) to language as a source of identity. Only 29 (16.1%) respondents from the last three categories gave it first rank. The respondents from the first three categories mostly gave second, third and fourth rank to the language as their identity marker. With all said and done, language has taken a back seat with the decline of the Dravidian nationalism and Nadars frequent movement to the neighboring states. The respondents irrespective of the economic status were aware that the linguistic chauvinism won't help them to widen their economic prosperity, and most of them vouched the advantage of knowing more number of languages.

vi) Identification with Nation

There were only 11 (6.1%) who gave first rank to the Nation as identification category. Surprisingly, only 4 (16.7%) very big farmers identified them through Nation as the first preference. From all the categories, 45 (25.0%) assigned third rank to nation, 34 (18.9%) fourth rank and 35 (19.4 %) assigned it fifth rank. From this one can conclude that the villagers mostly identify them with their immediate contexts like caste or sub-caste, religion, occupation or also the place of residence.

Though respondents chose to identify more through ethnic categories, they also recognized the significance of the situation. As one respondent from the garden land village put it aptly (*Naan Inathal Dravidian, Moliyal Tamilian, Mathathal Hindu, Jatiyal Nadar, Thesiyathal Indian*), my race is Dravidian, by Language I am a Tamilian, I am a Hindu by religion, Nadar by Caste and an Indian by domicile .

Conclusion

The Nadar caste identity has passed through many stages. Though the socio-political atmosphere provided the basis for the evolution of caste identity, the caste's own initiative has been solely responsible for moulding, reshaping and consolidating its identity. The formation of village level caste associations, collection of *mahamai* fund, establishment of caste panchayat and the elected informal leaders (*nattanmais*), and a state level caste association (Nadar Mahajana Sangam) were the major factors responsible for constructing the caste identity.

While constructing their identity, the Christian missionaries, colonial administration, caste historians, industrialization, commercialization of agriculture, social movements (Ayyavali movement, Evangelical movement. Self- Respect movement,

Backward Class movement, Temple Entry movement, Dravidian movement, etc), emergence of provincial politics and nationalist movement played pivotal role in facilitating the Nadars to construct their identity at various point of time.

The caste mobility process in religious, educational, occupational and spatial aspects facilitated the formation of this identity.

While analyzing the symbols (markers) of the caste, we should keep in mind that it keeps changing according to time and situations. In the initial stages the caste identity markers revolved around the cultural and religious front, and they were of traditional and ascribed in nature. But over time as the Nadars progressed in economic field, the caste symbols too underwent a change. They became more and more modern and achievement oriented and revolved around secular axis. The cultural and religious symbols were replaced by the modern ones like caste association and its affiliated institutions like marriage bureau, employment bureau, caste association owned educational institutions, financial institutions, community owned properties, etc. These modern institutions of the caste not only served the members of the community but also keep the caste bond to move smoothly according to the change of time. A major shift has taken place in the pattern of community investment to occupy the urban space so as to facilitate the members of the caste in their various walks of life.

Despite a rapid development of the caste, at the village level the members of the caste identified them through caste, sub-caste, occupation, religion, place of residence and language. This indicates that the self-identity was revealed through the basic social institutions of caste, religion and occupation.

The Nadar caste identity is and has been continually formed and reformulated over time. The formation of Nadar caste identity is unique among the backward castes of Tamil Nadu. Their ability to incorporate both the traditional and modern features questions several assumptions of the dominant theories of social change that always look at caste as a traditional institution. When they followed the path of Christianity, or the rational outlook oriented Self-Respect movement and the modern secular way of life, the institution of caste was not disturbed. Instead, it adopted the changed context without losing its distinctive attributes.

Notes

1. See, Romila Thapar, 'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the search for a Hindu Identity.' *Modern Asian Studies*, XXIII 2 (1989) Pp 209-231
2. *Ibid*, p. 229
3. See, Sumit Sarkar. *An Exploration of the Ramakrishna - Vivekanda Tradition* (Simla, 1993); Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi, 1990); Sandna Freitag, *Collective Action and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley, 1989).
4. See, C.A. Bayly, *The Pre-history of 'communalism'? Religious conflicts in India, 1700 - 1860*, *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 2 (1985), Pp. 117 - 203
5. *Ibid*. P. 203
6. On the Political Mobilization of Nadars, See R. Hardgrave, *The Nadars of Tamil Nadu: The Political culture of a community in charge* (Berkeley, 1969); on the Caste Identity of Saraswat Brahmins, See F.K. Conlon, *A caste in Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmins 1700 - 1835* (Berkeley, 1977); on the Corporate identity of The Kayasths. See, K.L. Leonard, *Social History of an Indian Caste: The Kayasths of Hyderabad* (Berkeley, 1978) : On Caste as a manipulative category. See D. Washbrook, "The Development of caste organization in South India 1880 - 1925". In C. Baker and Washbrook (eds). *South India: Political Institutions and Political changes, 1880 - 1940* (Delhi, 1975). Pp. 150-203

7. See, *Imagining India* P.4
8. See Nicholas Dirks 'The Invention of Caste: Civil Society in Colonial India' *Social Analysis*, 25 (1989). Pp. 42 - 51: 'Castes of Mind', *Representations*, 37, Winter 1992, pp 56 -78
9. See, Richard Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making*
10. See, Dipankar Gupta, *The context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a comparative perspective.*
11. Pate, *Madras District Gazetteers: Tinnevely* P. 101.
12. See, *The proceedings of the Church Missionary society*, 1823 - 24 (London 1824). P. 227.
13. See, Caldwell, 'The Tinnevely Shanars: A sketch of their Religion and Their Moral conditions and Characteristics of a Caste. Madras. Christian Knowledge Society Press, 1849
14. See Appendix
15. Ponnu. R. 'Vaikuntasami and social Reform in south Travancore'. Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation. Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, 1980, P. 47.
16. Arulnool. P. 19
17. Ahilam, P. 283. Thuvayal Panthi, literally meaning 'washing penance', an act of ritual washing of one's physique and cloths alongwith practice of abnegation and self-restraint, was a significant religious event that took place in the life of Ayyavali.
18. Ponnu, R.. op.cit. P. 47
19. A pad to the head for carrying any luggage made up of either by straw or by fallen plantain leaves and stalks or palmyra leaves.
20. T. Vijaya Doraisami Gramani, *Research on the world Nadar: A Manual Relating to the Kingly Community*, Madras 1927, Pp. 67 - 68.
21. See, *Hardgravc.* P. 134
22. J.A. Sharrock, caste and Christianity, *Indian Church Quarterly Review*, VI (Jan, 1893). 60; Thurston, VI 377.

23. Nadar Mahajana Sangam Annual Report 1952, P. 43
24. See, P. Rasadurai (1991), *Sattamanrath.il Soundrapandianar*. P.48.
25. Hardgrave *op. cit.*, P. 13 5
26. Hardgrave, *op. cit.*, Pp. 24 - 25
27. W.A. Symonds, Monograph on the Palmyra Palm and its uses. Pp. 142 - 143
28. Hardgrave *op.cit.*, P. 26
29. *Ibid.*, P. 145
30. C. Sarada Devi, The History of Nadar. P. 154
31. *Ibid.*,?. 154
32. Hardgrave. P. 172
33. *Ibid.*, P. 94
34. Menon, V.P., The story of the Integration of the Indian States, New Delhi, 1956, Pp. 265-266
35. Under the Royal Proclamation of 4th September, 1947, the Maharaja constituted a representative body consisting of fourteen members as a prelude to the establishment of responsible government. It also appointed a Reform committee to submit proposals for a new constitution.
36. Narayan Unnittan, P.G., Trivandrum, 14th September, 1947. Letter to Nesamony Nagercoil
37. Rajayyan, K, History of Tamil Nadu, 1569 - 1982. P. 302.

Chapter-VIII

Constructing Caste Identity : Role of W. P. A. Soundrapandian and Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited

In this chapter I have discussed how a specific individual and an economic institution became the identity markers for the caste as a whole. The contribution made by W. P. A. Soundrapandian and the Nadars owned Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited are discussed.

i) W. P. A. Soundrapandian

W. P. A Soundrapandian, popularly known as the 'Black Prince Pandianar' was born on 15th September 1893, in a Hindu Nadar family of the Pattiveeranpatti in Madurai district of south Tamil Nadu. Soundrapandian belonged to a landlord family of Virudhunagar Nadars.¹ He had his initial schooling in Virudhunagar Nadar Kshatriya School, later moved to V.C. high School in Madurai and joined Madras Christian college for his graduation. Because of his fathers' sudden death he discontinued his graduate study and returned to Pattiveeranpatti to look after the family business.

Soundrapandian, who served in the Legislative Assembly from 1920 until 1937, considered himself as the representative of the Nadar community and of the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam*.² Soundrapandian exerted a strong influence over both, and came to be known as the 'uncrowned king of the Nadar Community'.³ He sought to wield the Sangam into an effective representative of the Nadar community as a whole. The Sangam would be both the voice and arm of the community. But more than an interest group, the Sangam became under Soundrapandian the agent of community mobilization.

the catalyst to a more participant society. Soundrapandian, an active participation in the Justice Party, involved the Sangam in the politics of Tamil Nadu. Consequently, the Sangam became vehicle for the politicization of the community.⁴

Under the influence of Soundrapandian, the NMS began active work for the social upliftment of the Nadar community. He was instrumental in introducing the scholarship program, rural development and other welfare measures. He toured to the villages, urging the Nadars to unite, in forming local *uravinmurais*, to collect *mahamai* and to built schools. He spoke against the sub-caste differentiation and took great efforts to unite the northern and southern divisions of the caste. Seeking more than mere 'virtual representation' of the community, he worked for increasing the Sangam membership, urging all the Nadars to join the Sangam and to participate as active members. In order to increase the community's political strength in terms of members, he proposed in 1926 that the Sangam extend its membership to the Gramanis of Northern Tamil Nadu, and the Fzhavas and Tiyas of Kerala.⁵

As Soundrapandian worked for the strength and unity of the Nadar community through the NMS. he also sought an improvement in the relations between the Nadars and other communities. With his friend and colleague in the Legislative Council, the Raja of Ramnad. Soundrapandian succeeded in bringing an end to the punitive tax imposed on the Nadars after the Kamudi riots.⁶

The Nadars were described as shanars in all government records and census reports before. Soundrapandian brought up the issue of Census and the way in which the Nadars were described in the Madras Legislative Council. He urged the government to rectify its mistakes listing of the Nadar community as Shanars. On 8th April, 1921, a

Government Order was issued that the procedure followed at the recent census was to leave every one to write his caste name as he choose, adopting for use in the report that name **which the** majority of the caste actually written.⁷

As a response to the Sangam's decision, the government recognized the term Nadar rather than the Nadar *Kshatriya* and on 7th July 1921, a Government Order was issued to that effect.

Soundrapandian fell under the spell of E.V Ramaswamy Naicker (E.V.R), the non-Brahmin militant and leader of social reform. Seeking to draw in the mass support of the Nadar community for his new Justice party aligned Self- Respect movement, E.V.R selected Soundrapandian as the president of the first Self-Respecp conference, held at Chingelpet in February 1929.*

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Nadars were emulating the Brahmins in the process of Sanskritisation and had accepted the tyranny of caste system. They desired not to overthrow, but to secure a higher position in its ranks. Soundrapandian sought his caste members to overthrow the system, to deny legitimacy to ranking altogether, and to oppose Sanskritization of Nadar life and custom. He urged his fellow Nadars to abandon the pretension they had adopted without success in the previous generation: discard the sacred thread, cut the tuft and assert the Dravidian Self-Respect of Nadar community. He advocated remarriage for widows and campaigned against the use of Brahmin *purohits* in the ritual life of the Nadar.

Under the leadership of Soundarapandian, the Nadars abandoned Brahminical pretensions and de-sanskritized their ways. The Nadars of Ramnad and Madurai, loyal to the British Raj and supporters of the Justice party, extended their overwhelming

support to the Self-Respect movement. E.V.R attended two Nadar conferences while the third Self-Respect conference was held in the predominant Nadar town of Virudhunagar, which was considered as the bastion of Justice party.¹⁰

Since, Soundrapandian was in the forefront of the Self-Respect movement and the Justice party, the Nadars came forward to conduct many conferences. The Virudhunagar Nadars extended all types of help to the Self-Respect movement.¹¹ In the Virudhunagar region people started branding Justice party as Nadars party. With his articulating power Soundrapandian attracted the Nadars in enmass.

The *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* 13th conference, held at Poraiyar was a turning point in the caste history of Nadars. Influenced by Soundrapandian Self-Respect movement's philosophy, the Nadars passed resolutions to do away with the sacred thread, deserting the caste titles and also following the Self-Respect style of marriage.¹²

Soundrapandian was one among the pioneering Nadars who were instrumental in establishing the Nadar Bank in 1921 which was later rechristened later Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited.¹³ In its initial stages, Soundrapandian toured extensively all over Tamil Nadu, particularly in the Nadar settlements, and mobilized the required fund in the form of shares. In its seventy years of service. The Bank helped many Nadars to start business and industries. This bank known as "*Shanar Pasu*" that means '*Shanars mythic cow*'.

Soundrapandian's consistent efforts created the formation of the Nadar Press in 1920.¹⁴ Today it has become the pioneer in the area of printing. Later this Press was called as *Mahajanam* Press and began printing the "Nadar caste journal "*Mahajcmam*" and other printing works related to Nadar Mahajana Sangam. Soundrapandian also

established the cooperative sugar factory at Pandiayaajapuram, a coffee curing unit, Mother Insurance Company, Indian Circar Insurance Corporation Limited etc for the betterment of Nadar community.

Soundrapandian and the Nadar Mahajana Sangam

Soundrapandian, as the General Secretary and the Vice-President of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam (NMS) rendered great service to the welfare of the backward communities. He demanded communal electorates and communal representations in the elections and in the government services for the backward castes particularly for the Nadars. Under his influence the Sangam began its active work for the social upliftment and economic development of Nadar community through scholarship program, rural development program and other welfare activities. Soundrapandian served as a bridge to unite the Nadar community and thus gained its strength. He attended all the conferences of Nadar Mahajana Sangam held from 1921 to 1953.

Soundrapandian brought a change in the rules and regulations of the NMS. Before this change, it was usual that the person who presided over the conferences and the person who inaugurated the conferences belonged to other communities. Soundrapandian made it that the Nadars alone be the presidents of the conferences.

The resolutions introduced by Soundrapandian at various conferences proved the active role he played in the conferences. Some of the important resolutions introduced by him were i) As a sponsor of Self Respect movement in 1921, he passed the resolution conditioning Nadars not to give any kind of donations to the temples until disparity was removed, ii) At the Tenth Conference held at Madurai in 1925, he introduced the resolution urging the government to take steps for the abolition of the sale of intoxicant

goods within ten years rapidly, iii) At the Eleventh Conference held during 1927 at Kumbakonam, he moved the resolution requesting the government to appoint Nadar representative in Taluk Boards, District Boards, Municipal Councils and as Honorary Bench Magistrates.

Soundrapandian himself was the president of the Thirteenth Conference of NMS held on 29th April at Poraiyar. It recognized the Self-Respect principles and in his presidential address, he urged the people to accept and practice Self-Respect principles in day-to-day life. He urged non-brahminisation in every ritual conducted by the people from their birth to death. He also presided over the NMS branch conference held at Sattankulam in 1921.

Soundrapandian was the Vice-President of NMS from 1926 to 1928 and from 1932 to 1952 with the gap of nearly three years from 1947 to 1949. He served as the Secretary from 1928 to 1932.

Soundrapandian Role in the District Boards

Soundrapandian a member of the Madras Legislative Council in 1928 served as the president of Ramnad District Board. As per the demand put forth by the Nadar representatives, the Governor nominated Soundrapandian as the president of Ramnad District Board. Initially he was reluctant but his close friend E. V. Ramasami persuaded him and in fact compelled him to accept this position in access to the belief that he would do something substantial to the downtrodden people of Ramnad. Of course, Soundrapandian did not shake the confidence of E.V. Ramasami whose dreams became true under the able presidentship of Soundrapandian.

As a president of the District board he urged the correspondents of Nadars schools to admit the scheduled caste children in their schools. He felt a deep concern for Harijan welfare. He warned the private schools that if they refused to admit Harijan children, they would face derecognition.

In Ramnad district, some of the bus owners did not permit Harijans to get into their buses and they also indicated this by writing in the tickets that no tickets would be given to the Harijans. As the president of the district board, he sent a circular to all the bus company owners indicating that if they refused to get any person into the bus on the basis of their caste or if they printed such words in tickets their license would be cancelled without any notice. He also ordered that within a week, they themselves should report whether this cruel practice was disbanded along with sample tickets. The circular had a good effect, that the Adi Dravidars were admitted in the buses.

As a Self-Respector, he was in favor of women education. He appointed lady teachers in the schools so that more girls would be sent in those schools. He was of the opinion that if women of India were properly educated, the younger generation of future India would be brought up along the right path. Under his presidentship even women were given representation in the Taluk and Union Boards.

In 1943, he was nominated to be the president of Madurai District Board and it was a turbulent time. Even the British were not able to concentrate on the administration because of World War II. Apart from these, there were internal conflict between the Brahmin and non-Brahmin communities in Tamil Nadu. Soundrapandian exercised full control over Madurai district to maintain law and order.

Contribution to Educational Field

Soundrapandian's contribution to the educational development of the Nadar community was enormous. In 1920 he introduced the scholarship scheme for the pkor but deserving students through Nadar Mahajana Sangam. Initially only Rs.50/- was earmarked for this scheme by the Sangam but now it has increased to Rs. 25 lakhs.¹⁵ In the beginning of every academic year, he used to plead with the Nadar business houses as well as the well-to-do Nadars to contribute liberally in the form of cash or materials like text books, notes, and school uniforms to the poor children of the community.

In all caste association managed school functions, he regularly uttered one statement of Victor Hugo i.e., 'opening an educational institution is equal to closing down a prison'. The educational institutions opened by the NMS owing to his foresight emphasized on imparting rational thinking, self-respect, economic progress and all round personality development in addition to regular education.

It was his fervent appeal to the community members that if our community has to prosper in the years to come, we have to concentrate more on educational field. He emphasized the significance of women's education. He donated a large amount to the Theni Nadars Association to establish a girls' high school. He believed that if Nadar women prosper, the community would automatically prosper. He pleaded his caste members not to have any reservation in sending their girls to higher education.

Whenever schools were established by the local *uravinmurai*s, *Soundrapandian* asked them to upgrade the schools to higher levels. More than seventy five primary schools started during his time by the local *uravinmurai*s today have reached the status of

either high school or higher secondary school, and some of them even to the level of polytechniques and colleges.

On 28.9.1952, at the Agarakattu Village Youth Club function, he spoke at length about the importance of education.

Nadars educational institutions must concentrate not only on academic education but also good virtues in life viz., honesty, discipline, duty, dignity, rational thinking, hard work, self-help etc. The local *uravinmurai* must take efforts to upgrade the school from elementary to middle school level. You should send your children to the high school, which is just seven kilometer from this place. Without proper education our community can't prosper. Never think your children also have to follow the same occupation as you are doing. We have to change ourselves according to the environment and time. I request you to inform me the type of help you need related to education, and I will extend it immediately (A.Kesavamoothy, 1976:32)

With his tireless efforts, the Nadar Mahajana Sangam S. P. Sentilkumara Nadar College at Virudhunagar¹⁶ and the Nadar Mahajana Sangam S. Vellaisami Nadar College at Nagamalai Puthukottai were established. Till his death Soundrapandian was one of the member of the governing body of the former. On many occasions he used his friends from celluloid world and other exponents of various fields to conduct cultural shows in order to mobilize funds for the Nadar owned educational institutions.¹⁷

On 17.07.28, at the Udumalaipet Nadar *Uravinmurai* felicitated Soundrapandian.

While accepting their felicitation he spoke

I will help the Nadars to come up in politics, education, small-scale industries, business and trade, unity, and *mahimai*. To come up in all these fields Nadars should upkeep their Self-Respect. I request my fellow Nadars to read the self-respect movement magazines viz. *Kudiarasu*, *Dravidan*, *Justice*, *Viduthalai*, *Sadarkula Mitran* etc. In our family functions, Nadars should avoid inviting Brahmin *purohits*. In future, all the marriages in our caste should be conducted in day time and must follow the self-respect movement traditions' (*ibid.*, 48)

According to Sri. P. R Muthuswami, the General Secretary of the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam*, positions like Member of the Legislative Council, President of both Madurai and Ramnad District Development Councils, General Secretary and Vice-President of Nadar Mahajana Sangam, came to him on their own. All these position

became very popular because it was once held by Soundrapandian, but, he never tried to gain popularity out of those positions.

Today the Nadars and the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* use the ideas of Soundrapandian in two ways. Firstly, his ideology provided the Nadars to integrate the caste as a whole, with the perception of a shared past of their sufferings in the hands of Brahmins, Thevars, Pillais and other caste Hindu. Irrespective of the geographical locations, religious, sub-caste and occupational differences, the caste as a whole is now well integrated into an ethnic entity. Secondly, the Nadar political leaders (more so those affiliated with Dravidian parties) are appropriating Soundrapandian's political

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language. This indicates that the Nadar identity been shaped by one prominent individual of yester years is now being used and interpreted by the new claimants. Today it serves the Nadars of Tamil Nadu to relate to the wider community of Nadars spread across the country and advance their own territorial, political, economical claims and cultural aspirations. Celebrating Soundrapandian as their deified hero, many Nadars have named their children as Soundarapandian. erected statues and written volumes about his contribution in development of their caste. It is an established practice that, even today, when the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* passes any resolution, its office bearers take an oath in front of the portrait of Soundrapandian by lighting incensed sticks and camphor.

Of all the prominent Nadar leaders" photos sold by the NMS, Soundrapandian photographs fetched maximum income to the association. His photographs decorate most of Nadar households and village level associations. Several educational institutions of the *Kadur Mahajana Sangam* are named after him. The Virudhunagar Municipality, while celebrating its Golden Jubilee year, had named one of the important lanes as

Soundrapandian *veedhi*. A sixteen feet bronze statue of Soundrapandian was erected in the *Nadar Mahajana Sanham* S.Vellaisami Nadar College Campus at Nagamalai Pudukottai, Madurai. According to P.R. Muthusami Nadar, 'the main idea of erecting Soundrapandian statue in the educational institution campus was that the students should know more about the leader and should follow his path for the establishment of progressive Tamil Society and a vibrant Tamil Nadu in all fronts.

ii) Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank - An Identity Marker

The Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank (hereafter TMB) is one of the many institutions (among which we find the *uravinmuraish*, jati panchayat, temples, educational institutions, community centers, marriage bureau, employment bureau, youth club, hostels, etc) which have been created by the Nadars caste association. The story of Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank starts from 1910 when the Nadars in Poraiyar - under the aegis of the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* (NMS) of Tanjore district decided to start a bank. In those days every caste had either owned or started initiation to own a bank²¹ and the Nadars did not want to lag behind. Therefore a resolution was passed unanimously to start a bank for the betterment of the community as a whole. The Nadars' resolution of 1910 was fructified 11 years later in Tuticorin in 1921. when the Nadar bank was registered. It was initially called as the Nadar Bank and later rechristened as Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited."²² It also provided a lot of employment opportunity to the Nadars. Most of the money for setting up of the bank was raised from small investors. The first nine directors were well known Nadars of that time.²³ They were not large shareholders. Over the years, five \vell to do families bought a majority of the shares at the rate of rupees twenty per share.²⁴ Initially, even the caste association (*Nadar Mafia/ana*

Sangam) had twenty thousand shares. When the government issued an order saying that the public institutions should not hold shares, the association sold the shares @ Rs.25. In the beginning, W. P. A Soundrapandian Nadar of Pattiveeranpatti²⁵ sought to push the bank to higher levels in the banking industry. He was an estate owner and belonged to the justice party. At that time he was even more powerful than the legendary Nadar, K. Kamaraj, Congress leader and later the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Soundrapandian's door-to-door canvassing yielded positive results.

Development of the Bank

When the bank was started in 1921 it had only rupees 40,000 as its equity but today the equity size of the bank is 28.45 lakhs whereas the value of the bank is 27,64,296 lakhs, and a share is valued Rs. 13,100.²⁶ The bank started with only 10 branches, but today the bank has 184 branches.²⁷ The state wise distribution shows 127 branches in Tamil Nadu, followed by 8 in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, 4 in Gujarat, 5 in Karnataka, 4 in Maharashtra 2 in Pondichery and one each in West Bengal and New Delhi. TMB stands out not only for its long history but also for its volume of business among the private sector banks in the country.²⁸

How the Nadars lost the Bank

TMB shares were closely held by the descendents of the original promoters.²⁹ As a particular group was dominating the show, the rest got fed up with their association with TMB. However, the key player in the drama involving the TMB's Nadar Director is G. Kathiresan, owner of the 50-year old Tuticorin Spinning Mills. His family has been involved with the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank for the past three generations.³⁰ It was

Kathiresan who, five years ago sold over 30 per cent of TMB shares to the Ruias of Essar group, and sowed the seeds of the controversy. And yet, he is in control of TMB even today. According to his friends circle, Kathiresan is a reluctant speaker, but once he agrees to speak, he hold back no punches. Kathiresan's family had a 30 per cent holding from the very beginning.

In 1984, a misunderstanding arose between Kathiresan and his brother Vetrivel they sold 12 per cent of their shares to the pioneer group of Sivakasi ³¹ - where their eldest sister's daughter (niece) is married into that group. Before that, the Pioneer group had only one per cent of TMB's equity. Although Kathireasan and his brother sold the shares, when in 1990. the TMB board came out with a rights issue, they took over the management by acquiring the maximum shares.

By 1994, the Pioneer group had garnered 15 percent of the shares and subsequently they sold all their holding to the Essar group. The main reason for this was their mere frustration because they did not have management control. M S P Raja of Virudhunagar, ³² who had ten percent of the TMB shares, too sold it to the Essar group, making it more powerful enough to aim at TMB's management control. Before the sale, the share price was Rs.800, but Essar bought the shares at Rs.3000. Only after the Sivakasi and Viruthunagar Nadars had sold out their respective stakes, the Nadars in Tuticorin started reacting.³³

Kathiresan decided control the Essars in TMB. He started searching the potential checkmate to halt the Essar's strides. Kathiresan had sought the help from his friends Sreenivasa Reddy of Balaji Distillers and A C Muthiah of SPIC. ³⁴ These two business tycoons agreed to buy 20 per cent of the TMB shares from the market. They announced

that they would buy the TMB shares at Rs.5000. However, garnering twenty per cent of the TMB equity proved difficult. Having failed in their attempt, the Nadars waited for the Essar group to make a counter offer.

At last, the Ruias contacted Kathiresan. The former claimed that they have 40 per cent of the TMB shares. But Kathiresan was convinced that they did not have more than 27 per cent. Kathiresan mooted the idea of managing the show together. But the Essar rejected his idea outright and wanted to be the monopolist at the helm of TMB's business. After a few arguments, Kathiresan yielded to the Ruias and agreed to sell his stake. Kathiresan agreed to sell 84,000 shares with few conditions.³⁵ He wanted to continue his participation in the bank management, sought four directorships and control over the recruitment committee and emphasized to continue employing only Nadars. In addition to these conditions, he laid down that if the Ruias wanted to sell the TMB shares in future, they should first make the offer to him. When the Essar group agreed to all this point, Kathiresan sold his shares at Rs. 3,500 to the Ruias. With this, TMB, the Nadar community's pride, slipped out of the hands of Nadars. The Nadars started agitating. As one informant from the Nadar caste association put it in punchant language 'the Nadars slept till the water hit their ass'.³⁶

Formation of the Retrieval Forum

After losing the majority of the shares of TMB the Nadars realized that they were in hot water and lost their control over the TMB management. Immediately a retrieval forum was formed (Nadr Mahajana Bank Shares Investors Forum i.e NMBSIF) to get back the bank. Media baron Sivanthi Aditan³⁷ was named as President of the retrieval forum

and the case was taken to the Supreme court. The Ruias agreed to sell back **the** shares to the Nadars, when the Supreme Court verdict went against them. The Nadar caste as a whole **was mobilized by** the retrieval forum and come to the conclusion to buy back the shares **to the tune** of Rs.560 million. Under presidentship of Sivanthi Aditan, efforts were launched to mobilize the required funds. The fund raising drive lost its tempo when the forum could mobilise only Rs. 50 million. Fed up with this slow movement, Sivanthi Adityan stepped **down** as president of the retrieval forum.

Soon after, another committee was formed with Sri. Ramachndra Aditan³⁸ (Sivanthi Aditan's elder brother) a media baron in his own right, as its chairman. Another meeting was arranged with the Ruias. A new formula was developed; accordingly the Nadars have to pay Rs. one billion to get back the bank shares from Essar. The Nadars launched a renewed collection drive with new vigor. Ramachandra Adityan's tireless efforts made the forum to half a through stage and netted Rs.500 million to the Ruias and entered into a written agreement to pay the rest within the stipulated time frame.

Sivasankaran got into the controversy

A meeting was called and the mediator was the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Sri M.Karunanidhi. At that meeting instead of Sashi Ruia of the Essar group, Sri. Sivasankaran of Sterling computers turned up.³⁹ The Singapore based non-resident Indian claimed that he had bought the shares from Essar. As against one-billion agreed upon by the Ruias and the Nadars, Sivasankaran demanded Rs.1.35 billion, which ultimately broke down the talks. In the meantime, Sivasankaran requested the Reserve bank of India to transfer the shares to his name. At the same time, in Tuticorin the Nadar dominated **TMB board passed** a resolution stating that the shares should not be

transferred to Sivasankaran.⁴⁰

A delegation of Nadars led by the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam General Secretary J Jayalalitha met the then Prime Minister Shri. A. B. Vajpayee and

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sought his help to retrieve the bank. Earlier, the Reserve bank of India had refused to transfer the shares to Essar; now it refused to transfer the shares to Sivasankaran also. Now, Sivasankaran could either approach the Company Law Board or go back to the Nadars. It has always been the agents of Sivasankaran who had negotiated with the Nadars. After a long spell, on March 10, 1999, he wrote a letter to Sri. Ramachandra Aditan, asking for a meeting and offered a new deal to the Nadars. According to the new deal, out of the 67 per cent of the total shares held by him, he was willing to sell only 18 percent to the Nadars at the agreed rate of Rs.5,500/- per share and the rest 49 per cent, he wanted to sell to the financial institutions, so that he can make profit. The financial institutions will be definitely interested because TMB is a highly successful bank. But the Nadars were wary. They came to a conclusion that it will not be viable to run the bank with only 51 per cent of the shares. The money has been mobilized from allover the country and even from overseas Nadars. So even if two per cent shareholders sell out the shares in future, the Nadar will become minority stake holding. Mr. Rajendran, one of the board of directors said "we can allow him to sell only five percent or a maximum of ten percent to the financial institutions'. Sri R. Chandrasekaran, member of the retrieval forum, prefers leaving the issue to be decided upon by arbitrators. Sivasankaran had offered to discuss the matter through a team comprising of a chartered accountant, an advocate and two other representatives. The Nadars will send their own chartered accountant, an advocate and two other representatives. Mr. Ramachandra Aditan said

'with a chartered accountant **and an** advocate around, there will be substance in the talks. We don't want an endless dialogue'. While Chandrasekaran believes that the earlier price of Rs.1 billion for 67 per cent of the shares is right, Sivasankaran was willing to sell at a

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'fair price'. At last, the Nadars allowed Sivasankaran to sell 20 per cent of the total shares to financial institutions, whereas, Sivasankaran was not agreeing anything less than 30 per cent.

Strategies

The Nadars used the strategies of Three Ps (prayer, petition and protest) to get back the bank. The community members submitted their memorandum, to get back the bank to a number of persons like Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, All the political parties chief, Governor, Union Finance Minister, Home Minister, Prime Minister, President of India, Governor Reserve Bank of India, Finance Secretary, opposition leaders, both in the State Legislative Assembly and the Parliament, Floor leaders of all the political parties in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in Parliament, Members of the State Legislative Assembly Tamil Nadu. Speakers of the Parliament and Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. People belonging to the community from all walks of life helped to the maximum extent to get back the community's asset and still continuing all sorts of help. The Nadars owned news papers⁴³ thoroughly focused the issue so much so that the Mercantile Bank issue percolated even at the grass root level. Since the beginning of the problem almost all the issues of the caste association Journal otherwise known as the Nadar Gazetteer '*Mahajanam*' has consistently focused the development of the bank

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issue.

Proverbs, Slogans and Quotes

The office bearers of the NMBSIF motivated the community to participate the caste as a whole to get back the bank. Since 1995, the forum had brought out more than hundred and fifty leaflets, pamphlets, bulletins, newsletters and notices to motivate the caste as a whole.

In all the publications of NMBSIF and the article appeared in *Mahajanam* journal used some of the eye catching and motivating slogans to inspire the community members. They also used some of the character assassination statements to malign the character of Sashi Ruia and Sivasankaran. Some of the quotes used in these publications were as follows: the beauty of any caste is showing its unity in turbulent times, an appeal to eight million Nadars, you did our community proud, our unity is our strength, a Nadar who is not helping to get back the bank is not a Nadar, invest in TMB shares and uphold our community self-respect, TMB is not only our community pride it is also our caste identity, investment in TMB is towards the progress of our community, your investment in TMB is an opportunity to regain the past glory of our community, let every¹ Nadar household buy one share and the bank will be again ours, it is possible by you alone, let us bury the internal differences and fight for the community's cause, if Nadar lives comfortably pat them and if Nadar drown rescue them. TMB for the Nadars by the Nadars and of the Nadars, an epoch making endeavor of restoring the community 's hard earned prestige and glory, your gracious arms to uplift the pride of our community, it is an offer that eventually to restore the glory of Nadar in the banking sector, defaulter to a bank cannot run a bank, don't play with eight million people's sentiment. Ruia had ruined us, and Sankaran had sabotaged our community's progress.

TMB issue got politicized

On March 21st 1998, the opposition members in the Tamil Nadu legislative assembly raised **the** issue of the failure of the then ruling DMK government in restoring the TMB back to the Nadar community. The floor leader of the AIADMK R. Tamaraikani ⁴⁶ said that the DMK government had failed to fulfill its promise to the Nadars that it would rescue the cash rich TMB from the control of some industrialists. The member created uproar when he categorically alleged that the former Union Industry Minister and senior

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DMK leader Murosoli Maran was behind this failure. When the Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi asked the proof for his allegation, Mr. R. Tamaraikani reluctantly withdrew his charge. Further, the member said that if the DMK expressed its inability to restore the shares from NRI industrialist C. Sivashankaran, the AIADMK and its allies would do so. In a reply to this point the Chief Minister sarcastically replied that why the AIADMK and their friends were waiting for the DMK government to wash its hands off the matter, 'you can go ahead and restore the bank and express the DMK's inability'. The Chief Minister said that the government really had no role in solving the issue, which was essentially a dispute between private industrialists and the original agreement between the Nadar community and Sashi Ruia of the Essar group, mediated by himself, was not a signed accord. Essar could not be grossly blamed of breach of the agreement. as it was not a written one. The government could only use its good offices to help find a solution. Legally, there was nothing that it could do about it. On the charge against Maran (Karunanidhi's nephew), he said the former minister had not interfered with the talks that the government was having with the parties to help find a solution. It so happened that when the Chief Minister was engaged in talks, he was told that Maran was waiting to

see him outside for long time. Thereafter, he was invited inside the room.

Though he had nothing to do with the negotiations, Maran was upset with Sivashankaran once, when the latter demanded that he be paid Rs.185 crore to return the shares. Maran had, in a somewhat angry tone, told the industrialist that instead of paying him Rs. 185 crore, the Nadars could start a new bank on their own with the Rs. 100 crore they were collecting. The Chief minister said, adding that this was misinterpreted to mean that Maran had insisted that Sivasankaran be allowed to retain the TMB shares, while Nadars could start a new bank for their own community.

TMB issue was at its center stage in the Tirnelveli Lok Sabha constituency at the time of 1998 Parliament election. The Nadars constitute 13 percent of the total electorate in Tirunelveli. When the DMK announced the Tamil actor Sharath Kumar who is also a Nadar by caste as its candidate, the Nadars in some villages got in to action. Posters appeared all over the place, particularly on buses, saying that the community would not vote for Sharath Kumar. The reason they gave was 'Sharath Kumar has joined hands with Karunanidhi who helped Sivashankaran takeover the TMB which legitimately belongs to us'. To mitigate this problem Sharath Kumar led a morcha of Nadars to help caste to get back their bank. The Nadars thought he joined with them because he is a Nadar. The actor lamed politician also assured the voters that after becoming a parliamentarian, within six hours he would find a solution to the TMB problem. The earlier pasted posters were removed immediately but a cross section of the Nadars said in point blank that "we will vote for anybody except Sharath !".

At the time of his campaigning, Sharath Kumar said that the TMB is not a political issue; it involves one community, but the election result proved that TMB issue

was politicized and percolated even at the grass root level, which led to his defeat. The Nadars hit where it hurts. In the southern districts of Tirunelveli, Sivakasi, Viruthunagar, Madurai, and Tuticorin, posters sprung up condemning the DMK double standard in the Mercantile bank issue during the Lok Sabha elections. The DMK candidates lost badly.⁴⁹

Irrespective of the political ideology, almost all the political parties took up the issue of TMB in both the houses of parliament and the Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly on various occasions.

Role played by Nadar Businessmen

When the NMBSIF requested to buy the shares of TMB, the businessmen of Nadar community responded positively and enthusiastically. The main reason attributed behind their keen interest was that, at later stages, they could avail the financial assistance from the bank on priority basis to strengthen their business. Also as a shareholder, they can be involved in the decision making process. All type of businessmen involved actively and extended their support to get back the bank. That is why the bid opted to buy the shares ranged from minimum of one shares to a maximum of thousand shares. Some of the small businessmen openly declared that they are buying the share because they want to be part of the Mercantile Bank business network in future. The Nadar businessmen associations in many towns of Tamil Nadu passed resolutions to help the NMBSIF by purchasing shares to retain the caste owned bank also to uphold the castes long cherished pride in banking field.⁵⁰ Many of the Nadar business houses organized the meetings of the forum to make the collection drive successful. In addition to this, the businessmen identified the well to do caste customers and convinced them to invest in the bank shares. The Nadar businessmen from Virudhunagar allotted huge amount of their profits

to buy the shares.⁵¹ The Tamil newspaper industry dominated by the Adityans of Kayamoli has consistently focused the mercantile bank issue and all its latest development, so much so that the common man in the caste will come to know the bank issue in depth.⁵² The Nadar businessmen helped in conducting the meeting of the caste delegation in various parts of Tamil Nadu to mobilize the support to get back the bank. The nature of support varied from buying of shares, incurring the cost of organizing meeting and travel of the forum members, also providing the board and lodging arrangements to the retrieval forum members. Over all the Nadar businessmen and business houses were partly responsible behind the success of getting back the bank.

Role played by the caste association

The office bearers of the Nadar Mahajana Sangam toured very extensively to convince their caste members to buy back the shares and help the community as a whole. The association extended all types of support to the chairman and members of the NMBSIF to mobilize the required amount. The Mahajana Sangam wrote letters to all the local associations (*uravinmuraïs*) through out Tamil Nadu to invest their *Mahamai* fund in buying the mercantile bank shares so as to help the community and its economic development in the long run. The President, Secretary, and members of the Mahajana Sangam accompanied with the forum in their mobilization drive. The Mahajana Sangam also wrote letters to the overseas associations to identify the potential investors to invest in the shares. At times, it individually also contacted the Nadar businessmen in abroad and convinced them to contribute for the community's cause.

The caste association messengers (*Thuduvárs*) were also deployed in the field to canvass for selling the IMB shares, and each one of them was fixed with a specific target

and regions to be covered within the stipulated time frame. Those messengers who have achieved the targets were given special incentives.

In order to make the community members aware of the issue, the *Mahajanam* journal (considered to be the Gazetteer of the caste) regularly published articles about the latest development pertaining to the bank. There are 266 articles, which appeared over a period of five years. It requested the local level association to conduct village level and even street level meetings to explain the issue to the caste members.

The caste association wrote letters to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Prime Minister, president, Finance Minister, Governor, Reserve Bank of India, Secretary, Company law Board to stop the share transfer to Essar and to the Sivasankaran. It also sought justice from these VIPs to the caste as a whole. When it was demanded by the courts and Reserve Bank of India, the caste association retrieved all the old record from its archives to prove how the Nadars struggled to establish the Tami Nadu Mercantile Bank in its initial stages and how genuinely it belongs to the community instead of few individuals.

At times, it requested all the politicians of the community to fight unitedly to get back the bank. It had gone to the extend of saying that which ever political party come to their rescue in retrieving the bank will be voted by the Nadars in enmass. Although the caste association in an apolitical organization, due to the TMB issue it had aligned with political parties and justified its act for the sake of the caste as a whole.

To gain the political support of popular parties, the DMK president and the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and the President of the Tamil Manila Congress late Shri. G. K. Moopanar were invited as special invitees to the 64th Annual Conference of

Nadar Mahajana Sangam at Chennai in 1996³ The president of the NMS requested both the leaders to help the caste to get back the bank. Again in 1999 the caste association approached AIADMK Supremo Selvi. J. Jayalalitha to help the caste. Realizing the strength of Nadars vote bank, she took the caste delegation and met the Prime Minister and the Union Finance Minister to help the community.

The caste association used the prominent figures of the community to mobilize the support to get back the bank. Among them the actor turned politician Sharath Kumar, media barons Sivanthi Adityan and Ramachandra Adityan, business tycoons from Chennai, Maduraim Sivakasi and Virudhunagar like K.A.S Sekhar, M. G. Muthu, V. G. P. Santosham , and Rajagopal the proprietor of Saravana group were a few to be named.

How the Nadar politician helped the caste?

The Nadar politicians representing the Legislative Assembly in Tamil Nadu and both the houses of Indian Parliament raised the issues many time. The former union Minister of State for Finance. Shri. Kadampur Janardhanam, who is a Nadar by caste took keen interest to solve the issue in favor of his community. The Nadar politicians became part of the NMBSIF and met the Prime Minister. Finance Minister Governor, Reserve bank of India. Secretary, and Company Law Board, Leader of the Opposition parties to get back the bank. The political influence was to the extent that the AIADMK included the TMB issue in its election manifesto in 1998. The Nadar politicians convinced the ruling Bharathiya Janatha Party about the influential vote bank of their caste in Tamil Nadu. Realizing the community's strength the Deputy Prime Minister Shri. L.K. Advani brokered the deal between the Nadars and Sivasankaran and ultimately Sivasankaran

yielded to sell his stake to the Nadars at the cost of Rs. 155 crores. On 1st March 2004 Shri. Ramachandra Adityan openly requested the Nadars to vote in favor of the BJP-AIADMK combine in the 2004 parliamentary election.³⁴ This is the first time the forum taking a political line of extending its support to a front. The forum support is crucial in the constituencies like Tiruchendur, Tirunelveli, Tenksi, Sivakasi, Nagercoil, Ramnad, Madurai, Chennai North, Chennai South, and Chennai central. The BJP candidate Pon. Radha Krishnan contested from Nagercoil constituency, who is a Nadar by caste played a vital role in convincing Shri. L. K. Advani to broker the deal in favor of Nadars. The Nadars politicians had taken various steps for more than a decade to get back the bank.

Retrieving TMB: unification of caste

The TMB issue represents a new strategy, which favors the unification of caste irrespective of the sub-caste, religious, regional, and socio-cultural differences. It built up extensive caste association network, which exists today at eight different levels: these of global, national, regional, state, districts, major towns, village and street levels.

Although the mercantile bank share investors' forum has organized by the well to do Nadars and businessmen, they attract the participation from both urban and rural backgrounds. They help the village people to bury the differences arising out of the dominance of rich and middle class Nadars in the caste association and other developmental activities. They draw the attention of poor Nadars living in remote villages and small towns and make them to buy the bank shares in order to get back the bank.

The office bearers of the TMB share investor forum represents all the region and sub-castes which indicates the success of TMB issue atleast in integrating the wide

spread caste members. The forum has established alliances with the local *uravinmuraish* and mobilized the required amount. According to the members of the retrieval forum, only top business men of Nadar community is sufficient enough to contribute the amount, but the real intention is to have maximum number of shareholders, so as to have a sense of belongingness. The outstanding ability of the forum is to draw a large number of investors to exploit and complete the potentialities of the caste association at all levels.

The investor forum members of TMB first established direct contact with the local associations located all over Tamil Nadu. They are in constant touch with the local Nadar notables and involved them closely in the campaign to get back the bank. The help of the local leaders at the grassroot level was essential for the successful completion of the forum's work. They sent the touring agents of NMS (*Thuduvans*) all over Tamil Nadu and to meet the selected families who are willing to buy the TMB shares. They also arranged meetings district wise and opened the offices of the forum at the district head quarters to motivate the people to buy back the shares.

From an Economic Institution to Caste Identity Symbol

The Nadar community as a whole, irrespective of their economic status identifies with the bank so much so that a few not so well off members of the caste went out of their way to buy one or two shares. All for the community's sake. Some of the caste members pitched in money, more in the form of donations. Tuticorin Rajendran⁵⁵ says, 'suppose a public park is dirty, you will try to find out who donated the land. If you tell the descendants of the donor that the park is dirty, they will take steps to clean it. It's a normal human tendency. The Nadars are coming together to get back the bank because it was started by their elders'. R. Chandrasekhar of Coimbatore, an active member of the

forum says, " it was sentiment alone they gave us money, with no certificate in hand, no shares, nothing." There are 25,000 shareholders as of now; more are expected to join. 'It will remain a community-owned bank for the service of all,' says another shareholder. Former legislator S. N. Ramasamy Nadar says 'we went around telling the fellow Nadars that we must rescue the bank from the clutches of the northerners - after all it was started by Nadars for our betterment.' So intense is the love for the bank that Nadars will not appreciate if investors from other communities and regions seek to buy TMB shares, as one Parsi journalist in Mumbai who sought all but four shares realized recently. A member of the forum had said, ' we are selling only to the Nadars, if we want to sell to others, we would have let the bank to remain with either Essar or Sivasankaran.'

The bank remains a potent symbol of the community. Yet it acquired a new meaning after it was taken over by the Essar group and subsequently by the Sivasankaran of Essar group. In the era of liberalization where the community with enormous entrepreneurial acumen and its members moved to different direction to do business and engage in government services the community solidarity was weakened, but the issue of mercantile bank helped them to rebuilt their lost caste solidarity. The internal division of the caste based on territory (northern Vs. southern), religion (Hindus Vs. Christian), sub-caste (*Karukku paitaiyar, Nattati. Kodikal, Kalla* etc.), and occupation (tappers, farmers, traders, government servants etc.) were minimized to the maximum extent. The veteran leaders hitherto played a miniscule role came out openly and canvassed to get back the bank, which they considered as their community pride. 'Get back the bank* became a centerpiece of the emerging Nadar identity. The notion of Nadars identity built around an economic institution and has acquired as a new tool to rebuild the weakened caste

solidarity. With the arrival of globalization, liberalization and privatization, the old social institutions were replaced by the economic institutions.

The development of specific forms of property plays an important role in caste identity formation. Among the Nadars of Tamil Nadu, their caste owned bank TMB has been crucial for their entrepreneurial success.

This network has affected the class formation and class-consciousness among the Nadars. The success of Nadar caste based efforts in achieving upward mobility provides material affirmation of an ideology, which stresses the importance of caste identity. The efforts taken by the Nadars are illustrative of the extent to which once low-ranked caste use their social capital as a form of social investment and as symbols to alter their position in social schemata. In addition, the strategies used by the Nadars are similar to that deployed by other middle ranking castes who have drawn upon kin and caste networks to establish themselves as entrepreneurs (Upadhayay, 1988: 1441). As a result, there is need to safeguard their capital even in the larger economic arena and is linked to their dependency on capital to develop a better social and political status. Being able to control capital is to sustain their new identity and position as a significant agricultural, merchant, trading and entrepreneurial community. As a caste, the Nadars are inadequate to eschew the ascribed low status by changing occupations. Instead, the community has consolidated its collective solidarity, achieved financial strength by strategies to ensure its autonomy and interests.

The ability of a caste group to challenge the threats to its capital interest is indicative of the ability of a caste to draw on capital and enhance and consolidate its own identity.

Conclusion

The TMB not only gives the Nadars an opportunity to increase the scope of business activities but also stands as a caste identity marker. In the earlier times palmyra tree, toddy tapping, *uravinmurai*s (local associations), mahamai (welfare fund), jati panchayat, temples, Mariamman (mother goddesses), Ayyanar (territorial god), educational institutions, towering personalities were considered as socio- cultural, religious, economic and occupational identities of their caste. But with the advent of privatization, liberalization and globalization, the economic institutions occupies a centre stage of the community. The Nadar caste association and the bank retrieval forum redefined the base of the shareholders across the regions and various economic strata. This step also reinforces the ties of community solidarity among the caste members. The fund mobilization drive by the retrieval forum created awareness among the caste members about the importance of an economic institutions and its role in the development of community as a whole.

The collective efforts put forth to get back the bank demonstrated the Nadars caste solidarity once again to all the other community and the political parties. The developments of TMB over the past eight years showed that the domain of Nadar identity is not only shaped by the social and cultural institutions but also the economic institutions. The dimensions of caste and class do not exclusively govern specific realms of identity building; they are combined to various degrees and jointly shaped the life of members of caste.

Notes

1. Although Soundrapandian family migrated to Pattiveeranpatti, they were in constant touch with their native place Virudhunagar, due to their business interest.
2. The British nominated him as the representative of his caste. Hence, he continued the same tradition throughout his tenure in the assembly.
3. This is the title given to him by his caste brethren.
4. Although it is branded as a apolitical organization, at various points of time, the NMS was identified with some political party or ideology,
5. The idea was to integrate all the toddy tappers' community and so as to emerge as a political power in South India which was something similar to the Jat Political mobilization in North India.
6. The punitive tax was imposed both on the Nadars and Marvas after the terrible communal riots at Kamudhi in 1897.
7. The order was issued upon the request made by Nadars.
8. Periyar wanted a leader from the backward caste, and Soundrapandian's oratorical skills financial strength and organizing capability fetched him the Presidentship.
9. This not only advocated the rational behavior and also desanskritized the Nadars way of life.
10. Dr. M. Karunanidhi branded Virudhunagar as the bastion of Justice Party and Dravidian movement.
11. Virudhunagar Nadars liberally contributed and also published a good number of magazines to propagate the ideals of self-respect movement.
12. The Self-Respect style of marriage changed the Nadars traditional custom to a maximum extent and also challenged some of the rituals associated with marriage.
13. To shed the communal color, the bank name was changed in 1962.

14. The press helped to publish the caste journal in a regular and efficient way. Nadars were the first one to own a press among the backward castes in Tamil Nadu.
15. Scholarship scheme is the one which takes major share in NMS budget every year.
16. The first college established by the caste association in south India, without any government aid.
17. It is considered as a fund mobilization strategy.
18. To create awareness among the backward caste people, Soundrapandian used the caste association to propagate the philosophy of self-respect movement.
19. Nadars belong to the Congress Party and they continue to use the political language of K. Kamaraj Nadar, whereas the Dravidian Parties are using Soundrapandian's language.
20. This is like hero worshipping. Soundrapandian is considered as the defied hero by his caste people.
21. The Nattukottai Chettiars owned the Bank of Madura Ltd. The Chettiars owned Karur Vysya Bank, Pillais had Bank of South India, the Bunts Shetties of Karnataka owned Corporation Bank, Syrian Catholic owned Syrian Catholic Bank, the Jats of North India had control over Punjab National Bank. The Parsis started Central Bank and the Marwaris had their Bank. The Nadars did not want to be left behind.
22. In order to attract the deposit from non-Nadars, also, to shed its communal color, the Nadar Bank was rechristened as TMBL in 1962.
23. The first nine directors were Sri M.V. Shunmugael Nadar, Sri M.V.E. Ratnasami Nadar, Sri A.R.A.S. Arumugasami Nadar, Sri K.A.M.A. Kaliappa Nadar, Sri T.V. Balaguru Sami Nadar, Sri A.M.M. Chinnamani Nadar, Sri P.K.S.A. Arumuga Nadar, Sri A.R.A. Shenbaga Nadar and Sri M.S.P.A. Chidambara Nadar.
24. The five well-to-do families are 1. Sri Chinnamani Nadar family - Tuticorin, 2. Sri M.S.P. Raja family - Virudhunagar, 3. Sri Pioneer family - Sivakasi, 4. Sri. Chidampara Nadar family, and 5. Sri A.R.A.S. Arumugasami Nadar family.

25. W.P.A. Soundrapandian, the business tycoon of Nadar community, Proprietor of large plantation industry and a prominent figure in the justice party toured all the Nadar settlements in Tamil Nadu and mobilized the amount to strengthen the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited. His tireless effort made the bank a competitive one in the banking industry.
26. See, the latest Balance sheet of TMBL.
27. Initially it had only 10 branches, they are Tuticorin, Virudhunagar, Sivakasi, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Colombo (Overseas branch) and Madras,
28. See, Business Standard dated 28.3.2000 a column by Sridevi Sri Kanth.
29. Most of the shares were held by the descendents of original promoters till it was taken over by Essar and subsequently by Siva Sankaran.
30. Kathiresan's grandfather late Chinnamani Nadar was the Director of TMB, after his death Kathiresan's father, Ganesh Nadar became Director of TMB. At present, Kathiresan and his brother Vetrivel were very prominent figures in the TMB affairs. Three generations of an individual family had control over the bank.
31. The pioneer group of Sivakasi is a reputed industrial house known for firework, safety matches and off-set printing press. It also established a good number of educational institutions.
32. M.S.P. Raja of Virudhunagar is popularly known as the Duke of Virudhunagar and diversified his business network.
33. See Rediff on the Net Business News 'Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank's original promoter vows to WTest complete control, dated 6-11-2000.
34. Both Sreenivasa Reddy and A. C. Muthaiah are well known industrialists in South India. They are keen in acquiring the shares of reputed companies. They are also known for their takeover of new business.
35. The condition put forth by Kathiresan revealed that even after selling the shares he wanted to be in the helm of affairs in the TMB.
36. "This was quoted by one Sri. Tirumalainathan of NMS, at the time of my fieldwork.

37. Sivanthi Adityan, the son of Late. Chi. Pa Aditanar, a prominent figure who controls the Tamil media, Ex- President of Indian Olympic committee and owns a quite good number of educational institutions in south Tamil Nadu.
38. Another media baron, the brother of Sivanthi Adityan, owns number of Tamil Newspapers, weeklies, and fortnightlyes.
39. Sivasankaran bought the TMB shares from Ruias of Essar group under a shadow deal. Both Sashi Ruia and Sivasankaran were tight lipped till the last moment.
40. Since in the TMB board 90 percent of the Board of Directors were from the Nadar community, they unanimously passed a resolution, requesting the Reserve bank of India not to transfer the mercantile bank shares on Sivasankaran name.
41. J.Jayalalitha's AIADMK and A .B. Vajpayee's BJP had an electoral alliance in Tamil Nadu. Hence, she led the Nadar delegation. Her ulterior motive was to woo the Nadar vote bank at the time of assembly election.
42. According to Sivasankaran, the "fair price" was his original investment plus interest calculated for the amount over a period of time, which worked out to be Rs. 256 crores.
43. Nadar - owned newspapers are Dinatanthi, Dinakaran, Kathiravan, Malai Murasu. Mlai malar, Dina Bhoomi etc.
44. More than 250 articles and news items were published in the Nadar caste association journal Mahajanam over a period of four and half years.
45. All these leaflets, pamphlets, bulletins news letters were printed by both the Adityan;s owned press and the caste association owned Mahajanam press. These were dispatched to all the local uravinmuraias to abreast the caste members about the latest developments.
46. Sri. R. Thamaraikani a Nadar by caste was a staunch supporter of AIADMK, represented Srivilliputhur assembly constituency continuously for six times. There are many criminal cases against him in various courts in Tamil Nadu. At present he has aligned with M. Karunanidhi's DMK party.
47. The idea of attacking Murasoli Maran was to embarrass the DMK leader M. Karunanidhi and malign the DMK party.

48. The villages are Kulayankaraisal, Pandaravilai and Savithivapuram dominated by the Nadars.
49. DMK candidates lost with huge margin in Tirunelveli, Tiruchendur, Nagercoil, Sivakasi, madurai, Ramnad, Dindigul, and Tenkasi parliamentary constituencies dominated by Nadars.
50. The Nadar merchants association (Nadars Chambers of Commerce), in Tirunelveli, Sivakasi, Madurai, Virudhunagar, Coimbatore and Chennai passed such resolutions.
51. The M.S.P. group and V.V.D group of Virudhunagar came forward with huge amount to buy the mercantile bank shares.
52. My discussion with the agricultural laborers, tappers and petty traders revealed that they were all very well informed about the TMB issue.
53. Both Karunanidhi of DMK and G.K. Moopanar of Tamil Manila Congress wee part of the Deva Gowda's United Front Government at the center. Hejce, Nadars, invited them to the caste association's annual conference.
54. This is the first time the president of Mercantile Bank Shares Investors Forum openly requested the community to vote in favor of AIADMK and BJP combine. With this pre-condition only L.K. Advani mediated the deal between Nadars and Sivasankarn.
55. Tuticorin Rajendran was one among the board of Directors in TMB board.

Chapter - IX

CONCLUSION

The story of Nadars of Tamil Nadu is one of the most fascinating examples of social mobility and economic change of a community in modern India. The available literature on their history tells about their enormous resilience and entrepreneurship. Nadars and the story of their mobility has been a researched subject. However, much of the available literature looks at them in a macro perspective, various dimensions of the dynamism and dynamics of the community.

This study attempts to go further and looks at their experience once again. However, unlike much of the available literature, this study tried to look at the Nadar experience from below, by looking at the village level realities in contemporary Tamil Nadu and attempted to understand the relationship of their mobility and identity formation with the agrarian social structure in a historical perspective. Though the Nadars of Tamil Nadu today can hardly be characterized as an agrarian community, it is very important to look at the started point of the process of their mobility in order to understand the internal diversities and variation in the contemporary Nadar identity.

The available literature on the caste identity of Nadars or on agrarian change in Tamil Nadu has rarely tried to look at the interrelation between the two. The present study was designed to look at this relationship. In other words, the present study aspires to look at the questions of Nadar identity by relating it to the process of agrarian change in southern Tamil Nadu and the consequent social mobility experienced by the Nadars over the last century.

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To describe the nature of agrarian transformation among the Southern Nadars with special reference to different agro-ecosystems,
2. To analyze the nature of caste mobility among Nadars, spatial, educational, occupational, and religious,
3. To historically examine the process of identity formation and the making of caste symbols among the Nadars; and
4. To explore how some specific individuals (viz., a caste leader) or an institution (such as a bank) could become the symbols of caste identity and play a critical role in consolidation of caste solidarity.

Given the paucity of literature on the subject the study was designed to be exploratory-cum-descriptive in nature. It is based both in an empirical fieldwork and extensive use of archival material, which helped in looking at the historical aspects of the identity formation process. As is well known, identities are never static. So has been the case with Nadars. Though they have remained loyal to their caste, the meanings of caste and markers of their identity have been undergoing many substantial changes.

Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari districts of Tamil Nadu were chosen for the empirical study. Since the study focuses on southern Nadars, these three districts have Nadar population as the dominant caste, professing agriculture as their main occupation, and they have made tremendous progress over the years. The selection of the villages was purposive. Predominance of Nadar population, practice of agriculture, and the degree of development over the years were the criteria for selecting these villages. Three medium size Nadar dominated villages located in these districts under three

ecosystems i.e., wetland village (in Kanyakumari district), dryland village (in Tuticorin district) and gardenland village (in Tirunelveli district) were selected.

A total of one hundred and eighty (180) respondents were selected among all categories of agricultural population belonging to the Nadar community. The population was classified into six categories on the basis of ownership of land. These categories were: agricultural labors, marginal farmers, small farmers, middle farmers, big farmers, and very big farmers. Sixty respondents from each village were selected. Attempt was made to cover all possible sub-categories of farmers and landless laborers. Initial aim was to cover all the categories proportionately, by giving equal representation. But, the field visit to the wetland village located in Kanyakumari district revealed that the average size of operational holding was much smaller in the wetland village when compared with the other two villages. Therefore, a minor change was made at the last moment i.e., twelve farmers from the first three categories were selected from each village by random method. In a similar way, eight farmers from the last three categories from each village were selected viz., 8 middle farmers, 8 big and 8 very big farmers. The total sample from each village worked out to be 60. The sample chosen from all the three ecosystem (village) had each 20 percent of agricultural laborers, marginal and small farmers, 13.3 per cent in the categories middle, big and very big farmers. Apart from the case studies, a few interviews were also carried out with the Nadar notables viz., caste leaders, secretary of caste association, leader of a political party, touring agent of caste association etc.

An exploration into the agrarian transformation among the Nadars of the study revealed that they had acquired cultivable land through various sources viz., profits earned from toddy tapping, land distributed by Christian missionaries, land purchased

from upper caste, who out migrated after the break down of joint family system among them, and fragmentation and sub-division of land holdings, migrant Nadars also invested in landed property in their native villages. Land reform legislation also helped some Nadars to acquire ownership rights over the land they were cultivating. A large majority of Nadars thus eventually moved away from toddy tapping and acquired the status of a land owning dominant caste.

In term of agricultural development, the three villages followed different trajectories. In the wetland village the farmers changed their cropping system i.e., from annual cereal crops to perennial tree crops and more profit earning commercial crops. The traditional rice crop had become highly susceptible to both biotic and abiotic stresses. The educated Nadars who had jobs outside the village also had lesser time for agriculture and could not pay much attention to the short duration crops. Moreover, the locally available remunerative markets for coconut and banana assured them good returns. Hence, farmers started switching over from rice to coconut and banana. The new market for these products also played a role in inducing agrarian change in this village.

In the garden land village, the most critical factor that led to the agrarian change was the construction of a dam close to the village and the subsequent arrest of water flow to the village tanks. The land became valuable and expensive. Many Nadars disposed off their land in a phased manner and eventually gave up agriculture for business. The steep increase in the cost of cultivation, non-availability of labour force due out migration of men and the absorption of women folk in the beedi industry also played their role in making the practice of farming a difficult vocation.

Apart from these factors, the inflow of gulf-money into the land market and increasing out-migration of educated youth were also important factors that led to agrarian change in the gardenland village.

In the dryland village, the nature of soil, poor water availability, the reluctance to do farming by the well to do Adityan land owners, and the influence of a paper mill and adaptability of tree crops (*udai* shrub) meant for pulp required for the production of by the newly set-up Sun Paper Mill by a prosperous Nadar completely changed the agricultural scene. The rich Adityans who owned the paper mill also owned a large amount of land in the village. But they were not directly involved with agriculture. The trees could be grown even in their absence.

As mentioned above, Nadars of Tamil Nadu have come to symbolize mobility. They have been on move in virtually every respect, viz., religious, educational, occupational, and spatial. Social mobility pattern of Nadars in general and of the respondents from the study villages in particular were quite interesting and varied. Their strategies also had both religious and secular dimensions and they used both the "violent" and "non-violent" means in their endeavor for mobility. The major strategies adopted by the caste as a whole were conversion to Christianity, Sanskritization, forging an indigenous religious movement (Ayyavali movement) and various protest movements viz. temple entry movement, change of caste name, breast cloth agitation, campaign against toddy, Self- Respect movement and the backward class movement. On the secular sphere the caste-devised strategies like formation of caste association, opening up of series of educational institutions and participation in both regional and national politics.

The experience of religious mobility among the respondents of this study was confined only to one of the three villages. The other two Nadar settlements were not influenced by Christianity, mostly because of the influence of the reformist Ayyavali movement. The dominant family of Adityans in the dryland village was also a strong votary of Hinduism, which kept the missionaries away.

Investigations into the nature of conversions over the four generations revealed that in the first two generations it was the social and material benefits promised by the missionaries that led to their conversions. However, in the last two generations the marriages between Hindu and Christian Nadars also played a role in Hindus moving to Christianity. Nadar were also not very devout Christians. Many of the converts did not attend the church regularly. Nor did they follow the religious code in their daily life.

Thanks to the efforts of the caste as a whole, educational mobility was very fast in the third and fourth generations. The educational status of the respondents in the first generation was confined to maximum of high school level. As many as 56.1 percent of them were illiterate. In second generation also though some of them had gone up to the post-graduate level, illiterates among them were as many as 35.6 percent. However, in the third generation the level of education went up and some took to the professional education and only 3.3 percent illiterates. In the fourth generation, the education level went further up to technical and professional fields and there were no illiterates among the Nadars in the study villages. The investments made collectively by the caste in setting up of educational institutions, its innovative schemes like *Kalvi Thanthai* (father of education) and *Kalvi Thai* (mother of education), *Nallasiriyar* award (award for

talented teachers), scholarship scheme and the facilities given by the government helped a great **deal in** making the educational mobility possible.

Guided by educational mobility the Nadars moved from their traditional caste occupation to modern occupations. The nature of occupational mobility of the Nadars followed the following path, from toddy tapping to subsistence agriculture, from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture, from commercial agriculture to petty traders, from petty trade to business, and from business to industry and middle class occupations.

On the spatial mobility, the nature of migration of Nadar of four generations varied a great deal. Some moved just to a neighboring village while others migrated abroad. Initially the spatial mobility of Nadars was induced by the toddy tapping itself. Later they began to migrate for farming, business, and even in order to work as laborers in the plantation industries and even to multinational corporations. Spatial mobility of the first two generations was confined to working in the farms and labor in the plantation industries. Where as. in the third and fourth generations it was directed towards working in government services and modern industries or as skilled workers in abroad.

The third objective of the study was to historically examine the process of identity formation and the making of caste symbols among the Nadars. The Nadar caste identity has passed through many stages. Though the socio-political atmosphere provided a basis for the evolution of caste identity, the initiatives taken by the caste played the most critical role in moulding, reshaping and consolidating the modern Nadar identity. The formation of village level caste associations, collection of *mahamai* fund, establishment of caste panchayat, election of informal leaders (*nattanmais*). and a state level caste

association (Nadar Mahajana Sangam) were all responsible in constructing the caste identity.

While constructing their identity, the Christian missionaries, colonial administration, and caste historians have also played a role. Similarly the processes of industrialization, commercialization of agriculture, and social movements like the Ayyavali movement, Evangelical movement, Self- Respect movement, Backward Class movement, Temple Entry movement, Dravidian movement also helped. The emergence of provincial politics and nationalist movement provided the Nadars different historical context to make a statement of their separate identity.

The caste historians helped the caste invent new identity markers according to the time they keep on moving the caste solidarity. Similarly, the Nadar political elite, businessmen, and the migrants used cultural idioms of the caste to present a separate Nadar identity to the outside world.

However, as is the case with all identities the symbols or markers of the Nadar caste have kept changing over time. In initial stages the emphasis of the identity markers was around the cultural and religious aspects, and they were of traditional and ascribed nature. But with the changing times and the social and economic mobility of the caste, the caste leaders found new symbols. They began to focus on the modern and achievement oriented symbols, which revolved around secular axis. For example on the important new symbol of Nadar caste identity today is the commercial bank run by the caste, the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited.

However, despite the enormous progress made by Nadar, they have never tried to forget their caste as such. But this does not mean that Nadars have been culturally

conservative. Their caste identity has been continuously evolving and has been reformulated over and over again. Nadar, in a sense, are unique among the backward castes of Tamil Nadu. Their ability to negotiate between tradition and modernity has been quite remarkable. Even when they were attracted towards Christianity, or the rational outlook oriented Self-Respect movement, or more recently the modern secular way of life, the institution of caste was never given up. Instead they showed the ability to adapt to new situations without losing their distinctive attributes.

The fourth objective of this study was to explore how some specific individuals viz, a caste leader, or an institution, such as, a bank, could become the symbols of caste identity and play a critical role in consolidation of caste solidarity. W. P. A. Soundrapandian was one such individual who played a critical role in the modern Nadar history and came to acquire the status of a symbol of the caste identity. W. P. A. Soundrapandian's association with the Legislative Assembly, District boards and his active involvement in both Justice Party and Self-Respect movement helped the caste as a whole in coming up in all walks of life. His greatest contribution to the community was also in the educational field. He was instrumental in establishing quite a good number of educational institutions.

Simi'arly the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Limited has been an economic institution, which helped the community as a whole to get recognition in the socio-cultural and economic front. Virtually all the Nadars look at the bank as their own and identify with it at a personal level. When the Nadars were denied access to the financial institutions owned by other caste people, they established Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank, which gave a boost to the Nadar businessmen. Apart from helping the upcoming Nadar

business, **it also helped in inculcating an entrepreneurial** spirit among them. The bank in its **83 years history provided** employment opportunities to the educated Nadar and helped many Nadars **educational** institutions by contributing **a** sizeable amount of money from its profit. **The Nadar** treat it as their cow, popularly **known** as *Shanar pasu*. Today the bank **has become an inseparable** part of Nadacs day-to-day life.

As is the case with all researches, this study does not claim to answer all the questions. On **the** contrary, it raises more questions, which can be further pursued to understand some other dimensions of the contemporary Nadar identity. Some of these are:

1. How the identity is constructed among the educated Christian Nadars and in what a respect is it differs from the majority Hindu Nadars?
2. How the caste identity is perceived by the migrant urban Nadars vis-a-vis their rural counterparts?
3. How would the processes of liberalization, globalization and privatization affect the Nadars in terms of business, their caste solidarity and its identity? How, would, for example the educational institutions run by Nadar respond to such pressures?
4. How the perception and construction of caste identity differs between **the** southern and Northern Nadars in the present day context?
5. How do the caste identity formations of Nadars differ from the other backward-cum-dominant castes like the Thevars or the Dalits in South Tamil Nadu, or similar caste groups in other parts of South India?

6. Are there any similarities in the social mobility process and identity formation among the Nadars of Tamil Nadu, Ezhawas of Kerala, Gouds of Andhra Pradesh and the Idihas of Karnataka, since all these castes have common occupational identity as toddy tappers?

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APPENDIX -1

AGRARIAN CHANGE AND IDENTITY FORMATION: CASTE MOBILIZATION AMONG THE NADARS OF TAMIL NADU

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - FOR FARMERS

Village :

Category of Farmer:

I. PERSONAL

1.	Name	*	
2.	Age	*	
3.	Gender	*	
4.	Educational Status	**	
5.	Religion	*	
6.	Sub-Caste	*	
7.	Kuttam	*	
8.	Marital Status	*	
9.	Occupational status	*	
Sl.No.	Type of Occupation	Primary	Secondary
1.	Agriculture		
2.	Animal husbandry		
3.	Agril. Labour		
4.	Business		
5.	Govt. Service		
6.	Others (specify)		

Family particulars

1. Nature of family : Extended/ Nuclear

Economic Assets and Employment

1. Type of house : Kate ha / Puce a / Mixed
2. Do you own Agril. Land? : Yes / No
if yes. give the particulars (see table)

3. Do you own any urban lands in the form of house sites or land for industry etc. yes / No. Give particulars if yes

Sl.No.	Type of urban property	When brought	Source of Finance	Income if any
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

4. Other Assets owned

Sl.No.	Item	When brought	Source of Finance	Income if any
1.	Cycle			
2.	Motor Cycle / scooter			
3.	Car			
4.	Radio			
5.	Television			
6.	Refrigerator			
7.	Bio-gas plant			
8.	Tractor			
9.	Truck			
10.	Mixi			
11.	Wet Grinder			
12.	Any other (specify)			

5. Livestock particulars:

S. No.	Type	Nos.	When purchased	Present Value	Income if any	Other Benefits
1.	Bullocks					
2.	He-Buffaloes					
3.	Cows					
4.	She - Buffaloes					
5.	Young Stock					
6.	Sheep					
7.	Goats					
8.	Pigs					
9.	Poultry Birds					
10.	Others (if any specify)					

6. Farm Implements particulars:

Sl. No.	Implements	No.	Value (Rs.)	Lifespan	Income if any
1.	Wooden ploughs				
2.	Iron plough				
3.	Mould board plough				
4.	Blade harrow				
5.	Seed drill				
6.	Sickles				
7.	Spade				
8.	Crow-bar				
9.	Axe				
10.	Bullock cart				
11.	Oil Engines				
12.	Electricity motor				
13.	Sprayers				
14.	Dusters				
15.	Tractor				
16.	Power tillers				
17.	Others if any				

7. Employment particulars

i) How many days are you employed in a year?

ii) Agriculture / Non-Agriculture

8. What are the sources of your family income

Sl.No.	Source	Income per annum	Remarks
1.	Primary occupation		
2.	Agriculture		
3.	Rents		
4.	Business/trade		
5.	Subsidiary occupation		
6.	Through agril. labour wages		
7.	Income from urban property		
8.	Hiring out of farm Machinery		
9.	Others, if any		

9. Source of Irrigation :

SI. No.	Source	% of land irrigated of the total land holding	Remarks if any
1.	River		
2.	Canal		
3.	Open well		
4.	Tank		
5.	Bore well		
6.	Seasonal Train		
7.	Other source if any		

10. In case of open well are you the only owner or owned by others also? Give details about ownership rights and water sharing methods.

What are the devices used to lift the water? (in case of open well)

1. Leather bucket with the help of bullocks
2. Through manual labour
3. Electric pumpset
4. Oil engine
5. Others, if any.

11. Do you have migrant labour in your farm : Yes /No

If yes, what is the mode contract

- i) Wage per annum
- ii) Cash
- iii) Kind
- iv) Nature of contract
- v) Caste of the labour
- vi) How many years he/she has been working
- vi) Outstanding debts if any

PART-H

A) ASPIRATIONS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

1. Given the option, would you like to change your present Occupation: Yes / No
If yes, what type of occupation
2. Would you like to provide higher education to your children? Yes / No
If yes, what type of education
 1. Professional
 2. Administrative,
 3. Technical
 4. Commercial
 5. Arts
 6. Science
 7. Any other (Specify)

3. What type of job will you opt for your children?
4. When you say that a particular job is excellent for your children, what do you think are the most important thing than attach importance to the job?
 1. Good salary 2. Hereditary occupation 3. Stepping stone for social mobility
 4. Less physical labour is involved 5. High Social status 6. Any other specify
5. Do you think that women should work outside: Yes/No
 Give reasons for both
6. Do you think that women should have a say in their life partner selection?
 Give reasons for both
7. Would you like all your children to migrate to the city/town Yes / No
 If yes, what have you been doing in this regard?
8. Do you think that by acquiring modern education and government jobs your succeeding generation can improve their social status?
 If yes. how?
9. How much profit you can earn even' year from your agriculture? Amount in Rs.
10. How your saving your income derived out of agriculture and other sources?
 1. Non-productive investments (like investing gold, household utensils, Consumer durables etc.)
 2. Protective investments
 - a) Buying more lands b) Investing in urban property
 - c) Improving agricultural infrastructural facilities
 - d) Any other (Specify)
11. Have you ever participated in election at local, legislative and parliament level?
 Yes / No
 If yes, at what level and give the final outcome of your participation

II. (B) SOCIAL MOBILITY

1. Educational Mobility

Kindly mention the educational attainment of the following generations in your family

Sl. No.	Generation	Type of School Attended	Educational Attainment	
			Type of Training	Degree Obtained
1.	Grand Father			
2.	Grand Mother			
3.	Father			
4.	Mother			
5.	Self			
6.	Wife			
7.	Children			
	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
	4.			
	5.			
	6.			

2. Occupational Mobility

Sl. No.	Generation	Nature of Occupation	Reason for practicing
1.	Grand Father		
2.	Father		
3.	Self		
4.	Son		
5.	Son		
6.	Son		
7.			
8.			

What is the traditional occupation of Nadars?

1. Toddy tapping
2. Farming
3. Business
4. White collar job
5. Other any (specify)

3. Spatial Mobility

1. Kindly mention the Spatial Mobility of your family from your Grand father generation onwards

SI. No.	Generation	Nature of Mobility	Reason(s) for Mobility
1.	Grand Father		
2.	Father		
3.	Self		
4.	Son(s)		
5.	Daughter(s)		

2. Do you have any more plan to migrate to the near by town or cities? Yes/No
If yes, what are the reasons?
3. In case of migration to cities who will look after your agriculture?
4. How frequent the migrated members of your caste visit the villages and the reasons for their visits?
5. What type of social interaction do they have with their fellow villagers ?

4. Religious Mobility:

1. State whether any of your family members has converted to Christianity from your Grand father time onwards ? yes/ No

If yes, why did they do so?
2. Do you think by conversion they have attained higher status? Yes/No
If yes, what are the field they have attained higher status
 1. Over all social status
 2. Educational field
 3. Occupational field
 4. Religious field(explain in detail)
3. Are you willing to get into a marriage alliance with a converted Christian families? Yes / No
State the reasons for both
4. Comment the general standard of life of an average Christian and Hindu Nadar family?

5. Caste Solidarity:

1. What do you think of the Caste Solidarity which exists today in your village as compared to what was prevalent 20 years back?

1. Same as before 2. Solidarity increased
 3. Solidarity decreased Give reasons:
2. Does your caste membership facilitate your activities in any of the following fields?
- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--------------|
| Economic Field | Yes/No | If yes, How? |
| Social Field | Yes/No | |
| Political Field | yes / No | |
| Educational Field | Yes/No | " |
3. In what way your caste in the village has been affected for the past 20 years?
- | | | |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Economic field | : | Improved / Deteriorated / No change |
| Social Field | : | Improved/Deteriorated/No change |
| Political Field | : | Improved/Deteriorated/No change |
| Educational Field | : | Improved/Deteriorated / No change |
4. Please specify the most influential leaders of your village in the following field (only Nadars).
- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Economic Field: | Social Field : |
| Political Field : | Educational Field: |
5. According to you who are the three most influential leaders of your caste at the State and National Levels?
6. What is the strength of Nadar's caste solidarity at various levels?
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Village level: Strong/weak | District level: Strong / weak |
| State level : Strong / Weak | National Level: Strong / Weak |
7. Do you think that caste considerations determine the nature of voting during elections? Yes / No
8. Do you take into account your caste interests while exercising your franchise? Yes/No
9. How religious factors within Nadars affect the caste solidarity?
10. How the economic status within Nadars affect the caste solidarity?
11. In what way NMS is importing in achieving caste solidarity?

6. Caste Association

1. Are you a member of Nadar Mahajana Sangam? Yes/No
If No, what is the reason behind it?

2. Do you attend all the activities and conferences of your caste association?
3. What are all the different type of activities your caste association undertake?
4. What is your opinion regarding the activities of your caste association?

Satisfied/Not satisfied

5. What type of activities do you prefer the association?
6. Do you think that NMS so far promoted the interests of all Sections of Nadar Community? Yes / No
7. Can you say that NMS is same as other Caste Association in Tamil Nadu?
Same / Different

If it is different, what are all the differences?

8. Have you ever used NMS for the favor of your family members in any of the following areas ?

1. Financial : Yes/No 2. Educational: Yes/No 3. Employment: Yes/No
4. Legal : Yes/No 5. Political : Yes/No 6. Any other : Yes/No

9. What are the aims of NMS at the State Level? And How it differs at the village and district level?

10. Explain the major contributions made by NMS in Social, Educational-
Economical and Political field for the betterment of Nadars?

PART - III

CHANGING IDENTITIES

I. Community connections

1. Do you visit your caste people? Yes/No
If yes, 1. Frequently 2. No so frequently 3. Rarely
2. How would you like to be identified?
Through 1. Caste/Sub-Caste 2. Class 3. Occupation
 4. Urbanite/Ruralite 5. Region 6. State 7. H^{ation}
 8. Religion 9. Others in any (Specify)

3. Where will you place yourself in the present day context?

1. Forward 2. Backward 3. Most Backward 4. Dalit

4. Socially where will you place your caste as a whole?

1. Forward 2. Backward 3. Most Backward 4. Dalit

5. Economically where will you place yourself in the present day context?

- " 1. Upper class 2. Upper Middle 3. Middle Class 4. Lower class

6. Economically where will you place your caste as a whole?

1. Upper class 2. Upper Middle 3. Middle Class 4. Lower class 5. Difficult

7. During the past fifty years, the social economical, educational and political status of the Nadar Community has

1. Social status : Improved Significantly, Improved Marginally, Has remained the same

1

2

3

Deteriorate
Marginally

Deteriorated
Significantly

Cant
say

2. Economic Status :	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Political Status :	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Educational Status	1 2		3	4	5	6

8. In general the process of social transformation among the Nadars during the past-independence period has been one of

1. Positive Development 2. Development 3. Negative Development. 4. Can't say

9. Politically the influence of Nadar Caste Group in the village, district, state and the country as a whole is

- Dominant Significant Sufficient Marginal Insignificant

Village:

District:

State:

10. Economically the influence of Nadar Caste group in the village, district, state and the country as a whole is

- Dominant** Significant Sufficient Marginal Insignificant

Village:

District:

State:

Country:

II. Perceptions on related social Issues :

- 1 .Do you think, that Nadars can achieve social and economic equality in society vis-a-vis other castes? Yes/No
If yes how? If no, why
2. Which one do you think is the effective model or strategy for the development of all sections of Nadars? Rank them
 1. Economic and social reforms
 2. Cultural change
 3. Educational development
 4. Political influence
 5. Urbanization
 6. Migration to better places
 7. Others if any (Please specify)
3. Can Nadars alone fight for their cause ? Yes / No
Give reasons for the answer
4. Who are the political allies for Nadars in achieving political power? Name them
 1. Forward Caste
 2. Backward Caste
 3. Dalits
5. Are you a Member of any political party or social organization? Yes/No
If yes. Name them
Political party: _____ Social Organization _____
6. What are the social movements Nadars have undertaken for their upliftment?
Name them _____
7. Have you ever participated in the collective efforts aimed at the upliftment of Nadars?⁰ Yes/ No
If yes. specify _____
8. Do you agree that the institution of caste has no place in day to day life in the years to come'? Yes / No

comment on it. _____

III . Caste Identity:

1. How do you feel when you are outside the village?
 1. Reluctant
 2. Proud
 3. Embarrassed
 4. Does not matter
2. Are you reluctant to reveal your caste identity during a gathering with upper caste people?
If yes. what are the reasons _____
3. How do you identify your caste members at different level (self-image) _____

Village level :

District level :

State level :

National level :

4. In what way would you like to describe a typical member of your community?

Rank

1. Traditional / orthodox 2. Simple 3. Conservative

4. Cosmopolite 5. Straightforward 6. Hospitable 7. Hardworking

8. Enterprising 9. Cheat 10. Manipulate 11. Any other (specify)

5. What are the strength and weaknesses of Nadar Community?

6. How the Nadars occupational identity conceived by others at different level?

1. Village level 2. District level 3. State level 4. National level

7. Broadly speaking where would you like to place yourself in class terms?

1. Rich 2. Well to do 3. Middle class 4. Poor 5. Very Poor

8. Whom do you include in the list of Nadars in our society?

1. Traditional toddy tappers 2. Agricultural laborers

3. Educated Middle Class 4. Those who practice Agriculture

5. Converted Christians 6. All the categories belong to the same caste

9. a) How do you identify the Nadar Christians?

(For Hindu Nadar)

b) How do you identify the Hindu Nadar (For Christian)

1. Through Caste 2. Through Sub-Caste 3. Through Religion and position

4. Through Economic Status 5. Through their education and position

6. Any other :

10. Being a Nadar where will you place your religion

1. Under Dravidian Religion 2. Under Aryan Religion

3. Under Christianity 4. Under Rational outlook

5. Any other (specify)

11. What are the familiar Gods & Goddess of Nadar Caste?

12. What are the famous pilgrimage centers for Nadars?

IV. Caste Symbols

1. What are the cultural symbols of Nadars in the past and present day context?

Past Symbols:

Present Symbols:

2. What are the symbols used to identify their community members in the following fields?

1. Political Field :

2. Cultural field :

3. What are the different religious symbols of Hindu and Christian Nadars?
 Hindu Nadars :
 Christian Nadars :
4. What are the general symbols of Nadars to identify their caste members at the micro and Macro level?
5. What makes a person a Nadar?
 1. Birth 2.Economic status 3.Political influence
 4. Cultural Backwardness 5.Hardworking 6.Enterprising nature
 7.Membership in NMS
 8.**Strictly** following the community rules 9.Others if any specify
- 6.Do you personally feel that there is a wide cultural gap between Nadar culture and Tamil culture as a whole?
 Yes / No
 If yes, please explain
- 7.What are the different caste titles of Nadar Community?
8. What is the criteria to hold particular title?
- 9.Does increase in economic development of any individual leads to give a new title?
- 10.Generally what the particular jati title of an individual indicates?
- 11 .What are the significance of *Mahimai*, *Uravinmurai* and Jati panchayats?
12. What are the different proverbs related Nadar community?

Part II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - FOR AGRICULTURAL LABOURS

1. Name :
2. Age :
3. Caste :
4. Relation :
5. Education :
6. Marital Status :
7. Whether a migrant
If yes, which generation :
8. District migrated from :
9. When settled in this village :
10. Before settling down in the village, other place/places settled in :
11. Information about the family members :
- S. Relation Age Other information - activity
No. engaged in income, education etc.

12. Do you own a house : Yes/no
If yes, give details
(pucca/katcha)

When built	Total Expenditure	Sources of finance	If borrowed interest rate	How paid back
------------	-------------------	--------------------	---------------------------	---------------

13. Do you own a homestead land? If yes, how acquired & Area : Yes/No.
14. Details of livestock owned, if any:

Animal	When purchased	Sources of finance	Present value	Income or any other benefit
--------	----------------	--------------------	---------------	-----------------------------

15. Whether own any land? :
16. Whether owned any land in past by the family? If sold out, state the reason, to whom, rate etc.?
17. Type of agricultural laborer : Casual/Attached/Seasonal etc.
If attached :
18. Form of attachment

19. Do workers generally prefer working as attached laborer : Yes/No (State reasons)
20. Why do you prefer working as attached laborer :
21. Do the attached laborer easily get advances (loans) from their farmers whenever required? :
22. Do you get advances from your farmer, when you require? :
24. Details of indebtedness to the farmer working with?
- | Amount | Purpose | Interest paid | Mode of paying back | If unable to pay, consequences | Security of any form |
|---|---------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 25. Does any other member of your family also has to work for the farmer: :
If yes, does the farmer pay separately for the labour? | | | | | |
| 26. How many hours in a day you work for the farmer : | | | | | |
| 27. How many days in a year do you get work? : | | | | | |
| 28. Number of working hours : | | | | | |
| 29. Wage rates (in Rupees) : During seasons:
During Offseasons: | | | | | |
| 30. Is casual labor preferred? If yes, why? : | | | | | |
| 31. Why do you prefer not working as attached laborer : | | | | | |
| 32. Mode of wage payment
Cash/kind/proportion of the mixed? (give details of the different, labour activities) | | | | | |
| 33. Are you a member of the CCS? : Yes/No
If 'Yes' when became member | | | | | |
| 34. Information regarding the Indebtedness to Bank : | | | | | |
| 35. Have you ever been able to get loan from any commercial bank during last five years? : | | | | | |

APPENDIX - II

Sub-sects of the Nadars as per the Census Report of India 1891

(Extract from the caste index)

1. Agamudi	40. Ekali	79. Karay amaniy ar
2. Aijambadi	41. Edutlukkuli	80. Karaiyar
3. Akkapadi	42. Elava	81. Kariacheri
4. Akkini	43. Enur	82. Karnattar
5. Akudaikkar	44. Erikkaraipayiridum	83. Karutalaikatti
6. Alai	45. Erudukkar	84. Karukkumatti
7. Alakiyar	46. Ezhupattira	85. Karunbukati
8. Alamkudirja	47. Gopura	86. Karungudiyan
9. Ambalakkaran	48. Edakatti	87. Karunkottaiyar
10. Ambalam	49. Idiga	88. Karur
11. Ambattan	50. Eluvasiyar	89. Kasakkaltu
12. Andai	51. Iluvar	90. Kshauamurtipandaram
13. Andi	52. Enakatti	91. Kattamozhiar
14. Angapallan	53. Endra	92. Kaval Servai
15. Anjali	54. Enukiravan	93. Kavandan
16. Anjapuli	55. Erular	94. Kavaral
17. Anjukottai	56. Esanganattan	95. Kavarikkaraiyar
18. Appapi	57. Eanaka	96. Keltuvagaiyar
19. Appaya	58. Kadaikkalar	97. Kizhakkatti
20. Appi	59. Kadaikkaran	98. Kibsimai
21. Akliya	60. Kaiyani	99. Kiraikkar
22. Appu	61. Kaikutti	100. Kiraikkattar
23. Appucchi	62. Kakkidio	101. Kirutu
24. Arava	63. Kaladikkattan	102. Kittipavan
25. Arijipattu	64. Karadikulattan	103. Kodikkalvalatar
26. Arigan	65. Kalikutti	104. Kodinattar
27. Arujukatti	66. Kaliyar	105. Kolidak Kallar
28. Aruppukottai	67. Kalian	106. Kollar
29. Aruttukkatti	68. Kaiyani	107. Konan
30. Avashanan	69. Kamba	108. Kondakatti
31. Balya	70. Kammalen	109. Kondaiyankottai
32. Bogi	71. Kannakkan	110. Konga
33. Chetti	72. Kamkaipatti	111. Kottai
34. Dambarattan	73. Kanikkanattan	112. Kottaikallar
35. Dasi	74. Kannapattan	113. Kottaikkar
36. Desasta	75. Kantamaharishi	114. Kottaikati
37. Dottakadu	76. Kanul	115. Kshatriyan
38. Edakanadu	77. Kapu	116. Kudai
39. Eduttakkar	78. Karaikatton	117. Kudinakan

118.	Kukan	162.	Nadayanendi	206.	Pujadakalaeyar
119.	Kunjanur	163.	Nagiparam	207.	Ponneri
120.	Kunraja	164.	Nakka	208.	Poriskongar
121.	Kurichiradu	165.	Nasuva	209.	Ponkongar
122.	Kurumadai	166.	Nattan	210.	Potti
123.	Kuruthippatti	167.	Nattuva	211.	Pozhi
124.	Karuttukkariyar	168.	Navalinganaltar	212.	Padar
125.	Kattadi	169.	Navidanpandiyar	213.	Phdugumpu
126.	Lingadari	170.	Nayakarvaguppu	214.	Pudukkidaian
127.	Madappura	171.	Nettadi	215.	Palippidai
128.	Madiga	172.	Nenaiyer	216.	Punukkai
129.	Madur	173.	Odakkal	217.	Pusagi
130.	Madurai	174.	Ondriyakkarar	218.	Puntorai
131.	Malainadu	175.	Otapatti	219.	Rajapuram adu
132.	Malaiyal	176.	Ottka	220.	Rasinam
133.	Malkatti	177.	Paechaivalaiya	221.	Sakkili
134.	Manadu	178.	Padaiyacchi	222.	Samiyadi
134.	Manadu	179.	Padiga	223.	Sanakkar
136.	Manattunnattan	180.	Padujar	224.	Sanga
137.	Manjakolar	181.	Pagali	225.	Sangidum
138.	Marameri	182.	Pakadiri	226.	Sangubinarrar
139.	Maraveli	183.	Pakkupettai	227.	Sangumuppan
140.	Marayogi	184.	Palayakkar	228.	Sangusanar
141.	Maraipudiyar	185.	Palanar	229.	Ssanjoil
142.	Mattai	186.	Pullavaraya	230.	Sanror
143.	Melnadu	187.	Palaiyeri	231.	Saradu
144.	Mistimbakkar	188.	Panattar	232.	Sarukudai
145.	Morasaparaier	189.	Pandavan	233.	Sastriyar
146.	Morur	190.	Pandiyapuranganadu	234.	Satankudi
147.	Mozhali	191.	Pandiyapuranganadu	235.	Satlani
148.	Mudigi	192.	Pangaghulti	236.	Satti
149.	Muknattan	193.	Parainaltar	237.	Savani
150.	Mukkadar	194.	Parcheri	238.	Savurikkar
151.	Mukindar	195.	Paruttipalli	239.	Sayakulam
152.	Muppan	196.	Pattimari	240.	Sedanattar
153.	Murai	197.	Pattirakali	241.	Segidi
154.	Murattu	198.	Pavali	242.	Semkadavan
155.	Murukunattar	199.	Payanattar	243.	Senhinadu
156.	Nadakadi	200.	Pedai	244.	Senga
157.	Nadakkan	201.	Pettai	245.	Sengudi
158.	Nadan	202.	Pettaikudimagan	246.	Senkadu
159.	Nadapattu	203.	Pillaipattam	247.	Sentalainattar
160.	Nadapitta	204.	Piralakisamar	248.	Servaikkar
161.	Nadeni	205.	Piramalai	249.	Silandi

250.	Situvaru	292.	Vddakayiri
251.	Singanattan	293.	Vadama
252.	Sirukudi	294.	Vadapapnam
253.	Sirutarlikatti	295.	Vadaseri
254.	Sivali	296.	Vadugan
255.	Sivamata	297.	Valaiyakavarai
256.	Sozhakatti	298.	Valakai
257.	Sozhiair	299.	Valayan
258.	Sundarmasmartar	300.	Valluva
259.	Sudra	301.	Vaniyan
260.	Surukka	302.	Vannar
261.	Talaikatti	303.	Vanniyan
262.	Thalaipennattan	304.	V arattupay iri dum
263.	Talaipotte	305.	Valtu
264.	Talappakatti	306.	Vayitandi
265.	Tamil	307.	Vekari
266.	Telugu	308.	Velakkayur
267.	Tendisai	309.	Velan
268.	Tengalai	310.	Velnadu
269.	Tenamarrattu	311.	Velanur
270.	Terkatti	312.	Velar
271.	Tondamandala	313.	Vellalan
272.	Tirumangala	314.	Vellampulta
273.	Tiruvidaipandiyar	315.	Veltitaiyar
274.	Tochaninattar	316.	Vellai
275.	Tolakkadan	317.	Vidu Shanan
276.	Toluva	318.	Virudikkanattan
277.	Tonda	319.	Visvakulam
278.	Tottakkar	320.	Vittuvakuttan
279.	Tottar	321.	Viyapuri
280.	Tottikal	322.	Vuramo(i
281.	Tozhukatti		
282.	Tozhukavarai		
283.	Turaiyan		
284.	Vdaiyan		
285.	Uliyakkarar		
286.	Uppilian		
287.	Urukkamaniyar		
288.	Urumikkaran		
289.	Urappukottai		
290.	Vachiyan		
291.	Vadakayattu		

APPENDIX - III

Subdivisions of the Nadars - District wise

Sub-divisions of the Nadars - Distribution

I	District Tinnevelly District	Sub-Division Karukku - pattayar (Manattan) or Malanattan (Menattan) or Kongu Nadar Kodikkal and Kalla (Territorial origin)	Area occupied 1. Karukkupattaiyar - Manadu. The great province four miles from Trichendur. Pate thinks it must be Karukkumattaiyan - Sharp edge of the leaf stalk of the Palmyra and it may have changed to Karukkupattaiyan. As they were once warriors, it must be Karukkupattaiyan only - Caste historians call them Mara Nadar (including nadans Nelaimaikkarans and climbers) 2. Melnatar - Lived in south Travancore and western parts of Tinnevelly district. After the fall of chera dynasty, those people who are supposed to be the descendants of the Chera kings came and settled along the western ghats (Ambasamudram Taluq a few- in Tenkasi. Sankarankoil. Srivaikundam and Nansuneri
II	Coimbatore ⁿ	1. Chetti (those who engaged themselves a shop keepers 2. Muppans (headman (72923)	

III	Salem ³	<p>Salem Shanars or marameris Konga Shanars * Kalyana Shanars* * two endogamous groups</p> <p><u>At present</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Shanars proper 2. The Nattati Shanars 3. Virali Shanars 	<p>Kongu Shanars Paramarapatti, Panrangultur (a hamlet of Malla Samudram) Kattipolayan (a hamlet of Mamudi Kattanpallaiyam and Timmipalayam (hamlets of Karumanur Palamedu (a mittai village) south of Malla Samudram, Kalyanmi, Pulapalaiyam, Kachipalli</p>
IV	Tanjore ⁴	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tennam Shanars (Coconut) 2. Pannam Shanars (Palmyrah) 3. Eetchan Shanars (Wild Date) 	
V	Travancore ⁵	<p>Itanad, Illamkara Karrukkumattai, Kavara, Kiriya, Muttunatam, Tiruppapur</p>	
VI.	Noarth Arcot ⁶	<p>Sangidum Shanan (Sub division) Muppan. Gramoni. YTitles Nattan J</p>	
VII	South Arcot ⁷	<p>40 villages are grouped into 4 nads - 4 officials - Natans. the Mupan, the Gounder and the Kangani. Natans and Mupans collect the Poligars' rent. Kangani was a policeman. Gounder - the Natan's peon.</p>	
	Ceylon ⁸	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Velan Chanar of husbandman 2. Kalpura Shanar (dealers in small wares) 3. Kalla Chanar or Porters 4. Eeku Chanar or Bullock drivers 5. Tennamattee Chanar or toddy drawers from coconut trees 6. Pannamatte Chanar or toddy drawers from Palmyrah trees 7. Pallavarayc Chanar or Palanquin bearers 	

Important Sub-division found in the 1891 census⁹

Sub-division	Strength	Local distribution
Karukkumattai	93,886	Tinnevelly (86,265) Madurai (7359)
Konga	48,459	Coimbatore (26,649) Salem (21674)
Madurai	31,872	Coimbatore (30,108) Salem (1081)
Melanadu	10,816	Tinnevelly (9,011) Madurai (1,805)
Nadan	13,842	Madurai (408), Salem (2,637) Coimbatore
Tenam	11,244	Tanjore (11,048)

APPENDIX - IV

The 120 names attributed to Palm juice in literature are given below

Amari, Amirtham, Amizhtham, Amizhthu, Amudham, Amudhu, Ammiyam, Ari, Arittam, Arinai, Ariyal, Arugi, Arupam, Arumarunthu, AH, Arivaali, Asavam, Athuvam, Aambal, Aambilam, Aali, Aalai, Yikku, Yiraeyam, Eezham, Eli, Aeli, Kognaram, Kancha, Kalliyam, Kaly, Kal, Kaadi, Kaatham, Kaali, Kudu, Kunthi, Kongu, Kouwai, Chathi, Sayanam, Sali, Chaaru, Chikkar, Cheedhu, Chundam, Chundi, Chundai, Chuthai, Sumaali. Swam, Sura, Surai, Suloki, Sulikai, Suvikai, Chera, Cheru, Sol, Gnali, Thaniyal, Thamiyam, Thamil, Thumbi, Then, Theral, Them, Thondi, Thoppi, Naravu, Nara, Narai, Naanai, Nali. Naattam, Ladu, Pathaneer, Payam, Paadali, Paani, Paan, Paali, Paal, Paanam, Pirasam, Praeyam, Pili, Piliru, Pethai, Poruni, Madhu, Madhukaaram, Madhurai, Madhuvam, Makarantham, Maattu, Mathiyam, Manthiram, Maruttam, Maninlu, Marai, Madhaxan, Maadhuvam, Mari, Mali, Mundakam, Muruku, Mcdhai, Mowli, Yadhu, Yanam, Vadi, Vaanidham, Vaaruni, Vikuni, Visuli, Veri, Vedi, Vellai, Veari

Source : M. Immanuel. the Dravidian Lineages - A Socio - Historical Study - The Nadars through the ages. (P. 74)

APPENDIX - V

A list of Nadar Pettais

I. PROPERTY IN TINNEVELLY REGION

(It consists of Tinnelvelly, Ambasamudram and Tenkasi Taluks.)

- (i) Tinnelveli head office (Sindupoondurai)
- (ii) Tinnelveli Sorna Vilas (Nellaiyappar Peru Vazhi)
- (iii)** Ambasamudram Pettai
- (iv) Veeranalloor Pettai (vacant place)
- (v) Seevalaperi Pettai (vacant place)

II TIRUCHENDUR REGION

- (i) Tiruchendur Mandapam
- (ii) Kulasekara Pattinam (vacant place)
- (iii) Nazareth Pettai
- (iv) Sathaankulam Pettai
- (v) Pandavapuram Pettai

III. THISAYANVILAI REGION

(NANGUNERI TALUK)

- (i) Thisayanvilai Pettai
- (ii) Nanguneri Pettai

IV. TUTICORIN REGION

(TUTICORIN. SRIVAIGUNDAM TALUK)

- (i) Tuticorin, Periya Pettai
- (ii) Tuticorin Pillaiyarkovil
- (iii) Tuticorin Palmyrah forest
- (iv) Tuticorin Mahamai Gardens
- (v) Tuticorin Nadar Chathiram Kalyana Mandapam
- (vi) Srivaikundam Pettai

V. KOVILPATTI REGION

(KOVILPATTI. SANKARANKOVIL TALUKS)

- (i) Kovilpatti Pettai
- (ii) Kayathar Pettai
- (iii) Kalugumalai Pettai
- (iv) Sankarankoil Pettai
- (v) Nagalapuram Pettai (vacant place)
- (vi) Veerapatti (vacant place)
- (vii) Ellayairam Pannai (vacant place)
- (viii) Chippiparai (vacant place)

VI. VIRUDHUNAGAR REGION
(RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT)

- (i) Virudhunagar Periya Pettai
- (ii) Virudhunagar South Pettai
- (iii) Sivakasi Pettai
- (iv) Sivakasi Mela pettai
- (v) Aruppukottai pettai
- (vi) Rajapalayam
- (vi) Nadayaneri
- (viii) Varalpettai
- (ix) Kanniseri
- (x) Chonampatti
- (xi) Surankudi
- (xii) Kallampatti
- (xiii) Chinnayapuram Pettai

VII. MADURAI REGION
(MADURAI DISTRICT)

- (i) Madurai Pettai
- (ii) Nilakottai Keel Pettai
- (iii) Nilakottai Mel Pettai
- (iv) Nchinnamanoor Old Pettai
- (v) Chinnamanoor New Pettai
- (vi) Aandipatti Pettai
- (vii) Theni Pettai (vacant place)
- (viii) Palani Pettai
- (ix) Uchapalli South Pettai
- (x) Uchupalli North Pettai
- (xi) Dindugal pettai

APPENDIX - VI

Number of Fireworks, Safety Matches and Offset Printing Presses owned by the Nadars in Sivakasi Town.

I. FIREWORKS INDUSTRY

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Ajanta Fireworks | 10. Sri Krishna Fireworks |
| 2. Anil Fireworks | 11. Lord Fireworks Industries |
| 3. Arasan Fire Works Factory | 12. Micro Fireworks |
| 4. Arya Fireworks | 13. Raj Kamal Fireworks P Ltd |
| 5. Ayyan Fireworks | 14. Sony Fireworks |
| 6. Coronation Fireworks | 15. Standard Fireworks |
| 7. Gnanavel Fireworks | 16. Sundravel Fireworks |
| 8. Indian National Fireworks | 17. Vinayaka Fireworks |
| 9. Kaliswari Fireworks | 18. Veera Lakshmi Fireworks |

II. SAFETY MATCHES INDUSTRY

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Arasan Mathches | 8. Premier Match Company |
| 2. Bose Consortium | 9. R K Exports |
| 3. Ravindra Group | 10. Fancy Matches |
| 4. Malathi Associates | 11. The Bell Match Company |
| 5. Pioneer Asia Group | 12. Matches India |
| 6. Hind Matches Ltd | 13. Thangavel Match Industries |
| 7. Sumeet Impex | 14. Bilal Match Works |

II. OFFSET PRINTING PRESSES

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Srinath Fine Arts | 15. Vel Kailash Fine Arts |
| 2. Srinivas Fine Arts | 16. Sri Krishna Polyprints P Ltd |
| 3. Micro Fine Arts | 17. Janaki Printers |
| 4. Pauls Poly Pack | 18. Janaki Printers |
| 5. Coronation Arts and Crafts | 19. Vinayak Poly Pack |
| 6. Sivakasi Offset Printers | 20. Jeyakar Group of Industries |
| 7. Graphic Reproduction Syndicate | 21. Lovely Offset Printers |
| 8. Sri Sankareshwari Process | 22. Paulsons Litho Works |
| 9. Palaniappa Fine Arts | 23. Saffire printograph |
| 10. Prince Calendars | 24. Jawahar Cards |
| 11. Supreme Arts and Crafts | 25. Peacock Products |
| 12. OM Sakthi Group | 26. Bharat Rotocarvings |
| 13. Orient Litho Press | 27. Karthik Pol)' Printers |
| 14. Rotografs Eastern Co | 28. Mecron Publishing Pvt. Ltd. |

APPENDIX - VII

Taxes imposed on Nadars by the Aryan influence in 19th century

Kaal vari (tax for legs), *Nadai vari* (for walking), *Veetu vari* (house tax), *Ottu vari* (for tiles), *Naattu vari* (Village tax), *Kaattu vari* (for forests), *Ettu vari* (for Palm-leaf Texts), *Olai vari* (for Palm-leaves), *Taali vari* (for Mangal sutra - the wedding chain), *Thuni vari* (for cloth), *Aattu vari* (for goats), *Maattu vari* (for cattles), *Karakku vari* (for milking cow), *Ulavu vari* (for ploughing), *Taala vari or Pana vari* (for Tala or Palm trees), *Chanda vari* (for market), *Villu vari* (for Bow - the symbol of Nadans), *Vala vari* (for nets), *Ennai vari* (for oil). *Nesavu vari* (for weaving). *Kuppakalasa vari* (for huts), *Purusantara vari* (for heritable property), *Irumpu vari* (for Iron materials), *Soola vari* (for hunting), *Murasu vari* (for Drummers). *Ona vari* (for Onam festival), *Deepavali vari* (for festival of Deepavali). *Pirappu vari* (Birth tax), *Erappu vari* (death tax). *Smasana vari* (tax on cremation). *Samadhi vari* (for burials). *Vaal vari* (for Sword). *Padai vari* (for Army). *Padavaram* (for cavalry or other regiments). *Aanai vari* (for Elephants). *Talappa vari* (for head Turban - an important aspect for Nadars), *Uruppadi vari* (for ornaments for ear and neck. etc.). *Ponnu vari* (gold tax), *Mara vari* (for trees). *Aatru vari* (for rivers). *Kinatlu vari* (for Wells - drinking water), *Ooliya vari* (for bonded labour). *Kanippukally vari* (for Jaggery or Palm - Juice sap etc.). *Nongu vari* (for tender Palm fruits), *Panam Kizhangu vari* (for Palm Saplings - the products used by Armies of the Sangam Era), *Jnaitu vari* (for seedlings of paddy, etc.), *Neelu vari* (for Paddy), *Kutta vari* (for baskets), *Neeni vari* (for Chuna or line used for Palm-Juice processing, etc.), *Vaidya vari* (for treating the sick or handling Herbal Medicines, with which the Nadars were occupied).

APPENDIX -VIII

Nadar Caste Histories

- 1850 - *The Tinnevelly Shanars.* Robert Caldell
- 1871 - H. Martyn Winfred. *Shandrar Marapu*
- 1874 - S. Winfred. *Shandrar Kula Marapu Kaattala.*
- 1880 - Samuel Sargunar. *Dravida Kshatriya.*
- 1883 - Ponnusamy Nadar. *Pandya Kula Vilakkam.*
- 1883 - Samuel Sargunar. *Bishop Caldwell and the Tinnevelly Shanars*
- 1889 - K. Shanmuga Gramani. *Shandrarakiya Sooriya Chandra Vamsa Paramparai.*
- 1889 - Y. Gnanamuthu Nadar. *Shanars are Kshatriyas.*
- 1892 - K. Shanmuga Gramani. *Pallihal Vayappu.*
- 1900 - Manikka Kavairayar. *Sivakasi Prabandham.*
- 1901 - S.B. Nayaka Nattar (P.V. Pandion). *A Short Account of the Cantras or Tamil Xatras.*
- 1902 - K. Kannayira Nadar. *Tamil Kshatriya Kula Vilakkam Vinavilai.*
- 1910 - Dr. A.C. Asirvatam Nadar and T.T. Thomas Nadar. *Shandrar Ethnography.*
- 1910 - T. Vijaya Doraisamy Gramani. *Arya Kshatriya Vilakkam.*
- 1911 - P.V. Pandion. *Chandror Sangam.*
- 1911 - P.V. Pandion. *A Memorial from Nabbi P. V. Pandion, on Behalf of the Nadar Community, to J.C Malony, Esq., I.C.S., Superintendent of Census Operations, Madras, 1911.*
- 1911 - A.N. Sattampillai - Aiya. *The Chantro - Memorial, a Petition*

Of the Chanira (Nadar) Community Praying the Government authorities to admit this treatise as a review of the incorrect Statement about their Caste misspelt "Shanar" found in the Ethnography. Census Report, Manuals, Gazetteers and other reference works published under Government orders. Prepared at the request of the Community by Rabbi A.N. Chattampillai - Aiya.

- 1914 - Sattainatha Kavirayar. *Shandrar Puranam.*
- 1918 - B..I.M. Kulasekhara - Raj. *Nadar Varalant, A Brief Account*

Of the Nadar Race, being an Address by Rabbi B.J.M. Kulasekhara Raj (Son of Rabbi A.N. Chattampillai - Aiya, Prakasapuram, Nazareth, Tinnevelly Dt.) concerning the Origin, History, Names, Titles, Subdivisions, Clans, (ancient and Modern), Occupation, Religion, Manners and Customs. Social Position, Characteristics, Present Status, etc., of the Chantrars, or Mara - Nadars. The Original Lords of the Tamil Country, delivered on the 6th June, 1918. at the Fourth Conference of the Nadars, held at the Victoria - Edward Hall, Madura.

- 1922 - T.Vijaya Doraisamy Gramani. *Namathu Kula Thozhil Yaathu?*
- 1923 - T.Vijaya Doraisamy Gramani. *Kshatriya.*
- 1924 - Pupathi Chinnalakshmana Raja. *Shanar Kshatriya?*

- 1926 - T. Vijaya Doraisamy Gramani. *Namathu KulaThozhil.*
- 1927 - T. Vijaya Doraisamy Gramani. *Nadar Ennum Sol Arradchi, Arasa Kulathai Kurithu Ezhuthiya Or Prapandam.*
- 1927 - S.A. Veerasamy Naidu. *Nadar Kulathilaha Nattramil Kalanjiam.*
- 1931 - T. Masillamani Nadar. *Pandya Desa Aaditya Vamsa Sarithiram.*
- 1937 - Ramalinga Kurukkal and V.A. Kumariya Nadar. *Nadar MaNNARUM Nayakka Mannarum.*
- 1956 - K. Kochukrishnan Nadar, Kerala. *Nadar Charitram*
- 1968 - Manavaalakuruchi Dass. *Yiaar Intha Nadar gal*
- 1969 - Robert L. Hardgrave, JR. *The Nadars of Tamilnad The Political Culture of a Community in Change*
- 1996 - Dennis Templeman. *The Northern Nadars of Tamil Nadu An Indian Caste in the Process of Change*
- 1998 - K.G.M.Raj. *Nadar Charitam BC 2000 Mudal AD 1921 Varai.* Trivandrum, Kerala.

APPENDIX - IX

Famous Nadar Industrialists

1	A.V.Thomas (Plantation)	31	S.R.K.K.R
2	Shiva Nadar (HCL Computers)	32	Annamalai chemicals
3	A.M.M. Ganesha Nadar	33	Ammaippa Nadar Thalavai
4	P.Ayya Nadar (Matches)	34	Dhanasekaran Metals
5	M.S.P.Raja	35	S.P.S.Muthu Nadar
6	V.G.Santhosam	36	S.V.Sivalinga Nadar
7	P.Ramachandra Adityan (Tamil News papers)	37	M.S.P.Soali Nadar
8	T.P.S. Hari Ram Sait (Beedi Industry)	38	M.P.V.Gurusami Nadar
9	M.G.Muthu	39	S.V. Sivalinga Nadar
10	Trichy E.P.Mathuram	40	N.P.V. Gurusami Nadar
11	K.A.S. Sekar (Lottery)	41	S.A. Marthanda Nadar
12	S.S.Pandian	42	R.Dhanabalan
13	V ij ay Amirtha Raj. U. S.A	43	S.G. Jeyaraj Nadar
14	G.S.R. Bhoomi Balan	44	A.R.A.Shenbaga Nadar
15	N.V.Shunmugam	45	P.v. Balasubramania Nadar
16	T.A.S. Rathinam	46	V.V.D. Nithyanandam
17	P.Chidambara Nadar	47	S.Vivekanandan
18	V.S.Selvam	48	K.S.shunmugavel Nadar
19	S.S. Santhosa Nadar	49	P. Shunmugam
20	P.Sivanthi Adityan (paper)	50	Ku. Shunmugavel Nadar
21	P. Rajagopala Nadar (Sarvana Groups)	51	Dr.R. Thangappan
22	S.C. Pandian	52	Nanchil C.S.Durai
23	K.V.P. Bhoominathan	53	Idhayam Muthu
24	H. Chellathurai	54	L. Chinnamani Nadar
25	Pratap Singh (Diary)	55	A.N. Seenivasaga Nadar
26	K.Ganapathy Nadar (Books)	56	K.S.M.G.M .Nadar
27	Sivanesa nadar	57	Rao Sahib Masilamani
28	K.P.S. Ganesha Nadar (Arun Ice Cream)	58	R.Elango Nadar
29	N.Subramaniam (Cardamom)	59	P.R.K. Finance
30	T.U.N. Nagarajan	60	Soundrapandian stores

APPENDIX - X

Famous Nadar politicians

1	K.Kamarajar	37	S.Aranganayakam	73	V.P.R.K.Durairaj
2	W.P.A.Soundrapandian	38	Minor Moses	74	M.S.Ramasami
3	Marshall Nesamony	39	Natesan palraj	75	Maxist Rathinam
4	Chi.Pa Aditanar	40	Thalamuthu	76	Martin Mathanagopal
5	K.T.K.Thangamani	41	P.P.N. Nallthambi	77	Chandrapal
6	K.T.Kosalram	42	P.Chinnasami	78	T.Ganapathi
7	V.V.Ramasami	43	S.Chellasami	79	M. Mathiyas
8	M.P.Sivanganam	44	R.Chokkar	80	Nanchil Vincent
9	E.V.A.Vallimuthu	45	Sakthivel Murugan	81	Lawrence
10	A.V.P.Asaithambi	46	Dennis	82	Elanchelian
11	Kadampur Janarthanam	47	Dhanuskodi Adityan	83	A.Satyamoorthy
12	K.ponnappa Nadar	48	R. Inbathamilan	84	Sadhu. Subramanian
13	S.T.Adityan	49	Sangaralinganar	85	A.V.Thomas
14	S.K.T.Ramachandran	50	T.S.Adhimoolam	86	K.parvathi
15	P.Thanulinga Nadar	51	S.S.Palanisami	87	S.P.Sargunam
16	R.Santhosam	52	V.M.S.Velusami	88	V.P.M.Namachivayam
17	K.V.K.Sami	53	R.M.S.Soundrapandian	89	Kumari Anandthan
18	M.S.Sivasami	54	S.Neethi Manicka Nadar	90	Aru.Sankar
19	Hlamvaluthi	55	T.Chidambara Nadar	91	T.K.palanisami
20	Thangapalam	56	K.Arumugasami	92	P.Kannan
21	Nathigam Ramasai	57	Aladi Aruna	93	Porayar Sambu
22	Mayandi Nadar	58	R.Thamaraikani	94	Karai. Sivam
23	P.Ramasami	59	L.Kabali	95	P.Rajamani
24	Nellai Jcbamani	60	K.T.K.Chinnamani	96	M.K.D. Subramainam
25	P.H.Pandian	61	M.S. Selvaraju	97	P.A.K. Palanisami
26	Manoj pandian	62	Pon. Vijayaraghavan	98	Murugu Dhanuskodi
27	K.P.Kandasami	63	K.T. Janakiram	99	Jeyaveerapandian
28	Pethannan	64	Daniel Thomas	100	Neela Lohidasa Nadar
29	P.A.Rajarathinam	65	M.C.Balan	101	Sank} Krishnan
30	S.N.Rajendran	66	P.R.Muthusami	102	A.Y.S.Parisutha Nadar
31	S.P.T.Dravidamani	67	S.R. Subramania Adityan	103	T.S.T.Raja
32	V.V.Dhanuskodi	68	M.Patturajan	104	Chengai P.Shunmugam
33	Kasirajan-Rajagopalan	69	V.Devadasan	105	G. Perumal
34	T.Kunjan Nadar	70	S.Thangamani Nadar	106	Erode Nachimuthu
35	R.B.Aditan	71	Trichy Nagasundaram	107	Sivakasi Subbiah
36	Dr.Kumaradaoss	72	S.P.Jeyaram Nadar	108	V.V.V. Anandan

APPENDIX -XI

Nadars Owned News papers and Magazines

1	Dina Thanthi (Daily Thanthi)	31	Nadar Murasu
2	Malali Malar	32	Chanda Marutham
3	Dinakaran	33	Sandror uravu
4	Kathiravan	34	Rani
5	Malai Murasu	35	Ranimuthu
6	DinaBhoomi	36	Devi
6.	Athirstam	37	Vasuki
7.	Dinacheithy	38	Mahajanam
8.	Dina Chudar	39	Vijaya Vikatan
9.	Deccan Herald	40	Kshatiya Mitran
10.	Tamil Kodi	41	Dhatchana Deepam
11.	Nathiham	42	Gramani kulam
12.	Thani Arasu	43	Gnanaodayam
13.	Munnetra murasu	44	Suaymariyathai Chudar
14.	Puthumai	45	Nadar Kulam
15.	Chengol	46	Nadar Nanban
16	Pakutharivu	47	Maranadu
17	Kilarchi	48	Samuha otrumai
18	Tamil Thenral	49	Sivakasi Murasu
19	Mahilchi	50	Sachithanandam
20	Udaya Surian	51	Ananda Vijayan
21	Sivappunadaa	52	Bharatha Lanka
22	Javaharisam		
23	Kalai Manram		
24	Kalaiarngam		
25.	Thenkudu		
26.	Thhenaruvi		
27.	Peravai		
28.	Valihatti		
29.	Padithen		
30	Maratiya Murasu		

APPENDIX - XII

LIST OF BRANCHES - STATEWISE

TAMILNADU

1. Tuticorin Main	44. Villupuram	87. Padanthalumoodu
2. Madurai Majj	45. Palliyadi	88. Mayiladumparai
3. Sivakasi	46. Verkizhambi	89. Devathanampetpai
4. Virudhunagar	47. Chinnamanur	90. Kappukad
5. Nagercoil	48. Colachel	91. Kancheepuram
6. Dindigul	49. Agasteeswaram	92. Tuticorin - South
7. Theni	50. Eriodu	93. Chengavilai
8. Chennai - 21	51. Sayalkudi	94. Vadamalaikurichi
9. Vilathikulam	52. Simthondanallur	95. Pandaravillai
10. Muhavoor	53. Prahasapuram	96. Varagur
11. Kamuthi	54. Chennai - T. Nagar	97. Chockalingapuram
12. Pavoorchatram	55. Rayagiri	98. M.M. Kovilur
13. Puthiyamputhur	56. Kanjampuram	99. Madurai - Chinthamani
14. Rajakkamangalam	57. Podanur	100. Coimbatore - Dr. Nanjappa Road
15. Nagamalai	58. Kumarapalayamputhur	101. Chennai-T.T.K. Road
Pudukottai		
16. Coimbatore Main	59. Kannankurichi	102. Udumalpet
17. Pudur	60. Ayyalur	103. Tiruchengodu
18. Anjugramam	61. Thanjavur	104. Karaikudi
19. Tiruchirapalli	62. Sonakanvilai	105. Pudukottai (Pudukottai Dt.)
20. Chennai - G.T.	63. Arumanai	106. Namakkal
21. Kommadikottai	64. L.Jsilampatti	107. Ramanathapuram
22. Megnanapuram	65. Vallalnathi	108. Sattur
23. Yercaud	66. Pannaipuram	109. Thiruvannamalai
24. Kayamozhi	67. Rajapalayam	110. N'agapattinam
25. Tirunelveli	68. Tirupur	111. Coimbatore - R.S. Puram
26. Thalakkulam	69. Odaipatti	112. Dharmapuri
27. Mullakkadu	70. Kallimandayam	113. Sankarankovil
28. Salem	71. Viralipatti	114. Mettupalayam
29. Radhapuram	72. Pavithrampudur	115. Chennai - Aminjikarai
30. Tisaiyanvilai	73. Pottireddipatti	116. Marthandam
31. T. Kallikulam	74. Vattur	117. Hosur
32. Vellore	75. Cuddalore	118. Chennai - Tambaram
33. Elayirampannai	76. Govindakudi	119. Palayamkottai
34. Kovilpatti	77. Vengadampatti	120. Thirumangalam
35. Pudukottai (Tuticorin Dt.)	78. Karur	121. Sivaganga
36. Erode	79. Palani	122. Cum bum
37. Kumbakonam	80. Pollachi	123. Tuticorin - SIPCOT Industrial Complex
38. Aruppukottai	81. Edalakudy	124. Chennai - Perambur
39. Kalloorani	82. Edalakudy	125. Chennai - Thiruvannamiyur
40. Alangulam	83. Madurai - Simmakal	126. Valliyoor
41. Bommi	84. Mayiladuthurai	127. Valliyoor
43. Thiruvavarur	86. Porulur	

II. KERALA	V. WEST BENGAL
1. Tirupuram	1. Kolkata
2. Kottugal	
3. Thiruvananthapuram	V. KARNATAKA
4. Kollam	1. Bangalore City
5. Ernakulam	2. Bangalore Cantonment
6. Kozhikode	3. Gulbarga
7. Changanacherry	4. Mangalore
8. Kottayam	5. Hassan
III. ANDHRA PRADESH	VI. MAHARASHTRA
1. Hyderabad	1. Mumbai - Mandvi
2. Guntur	2. Navi Mumbai - Vashi
3. Vijayawada	3. Ichalkaranji
4. Nellore	4. Pune
5. Rajahmundry	
6. TadepalligLidam	
7. Secunderabad	VII. NEW DELHI
8. Visakliapatnam	1. Delhi
9. Kurnool	
IV. GUJARAT	VIII. UNION TERRITORY OF PONDICHERRY
1. Ahmadebad	1. Pondicherry
2. Surat	2. Karaikal
3. Unjah	
4. Vadodara	

APPENDIX -XIII

I. INTERVIEW WITH A PROMINENT FIGURE OF THE TAMIL NADU MERCANTILE BANK SHARE INVESTORS' FORUM

(As per the request made by him, his name and designation have not been revealed)

1. What is the present status of Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank share Investors Forum and how far has it succeeded in its endeavor?

The Forum is in its final stage to take back the Bank from Sri Sivasankaran. The actual problem lies with Sri Sivasankaran because he is not firm in his words. He is an artful dodger and every time he demands more amount. The Forum has mobilized 3/4* of the required money. At present, the AIADMK supremo Ms. J Jayalalitha and the hon'ble Prime Minister of India are trying their level best to help the Nadars in getting back the Bank. We are confident that within two to three months the clouds will be clear.

2. On what basis the office bearers were selected to lead the Forum?

The elderly people of Nadar community and members of both the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* and the *Dakshinamara Nadar Sangam* met and discussed and finalised the names of TMB Retrieval Forum. Preference was given to people hailing from the reputed industrial and business houses that belongs to our caste, with cosmopolitan outlook, financial strength, having held important positions, proximity to the state and central governments, politicians etc. Equal weightage was given to all the regions of Tamil Nadu to have a proper representation. More than two hundred people assembled at various places, discussed thoroughly the personalities and selected the head, treasurer and other members of the Forum in a democratic manner.

3. When Nadars are capable of mobilizing huge amount within a short period of time, why don't they float a new bank?

(Annoyed with the question). TMB is our original property. It is like own Mother. It is our right to own the Bank. Can you keep quite, if somebody comes and occupies your ancestral property? If you do so, they you are a person without self-respect. When other castes of Tamil Nadu treated the Nadars worse than the untouchables, the bank gave us some respect and caste identity. How can we forgo this Bank? When the Nadars led a very backward life in all aspects, our forefathers created the bank for the community's upliftment. Today we have come up in all fronts and loosing the bank now, is it not an insult to the entire community?

Today, the durable assets of TMB are around Rs.1650 crores. The deposits are around Rs.1 130 crores and the net profit is Rs. 342 crores. Is paying a mere Rs.150 crores and owning this *Kama Dehnu* good or floating a new bank and waiting for another 100 years to attain the present status of Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank good? Imagine by then where the TMB will be? Being a research scholar you should think about this issue in terms of social, cultural and economic dimensions of a big community. When we are having butter on our palm, why should we search for ghee? Losing this Bank is losing the very self-respect of our community and, tomorrow, in the eyes of others, we (Nadars) may become the laughing stock.

4. What is the actual problem in getting back the Bank?

The entire problem is with Sri Sivasankaran. He is not a desirable industrialist. His cheque of Rs. 24 lakhs issued to the State Bank of India got bounced for which the SBI has framed a charge sheet against him. Some politicians and his own caste (*Mudaliars*) people are instigating him not to yield to the Nadars" pressure. He is like a frog, when we

go to his side, he goes to the other side (the Essar Group side), when we approach the Essar Group, and he comes to our side. He is a man of inconsistencies. His idea is to delay the whole process, so that the Nadars lose their interest. But, the truth is, the more he delays the more we become harder. Each time he demands a few crores more. Now from where shall we pay this huge amount? Starting from 100 crores, he is now demanding 186 crores. But, he does not have the valid documents to prove that he had purchased the shares from Essar group for Rs.186 crores. A day will come when he may even demand the planet moon from Nadars.

5 What has the National and regional political parties done to help in regaining the Bank?

Every political party promises to help the Nadar community to get back the bank, particularly during election time. Once the election is over, they put our demand in cold storage. We, sought the help of hon'ble Law Minister of Tamil Nadu, former Union Finance and Industry Ministers, and the Prime Minister Shri. A.B. Vajpayee. Even' one is in favor of our cause, yet things have not materialized. At present, the AIADMK, Supremo, J. Jayalalitha and the BJP party are doing a good job for us. The present Minister of State for Finance in the Union Cabinet belongs to our Community and is trying his level best to help us. The 1998 parliamentary election results revealed the truth. That is the price the politicians to pay dearly for the false promise they made. (The DMK and TMC combine had miserably failed). The legal documents prepared by the Reserve Bank of India also support our claim. Yet some political parties want to ditch us.

6. In what way are the local *Uravinmuraïs* and *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* involved in regaining the control over the TMB?

The local *Uravinmuraïs* helped a lot to buy the TMB shares, motivated the individual members of local *Uravinmuraïs* to buy the shares. Without their help, we would not have

succeeded in buying the required number of shares. The Perambur *Uravinmurai* of Madras city alone bought Rs. 500,000 worth shares. Mostly 75% of the local *Uravinmurais* responded positively to our call and their range of investment varies from Rs. 5,500/- to Rs. 5,00,000/-. All the local *Uravinmurais* created awareness among the Nadars. It has not only motivated the people to buy shares, but, also built the community solidarity and revealed the importance of Nadars' unity to uphold the community values.

The *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* (NMS) has been doing a tremendous job to get back the Bank. It has been publishing several articles in its weekly journal "*Mahajanam*" about the various stages and work done by the TMB share Investors' Forum. The NMS represented several times to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Prime Minister, Union Finance Minister, Governor, Reserve Bank of India, etc. about the Nadars' genuine interest to get back the bank. The NMS further instructed all the local *uravinmurais* to help in buying back the shares. The touring agents of the NMS have been doing a pioneering job in convincing and making people to buy shares. Being the custodian of Nadars, the caste association has done and still doing a laudable job to get back the bank.

7. How have the businessmen and politicians of Nadar community co-operated in this endeavor?

The businessmen of our community responded very positively, particularly the reputed business houses from Madras, Madurai, Coimbatore, Trichy, Tirunelveli and Virudhunagar. They have bought a reasonably a good number of shares (He then showed some cheques and duly filled share application forms, worth Rs. 2,00,000/- sent by some businessman from Virudhunagar). Some businessmen are interested to buy more number of shares, but the Forum has imposed a ceiling, because if one individual has a huge number of shares, then there is every possibility of selling it to others in future for his

selfish gain. If that happens, we may have to face similar problem in the future also. Our aim is to have a minimum of twenty five thousand shareholders out of the one million Nadar population. The economic power and the financial gain derived out of the Bank should reach maximum number of people. A community owned Bank should be controlled by most of its members, not by a few. The Nadar businessmen are investing their profit in TMB shares and their participation is very much encouraging.

Compared to the businessmen, the politicians belonging to Nadar caste have not done any appreciable work to get back the Bank, because they are very much afraid of their party leaders. Although our caste has a sizeable number of MPs, MLAs and ministers both at the state and central levels, they have not done any solid work in this regard. Like any politician, they also preach one thing and practise another. If they want to support our community openly, then their very survival will be in doldrums. A politician is after all a politician. For him, his own welfare is more important than the community's.

8 Don't you think that initially the Nadar shareholders sold their shares purely for selfish gains?

Yes; you are absolutely right. But, you should remember investment in stocks and shares are purely for profit making. Basically all of us are materialistic, so the initial shareholders were not an exception.

9. There is a wide spread criticism that one particular family from Tuticorin wants to dominate the show. What is your opinion about it?

This is not correct. For the sake of criticizing the bank and its management, they are criticizing this particular family. We have respect to the family members of the founder of TMB. Where were the critics all these years? It is an established tradition in Nadar

community to respect the founders and their family members who established all Nadar Institutions. Even in the Nadar Mahajana Sangam, the members of Poraiyar Ratnasami Nadar family has been given due recognition because the NMS was the brainchild of Poraiyar family. So is the case with the TMB and the Tuticorin family. Today all over Tamil Nadu, if the Nadars are identifying the TMB as a Nadar Bank the credit goes to that particular Nadar family.

10. Is there any other community in Tamil Nadu, which has come forward to support the Nadars cause?

Yes, so many communities mostly the backward castes and the dalits have raised their voice in favor of Nadars. The *Thevar Peravai*, *Yadava Sangam*, *Devaendrakula Vellalar Sangam* are some. We need only their moral support, not the financial support. Some caste people are willing to support by buying the TMB shares, which we have not allowed, because the TMB is our caste property. Why should we allow others to enter into our house?

11. There is a general feeling that some political parties would like to gain political mileage out of the TMB issue. Please comment on it ?

As I have said earlier, except two or three political parties, others are interested in Nadar vote bank. Only they are trying to woo the Nadars vote Bank. But we are not fools. Their crocodile tears towards our community will be very strong only at the time of election. Once the election is over they also disappear. We will extend our solid support to that party, which helps us to get back the bank.

12. Some prominent figures of the Nadar Community have openly declared that the community leaders were divided over the TMB issue. What is the actual problem?

This is not correct. All the leaders of our caste are together with the concrete idea of getting back the bank at any cost and by any means. Again irrespective of region, religion, sub-caste, political differentiation, the Nadars are fighting unitedly. No other problem, so far, has united the Nadars like this. Then where is the question of division and fragmentation? Even the State and Union governments were astonished to see our unity and determination to fight to get back the bank. In every community, there are a few back stabbers. ours is not an exception. Therefore, you should not take their words seriously.

13. How effective has been the slogan "One family one share"?

The slogan has been very effective. "One family one share" is to convince the well-do-do families only. We can't expect the agricultural laborers to buy one share which costs around Rs. 6000/- Their annual income may be less than the share price. The slogan is specifically meant for middle and upper classes and they have responded positively. In order to collect the amount now the slogan has changed into "one family three shares"

14. Do you personally think that the TMB is Nadars' economic symbol like the social institutions of *uravinmurai* and *Nadar Mahajana Sangam*?

Yes, it is not only an economic symbol of our community, but also a socio-cultural and self-respect symbol. The Nadars were denied entry into financial institutions managed by the higher castes in the colonial days. In order to keep our self-respect and caste identity, our forefathers created the TMB and even allowed other castes to avail the services of our Bank. It has given the Nadars not only economic upliftment, but also

prestige. Today the way we are keeping all the political parties guessing about our vote bank can be seen as a political weapon.

15. What are the future plans regarding the TMB issue?

The first task is to capture the Bank. Then, we are planning to establish more branches in the neighboring states and abroad. The long-term plan is to make the TMB as the number one bank in all aspects and to help in Tamil Nadu's economic development in general and that of Nadar caste in particular.

16. What is the contribution of toddy tappers castes from other states and NRI Nadars in efforts to regain the TMB?

The *Ezhavas* of Kerala and the *Idigas* of Karnataka are willing to help in mobilizing the finance. But, we requested them to wait for some time. If we are unable to mobilize the required amount within the community, then, we may have to seek their help. Regarding the NRI Nadars, there is a good response to our call. We are hoping that 5% of the required amount may come from the NRI Nadars. The Forum members are planning to tour USA and the South East Asian Countries to mobilize the NRI Nadars' support.

II. INTERVIEW WITH THE NADAR MAHAJANA SANGAM TOURING

AGENT (Sri. I. LAKSHMANAN)

1. Since how many years have you been working as a touring agent in the *Nadar Mahajana Sangam*?

I have been working as a touring agent of the NMS since 1986.

2. How did you get the job? Are you happy with the present job?

The *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* advertised the vacancies, required qualification, total emoluments and nature of work etc in our caste journal "*Mahajanarri*". I had all the requisite qualifications; also the then Joint Secretary of NMS helped me in getting the job. I am very happy and fully satisfied with the job, because I am drawing a salary of Rs. 2800/- per month plus travelling allowances. When I am visiting the local *uravinmuru*, they take care of my other requirements like refreshments, meals, accommodation etc. Thousands with my educational qualification (intermediate only) are loitering in the streets. I feel I have been well placed. I am not only getting the salary, but also helping my community in all possible ways. I should remain grateful to NMS and the Nadar community as a whole.

3. How many touring agents are at present working with *Nadar Mahajana Sangam*?

There are fifteen touring agents and even- one of us has a fixed jurisdiction to discharge our duties. I am responsible for the two southern districts.

4. What is the nature of your job?

There is no fixed work as such for the touring agents. We have to do all type of jobs assigned by the Secretary and the treasurer of NMS. Mostly, we function like a bridge **between** all the *uravinmuru* and the caste association headquarters at Madurai.

Collecting membership fee (both life and annual), advertisements for the caste journal, visiting Nadar settlements on fact finding missions whenever there are any inter or intra-caste problems, supervising and collecting rent from the Nadar owned buildings in various places, disseminating information about the assistance and other facilities available for poor Nadars and making arrangements to conduct the annual conference etc.

Recently, we are completely involved in the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank issue. We have toured extensively, consulted and convinced all the local *uravimmurais*, Nadar businessmen, bureaucrats and made them buy the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank shares. We have succeeded in our attempt. We sometimes even act as a go-between the families of brides and bridegrooms.

5. How are you helping to consolidate the caste solidarity?

Being an active member and office bearer of the caste association, I am working a lot to strengthen the solidarity of Nadars. Whenever there are any problems among Nadars or between Nadars and other dominant castes of an area. I bring them to the notice of NMS and try to solve them amicably. I inform the poor Nadars about the facilities available for their children regarding scholarships, employment opportunities etc. Sometimes I help the people in finding suitable matches for marriage. Regarding the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank issue, I have convinced the people to invest more than Rs. 10 lakhs to buy back the shares. Therefore, my very nature of work itself is to build caste solidarity and solve their problems.

6. What differences do you find in the functioning of NMS when compared to other caste associations?

The major difference between *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* and other caste associations is in the use of violent methods. After India's independence, the Nadars or the NMS never

used any violent method to achieve their demands. Have you eve heard of Nadars burning buses, exploding bombs or damaging Government property? Nadars are more interested in Tamil Nadu's development than their community's development. Because of our tolerance today we are able to attain this stage, whereas, some castes in Tamil Nadu are highly selfish and don't think about the state or country. Their only aim is to create trouble and fish in the troubled waters.

7. What are the important problems today that Nadars face?

The community is facing a number of problems in every field. Take, for example, the educational field. Although ours is the only caste in Tamil Nadu having the most number of educational institutions and offering qualitative education, our literacy rate is far from satisfactory, especially of the Nadar women. People are more interested in business. Similar interest should also be shown in education and government jobs. In the political field, irrespective of the ideologies and parties, politicians belonging to Nadar community should fight for Nadars' cause. But that spirit is lacking. Take for example, the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank issue. The MPs, MLAs and Ministers of Nadar community have never fought unitedly. That is the reason for its continued languishing. In the social field too the northern and southern Nadars are not united properly. There are no marriage alliances between the two. So is the case with the *Gramanis* of Coimbatore and Salem areas. Most of the *uravinmuraïs* are divided on petty issues like elopement of young people, sub-caste factions, religious, political and factional rivalries etc. Now, the time has come for the Nadars to forget their internal problems and act as one coherent social group. We can show our strength to government and our genuine demand can be met only when we are united.

8. What are the major caste symbols associated with the Nadar community?

See, I am ignorant of the caste symbols of the past. Through books and interaction with the aged people, I have gathered some information. The family deity and association with the *palmyra* tree were the religious and occupational symbols of Nadars in the past. The male god *Ayyanar* and the mother goddess *Mariamman* are very popular among the Nadars. But, since the inception of Nadar Mahajana Sangam, institutions like *Jati Panchayat*, *Uravinmurai*, *Mahamai* have become the caste symbols of Nadars all over Tamil Nadu. In the present day, the business and industrial houses, Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank, caste journal *Mahajanam*, community buildings etc. have become caste symbols. In short, the past identities were built on occupational and religious aspects; but the new identities are based on economy, class and materialistic life.

9. What is the role of politicians and business elites of Nadar Community in building the community solidarity?

As I said earlier, everyone is selfish in nature, more bothered about their personal well being than the caste. See, for example twenty five top businessmen of Nadar community are sufficient enough to buy the required number of shares of Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank, but they won't because they calculate the profit they get out of it. So is the case with politicians belonging to our community. They are more bothered about their own chair, position and wealth. At present, the Nadar businessmen and politicians' contribution to community solidarity building is far from satisfactory.

10. Do you find a gap between the northern and southern Nadars?

Yes; there are a lot of gaps between these two groups. Northerners are well to do compared to the southerners. They take (to a limited extent) but, won't give their bridegrooms. Among the southern Nadars, there are many converted Christians. Such is

not the case with the northerners. The northern Nadars give more importance to business than education and government jobs, unlike the southern Nadars. Tapping as an occupation is almost unknown to the northerners, but is still prevalent among the southerners. The northern Nadar would like to build the community identity around business, trade etc. While for the Southerners the identities are built around ancestral temples, marriage, kinship, sub-caste, religion etc. The northerners mostly have achieved identities, whereas, the southerners have ascribed identities.

11. What are the important problems the present day Nadars face?

Lack of unity and community consciousness and in-group fighting are the important problems they face. Again the migrant Nadars are not actively associating with the caste association.

12. How do you visualize the future development of Nadar Community as a whole?

With all said and done, the future of Nadar community is very bright. They will definitely prosper well in trade, education and political field. Once the community succeeds in getting back the Mercantile Bank, they need not look back again, because it is a golden egg laying goose. On the economic front, they will prosper because of their hard working and entrepreneurial qualities. Their dependence on traditional occupation and agriculture will come down heavily, due to their low returns. In future, the Nadars will be dominating in the urban areas due to their interest in trade, business network and rural to urban migration.

III INTERVIEW WITH THE SECRETARY, OF NADAR MAHAJANA SANGAM, MADURAI 18.09.1997

1. How many times have you worked as Secretary of Nadar Mahajana Sangam (NMS)?

This is the first time I have been elected as Secretary of NMS. However, earlier I was associated with the *Sangam* in other positions.

2. How does Nadar Mahajana Sangam differ from other caste associations in Tamil Nadu?

You see. I don't want to specifically mention the names of other caste associations in Tamil Nadu, but people know pretty well about their divisive and destructive activities. But, although ours is a caste association, we always consider the overall development of Tamil Nadu and Tamils as our prime concern. In all possible ways we have always co-operated with the Government of Tamil Nadu, irrespective of the party in power. Our association aims to make Tamil Nadu a dynamic and vibrant state. However, I doubt very much whether other caste associations have such broad views. If they do have, then Tamil Nadu can be made an exemplary state.

3. There are two caste associations simultaneously working for the betterment of Nadars, one is yours i.e., Nadar Mahajana Sangam (NMS) and the other is Dakshinamara Nadar Sangam (DMNS) with its headquarters in Tirunelveli. What are the differences and similarities between both the associations?

Half the answer is in your question itself. Both are functioning for the betterment of Nadars. That is the prime goal. *Dakshinamara Nadar Sangam* 's (DMNS) jurisdiction is restricted to only three districts namely Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari. Some southern Nadars felt that their interests were not protected by *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* (NMS). So, they floated a separate association specifically meant for southerners. Simultaneously, they are continuing their membership in NMS as well, whereas, the

northern Nadars settled in South Tamil Nadu are not allowed to have that membership in DMNS. But, I personally feel that their presence will be advantageous in putting up a joint fight on common issues in order to achieve the desired goal. In terms of membership, strength, organizational set up and network, and economic assets NMS is much stronger than DMNS. I am sure a day will come when both would merge.

4. What the NMS is expecting actually from the Government on the reservation issue?

NMS strongly supports the Mandal Commission Recommendations and is for 69% reservations. Unfortunately, the Christian Nadars have been demanding backward caste status, which is not at all justifiable. If they are powerful in south Tamil Nadu, Hindu Nadar are powerful in north Tamil Nadu. The Nadars are also prospering in a big way in Madras and its environs. A few years back, we furnished all the particulars to the government to include the Nadars under the most backward class category (both NMS and DMNS jointly represented). But, quoting the affluent Nadars of Sivakasi and Virudhunagar, the Government turned down our appeal. Government does not know the real condition of Nadars at the grassroot level. There does not seem to be any chance of succeeding in our attempts to include Nadars under the most backward caste category. Since we believe in peaceful methods, we are pursuing this issue only through prayers and petitions. For everything, there is a saturation point and the Government should realize it before our successors start indulging in violent methods to achieve the ends.

5. Has the NMS ever acted as a pressure group?

Yes, we are acting as a pressure group to redress the grievances of Nadars; but, our approach is always within the constitutional framework.

6. What is the NMS doing for the downtrodden or poor people of the community?

Ever since the creation of the NMS, we have been working for the betterment of the lower class people of our community. The insurance scheme we introduced for the toddy tappers is one such example. Again, in the field of education, the NMS is providing scholarships, text books, note books, free hostel facility, preference in admission to the community owned educational institutions etc. We try to absorb the economically poor, but academically meritorious, students in Nadar owned industries and business establishments. We are providing free coaching for competitive examinations and also entrance examinations for professional courses. In the areas where poor Nadars live, which are dominated by other castes, the NMS acts as their custodian, to redress their grievances. The employment bureau, marriage information cell under the NMS helps the poor Nadars a lot.

7. What are the important problems faced by the NMS?

Even after 65 years of the formation of NMS, the caste solidarity is very much lacking. We have to concentrate on this aspect. Although we are having sizeable assets, the income is not sufficient to meet even the regular expenditure. In spite of Nadars' representation to the state and central governments, no help is forthcoming. Take for e.g. the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank issue; still, nothing has been finalized. The national and regional political parties target the Nadars vote bank, but are unconcerned about their welfare. The political affiliation of NMS members hinders its solidarity. Political affiliations divide the members. Another matter of concern is that southern Nadars feel that NMS is meant for northerners, which is not true. The real integration has not taken place, so far.

8. What is the Nadar Mahajana Sangam's stand on naming the state transport corporations, districts, universities airports etc., after caste leaders?

NMS does not believe in caste; but when all other caste associations work to uplift their own people, we can't keep quite. If all the castes are willing to abolish their association, NMS will come forward first to eradicate the institution of caste. The history of naming public places after leaders first started in North India. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, Indira Gandhi National Airport, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Mahatma Gandhi Marg etc. are some examples. Here, naming of the state owned transport corporations was started with the DMK rule. First, the names of great kings like *Chera*, *Chola* and *Pandya* were given because they were great leaders with illustrious history. Now a day, even castes having total population of less than 5000 want their little known and often unknown caste leaders' name to be given to some corporations or districts, which is awkward. How can one compare these personalities with stalwarts like Kamaraj Nadar or E.V. Ramasami Naicker. The best way to overcome this problem is to remove all the caste leaders names given to the districts, public places and transport corporations. The naming process has not economically benefited the concerned castes but has united the people and created awareness. Take my personal life - during my teenage, I was an ardent supporter of Periyar's Self-Respect movement which preached a casteless, classless and religionless society. But today I have become the Secretary of a caste association. All of us want the institution of caste and caste is very much in everybody's blood.

9. How is the NMS maintaining the cultural symbols of Nadar community?

The NMS is nothing to do with the cultural symbols of the Nadar community. Its main aim is to help the caste members in economic and educational front. If we concentrate on cultural symbols, we can't achieve economic development. Nadars is one such

community spread all over Tamil Nadu and its culture differs from area to area. The caste title, religious practices, hereditary occupations, marriage and kinship patterns also differ in different regions. Twenty-five years ago, symbols had some validity. Now a days what any community requires is money. Once, a caste becomes economically well-off, it can start investing in acquiring the so called culture and cultural symbols.

10. How is the NMS maintaining relations with Nadars and their equivalent in other states, particularly in South India?

The annual conference of the NMS held at Courtalam in the year 1975 was presided over by Sri Bangarappa of Karnataka. The resolution passed was to integrate the Nadars of Tamil Nadu, the *Idigas* of Karnataka, the *Ezhavas* of Kerala and the *Gouds* of Andhra Pradesh. The very idea was to bring the Nadars, Idigas, Ezhavas and the Gouds on an equal footing with the Jats of North India in National and regional politics. But, this idea never got a proper shape. When the Nadar Mahajana Sangam and the Dakshinamara Nadar Sangam are unable to function unitedly, how can we expect tappers of all the South Indian states to unite and work together.

11. What is the NMS role in business and industrial development of the Nadar community?

At the village level, the local *uravinmuraïs* (local associations) help the businessmen by lending loans on nominal interest. This very motive led to the establishment of Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank. The prime motive of this Bank is to help the Nadar businessmen. At present the Nadars are running a Nadar Finance Corporation with its headquarters at Madurai to help the Nadar businessmen and industrialists. Nadars run engineering colleges and polytechnics too. The Industrial Training Institutes are providing technicians to the Nadar industrial establishments. The Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank is (of which Nadars are the major shareholders) also liberally lends loans to the

entrepreneurs to start new ventures. But the NMS never gives surety to individual Nadars. The NMS annual conference held at Madras in 1997 passed a resolution to focus on business and industrial development.

Earlier, Nadars floated some co-operative ventures in business, but they were not performing well. The Pandiarajapuram Sugar Factory near Madurai was the brainchild of Soundrapandia Nadar. Again, the Meenakshi Flour Mill started by some Nadars, failed miserably. Individual enterprises are highly successful. Now we are planning to establish a co-operative Spinning Mill near Trichy. I feel that the Nadar always work for the economic development of Tamil Nadu. The government should give them priority in loan, subsidized power supply, land at concessional cost, tax holiday etc.

12 What are the thrust areas of NMS for the betterment of the caste as a whole?

Although the community is running a number of educational institutions, the literacy rate among the Nadars, particularly among the women, is far from satisfactory. Only very few top bureaucrats belong to the Nadar community. We have to establish coaching centres for civil service examinations and for professional courses. To uplift the poor Nadars still practising the hereditary occupations, we have to ask the government to provide group insurance, medical aid and scholarship to the children, matching grant to tappers' co-operative society etc. On the economic front, we have to get back the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank from Sivasankaran, failing which the very identity of Nadars would be in peril. Efforts are on way and we need the help of both state and central Governments. On the political front the NMS is planning to demand more representation to the Nadars in both state and central cabinets and legislatures.

13 What were the positions you held earlier and holding at present?

Earlier I was the treasurer and Deputy Secretary of the NMS. I have been associated with the NMS for more than 30 years. Other than this, I am a Member of Madurai Meenakshi temple board of trustees and academic council member of half a dozen educational institutions, I have also worked as President of Madurai Chambers of Commerce and Industry and have been an active member of Madurai city lions club.

14 What difference do you find in associating with secular and caste-based organizations?

I am sure you are well aware of other caste associations and their presidents' and secretaries' background. Compared to them all, I am less educated and never held any government job. See Dr. Ramadas of Vanniar Sangam, Dr. Krishnasami of Devendra Kula Velalar Sangam, Pon. Paramaguru. I.P.S. (ex. Inspector General of Police) of the Thevar caste association and Sri G. Gopala Krishnan, former Chairman of Indian Bank, the president of Yadava Sangam. All these leaders went to gain political mileage out of their association with caste based organizations, whereas, I am working for the upliftment of not only my caste, but also of Tamil Nadu. When I am in trouble, my caste brothers and association will come to my rescue and not the state or my secular outlook. Therefore, I feel, there is nothing wrong in my association with both caste based and secular organizations at the same time.

15 What is the size or Nadar population in Tamil Nadu?

The decennial censuses cover only the SC and ST population. Other castes are all claiming exaggerated figures for political gains. I don't know the exact size of the Nadar population in Tamil Nadu. Since my caste people are highly mobile providing approximate figure is very difficult. But it may be approximately ten millions.

IV. INTERVIEW WITH SRI HARI KRISHNAN, GENERAL SECRETARY, KAMARAJAR- ADITANAR KHAZAHAM (Nadars political party)

1. Why did you name your party as Khazaham?

The word 'Khazaham' is not the monopoly of Dravidian parties. Khazaham means federation. Since our party is the federation of all Tamil *jatis*, we have named it Kamarajar - Aditanar Khazaham.

2. Why is your party specifically named after Kamarajar and Aditanar?

Gandhiji never approved his name being used by any political party. But, today, all parties are using his name and totally disregarding his ideology and basic principles. In Tamil Nadu, the *Tamil Manila Congress* and *Janata Dal* have discarded the real ideology of Kamarajar: but claim that they are going to establish Kamarajar rule. The Kamaraj tag has become a saleable commodity in the present day political arena. But, we are the real inheritors of Kamarajar and Aditanar. Kamarajar stood for simplicity and pro-people decisions, while Aditanar symbolised bold and firm decision-making. Both were the illustrious sons of Tamil Nadu, and we want to follow their cardinal principles in toto. They are our role models. Therefore, our party is named after them. You may be tempted to link this to the fact that they belong to the Nadar community. Let me make it clear that, we consider them as leaders of the Tamils.

3. Who are your political allies?

Seeing our strength in South Tamil Nadu, most parties intend to have alliance with us. But, we are still studying the parties' standpoints and wherever our wavelengths match we will forge alliance. It is too early to come to any conclusion now.

4. How will you include and integrate other backward castes and scheduled castes in your party?

Our party stands for the betterment of the OBCs and SCs. But, the Scheduled Castes of Tamil Nadu have their own party (*Puthiya Tamilaham*, led by Dr. Krishna Swamy). The only option left with us to integrate the SCs is to have a strategic electoral alliance with them.

5. In what way does your party's ideology differ from that of the *Pattali Makkal Katchi* (PMK) led by Dr. Ramadoss?

The Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) is confined to one caste group and a few pockets (where the Vanniars are dominate) of Tamil Nadu, whereas, Kamarajar Aditanar Khazaham (KAK) is meant for all the Tamils. PMK's prime motive is to get more political mileage by using the caste card, whereas, KAK is meant for reviving the glorious past of Tamil society and its pride. Moreover, PMK can't point out any big leader as their guiding star, whereas, we have Kamarajar, Aditanar, Soundra pandianar etc. PMK is known for violent activities. Ours is a peace loving organization.

6. Will it only fight for the Nadar cause?

No. Again I am reiterating that this is a party for all the Tamils irrespective of caste, religion and region.

7. What are the prospects of your Party?

It has a very bright future, but it may take time. Even the DMK took 20 -25 years to establish itself as a potential political force in Tamil Nadu politics. The seed of a banyan tree is very small, but once it grows and establishes, its canopy occupies acres of land. Similarly, our Party will come up in the future.

8. What is the ideology of your Party?

To realize the ideals of Kamarajar and Aditanar and uphold Tamil identity. To make Tamil Nadu a vibrant and dynamic state in all fronts.

9. In what way is the Nadar culture distinct from the Tamil culture?

Nadar culture is the original dravidian culture, whereas Tamil culture is the combination of Aryan and Dravidian cultures.

10. What is your party's stand on the language issue in Tamil Nadu?

There is nothing wrong in learning a new language. The so called Dravidian parties are against Hindi in order to gain political mileage. But, our party is not like that. We are for the three language formula which will help the people in many ways.

11. How do you strengthen your party's base at the grass root level?

We are opening party offices at the village level throughout the state and appointing office bearers. The membership drive is in full swing. We are also conducting periodical meetings to explain our ideology. I am sure within a period of ten years our party will be equal to the other regional parties of Tamil Nadu.

12. Does your party seek support from *Nadar Mahajana Sangam* (NMS)?

No. not at all. The NMS is dominated only by the affluent Nadars. They are the ones who have let down the Nadar community. They don't like our party and its fast growth. Any support from NMS will indirectly wreck the party. Moreover, the NMS never helps the poor people. It is meant for one caste, whereas, our party is secular in character. I don't want to add communal color to this party.

13. What does your party flag indicate?

The party flag has two colors proportionately i.e. green and blue. Green color symbolizes prosperity. We want to make Tamil Nadu another Punjab on agricultural front. Sky blue indicates that our party is the custodian of other backward castes and dalits. When we contest elections we are going to demand the election commission to allot *Palmyra Tree* as a symbol of our party. The palmyra tree is an agrarian symbol, familiar to the people. It helps the people in more than 100 ways. Like the palmyra tree our party also will be helpful to the people in all walks of their life.

14. Today, the Nadar vote bank has spread across parties like DMK, AIADMK, Cong-I, Janata Dal etc. How can you integrate these masses under one umbrella?

Again I am telling you not to use the word Nadar. It is a party of Tamils. Every political party has an eye on the Nadar vote bank particularly in South Tamil Nadu. But, they never helped the Nadar community in times of crisis. Take for example, the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank issue. No party is showing interest. They all have forgotten the ideology of Kamarajar and Aditanar. Our party is going to fight for the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank issue and other issues with help of the Nadar community in particular and the Tamils in general. Through that we will integrate the Nadars into one tribe, irrespective of the area, region, religion and economic class.

15. How are you different from other caste-cum-political leaders like Drs Krishnasami, Ramdoss and Sri. John Pandian?

You see, there are vast differences between me and the other leaders. They always fight with the government in a violent way. That is one reason for their failure to win the hearts of the people. The PMK led by Dr. Ramadoss is confined to a particular caste and confined to a few districts. He always preaches violence. So is the case with *Pudhiya*

Tamilakam Party supremo Dr. Krishnasami **and** the dalit leader John Pandian. That is the reason we have been growing very fast. In our party, the membership is open to all people irrespective of caste. During election, the other leaders align with any of the major political parties to get a few MLA seats and money. Unlike us, they are not having any concrete ideology and vision.

16. What is the political strength of Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu today?

The Dravidian political parties (DMK, AIADMK, MDMK) are in a very bad shape, and their ideology is in a very fluid stage. We may need a computer to work out their splits from the parental DMK. Now there are DMK, AIADMK (J), AIADMK (T), MGR DMK(R) MDMK and so on. In the 1960s, they projected leaders like E.V. Ramaswami Naiker, Annadurai and Aditanar to get votes. What is their position today? They have to depend on matinee idols like Rajinikanth, Sarathkumar, SS Chandran, Rathika, Rama Rajan. Gautami etc. to get the votes. This itself shows their party's stand and erosion of ideology. Their main aim is to occupy the chair by any means; no ideology, no principle. To get the mandate, they adopt all sorts of shortcuts, viz., erecting statues, naming the transport corporations, universities, districts, after caste leaders etc. They indulge in the art of fishing in troubled waters. By 2010, all these parties will vanish or will be marginalised.

V. INTERVIEW WITH A SHAREHOLDER OF TAMIL NADU MERCANTILE BANK WHO BELONGS TO ONE OF THE SAMPLE VILLAGES

1. How did you come to know about the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Issue?

From 1995 onwards, the local news papers particularly Daily Thanthi and the national newspapers alongwith the Nadar Mahajana Sangam journal "Mahajanam" brought out a number of articles about the Mercantile Bank imbroglio and how the Nadars lost hold, and its subsequent take over by the Essar group and then by Sivasankaran Mudaliar. Earlier, I had no idea about the shares and stock, but now I know what is what in share business. I also read a lot about the big bull Harshad Mehtha and his scam. Besides all these, the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank Share Investors Forum and the caste association touring agent (*Thuduvār*) approached me several times, and they have explained, convinced and made me invest in TMB shares.

2. Do you have shares or debentures of any other company?

No other public sector or private firms shares are with me, but twenty-five years back when the co-operative jaggery society was formed in this village. I have bought 10 shares worth hundred rupees. My investments are mostly in the form of bank deposits and gold ornaments.

3. What are all the advantages you are going to reap from the shares of TMB in future?

I have only one share which costs about Rs. 5500/-. Right now the bank is paying 100 percent dividend so I will be paid Rs. 10/- per annum as dividend, which is not equal to simple interest. Instead of the financial gain, I will have the mental satisfaction of the help rendered by me to get back the Bank. Everywhere one need not think about the material benefits. By becoming a shareholder now I am part of the bank and I feel proud of it.

4. Would you like to sell the share of TMB if it fetches good price in future?

Precisely because of selling the shares, we lost the Bank and the caste pride. Even if I am in deep financial trouble, I won't sell or in inevitable circumstances I shall sell it only to a fellow Nadar and not to others. The caste association is also planning to buy back the shares from individual shareholders over a period of time. Since, we, the Nadars have learnt a lesson by selling shares, now onwards we will be very cautious.

5. What are all your suggestions to get back the bank at the earliest?

The first point is to approach both the central and state governments to intervene in this matter and find a solution in favor of Nadars. Second, all the political leaders belonging to the Nadar caste should take this issue very seriously, cutting across their party affiliations. The members of the Mercantile Bank Shares Investor Forum should press the Reserve Bank of India to take necessary action. If we fail in all our endeavors through legal way, then we have to follow the coercive methods to get back the Bank. In the last year procession held in Chennai, our Community has shown clearly the strength of Nadars not only to Sivasankaran Mudaliar, but also to all the politicians.

6. What are the strategies required to integrate your community as a powerful force in Tamil Nadu?

Members of the caste should always think that they are one irrespective of their sub-caste, occupation, and place of residence, religion and political party affiliation. Matrimonial relationship among the sub-castes is one way of overcoming the problem of intra-caste differentiation. The other strategies to integrate the caste are strengthening the local *uravinmuraish*, *jati panchayat* and the *mahamai* fund. Internal caste problems should not reach to other caste domains and government institutions like police and court. If we are maintaining caste discipline at every level, then what is the necessity of **seeking justice through external** institutional means? The association leaders should focus more

on building educational institutions to cater to the needs of our succeeding generation. Above all, the individual members must be ready to do self-sacrifice for the sake of the community as and when required.

7. Are you willing to have a matrimonial relationship with a Nadar belonging to another sub-caste or religious denomination?

Yes, already I have performed my daughter's marriage with a Christian Nadar family.

8. What are the characteristics that differentiate Nadars from other castes?

Hard-working, peace loving, honesty, community solidarity, entrepreneurial acumen, courage with determination, helping tendency, accommodative nature, religious tolerance are the important characteristics which differentiate Nadars from other caste people.

9. Who are all the most influential and well-known leaders of the caste?

K. Kamaraj Nadar, W.P. A. Soundrapandianar, Chi. Pa. Aditanar, Marshal Nesamony and Ayya Vaikunta Swamy are the illustrious sons of Nadar caste.

10. As a Nadar, what message would you like to give to other caste brethren?

Hard working nature is very essential for the development of self, caste, village, region and the nation. All castes should follow the policy of live and let live. Due to hard work alone, the Nadar community has been prospering. I wish all the castes in Tamil Nadu should emulate our community in one aspect i.e. of working hard.

VI. INTERVIEW WITH A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR BELONGING TO THE NADAR CASTE WHO IS VERY ACTIVE IN THE NADAR MAHAJANA SANGAM ACTIVITIES

1. When did you join the Nadar Mahajana Sangam and what made you to take the membership?

I joined the Nadar Mahajana Sangam in 1975, and the main reason was the Sangam's educational services and their constructive activities like running hostels, providing marriage hall, safe drinking water. Through out my student life I have availed benefits from NMS, which is another reason to be a member of this organization. Above all, the Sangam never jeopardized the government work or properties under any circumstances. Except the membership criterion, other facilities of NMS are available for all the castes. This secular and benevolent approach attracted me to become a life member.

2. Have you ever come across any criticism from your colleagues because of your close association with NMS?

No. not at all because most of them are also members of their respective caste associations.

3. How the Nadar caste has been integrated in urban areas like Madurai, Chennai and Coimbatore?

Always people prefer to live in an area, which is dominated by their own caste people because of the cultural compatibility and mutual help. The Nadar settlement in urban areas of Tamil Nadu has evolved over a period of 150 - 200 years. In case of Chennai, one can see the thickest Nadar settlement in Vannara pettai, which was once the Nadar Pettai (fortified business centres) and subsequently become a residential area. Similarly, the Vepery area of Chennai has been dominated by converted Christian Nadars because of the influence of Church and schools. In case of Madurai, the Nadars completely dominated in areas like the west and north car streets which were once their *Pettais*.

The social ties, which integrate the caste in urban areas, are the local *uravinmurais*, kinship network and educational institutions managed by caste associations at the local level. The Sivakasi Nadars in Chennai, Aruppukkottai Nadars in Madurai, Viruthunagar Nadars in Trichy have their own associations. Modern institutions like marriage bureau, brokers, caste based financial institutions like the Nadar Financial corporation (Chennai), Nadar Links (Madurai), the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank are bringing caste members on a common platform. There are also newsletters and magazines published by the urban Nadars to interact with each other and they have been considered as a cementing force of the community.

4. What are the fields in which Nadars have excelled and failed?

Agriculture, business (particularly groceries and agricultural commission shops), education, community solidarity building, journalism, banking are the fields in which the Nadars have made rapid strides, whereas in politics, civil service, overseas migration, women's education, the cine field and big industries are the areas where the Nadars have not made any satisfactory development.

5. How are the factors like religious denomination and political affiliation of caste members hindering the caste's progress?

In the initial stages, religious conversion facilitated the community to improve its educational standards and occupational avenues. Of late, in villages religious differences have weakened community solidarity, mainly because the church and parish priest mostly controls the Christian Nadars. while, the caste association and local *uravinmurais* control the Hindu Nadars. The NMS emphasizes that the Christian brethren can follow the church as far as the religious matters are concerned. But when it comes to caste, they have to follow the norms framed by the caste association. Again in matrimonial alliances between Hindus and Christians, the latter demands compulsory conversion to their **fold**

which weakens caste solidarity and progress. Therefore, my suggestion is that, at any cost, religion should not be allowed to enter the caste association. Similarly, the church also must restrict its influence only to the religious matters and not venture into family and caste affairs.

The identification of Nadars with political parties hinders the community at all levels, particularly at the time of election, and that too when the contestants happened to be Nadars themselves. If the contest is between Nadar vs. non-Nadars the trouble is less intensive. Because of the hero-worshipping and fanaticism, of late the party affiliations have began to create heat and dust even at the grass root level Nadar settlements. Nadar Mahajana Sangam never allowed politics to enter in its day-to-day work. This is one reason, for the past 90 years, it has been functioning smoothly. I wish the local level association too the dividing and destructive forces away from caste affairs.

6. Is it good for the educated people to be associated with the caste association?

It is very difficult to say whether it is good or bad to associate with one's own caste association. In my case, all along the student days, I had availed the facilities of the caste association. Today, when I have established firmly in professional life, how can I forget the help rendered by the association. It is always better to be identified with one's own caste. Even in foreign countries also, people identify them with their own race, where there is no caste. Like when the jews, anglo-saxons, nordics are grouped separately.

7. What are your contributions to the caste association?

The Mahajana Sangam appointed me as a counsellor for the students and job seekers. It is an honorary position without any financial remuneration. Usually in the beginning of the academic year, students of our community approach and consult me about their

higher studies and the type of employment they are searching for. According to their background, I used to advise them for suitable course and job.

Whenever the association has to send letters to the state and central governments, the drafting work is usually assigned to me. Regarding the NMS demand to include Christian Nadars in backward caste list, the Tamil Nadu Mercantile Bank issue, the communal riots in South Tamil Nadu, the letters related to the aforesaid problems to government were drafted by me as per the instructions given by the Secretary and other office bearers of Nadar Mahajana Sangam.

As an active life member, I attend all the annual conferences organized by the association.

I have been writing in the association journal for the last 20 years on various aspects of Nadar life and the measures to develop the community.

Being a university professor I was assigned to contact the overseas Nadars to strengthen the association abroad, mobilizing funds from the migrant Nadars, seeking information on higher studies on behalf of deserving students etc.

I maintain constant touch with the Nadar business houses and industrialists in order to place the educated youth who are in search of a job.

Recently, concerning the Mercantile Bank issue, along with the Forum members I went and met political leaders, senior bureaucrats to get back the Bank. Also I convinced the caste brethren to buy the shares of Mercantile Bank.

8. What are all the caste symbols of Nadars?

The olden days the caste title, the hereditary occupation (toddy tapping), *uravinmurai*, *mahamai*, *jati panchavat* and the Mariamman temple happened to be the caste symbols. But with the development of the community, the new ones have replaced the old

symbols. At present the educational institutions, buildings, Nadar business establishments, caste based financial institutions, caste leader's statues, the caste association are the caste symbols. In villages though, the old caste symbols are still prevalent.

9.What are your suggestions to strengthen the community?

In order to improve the literacy rate within the community, women's education should be given the top most priority. More scholarships and other assistance should be made available to the poor and deserving students, Particularly the rural students. It is high time that the caste association managed educational institutions introduce more of job-oriented courses instead of the conventional courses like arts, science and commerce. The Nadar students must be encouraged to write competitive examinations like civil sendees, engineering service, national defence service and combined defence services examinations. In these areas, the Nadar representation is miniscule. The problems cropping up between the Hindu vs. Christian Nadars, or between the sub-castes or between region (northerners vs. southerners) should be settled amicably and quickly. The well to do Nadars have to invest in areas like the cinefield, hardware business and jewellery which are hitherto not taken up by them. Traditional institutions like *uravinurai*, *mahamai* and *j'an panchayat* are all to be strengthened at the grassroot level.

VII. INTERVIEW WITH SRI BALAPRAJAPATHI ADIKAL OF AYYAVALI MOVEMENT, SWAMITHOPPU, KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT, TAMILNADU

1. What are the salient features of Ayya Vaikuntar preachings?

Vaikuntar's preaching about temple worship is of great significance. He discouraged idol worship, slaughtering of animals in the name of sacrifice, keeping *hundis* in temples and also giving *kannikkai*. He advised his followers about the day-to-day life. He asked them to be good to their enemies too. He advised them to be kind and generous to those who came to them, chanting his name. He asked his followers to abide by the law of the land and not to be covetous.

2. What are the important pilgrimage centres of the Ayyavali people?

The important pilgrimage centres of Ayyavali are the *pancha pathis* and a large number of *nizal thangal*. These pathis are *Swamithoppu*, i.e. the head quarters of Ayyavali. The other Pathis are *Muttapathi*, *Thamaraikulam Pathi*, *Ambalapathi* and *Poopathi*.

Muttapathi was the place where *Thuvayal Panthi* was conducted by the followers of Ayya Vaikuntar. Here, the last part of the Thuvyal Panthi was conducted as per Ayya Vaikuntar's wishes. The seven hundred families lived there as a group, so there prevailed group economy. The neighbors heard about their pure vegetarian life. A lot of people came to witness the life of devotees. The present *Muttapathi* was established there and was under the direct control of *Swamithoppu Gurukulam*. Later, due to some litigations, the land was auctioned by the government. At present, *Muttapathi* is a private temple managed by trustees. Ayyavali people have a belief that, it is sanctifying to take a holy dip in the sea at *Muttapathi*. Every year on last Friday of Tamil month *Panguni*, people march from *Swamithoppu* in large numbers to *Muttapathi*.

Thamarikulam pathi

Tamaraikulam is the birthplace of *Arigopalan*, one of the disciples of Ayya Vaikuntar. He helped Ayya to write *Akilathirattu*, the holy book. People of this village once invited Ayya Vaikuntar and gave him a warm welcome. Ayya stayed there for a day and returned to *Swamithoppu*.

During the early years, Ayya Vaikuntar was taken to this village in a *Vahana* once in a year. It is fourteen kilometers away from Nagercoil. The auspicious day was the last Sunday of the Tamil month *Panguni*. The festivals and day to day affairs of the temple are conducted by the village people. This *Pathi* is managed by a village committee.

Ambalapathi

Ayya Vaikuntar went to a place called *Pallam* and stayed there for two years. This place is called as *Ambalapathi*. Ayya was a *Shivasorubhi* at this place. Here *ambalam* was constructed with ninety-six beams meeting at the centre and Ayya preached from that *Ambalam*. Here, as a *Shiva-sorubi*, Ayya assumed the powers of *Parvathi*, *Bhagavathi*, *Valli* and *Theivayanai*. Ayya established *nizhal thangals* in this village. Later, at the end of the second year, Ayya returned to *Swamithoppu*. Now the descendants of the people who constructed the temple manage this *Pathi*. Every year car festivals are conducted in this *Pathi*. There are many *vahanas* to earn' Ayya Vaikuntar around the temple. This *Pathi* is located ten kilometers south of Nagercoil.

Poopathi

Ayya Vaikuntar spent his last six years at *Swamithoppu*. He lived a normal life. He owned fields, groves and cattle. *Boomadevi* known as *Poomadanthai* was a little girl living at a place near *Eathamozhi*. Some devotees wanted to unite this divine couple, but

there was stiff opposition from the relatives of the girl. *Poomadanthai* was chanting the praise of Ayya Vaikuntar and proved that she was extraordinary.

Later, the relatives of the girl invited Ayya and performed the girl's marriage with Vaikuntar. Later, the devotees established a *Pathi* at this place called as *Poopathi*. Festivals are conducted every year and this temple is owned by the village and maintained by the village committee. *Poopathi* is located about ten kilometers south of Nagercoil.

3. What are the methods and instruments used to propagate the Ayyavali movement?

For the last twenty years, there is a spurt in the development of Ayyavali cult. From 1947 onwards, the cult is growing day by day. Before 1947, there was no organized procession on the birthday of Ayya Vaikuntar. I am using several methods to propagate the gospel of Ayya Vaikuntar. These are peace and inter-religious dialogue, Ayyavali conference, *Ayyavali Anbukodi Makkal Tiruchabai* and the publication and supply of literature, audio and video cassettes related to the philosophy of Ayyavali.

4. How does Ayyavali movement differ from the Vaishnavites of Hindu religion?

In Vaishnavite temple, usually the brahmin alone functions as a *purohit*, whereas in Ayyavali movement the priest hails from Nadar or other such backward classes. Sanskrit is used in vaishnavite temples to recite *mantras*, but we use only Tamil as temple language. The Ayyavali temple is unique because there is no idol, no *deepaarathi*, (lighting of camphor) and above all no *hundi* in the temple. The offering made to the temple is distributed to the devotees present in the temple. In the sanctum sanctorum a mirror is kept, as it is supposed to tell the devotees 'First see yourself and you can visualize God within you'. These are the ways in which Ayyavali differs from Hindu religion.

5. What is the specialty of Vaikuntar temple at Swamithoppu?

The temple has three specialities required of a holy place i.e. *Moorthy*, *Thalam* and *Theeriham*. When we think of the *Moorthy*, Lord Vaikuntar's human body is the moola moorthy of this temple. This temple has been established for this moorthy. When we think of *thalam*, *Akilathiratu*, the holy book describes this holy land's fame. This was the place where Parthiban, the Legendary Arjuna made penance to get *Vasupathasthiram*, from Lord Siva. This place was the birthplace of Veda Vysa who wrote Mahabaratha. *Munthirikinaru* is the holy *theertham* of this temple. *Munthirikinaru* is located at the north west of this village. People first go to this well and take bath before entering the temple.

Another important thing about this temple is that this is a people's temple. This temple was constructed by the poor people and not by any ruler. In fact, the then rulers of Travancore were very much against the construction of this Temple.

6. What are the Holy books of Ayyavali people?

Akilathiratu and *Arulnool* are the holy books of Ayyavali people. Lord Vaikuntar wrote *Akilathirattu*, the holy, book with the help of Arigopalan, one of his disciples. His other works were compiled as *Arulnool*. These two books were translated into many languages in order to get wider publicity.

7. What does the *Namam* symbolise for Ayyavali ?

Ayya Vaikuntar used the sanctified earth (*thiruman* - which is called as *Namam* by his devotees) and water to treat the people for their diseases. People from far and wide congregated there to get the blessings of Vaikuntar to overcome their diseases. In every temple of Vaikunta Swamy, once the worship is over, the guru applies the sacred mud on the devotees' forehead in the form of *Namam*. Ayya considered the *namam* as the

most important weapon and called it as *Thottu Namam Chattuthal* - the practice of applying sacred *Namam* on the forehead of devotees. In those days, lower castes like Nadars were not allowed to enter the temple premises. Later, after the period of Vaikuntar entry into temple was granted to lower castes. But, even today, one can see the priests throwing the sacred ash and sandal paste at devotees, instead of applying it reverentially.

Therefore, Vaikuntar advised the practice of *Thottu Namam Chattuthal* in every temple. Ayya considered it as a mark of self-respect and it reduces the difference between higher and lower castes.

8. What are the religious reforms Vaikuntar advocated to Ayyavali people?

Ayya's preachings were unique in the way of worshipping God. In those days, Hindu religion was in the grip of Brahmins and the upper castes. The temples were managed by the kings and their henchmen. Vedas and *upanishads* were the religious books and were in Sanskrit; hence, the common man could not learn these books.

Ayya wanted to simplify the religion so that it could reach the common man. Ayya's simplification started with the structure of temple itself. In Ayyavali temples, one can worship according to his will and pleasure. The language used in the temple is strictly Tamil. Ayya wrote his book only in Tamil. Ayya Vaikuntar used Tamil in temple worship so that even common man could understand the meaning of what they hear. It is also very easy for the non-privileged community to practise.

Ayya was totally against the idol worship. His ideology is to see God in oneself. He says in *akilathirattu* that the powers of God cannot be confined to any limit. He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent.

Social organizations of this day are condemning the practice of animal sacrifice. But, Ayya raised his voice against this practice 150 years ago. Ayya said those who practised animal sacrifice were not his people. His followers took his words in the right sense and there is no room for this evil practice in Ayyavali. His followers say that God who created all the living beings will not be happy if we snuff life out of his creatures.

Ayya called this world of righteousness as *dharmayuka*. Ayya Vaikuntar's mission is to destroy Kali and achieve *dhaymayuka*. In *dharmayuka*, there will be no caste, but a single creed and religion. There won't be any evil in that world. These are the religious reforms Ayya advocated to his followers.

9. What are the social reforms Ayya Vaikuntar advocated?

Vaikuntar's social reform pertain to eradication of casteism and untouchability, social respect, integration through love and marriage reforms,

i) Casteism and Untouchability

Vaikuntar chose to eradicate casteism and untouchability through *Samapanthibojana* in each and every place of worship in the name of *annadharman*. People, irrespective of their castes, had to sit together and have food prepared in temple. He did this too in a unique way.

During the festival season, from the very first day onwards, Ayyavali people used to go out to different places for collecting alms. On the eighth day of the festival, food would be prepared, out of the alms collected, and served. Ayya asked his followers to serve it out with their own hands. Ayya asked them not to use spoon or any such thing to make the people understand that everybody is equal and there is no difference among human beings.

It was a time when one cannot imagine eating food cooked by lower castes. But, Ayya used to send his disciples to different villages and advised them to have meals with the lower caste people.

The second thing he did was the construction of a community well. During those days, casteism was so rigid that each caste had separate wells. No person from a different caste was allowed to draw water from the well. The Lord silently started to cleanse this dirt from the society by establishing the *Munthirikinaru*. This was the first well in this part of the Country where people from different castes came together and used the water.

The third and most important weapon devised by him was *Thottu Namam Chattuthal* - the practice of applying sacred *namam* on the forehead of devotees. In those days, lower castes were not allowed to enter the temple premises. Later, after the period of Vaikuntar, the temple entry was granted to lower castes. But, even today you can see poojaris throwing the sacred ash and sandal paste at devotees, instead of applying it reverently.

ii) Sef - Respect

These days wearing a turban was a matter of social respect. There were rules restricting the lower castes from wearing a turban and dressing like a higher caste person. Vaikuntar wanted to eradicate this discrimination from the society and uphold the self-respect of the lower castes. Ayya Vaikuntar asked his people who came to him to wear a turban. Ayya practised this democratic siddhantha to bring equality among the downtrodden.

iii) Integration through love

Ayya Vaikuntar designed a flag for his movement. The flag is even today called as *anbukodi (love flag)*. It is a saffron coloured with single *namam* in the shape of jyothi on

both sides. Ayya preached that only love can integrate a society. The flag was hoisted at every *nizhal thangal* and in many houses during those days.

iv) Disobedience

Ayya Vaikuntar advised his followers not to remit their full earnings as tax. In those days, the lower castes had to pay a large amount as penalty tax. Further, the higher castes imposed tax on the lower castes in the name of *pan*. Ayya Vaikuntar asked the king to desist from the collection of penalty taxes. Moreover, the lower castes had to work for the State without wages. The lower castes, particularly the Nadars, disobeyed the king by not paying the penalty tax and revolted against work without wages.

v) Tamil Marriage

Before and during the period of Ayya Vaikuntar, Hindu religion was in the grip of Brahmins. Marriages were conducted chanting mantras in Sanskrit. The Brahmins considered Sanskrit as the language of Devas and prohibited other castes from learning it. Ayya Vaikuntar was totally against this practice; so, he preached everything in Tamil.

Ayya Vaikuntar designed a unique marriage ritual, which is later on called as 'Ayyavali Marriage'. In this type, the wedding is conducted in Tamil only. Ayya depicts this Marriage as the marriage of Lord Kantha. Lord Shiva is the Guru and the marriage is assumed to have been conducted in the presence of Lord Vishnu. In this marriage, the bride and groom are seated facing the south. A guru, preferably an elderly man of the village, performs the marriage rituals. The Guru applies the sacred '*namam*' on the forehead of the bride and the groom.

The *Kalyana Vazhthu*, a part of *Akilathirattu*, is recited during the marriage. The *Vazhthu* begins with the line '*mavuni kalyana manavolai vazhthaluku*'. It contains 56 lines, and takes seven minutes to recite the *vazhthu*. While chanting the mantra, the

bridegroom ties the Mangla Sutra around the bride's neck. After completion of the *vazthu*, the couple will go round the *manavarai* five times. Thus begins the married life. These kinds of marriages are being conducted for the past 150 years.

10. How other Social reformers were influenced by Ayya Vaikuntar's preachings?

Narayanaguru (founder of SNDP) and Ayyankazhi (The Dalit Revolutionary) both from Kerala were so much influenced by Ayya Vaikuntar that they stayed at *Maruthuvazhmalai* near Swamithoppu before launching their own movements. Even Vivekananda, the great Indian Monk, who took Hinduism outside India, heard about Ayya Vaikuntar when he was at Kanyakumari and visited Swamithoppu. It is said that his wearing of the turban was due to the influence of Ayya Vaikuntar.

11. How did the Christian missionaries view Ayyavali movement in Colonial days?

The English missionaries, who were at Kanyakumari during colonial time to spread their religion, felt that Ayyavali was an obstacle to the spread of their religion. They sent many reports to their headquarters in London. In the Annual report of the London Mission Society, James Town Mission District for the year 1863, it is recorded that they had no time to sleep as Ayyavali was spreading like wild fire. The report says that the followers of Ayya Vaikuntar met together in a building, which was smaller than the village chapels.

In the Annual report of London Mission Society, Santhapuram Mission District for the year 1864, it is reported as follows:

"some years, ago a palmyra climber named Muthukutty claimed to be an incarnation of Vishnu and deceived many people. His followers have erected pagodas in many places. As they regard Muthukutty, as an incarnation of Vishnu they affirm that the worship of Muthukutty is really a worship of the Supreme being. This imposter is one of the chief obstacles to the spread of the gospels in these parts" .

In the Annual report of the London Mission Society Nagercoil Mission District Kottaram division for the year 1874, the entire scene of *Tamaraikulam* - present day Swamithoppu - has been reported. In this, they had reported that Muthukutti was a strong obstacle to the spread of Christianity, also reported about how the car festival of swamithoppu attracted thousands of people from far off places.

12. Since you are claiming Ayya Vaikuntar as a prophet, can you cite few examples of his foretold predictions?

Yes, I can cite thousands of his foretold predictions. I will present you a copy of *Arul Nool* and *Akilathirattu*. You read it thoroughly; you will realize the prophet qualities of Vaikuntar.

Ayya foretold events, which are proving correct in our times. If someone makes a research on *Akilathirattu* and *Arul Nool* in this lines and compiles his predictions it will run into volumes and volumes. I will cite a handful of his predictions and, when you listen to it, you will realize the truth.

1. Ram Janma Bhoomi - Babri Masjid

Ayothi paitanam than azhiyuthada en mahane

Arul Nool

"My son Ayothi city will get destroyed"

For several centuries after the alleged demolition and desecration of the temple where Lord Rama was born, there were many attempts to demolish the Babri Masjid. There are many who believe that Ayodhya referred to in Ramayana is elsewhere. But a large majority has accepted this place as the birthplace of Lord Rama (Janmasthan of Lord Rama). The dispute has been heating up for the past forty years and the building was closed for darshan. Later, it was opened for Hindus to conduct pooja. The Vishwa **Hindu Parishad** tried to put a saffron flag on the top of this building. Finally, the building

was demolished and basic construction work for the Ramajanma Bhoomi was started.

Ayya Vaikuntar has foretold about this vexed issue and the result.

2. Roads and Transport

Nazhuku nazhai nadakkum aazhi kurukum

Akilathirattu

"Day by day the distance you walk will diminish"

3. Prosopis - prosopis Julifora

Vettavezhi thanilae makkal velipairahuthappa

Arul nool

"Son, Live fence is grown on the open space"

If someone travels through the length and breadth of this country, this shrub Prosopis Julifora is a common sight everywhere. This shrub is known by various names viz. *Kanthimul. Kangress mul, Velikaruvai, Delhi mul etc.* This shrub was introduced into India less than a hundred years ago and was grown in open spaces to control wind and soil erosion. This shrub can be grown into a tree. Now *Prosopis* is responsible for the economy of the dry districts of Tamil Nadu like Ramanad.

Ayya Vaikuntar has written prophetically. Now a days this plant is grown in open and waste lands for charcoal and firewood. Ayya Vaikuntar has foreseen this and recorded it in his book Arul nool.

4. Women's Era

Nariyarkal koodi nadengum Vasamittu oru kudai keezh azhwar

Akilathirattu

"Power to rule the state will be in the hands of women"

Ayya Vaikuntar's period was a dark period for women. In those days, women had no freedom. Women were not allowed to move freely in society. They had no education, no right to voice their ideas. Women were confined to the house. But, now, the scene is much different. Women are equal to men in every walk of life. They are scaling the Everest and flying in planes in the aerospace and even have become heads of states. Today countries like Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan had or are have women heads of state. Ayya Vaikuntar had foretold this in his book *Akilathirattu*.

5. Deforestation

Nazh thorum boomellam kadu thaninthuvarum

Akilathirattu

"There will be constant shrinking of forest area"

Forests are being destroyed, and afforestation is the need of the day. Trees of the forests are destroyed day by day for fuel, furniture and fodder throughout the world. In India, every year 1.5 million hectares of forest is destroyed. The total forest area of our country is less than 23 per cent of our geographical area. Forest wealth is the real wealth of the country.

Ayya Vaikuntar had foreseen this and foretold in his holy book. Arulnool in the chap'er *Nadutheervai ula*. But, there is good news in *Sivakanda adikarapathiram*. Here Ayya had recorded, *Nadellam kadakum*. As per his words, our afforestation programs such as social forestry will be successful and our forest wealth will increase in future.

6. Cows and Milk

Adumadu aruguthadi katha avinangal thomithadi

Akilathirattu

"While the strength of cattle is reduced, the milk output will increase"

After the artificial insemination and introduction of exotic breeds, there is a spurt in the milk production. The milk yields per animal has almost doubled, but the strength of cowheads has fallen drastically. Ayya Vaikuntar had foreseen this fact 150 years ago and this is a point to be considered by the Animal husbandry department of our country. Scientists have invented embryo transfer technology, which is expected to increase the milk yield to a large extent in future. Thus, Ayya Vaikuntar's words in *Akilathirattu* have come true.

7. **Sri Lanka**

Srilanka mariyathu chennel vilayauthada thee meluga nalachu

Ennudaya thambimarae elankakpuri azhuvai

Akilathirattu

"There will be change in Sri Lanka after fire and blood

"My brother, you will rule Sri Lanka"

Ayya Vaikuntar had mentioned Sri Lanka; an island nation now plunged in internal ethnic warfare in his holy book *Arul nool*. There were incidents related to Tamil Kings annexing Sri Lanka to their territory. During 1815, the last Tamil King Vikram Rajasingam who ruled Kandy - a part of Sri Lanka - revolted against the English rulers and was imprisoned at Velur Fort in Tamil Nadu i.e. before the time of Ayya Vaikuntar. From that time onwards, misery reigned for the Tamils of Sri Lanka.